

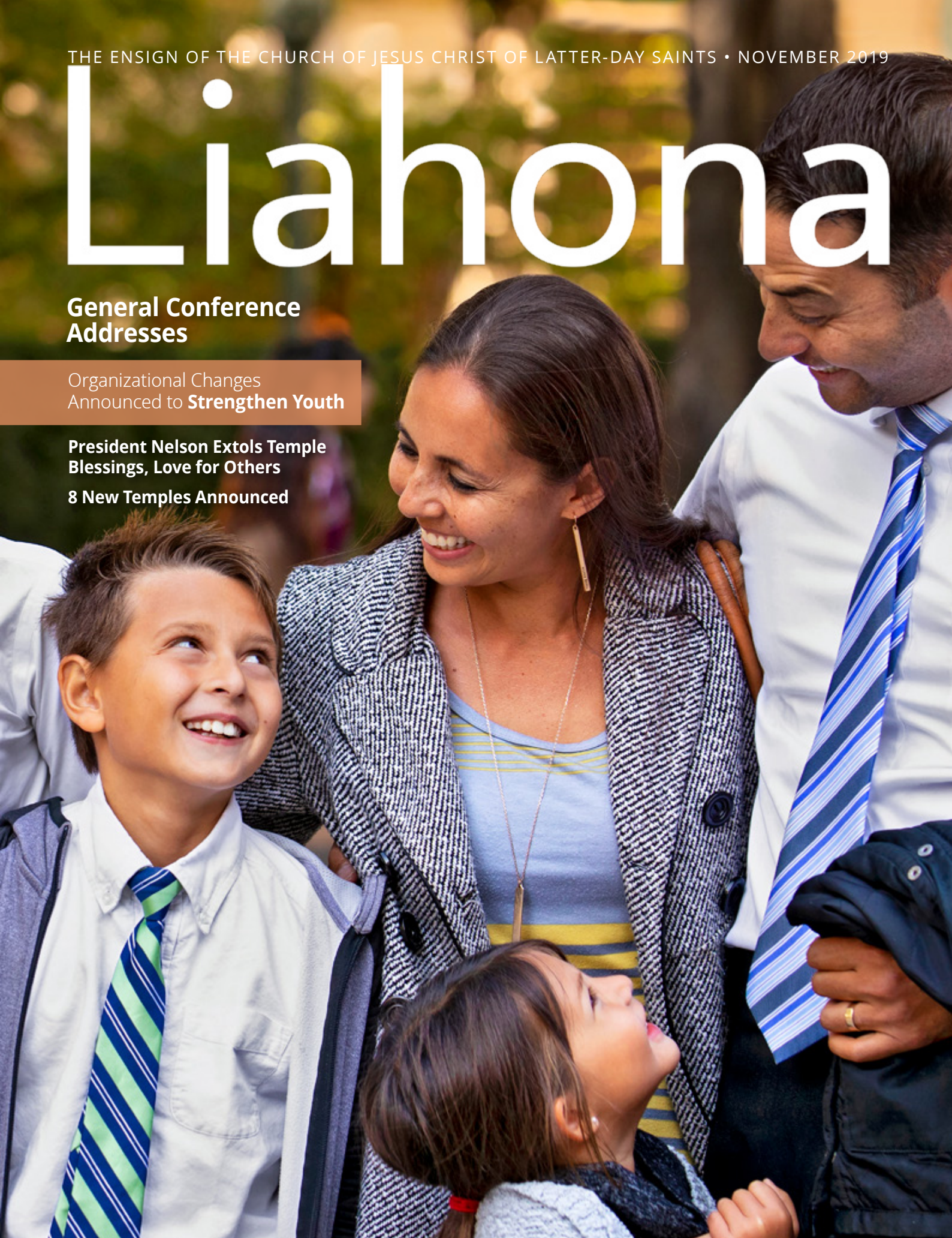
Liahona

General Conference Addresses

Organizational Changes
Announced to **Strengthen Youth**

President Nelson Extols Temple
Blessings, Love for Others

8 New Temples Announced



***The Very Thought of
Thee (The Messiah),***
by Elspeth Young

*“In speaking of the Savior’s
Atonement, President
Russell M. Nelson said:*

*“As in all things, Jesus
Christ is our ultimate exemplar,
“who for the joy that was set
before him endured the cross”
[Hebrews 12:2]. Think of that!
In order for Him to endure the
most excruciating experience
ever endured on earth, our
Savior focused on joy!’ . . .*

*“Similarly, the joy ‘set
before us’ is the joy of assist-
ing the Savior in His work of
redemption.”*

Elder D. Todd Christofferson
of the Quorum of the Twelve
Apostles, “The Joy of the
Saints,” 17.



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The 189th Semiannual General Conference

Saturday Morning, October 5, 2019, General Session

Conducting: President Henry B. Eyring
Invocation: Elder Larry Y. Wilson
Benediction: Elder Steven R. Bangert
Music by the Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square; Mack Wilberg and Ryan Murphy, directors; Andrew Unsworth, organist: “The Morning Breaks,” *Hymns*, no. 1; “From All That Dwell below the Skies,” *Hymns*, no. 90, arr. Wilberg; “As I Search the Holy Scriptures,” *Hymns*, no. 277, arr. Murphy; “How Firm a Foundation,” *Hymns*, no. 85; “Faith,” *Children’s Songbook*, 96–97, arr. Elliott; “Now Let Us Rejoice,” *Hymns*, no. 3, arr. Wilberg.

Saturday Afternoon, October 5, 2019, General Session

Conducting: President Dallin H. Oaks
Invocation: Elder Matthew L. Carpenter
Benediction: Elder Craig C. Christensen
Music by a combined choir from stakes in Provo, Utah; Jim Kasen, director; Joseph Peeples, organist: “The Lord Is My Light,” *Hymns*, no. 89, arr. Kasen; “Sweet Is the Work,” *Hymns*, no. 147, arr. Kasen; “Redeemer of Israel,” *Hymns*, no. 6; “Thy Spirit, Lord, Has Stirred Our Souls,” *Hymns*, no. 157, arr. Kasen.

Saturday Evening, October 5, 2019, Women’s Session

Conducting: Joy D. Jones
Invocation: Salote Tukuafu
Benediction: Carol Costley
Music by a combined choir of Primary girls and young women from stakes in West Jordan, Utah; Kasey Bradbury, director; Linda Margetts, organist: “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty,” *Hymns*, no. 72, arr. Webb; “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet,” *Hymns*, no. 19; “I Love to See the Temple,” *Children’s Songbook*, 95, arr. Mohlman; “He Sent His Son,” *Children’s Songbook*, 34–35, arr. DeFord.

Sunday Morning, October 6, 2019, General Session

Conducting: President Henry B. Eyring
Invocation: Elder O. Vincent Haleck
Benediction: Becky Craven
Music by the Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square; Mack Wilberg, director; Brian Mathias and Richard Elliott, organists: “How

Wondrous and Great,” *Hymns*, no. 267; “High on the Mountain Top,” *Hymns*, no. 5, arr. Wilberg; “A Child’s Prayer,” *Children’s Songbook*, 12–13, arr. Perry; “Teach Me to Walk in the Light,” *Hymns*, no. 304; “True to the Faith,” *Hymns*, no. 254, arr. Lyon; “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling,” Wesley and Prichard, arr. Wilberg.

Sunday Afternoon, October 6, 2019, General Session

Conducting: President Dallin H. Oaks
Invocation: Elder Jack N. Gerard
Benediction: Douglas D. Holmes
Music by the Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square; Mack Wilberg and Ryan Murphy, directors; Richard Elliott, organist: “Come, Ye Children of the Lord,” *Hymns*, no. 58, arr. Murphy; “I Stand All Amazed,” *Hymns*, no. 193, arr. Murphy; “Let Us All Press On,” *Hymns*, no. 243; “More Holiness Give Me,” *Hymns*, no. 131, arr. Staheli.

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Highlights from the 189th Semiannual General Conference

Church leaders who spoke during general conference extended over and over the invitation to become—to become happier, to become holier, to become more like the Savior, and to help others do the same.

What’s more, they made that change seem within reach for each of us.

“The Lord wants all His children to partake of the eternal blessings available in His temple,” President Russell M. Nelson taught. “. . . Individual worthiness to enter the Lord’s house requires much individual spiritual preparation. But with the Lord’s help, nothing is impossible.”

Finding Happiness and Holiness

President Nelson invited each of us to qualify for the blessings of the

temple (see page 120).

President Henry B. Eyring explained the connection between increasing holiness and increasing happiness (see page 100).

Elder D. Todd Christofferson taught us how to find “the joy of the saints” (see page 15).

An Invitation to Love and Share

President Nelson taught the importance of loving our neighbor and detailed the far-reaching humanitarian work of the Church (see page 96).

Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf explained the power of inviting others to “come and see” (see page 86).

Sister Cristina B. Franco described the joy of sharing the gospel (see page 83).

Strengthening Youth

The prophet introduced changes to the youth organizations that will encourage youth in quorum and class presidencies to rise up and lead (see page 38).

Elder Quentin L. Cook presented how Aaronic Priesthood leadership will function (see page 40).

Sister Bonnie H. Cordon shared changes to the Young Women organization (see page 67).

Building Temples; Building Us

President Nelson announced eight new temples during the women’s session (see page 76).

On Sunday afternoon, he taught about qualifying to enter the temple and introduced revised temple recommend questions (see page 120). ■





BY ELDER JEFFREY R. HOLLAND
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

The Message, the Meaning, and the Multitude

Through the incessant din and drumbeat of our day, may we strive to see Christ at the center of our lives, of our faith, and of our service.

Brothers and sisters, this is Sammy Ho Ching, seven months old, watching general conference on television in his home last April.

As time approached to sustain President Russell M. Nelson and the other General Authorities, Sammy’s arms were busy holding his bottle. So he did the next best thing.

Sammy gives entirely new meaning to the concept of voting with your feet.

Welcome to this semiannual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. To set the stage for a discussion of the meaning of these twice-a-year gatherings, I invoke this scene from Luke’s New Testament account:¹

“It came to pass, that as [Jesus] was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging:

“ . . . Hearing [a] multitude pass by, he asked what it meant.

“ . . . They told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.

“And he cried, saying, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.”

Startled at his boldness, the crowd tried to silence the man, but “he cried so much the more,” it says. As a result of his persistence, he was brought to Jesus, who heard his faith-filled plea for the restoration of his sight and healed him.²

I am moved by this vivid little vignette every time I read it. We can sense the man’s distress. We can almost



Sammy Ho Ching sustains President Russell M. Nelson during general conference in April 2019.

hear him shouting for the Savior’s attention. We smile at his refusal to be silenced—indeed, his determination to turn the volume *up* when everyone else was telling him to turn it *down*. It is, in and of itself, a sweet story of very determined faith. But as with all scripture, the more we read it, the more we find in it.

One thought that struck me only recently is the good sense this man had in having spiritually sensitive people around him. The entire significance of this story hinges on a handful of anonymous women and men who, when asked by their colleague, “What does this commotion mean?” had the vision, if you will, to identify Christ as the reason for the clamor; He was Meaning Personified. There is a lesson in this little exchange for all of us. In matters of faith and conviction, it helps to direct your inquiry toward those who actually have some! “Can the blind lead the blind?” Jesus once asked. “[If so,] shall they not both fall into the ditch?”³

Such a quest for faith and conviction is our purpose in these conferences, and by joining with us today, you will realize that this search is a broadly shared endeavor. Look around you. Here on these grounds you see families of all sizes coming from every direction. Old friends embrace in joyful reunion, a marvelous choir is warming up, and protestors shout from their favorite soapbox. Missionaries of an earlier day look for former companions, while recently returned missionaries look for entirely *new* companions (if you know what I mean!). And photos? Heaven help us! With cell phones in every hand, we have morphed from “every member a missionary” to “every member a photographer.” In the midst of all of this delightful commotion, one could justifiably ask, “What does it all mean?”

As in our New Testament story, those blessed with sight will recognize that, in spite of everything else this conference tradition may offer us, it will mean little or nothing unless we find Jesus at the center of it all. To grasp the vision we are seeking, the healing that He promises, the significance we somehow know is here, we must cut through the commotion—joyful as it is—and fix our attention on Him. The prayer of every speaker, the hope of all who sing, the reverence of every guest—all are dedicated to inviting the Spirit of Him whose Church this is—the living Christ, the Lamb of God, the Prince of Peace.

But we don't have to be in a conference center to find Him. When a child reads the Book of Mormon for the first time and is enamored with Abinadi's courage or the march of 2,000 stripling warriors, we can gently add that Jesus is the omnipresent central figure in this marvelous chronicle, standing like a colossus over virtually every page of it and providing the link to all of the other faith-promoting figures in it.

Likewise, when a friend is learning about our faith, she or he can be a bit overwhelmed by some of the unique elements and unfamiliar vocabulary of our religious practice—dietary restrictions, self-reliance supplies, pioneer treks, digitized family trees, with an untold number of stake centers where some have undoubtedly expected to be served a fine charbroiled sirloin, medium-rare. So, as our new friends experience a multitude of new sights and sounds, we must point past the hustle and bustle and concentrate them on the meaning of it all, on the beating heart of the eternal gospel—the love of Heavenly Parents, the atoning gift of a divine Son, the comforting guidance of the Holy Ghost, the latter-day restoration of all these truths and so much more.



When one goes to the holy temple for the first time, he or she may be somewhat awestruck by that experience. Our job is to ensure that the sacred symbols and revealed rituals, the ceremonial clothing and visual presentations, never distract from but rather point toward the Savior, whom we are there to worship. The temple is His house, and He should be uppermost in our minds and hearts—the majestic doctrine of Christ pervading our very being just as it pervades the temple ordinances—from the time we read the inscription over the front door to the very last moment we spend in the building. Amid all the wonder we encounter, we are to see, above all else, the meaning of Jesus in the temple.

Consider the swirl of bold initiatives and new announcements in the Church in these recent months. As we minister to one another, or refine

our Sabbath experience, or embrace a new program for children and youth, we will miss the real reason for these revelatory adjustments if we see them as disparate, unrelated elements rather than as an interrelated effort to help us build more firmly on the Rock of our Salvation.⁴ Surely, surely, this is what President Russell M. Nelson intends in having us use the revealed name of the Church.⁵ If Jesus—His name, His doctrine, His example, His divinity—can be at the center of our worship, we will be reinforcing the great truth Alma once taught: “There be many things to come; [but] behold, there is one thing which is of more importance than they all— . . . the Redeemer [who] liveth and cometh among his people.”⁶

One concluding thought: Joseph Smith's 19th-century frontier environment was aflame with competing crowds of Christian witnesses.⁷ But in



the tumult they created, these exuberant revivalists were, ironically, obscuring the very Savior young Joseph so earnestly sought. Battling what he called “darkness and confusion,”⁸ he retreated to the solitude of a grove of trees where he saw and heard a more glorious witness of the Savior’s centrality to the gospel than anything we have mentioned here this morning. With a gift of sight unimagined and unanticipated, Joseph beheld in vision his Heavenly Father, the great God of the universe, and Jesus Christ, His perfect Only Begotten Son. Then the Father set the example we have been applauding

this morning: He pointed to Jesus, saying: “This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!”⁹ No greater expression of Jesus’s divine identity, His primacy in the plan of salvation, and His standing in the eyes of God could ever exceed that short seven-word declaration.

Commotion and confusion? Crowds and contention? There is plenty of all that in our world. Indeed, skeptics and the faithful still contend over this vision and virtually all else I have referred to today. In case *you* may be striving to see more clearly and to find meaning in the midst of a multitude of opinions, I point you toward that same Jesus and

bear apostolic witness of Joseph Smith’s experience, coming as it did some 1,800 years after our blind friend received his sight on the ancient Jericho Road. I testify with these two and a host of others down through time that surely the most thrilling sight and sound in life is that of Jesus not only passing by¹⁰ but His coming *to* us, stopping *beside* us, and making His abode *with* us.¹¹

Sisters and brothers, through the incessant din and drumbeat of our day, may we strive to see Christ at the center of our lives, of our faith, and of our service. That is where true meaning lies. And if some days our vision is limited or our confidence has waned or our belief is being tested and refined—as surely it will be—may we then cry out the louder, “Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me.”¹² I promise with apostolic fervor and prophetic conviction that He will hear you and will say, soon or late, “Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee.”¹³ Welcome to general conference. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. This may or may not be the same incident recorded in Matthew 20:30–34, in which there are two blind men responding, or the one recorded in Mark 10:46–52, in which the blind man is identified as Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus.
2. See Luke 18:35–43; emphasis added.
3. Luke 6:39.
4. See 2 Nephi 9:45.
5. See Russell M. Nelson, “The Correct Name of the Church,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 87–89.
6. Alma 7:7.
7. The region in upstate New York near Palmyra was often referred to as “the burned-over district” due to the religious zeal that regularly swept through those small communities.
8. Joseph Smith—History 1:13.
9. Joseph Smith—History 1:17.
10. See Luke 18:37.
11. See John 14:23.
12. Mark 10:47.
13. Luke 18:42.



BY ELDER TERENCE M. VINSON
Of the Presidency of the Seventy

True Disciples of the Savior

*We can feel enduring joy when our Savior
and His gospel become the framework
around which we build our lives.*

Somewhat hidden in the Old Testament book of Haggai is a description of a group of people who could have used Elder Holland’s counsel. They got it wrong by not placing Christ at the center of their lives and their service. Haggai paints some thought-provoking word pictures as he reprimands these people for staying in their comfortable houses instead of building the Lord’s temple:

“Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?”

“Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways.

“Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.

“Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways.”¹

Don’t you love those descriptions of the futility of prioritizing things of no eternal consequence above the things of God?

In a recent sacrament meeting I attended, a returned missionary quoted

a father who summed up this idea perfectly when he said to his children, “What we need here is less Wi-Fi and more Nephi!”

Having lived in West Africa for five years, I saw plenty of examples of people prioritizing the gospel naturally

and unashamedly. One such example is the name of a tire repair and wheel balancing business in Ghana. The owner has named it “Thy Will Alignment.”

We can feel enduring joy² when our Savior and His gospel become the framework around which we build our lives. However, it’s so easy for that framework to become, instead, the things of the world, where the gospel sits as an optional extra or as simply attending church for two hours on Sundays. When this is the case, it is tantamount to putting our wages into “a bag with holes.”

Haggai is telling us to be committed—to be, as we say in Australia, “fair dinkum” about living the gospel. People are fair dinkum when they are what they say they are.

I learned a little about being fair dinkum and being committed by playing rugby. I learned that when I played my hardest, when I gave my all, my enjoyment of the game was greatest.



My favorite year of rugby was the year after high school. The team of which I was a member was both talented and committed. We were the champion team that year. However, one day we were to play a lowly ranked team, and after the game we all had dates to take to the big, annual college dance. I thought that because this would be an easy game, I should try to protect myself from injury so I would be able to enjoy the dance fully. In that game, we were not as committed in the hard contacts as we might have been, and we lost. To make things worse, I ended the match with a very swollen, fat lip that did not enhance my appearance for my big date. Perhaps I needed to learn something.

A very different experience occurred in a later game in which I was totally committed. At one point I ran with real intent into a contact; immediately I felt some pain in my face. Having been taught by my father that I should never let the opposition know if I was hurt, I continued to play out the game. That night, while trying to eat, I found that I couldn't bite. The next morning, I went to the hospital, where an X-ray confirmed that my jaw was broken. My mouth was wired shut for the next six weeks.

Lessons were learned from this parable of the fat lip and the broken jaw. Despite my memories of unsatisfied cravings for solid food during the six weeks when I could ingest only liquids, I feel no regrets about my broken jaw because it resulted from my giving my all. But I do have regrets about the fat lip because it symbolized my holding back.

Giving our all doesn't mean that we will be continually enveloped in blessings or always have success. But it does mean that we will have joy. Joy is not fleeting pleasure or even temporary happiness. Joy is enduring and is founded on our efforts being accepted by the Lord.³

An example of such acceptance is the story of Oliver Granger. As President Boyd K. Packer stated: "When the Saints were driven from Kirtland, . . . Oliver was left behind to sell their properties for what little he could. There was not much chance that he could succeed. And, really, he did not succeed!"⁴ He had been commissioned by the First Presidency to do a task that was difficult, if not impossible. But the Lord commended him for his apparently unsuccessful efforts in these words:

"I remember my servant Oliver Granger; behold, verily I say unto him

that his name shall be had in sacred remembrance from generation to generation, forever and ever, saith the Lord.

"Therefore, let him contend earnestly for the redemption of the First Presidency of my Church, . . . and when he falls he shall rise again, for his sacrifice shall be more sacred unto me than his increase, saith the Lord."⁵

That may be true of all of us—it's not our successes but rather our sacrifice and efforts that matter to the Lord.

Another example of a true disciple of Jesus Christ is a dear friend of ours in Côte d'Ivoire in West Africa. This wonderful, faithful sister suffered terrible emotional, and even some physical, abuse from her husband over a sustained period of time, and eventually they divorced. She never wavered in her faith and goodness, but because of his cruelty to her, she was deeply hurt for a long time. In her own words, she describes what happened:

"Though I said I forgave him, I always slept with a wound; I spent my days with that wound. It was like a burn in my heart. Many times I prayed to the Lord to take it away from me, but it hurt so bad that I strongly believed I was going to spend the rest of my life with it. It hurt more than when I lost my mom at a young age; it hurt more than when I lost my dad and even my son. It seemed to expand and cover my heart, giving me the impression I was going to even die at any time.

"Some other times I asked myself what the Savior would have done in my situation, and I would rather say, 'This is too much, Lord.'

"Then one morning I looked for the pain that comes from all this in my heart and went deeper, looking for it in my soul. It was nowhere to be found. My mind quickly passed to review all



Terence M. Vinson, standing fourth from left, as a member of his post-high school rugby team



the reasons I [had] to feel hurt, but I did not feel the pain. I waited the whole day to see if I was going to feel the pain in my heart; I did not feel it. Then I knelt down and thanked God for making the atoning sacrifice of the Lord work for me.”⁶

This sister is now happily sealed to a wonderful, faithful man who loves her deeply.

So what should our attitude be if we are true disciples of Christ? And what is the gospel worth to us when we do “consider [our] ways,” as Haggai suggested?

I love the example of the correct attitude shown by King Lamoni’s father. You’ll remember his initial anger at finding his son being accompanied by Ammon, a Nephite—a people whom the Lamanites hated. He drew his sword to

contend with Ammon and soon found Ammon’s sword at his own throat.

“Now the king, fearing he should lose his life, said: If thou wilt spare me I will grant unto thee whatsoever thou wilt ask, even to half of the kingdom.”⁷

Note his offer—half his kingdom for his life.

But later, after understanding the gospel, he made another offer. “The king said: What shall I do that I may have this eternal life of which thou hast spoken? Yea, what shall I do that I may be born of God, having this wicked spirit rooted out of my breast, and receive his Spirit, that I may be filled with joy, that I may not be cast off at the last day? Behold, said he, I will give up all that I possess, yea, I will forsake my kingdom, that I may receive this great joy.”⁸

This time, he was prepared to give up *all* his kingdom, because the gospel was worth more than all he had! He was fair dinkum about the gospel.

So, the question for each of us is, are we also fair dinkum about the gospel? Because being half-hearted is not being fair dinkum! And God is not known for showering praise on the lukewarm.⁹

There is no treasure, nor any hobby, nor any status, nor any social media, nor any video games, nor any sport, nor any association with a celebrity, nor anything on earth that is more precious than eternal life. So the Lord’s counsel to every person is “consider your ways.”

My feelings are best expressed in the words of Nephi: “I glory in plainness; I glory in truth; I glory in my Jesus, for he hath redeemed my soul from hell.”¹⁰

Are we true followers of Him who gave His all for us? He who is our Redeemer and our Advocate with the Father? He who was Himself absolutely committed in His atoning sacrifice and is so now in His love, His mercy, and His desire for us to have eternal joy? I plead with all who hear and read these words: Please, please don’t put your total commitment off until you get around to it at some non-existent, future time. Get fair dinkum now and feel the joy! In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Haggai 1:4–7.
2. See John 15:11; Romans 14:17; 2 Corinthians 8:2; Hebrews 12:2; Moses 5:10, 7:53.
3. See Enos 1:3–6, 27; Doctrine and Covenants 52:15; 97:8–9.
4. Boyd K. Packer, “The Least of These,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2004, 86.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 117:12–13.
6. Personal correspondence.
7. Alma 20:23.
8. Alma 22:15.
9. See Revelation 3:15–16.
10. 2 Nephi 33:6.



BY STEPHEN W. OWEN
Young Men General President

Be Faithful, Not Faithless

We must deliberately take time each day to disconnect from the world and connect with heaven.

Not long ago I woke up and prepared to study the scriptures. I picked up my smartphone and sat in a chair next to my bed with the intention of opening the Gospel Library app. I unlocked my phone and was just about to begin studying when I saw a half dozen notifications for text messages and emails that had come during the night. I thought, “I’ll quickly check those messages, and then I’ll get right to the scriptures.” Well, two hours later I was still reading text messages, emails, news briefs, and social media posts. When I realized what time it

was, I frantically rushed to get ready for the day. That morning I missed my scripture study, and consequently I didn’t get the spiritual nourishment I was hoping for.

Spiritual Nourishment

I’m sure many of you can relate. Modern technologies bless us in many ways. They can connect us with friends and family, with information, and with news about current events around the world. However, they can also distract us from the most important connection: our connection with heaven.



I repeat what our prophet, President Russell M. Nelson, has said: “We live in a world that is complex and increasingly contentious. The constant availability of social media and a 24-hour news cycle bombard us with relentless messages. 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.”

President Nelson went on to warn that “in coming days, it will not be possible to survive spiritually without the guiding, directing, comforting, and constant influence of the Holy Ghost.”¹

Years ago, President Boyd K. Packer told of a herd of deer that, because of heavy snowfall, was trapped outside its natural habitat and faced possible starvation. Some well-meaning people, in an effort to save the deer, dumped truckloads of hay around the area—it wasn’t what deer would normally eat, but they hoped it would at least get the deer through the winter. Sadly, most of the deer were later found dead. They had eaten the hay, but it did not nourish them, and they starved to death with their stomachs full.²

Many of the messages that bombard us in the information age are the spiritual equivalent of feeding hay to deer—we can eat it all day long, but it will not nourish us.

Where do we find true spiritual nourishment? Most often, it is not trending on social media. We find it when we “press [our] way forward” on the covenant path, “continually holding fast to the rod of iron,” and partake of the fruit of the tree of life.³ This means that we must deliberately take time each day to disconnect from the world and connect with heaven.

In his dream, Lehi saw people who partook of the fruit but then abandoned



it because of the influence of the great and spacious building, the pride of the world.⁴ It is possible for young people to be raised in a Latter-day Saint home, attend all the right Church meetings and classes, even participate in ordinances in the temple, and then walk away “into forbidden paths and [become] lost.”⁵ Why does this happen? In many cases it is because, while they may have been going through the motions of spirituality, they were not truly converted. They were fed but not nourished.

In contrast, I have met many of you young Latter-day Saints who are

bright, strong, and faithful. You know that you are sons and daughters of God and that He has a work for you to do. You love God with all your “heart, might, mind and strength.”⁶ You keep your covenants and serve others, beginning at home. You exercise faith, repent, and improve each day, and this brings you enduring joy. You are preparing for temple blessings and other opportunities you will have as true followers of the Savior. And you are helping prepare the world for the Second Coming, inviting all to come unto Christ and receive the blessings

of His Atonement. You are connected with heaven.

Yes, you face challenges. But so does every generation. These are our days, and we need to be faithful, not faithless. I testify that the Lord knows about our challenges, and through the leadership of President Nelson, He is preparing us to meet them. I believe that the prophet’s recent call for a home-centered church, supported by what we do in our buildings,⁷ is designed to help us survive—even thrive—in this day of spiritual malnutrition.

Home Centered

What does it mean to be a home-centered church? Homes can look very different across the world. You may belong to a family that has been in the Church for many generations. Or you may be the only member of the Church in your family. You may be married or single, with or without children at home.

Regardless of your circumstances, you can make your home the center of gospel learning and living. It simply means taking personal responsibility for your conversion and spiritual growth. It means following President Nelson’s counsel “to [remodel your] home into a sanctuary of faith.”⁸

The adversary will try to persuade you that spiritual nourishment isn’t necessary or, more cunningly, that it can wait. He is the master of distraction and author of procrastination. He will bring things to your attention that seem urgent but in reality aren’t that important. He would have you become so “troubled about many things” that you neglect the “one thing [that] is needful.”⁹

How grateful I am for my “goodly parents,”¹⁰ who raised their family in a home of constant spiritual nourishment, loving relationships, and wholesome



recreational activities. The teachings they provided in my youth have held me in good stead. Parents, please build strong relationships with your children. They need more of your time, not less.

Church Supported

As you do, the Church is there to support you. Our experiences at church can reinforce the spiritual nourishment that happens at home. So far this year, we have seen this kind of Church support in Sunday School and Primary. We will see more of it in Aaronic Priesthood and Young Women meetings too. Starting this January, the curriculum for these meetings will be adjusted slightly. It will still focus on gospel topics, but those topics will be aligned with *Come, Follow Me—For Individuals and Families*. This is a small change, but it can make a big impact on the spiritual nourishment of the youth.

What other kinds of support does the Church provide? At church we partake of the sacrament, which helps us reestablish our commitment to the Savior each week. And at church we gather with other believers who have made the same covenants. The loving relationships we develop with fellow disciples of Jesus Christ can be a

powerful support to our home-centered discipleship.

When I was 14, my family moved to a new neighborhood. Now, this may not seem like a terrible tragedy to you, but in my mind, at that time, it was devastating. It meant being surrounded by people I didn't know. It meant that all the other young men in my ward would be attending a different school than I was. And in my 14-year-old mind, I thought, "How could my parents do this to me?" I felt as if my life had been ruined.

However, through our Young Men activities, I was able to build relationships with the other members of my quorum, and they became my friends. In addition, members of the bishopric and Aaronic Priesthood advisers began to take a special interest in my life. They attended my athletic events. They wrote me encouraging notes that I have kept to this day. They continued to keep in touch with me after I went to college and when I left for a mission. One of them was even at the airport when I came home. I will be forever grateful for these good brothers and their combination of love and high expectations. They pointed me heavenward, and life became bright, happy, and joyful.

How do we, as parents and leaders, help the youth know they are not alone as they walk the covenant path? In addition to building personal relationships, we invite them to gatherings large and small—from For the Strength of Youth conferences and youth camps to weekly quorum and class activities. Never underestimate the strength that comes from gathering with others who are also trying to be strong. Bishops and other leaders, please focus on nourishing the children and youth in your ward. They need more of your time, not less.

Whether you are a leader, a neighbor, a quorum member, or simply a fellow Saint, if you have the opportunity to touch the life of a young person, help him or her connect with heaven. Your influence might be exactly the "Church support" that young person needs.

Brothers and sisters, I testify that Jesus Christ is at the head of this Church. He is inspiring our leaders and guiding us to the spiritual nourishment we need to survive and thrive in the latter days. That spiritual nourishment will help us be faithful and not faithless. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson, "Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2018, 96.
2. See Jeffrey R. Holland, "Teaching and Learning in the Church," *Ensign*, June 2007, 96; *Liahona*, June 2007, 64.
3. 1 Nephi 8:30.
4. See 1 Nephi 8:24–28; 11:36.
5. 1 Nephi 8:28.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 4:2.
7. See Russell M. Nelson, "Opening Remarks," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 7.
8. Russell M. Nelson, "Becoming Exemplary Latter-day Saints," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 113.
9. Luke 10:41–42.
10. 1 Nephi 1:1.



BY ELDER D. TODD CHRISTOFFERSON
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

The Joy of the Saints

Joy comes from keeping Christ's commandments, from overcoming sorrow and weakness through Him, and from serving as He served.

The Book of Mormon prophet Enos, Lehi's grandson, wrote of a singular experience that happened earlier in his life. While hunting alone in the forest, Enos began pondering on the teachings of his father, Jacob. He related, "The words which I had often heard my father speak concerning eternal life, and the joy of the saints, sunk deep into my heart."¹ In the spiritual hunger of his soul, Enos knelt in prayer, a remarkable prayer that lasted through the day and into the night, a prayer that brought him crucial revelations, assurances, and promises.

There is much to be learned from Enos's experience, but today what stands out in my mind is Enos's memory of his father speaking often of "the joy of the saints."

In this conference three years ago, President Russell M. Nelson spoke of joy.² Among other things, he said:

"The joy we feel has little to do with the circumstances of our lives and everything to do with the focus of our lives.

"When the focus of our lives is on God's plan of salvation . . . and Jesus Christ and His gospel, we can feel joy regardless of what is happening—or not happening—in our lives. Joy comes

from and because of Him. . . . For Latter-day Saints, Jesus Christ is joy!"³

Saints are those who have entered into the gospel covenant through baptism and are striving to follow Christ as His disciples.⁴ Thus, "the joy of the saints" denotes the joy of becoming Christlike.

I would like to speak of the joy that comes from keeping His commandments, the joy that arises from overcoming sorrow and weakness through Him, and the joy inherent in serving as He served.

The Joy of Keeping Christ's Commandments

We live in a hedonistic age when many question the importance of the Lord's commandments or simply ignore them. Not infrequently, people who flout divine directives such as the law of chastity, the standard of honesty, and the holiness of the Sabbath seem to prosper and enjoy the good things of life, at times even more so than those who are striving to be obedient. Some begin to wonder if the effort and sacrifices are worth it. The ancient people of Israel once complained:

"It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?"

"And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered."⁵

Just wait, said the Lord, until "that day when I make up my jewels. . . . Then shall ye . . . discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not."⁶ The wicked may "have joy



in their works for a season,” but it is always temporary.⁷ The joy of the Saints is enduring.

God sees things in their true perspective, and He shares that perspective with us through His commandments, effectively guiding us around the pitfalls and potholes of mortality toward eternal joy. The Prophet Joseph Smith explained: “When His commandments teach us, it is in view of eternity; for we are looked upon by God as though we were in eternity; God dwells in eternity, and does not view things as we do.”⁸

I haven’t met anyone who found the gospel later in life who didn’t wish it could have been earlier. “Oh, the poor choices and mistakes I could have avoided,” they will say. The Lord’s commandments are our guide to better choices and happier outcomes. How we ought to rejoice and thank Him for showing us this more excellent way.

As a teenager, Sister Kalombo Rosette Kamwanya from the D.R. Congo, now serving in the Côte

d’Ivoire Abidjan West Mission, fasted and prayed for three days to find the direction God wanted her to take. In a remarkable night vision, she was shown two buildings, a chapel and what she now realizes was a temple. She began to search and soon found the chapel she had seen in her dream. The sign said, “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” Sister Kamwanya was baptized and then her mother and her six brothers. Sister Kamwanya said, “When I received the gospel, I felt like a captured bird that had been liberated. My heart was filled with joy. . . . I had the assurance that God loves me.”⁹

Keeping the Lord’s commandments enables us more fully and more easily to feel His love. The strait and narrow path of the commandments leads directly to the tree of life, and the tree and its fruit, the sweetest and “most desirable above all things,”¹⁰ are a representation of the love of God and fill the soul “with exceedingly great joy.”¹¹ Said the Savior:

“If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.

“These things have I spoken unto you, that my *joy* might remain in you, and that your *joy* might be full.”¹²

The Joy of Overcoming through Christ

Even when we are found faithfully keeping the commandments, there are trials and tragedies that could interrupt our joy. But as we strive to overcome these challenges with the Savior’s help, it preserves both the joy we feel now and the joy we anticipate. Christ reassured His disciples, “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”¹³ It is in turning to Him, obeying Him, binding ourselves to Him that trial and sorrow are turned to joy. I mention one example.

In 1989, Jack Rushton was serving as president of the Irvine California Stake in the United States. During a family vacation on the California coast, Jack was bodysurfing when a wave swept him into a submerged rock, breaking his neck and severely injuring his spinal cord. Jack said later, “The instant I hit, I knew that I was paralyzed.”¹⁴ He could no longer talk or even breathe on his own.¹⁵

Family, friends, and stake members rallied around Brother Rushton and his wife, Jo Anne, and, among other things, remodeled a section of their home to accommodate Jack’s wheelchair. Jo Anne became Jack’s principal caregiver for the next 23 years. Referring to Book of Mormon accounts of how the Lord visited His people in their afflictions and made their burdens light,¹⁶ Jo Anne said, “I am often amazed at the lightness of heart I feel in caring for my husband.”¹⁷



Sister Kalombo Rosette Kamwanya



Jack and Jo Anne Rushton

An alteration to his respiration system restored Jack's ability to speak, and within the year, Jack was called as Gospel Doctrine teacher and stake patriarch. When he would give a patriarchal blessing, another priesthood holder placed Brother Rushton's hand on the head of the person receiving the blessing and supported his hand and arm during the blessing. Jack passed away on Christmas Day 2012, after 22 years of devoted service.

Once in an interview, Jack observed: "Problems will come into all of our lives; it's part of just being here upon this earth. And some people think that religion or having faith in God will protect you from bad things. I don't think that's the point. I think the point is that if our faith is strong, that when bad things happen, which they will, we'll be able to deal with them. . . . My faith never wavered, but that didn't mean that I didn't have depressions. I think for the first time in my life, I was pushed to the limit, and literally there was nowhere to turn, and so I turned to the Lord, and to this day, I feel a spontaneity of joy."¹⁸

This is a day of sometimes merciless attacks in social media and in person against those who seek to uphold the Lord's standard in dress, entertainment, and sexual purity. It is often the youth and young adults among the Saints, as well as women and mothers, who bear this cross of mocking and persecution. It is not easy to rise above such abuse, but remember the words of Peter: "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified."¹⁹

In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were "in a state of innocence,



having no joy, for they knew no misery."²⁰ Now, as accountable beings, we find joy in overcoming misery in whatever form, whether it be sin, trial, weakness, or any other obstacle to happiness. This is the joy of sensing progress in the path of discipleship; the joy of "having received a remission of . . . sins, and having peace of conscience";²¹ the joy of feeling one's soul expand and grow through the grace of Christ.²²

The Joy of Serving as Christ Serves

The Savior finds joy in bringing to pass our immortality and eternal life.²³ In speaking of the Savior's Atonement, President Russell M. Nelson said:

"As in all things, Jesus Christ is our ultimate exemplar, 'who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross' [Hebrews 12:2]. Think of that! In order for Him to endure the most excruciating experience ever endured on earth, our Savior focused on *joy!*

"And what was the joy that was set before Him? Surely it included the joy of cleansing, healing, and strengthening us; the joy of paying for the sins of all who would repent; the joy of making it possible for you and me to return home—clean and worthy—to live with our Heavenly Parents and families."²⁴

Similarly, the joy "set before us" is the joy of assisting the Savior in His work of redemption. As the seed and children of Abraham,²⁵ we participate in blessing all the families of the earth "with the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal."²⁶

The words of Alma come to mind:

"This is my glory, that perhaps I may be an instrument in the hands of God to bring some soul to repentance; and this is my joy.

"And behold, when I see many of my brethren truly penitent, and coming



to the Lord their God, then is my soul filled with joy. . . .

“But I do not joy in my own success alone, but my joy is more full because of the success of my brethren, who have been up to the land of Nephi. . . .

“Now, when I think of the success of these my brethren my soul is carried away, even to the separation of it from the body, as it were, so great is my joy.”²⁷

The fruits of our service to one another in the Church are part of the joy “set before us.” Even in times of discouragement or stress, we can minister patiently if we are focused on the joy of pleasing God and bringing light, relief, and happiness to His children, our brothers and sisters.

When in Haiti last month for the dedication of the Port-au-Prince Temple, Elder David and Sister Susan Bednar met with a young sister whose husband had been killed a few days earlier in a tragic accident. They wept together with her. Yet on Sunday this dear woman was in her place as an usher at the dedication services, with

a soft, welcoming smile for all who entered the temple.

I believe that the ultimate “joy of the saints” comes in knowing that the Savior pleads their cause,²⁸ “and no one can conceive of the joy which [will fill] our souls [as] we [hear Jesus] pray for us unto the Father.”²⁹ With President Russell M. Nelson, I testify that joy is a gift for faithful Saints “who have endured the crosses of the world”³⁰ and who are “intentionally trying to live a righteous life, as taught by Jesus Christ.”³¹ May your joy be full, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Enos 1:3.
2. See Russell M. Nelson, “Joy and Spiritual Survival,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 81–84.
3. Russell M. Nelson, “Joy and Spiritual Survival,” 82.
4. See Bible Dictionary, “Saint.”
5. Malachi 3:14–15.
6. Malachi 3:17–18.
7. The Savior declared that if a church (or a life) “be 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 they have joy in their works for a season, and by and by

the end cometh, and they are hewn down and cast into the fire, from whence there is no return” (3 Nephi 27:11).

8. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 475.
9. Personal correspondence.
10. 1 Nephi 11:22; see also 1 Nephi 8:11.
11. 1 Nephi 8:12.
12. John 15:10–11; emphasis added.
13. John 16:33.
14. Jack Rushton, in “Faith in Adversity: Jack Rushton and the Power of Faith,” SmallandSimpleTV, Sept. 2, 2009, YouTube.com.
15. See Allison M. Hawes, “It’s Good to Be Alive,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1994, 42.
16. See Mosiah 24:14.
17. Jo Anne Rushton, in Hawes, “It’s Good to Be Alive,” 43.
18. Jack Rushton, in “Faith in Adversity: Jack Rushton and the Power of Faith.”
19. 1 Peter 4:14. Remember also the promises cited in 2 Nephi 9:18 and 3 Nephi 12:12.
20. 2 Nephi 2:23; see also Moses 5:10–11.
21. Mosiah 4:3.
22. We remember the words of James that inspired Joseph Smith to “ask of God” (James 1:5). Less familiar are the preceding verses:
 - “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into many afflictions;
 - “Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.
 - “But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing” (Joseph Smith Translation, James 1:2 [in James 1:2, footnote a]; James 1:3–4).
23. See Moses 1:39.
24. Russell M. Nelson, “Joy and Spiritual Survival,” 82–83; emphasis in original.
25. “And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:29; see also Genesis 22:18; 26:4; 28:14; Acts 3:25; 1 Nephi 15:18; 22:9; Doctrine and Covenants 124:58).
26. Abraham 2:11.
27. Alma 29:9–10, 14, 16. Likewise, the Lord says to us, “If your joy will be great with one soul that you [bring] unto me into the kingdom of my Father, how great will be your joy if you should bring many souls unto me!” (Doctrine and Covenants 18:16). The Three Nephites were promised a fulness of joy because they desired to bring souls unto Christ “while the world shall stand” (3 Nephi 28:9; see also 3 Nephi 28:10).
28. See Doctrine and Covenants 45:3–5.
29. 3 Nephi 17:17.
30. 2 Nephi 9:18.
31. Russell M. Nelson, “Joy and Spiritual Survival,” 84.



BY MICHELLE CRAIG
First Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency

Spiritual Capacity

As Jesus Christ's faithful disciple, you can receive personal inspiration and revelation, consistent with His commandments, that is tailored to you.

As I was leaving a Young Women camp this summer, a sweet young woman handed me a note. In it, she asked, "How can I tell when God is trying to tell me something?" I *love* her question. Our souls long for a connection with our heavenly home. We want to feel needed and useful. But at times we struggle to distinguish between our own thoughts and the gentle impressions of the Spirit. Prophets, ancient and modern, have taught that if something "invites and entices to do good, it comes from Christ."¹

President Russell M. Nelson has extended a simple, powerful invitation: "My beloved brothers and sisters, I *plead* with you to increase your *spiritual capacity* to receive revelation. . . . Choose to do the spiritual work required to enjoy the gift of the Holy Ghost and hear the voice of the Spirit more frequently and more clearly."²

My desire this morning is to speak to you from my heart about four ways to increase your spiritual capacity to receive revelation.

1. Be Intentional about Creating Time and Space to Hear God's Voice

As you use your agency to carve out time every day to draw close to God's voice, especially in the Book of Mormon, over time His voice will become clearer and more familiar to you.

In contrast, the *distractions* and *noise* that fill the world and our homes and our lives can make it more difficult to hear His voice. These distractions can so occupy our minds and hearts that we leave no room for the gentle promptings of the Holy Ghost.

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that most often God reveals Himself "to individuals in private, in their chamber; in the wilderness or fields, and that generally without noise or tumult."³

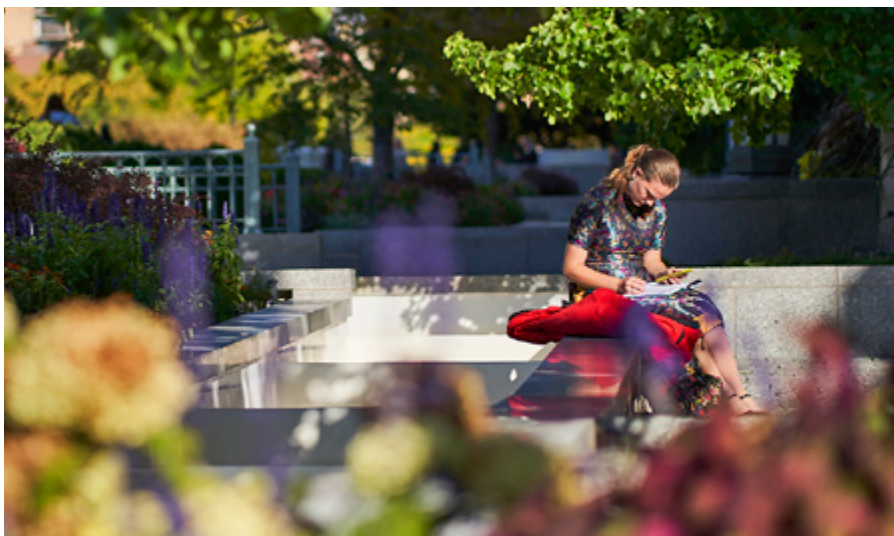
Satan wants to separate us from God's voice by keeping us out of those quiet places. If God speaks in a still, small voice, you and I need to draw close to hear Him. Just imagine what would happen if we were as intent on staying connected with heaven as we are on staying connected to Wi-Fi! Pick a time and place, and listen for God's voice every day. And keep this sacred appointment with exactness, for so very much depends on it!

2. Act without Delay

When you receive promptings and then act with intention, the Lord can use you. The more you act, the more familiar the voice of the Spirit becomes. You will increasingly recognize God's guidance and that He is "willing . . . to reveal His mind and will."⁴ If you delay, you might forget the prompting or miss the chance to help someone for God.

3. Get Your Errand from the Lord

The prayer Heavenly Father seems eager to answer is our plea to be led to someone who needs our help. President



Henry B. Eyring has taught us to seek revelation by asking God who we can help for Him. “If you ask questions like that, the Holy Ghost will come and you’ll feel nudges about things you can do for other people. When you go and do those things, you’re on the Lord’s errand, and when you’re on the Lord’s errand, you qualify for the gift of the Holy Ghost.”⁵

You can pray and ask the Lord for an errand. As you do, He can use your ordinary skills to accomplish His extraordinary work.

My grandfather, Fritz Hjalmar Lundgren, emigrated from Sweden when he was 19 years old. He arrived in America alone, with a suitcase and six years of formal schooling. Unable to speak any English, he made his way to Oregon and worked there as a lumberjack and then later, with my grandmother and my mother, joined

the Church. He never presided over a ward, but as a faithful home teacher, he brought more than 50 different families into Church activity. How did he do that?

After Grandpa’s death, I was going through a box of his papers and came across a letter written by a man who had come back to church because of Grandpa’s love. The letter read, “Brother Fritz’s secret, I believe, is that he is always on an errand for Heavenly Father.”

That letter was from Brother Wayne Simonis. Grandpa visited him and got to know each member of the family. In time, Grandpa told them that they were needed and invited them to attend church. But that Sunday, Brother Simonis awoke with a dilemma—he had not finished reroofing his house, and rain was expected that week. He decided that he’d go to church, shake hands with Grandpa, and then leave

and go home to finish the roof. His family could attend sacrament meeting without him.

His plan was working just fine until, on the roof, he heard someone climbing the ladder. In his words: “When I looked up, . . . standing at the top of the ladder was Brother Fritz. He just gave me that big smile. At first, I was embarrassed and felt like a little kid getting caught for skipping school. Then . . . I felt anger. [But Brother Fritz just] took off his suit coat and hung it on the ladder. As he rolled up the sleeves of his white shirt, he turned to me and said, ‘Brother Simonis, do you have another hammer? This work must be very important or you wouldn’t have left your family, and if it’s that important, I want to help you.’ As I looked into his eyes, I saw only kindness and Christlike love. My anger left. . . . I laid my tools down that Sunday and followed my good friend down the ladder and back to the chapel.”

Grandpa had obtained his errand from the Lord, and he knew he was to seek out lost sheep. Just as when the four men who carried their friend with palsy onto a roof and then let him down to be healed by Jesus Christ,⁶ so too did Grandpa’s errand take him to a rooftop. The Lord sends revelation to those seeking to help others.

4. Believe and Trust

Recently, I read in the scriptures about another great missionary who obtained his errand from the Lord. Aaron was teaching the king of the Lamanites, who wondered why Aaron’s brother Ammon had not also come to teach him. “And Aaron said unto the king: Behold, the Spirit of the Lord has called him *another way*.”⁷

The Spirit spoke to my heart: each of us has a different mission to perform,



and at times the Spirit may call us in “another way.” There are many ways to build the kingdom of God as covenant-making, covenant-keeping disciples of Jesus Christ. As His faithful disciple, you can receive personal inspiration and revelation, consistent with His commandments, that is tailored to you. You have unique missions and roles to perform in life and will be given unique guidance to fulfill them.

Nephi, the brother of Jared, and even Moses all had a large body of water to cross—and each did it differently. Nephi worked “timbers of curious workmanship.”⁸ The brother of Jared built barges that were “tight like unto a dish.”⁹ And Moses “walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea.”¹⁰

They each received personalized direction, tailored to them, and each trusted and acted. The Lord is mindful of those who obey and, in the words of Nephi, will “prepare a way for [us to] accomplish the thing which he commandeth.”¹¹ Note that Nephi says, “a way”—not “the way.”

Do we miss or dismiss personal errands from the Lord because He has prepared “a way” different from the one we expect?

My grandpa was led to an unusual place—in a suit, on a rooftop, on a Sunday. Trust God to lead you, even if that way looks different than you expected or is different from others.

Latter-day Saints come in many shapes and sizes, but “all are alike unto God”—“black and white, bond and free, male and female,” single and married, rich and poor, young and old, lifelong member and recent convert.¹² No matter who you are or what you’re dealing with, you are invited to the Lord’s table.¹³

As seeking and doing the will of the Father becomes the cadence of your



daily life, you will, of course, be led to change and repent.

The Church’s new program for children and youth is built on the foundation of learning to seek revelation, discovering what the Lord would have us do, and then acting on that direction. Each one of us, regardless of age or circumstance, can strive to *seek, receive, and act*. As you follow this eternal pattern ordained for our day, you will draw nearer to Jesus Christ—His love, His light, His direction, His peace, and His healing and enabling power. And you will increase your spiritual capacity to become an everyday instrument of His hands in accomplishing His great work. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. David A. Bednar, in *Face to Face with Elder and Sister Bednar* (worldwide youth broadcast, May 12, 2015), facetoface.ChurchofJesusChrist.org; see also Moroni 7:16.
2. Russell M. Nelson, “Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2018, 96; emphasis added.
3. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 121.
4. Russell M. Nelson, “Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives,” 94.
5. Henry B. Eyring, in “President Eyring 1990s,” *Deseret News*, Apr. 2, 2009, deseretnews.com.
6. See Mark 2:1–12.
7. Alma 22:4; emphasis added.
8. 1 Nephi 18:1.
9. See Ether 6:5–8.
10. Exodus 14:29.
11. 1 Nephi 3:7.
12. 2 Nephi 26:33.
13. See Quentin L. Cook, “The Eternal Everyday,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2017, 51.



BY ELDER DALE G. RENLUND
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Unwavering Commitment to Jesus Christ

God invites us to cast our old ways completely out of reach and begin a new life in Christ.

Last April, I had the privilege of dedicating the Kinshasa Democratic Republic of the Congo Temple.¹ Words cannot express the joy the faithful Congolese and I felt to see a temple dedicated in their land.

Individuals who enter the Kinshasa Temple see an original painting entitled *Congo Falls*.² It uniquely reminds temple-goers of the unwavering commitment required to anchor themselves to Jesus Christ and to follow the covenant path of our Heavenly Father’s plan. The waterfalls depicted in the painting call to mind a practice that was common more than a century ago among early converts to Christianity in Congo.



Kinshasa Democratic Republic of the Congo Temple

Before their conversion, they worshipped inanimate objects, believing that the items possessed supernatural powers.³ After conversion, many made a pilgrimage to one of the countless waterfalls along the Congo River, such as the Nzongo Falls.⁴ These converts threw their previously idolized objects into the waterfalls as a symbol to God and others that they had discarded their old traditions and accepted Jesus Christ. They intentionally did not throw their objects into calm, shallow waters; they



Congo Falls, by David Meikle

threw them into the churning waters of a massive waterfall, where the items became unrecoverable. These actions were a token of a new but unwavering commitment to Jesus Christ.

People in other places and ages demonstrated their commitment to Jesus Christ in similar ways.⁵ The Book of Mormon people known as the Anti-Nephi-Lehies “laid down the weapons of their rebellion,” burying them “deep in the earth” as “a testimony to God . . . that they never would use [their] weapons again.”⁶ In doing so, they promised to follow God’s teachings and never go back on their commitment. This action was the beginning of being “converted unto the Lord” and never falling away.⁷

Being “converted unto the Lord” means leaving one course of action, directed by an old belief system, and adopting a new one based on faith in Heavenly Father’s plan and in Jesus Christ and His Atonement. This change is more than an intellectual acceptance of gospel teachings. It shapes our identity, transforms our understanding of life’s meaning, and leads to unchanging fidelity to God. Personal desires that are contrary to being anchored to the Savior and to following the covenant path fade away and are replaced by a determination to submit to the will of Heavenly Father.

Being converted unto the Lord starts with an unwavering commitment to God, followed by making that commitment part of who we are. Internalizing such a commitment is a lifelong process that requires patience and ongoing repentance. Eventually, this commitment becomes part of who we are, embedded in our sense of self, and ever present in our lives. Just as we never forget our own name no matter what else we are thinking about, we never forget a commitment that is etched in our hearts.⁸



God invites us to cast our old ways completely out of reach and begin a new life in Christ. This happens as we develop faith in the Savior, which begins by hearing the testimony of those who have faith.⁹ Thereafter, faith deepens as we act in ways that anchor us more firmly to Him.¹⁰

Now, it would be nice if increased faith were transmitted like the flu or the common cold. Then a simple “spiritual sneeze” would build faith in others. But it does not work that way. The only way faith grows is for an individual to act in faith. These actions are often prompted by invitations extended by others, but we cannot “grow” someone else’s faith or rely solely on others to bolster our own. For our faith to grow, we must choose faith-building actions, such as praying, studying the scriptures, partaking of the sacrament, keeping the commandments, and serving others.

As our faith in Jesus Christ grows, God invites us to make promises with Him. These covenants, as such promises are known, are manifestations of our conversion. Covenants also create a sure foundation for spiritual progression. As we choose to be baptized, we begin to take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ¹¹ and choose to identify ourselves with Him. We pledge to become like Him and to develop His attributes.

Covenants anchor us to the Savior and propel us along the path that leads to our heavenly home. The power of covenants helps us maintain the mighty change of heart, deepen our conversion to the Lord, and receive Christ’s image more fully in our countenance.¹² But a half-hearted commitment to our covenants will not guarantee us anything.¹³ We may be tempted to equivocate, throw our old ways in calm water, or bury our

weapons of rebellion with the handles sticking out. But an ambivalent commitment to our covenants will not open the door to the sanctifying power of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

Our commitment to keep our covenants should not be conditional or vary with changing circumstances in our lives. Our constancy to God should be like the dependable Congo River that flows near the Kinshasa Temple. This river, unlike most rivers in the world, has constant flow all year¹⁴ and pours nearly 11 million gallons (41.5 million L) of water per second into the Atlantic Ocean.

The Savior invited His disciples to be this dependable and steadfast. He said, “Wherefore, settle this in your hearts, that ye will do the things which I shall teach, and command you.”¹⁵ A “settled” determination to keep our covenants allows for the full realization of God’s promise of enduring joy.¹⁶

Many faithful Latter-day Saints have demonstrated that they are “settled” in keeping their covenants with God and are forever changed. Let me tell you about three such individuals—Brother Banza Mucioko, Sister Banza Régine, and Brother Mbuyi Nkitabungi.

In 1977 the Banzas lived in Kinshasa in the country of Zaire, now known as the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They were highly respected in their Protestant church community. Because of their talents, their church arranged for their young family to go to Switzerland to study and provided a university scholarship.

While in Geneva, on the bus route to school, Brother Banza frequently saw a small meetinghouse with the name “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” He wondered, “Does Jesus Christ have Saints now, in the latter days?” He eventually decided to go and see.

Brother and Sister Banza were greeted warmly at the branch. They asked some of the persistent questions they had about the nature of God, such as, “If God is a spirit, like the wind, how could we be created in His likeness? How could He sit on a throne?” They had never received a satisfactory answer until the missionaries explained restored doctrine in a brief lesson. When the missionaries



left, the Banzas looked at each other and said, “Isn’t this the truth that we have heard?” They continued coming to church and meeting with the missionaries. They knew that baptism in the restored Church of Jesus Christ would have consequences. They would be stripped of their scholarships, their visas would be revoked, and they and their two young children would be required to leave Switzerland. They chose to be baptized and confirmed in October 1979.

Two weeks after their baptism, Brother and Sister Banza returned to Kinshasa as the first and second members of the Church in their country. The members of the Geneva Branch stayed in contact with them and helped them connect with Church leaders. The Banzas were encouraged to faithfully await the promised time when God would establish His Church in Zaire.

Meanwhile, another exchange student from Zaire, Brother Mbuyi, was studying in Belgium. He was baptized in 1980 in the Brussels Ward. Soon thereafter, he served a full-time mission to England. And God worked His miracles. Brother Mbuyi returned to Zaire as the third member of the Church in his country. With parental permission, Church meetings were held in his family home. In February 1986 a petition was made for official government recognition of the Church. The signatures of three citizens of Zaire were required. The three happy signatories of the petition were Brother Banza, Sister Banza, and Brother Mbuyi.

These stalwart members knew the truth when they heard it; they made a covenant at baptism that anchored them to the Savior. They metaphorically threw their old ways into a churning waterfall with no intention of retrieving them. The covenant path was never easy. Political turmoil, infrequent contact with Church leaders, and challenges inherent in building a community of Saints might have deterred less-committed individuals. But Brother and Sister Banza and Brother Mbuyi persevered in their faith. They were present at the dedication of the Kinshasa Temple, 33 years after they signed the petition that led to the official recognition of the Church in Zaire.



Banza Mucioko, Banza Régine, and their sons



Mbuyi Nkitabungi as a full-time missionary

The Banzas are here in the Conference Center today. They are accompanied by their two sons, Junior and Phil, and daughters-in-law, Annie and Youyou. In 1986, Junior and Phil were the first two individuals baptized into the Church in Zaire. Brother Mbuyi is watching these proceedings from Kinshasa with his wife, Maguy, and their five children.

These pioneers understand the meaning and consequences of covenants through which they have been brought “to the knowledge of the Lord their God, and to rejoice in Jesus Christ their Redeemer.”¹⁷

How do we anchor ourselves to the Savior and remain faithful like these and many tens of thousands of Congolese Saints who followed them and millions of others throughout the world? The Savior taught us how. Each week we partake of the sacrament and make a covenant with our Heavenly Father. We promise to link our identity with the Savior’s by pledging our willingness to take upon us His name, to always remember Him, and to keep His commandments.¹⁸ Conscientiously preparing for and worthily making these covenants each week anchors us to the Savior, helps us internalize our commitment,¹⁹ and powerfully propels us along the covenant path.

I invite you to commit to a life-long process of discipleship. Make

and keep covenants. Throw your old ways into deep, churning waterfalls. Completely bury your weapons of rebellion with no handles sticking out. Because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, making covenants with a real intent to reliably honor them will bless your life forever. You will become more like the Savior as you always remember Him, follow Him, and adore Him. I testify that He is the firm foundation. He is dependable, and His promises are sure. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. The dedication took place on Palm Sunday, April 14, 2019, as assigned by President Russell M. Nelson.
2. The artist, David Meikle, painted *Congo Falls* working from photos of Kiubu Falls. The Kiubu Falls are located approximately 249 miles (400 km) north of Lubumbashi in the southeastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
3. These objects were known as *inkisi* in Kikongo and as *fétiches* in French. The word translates into English as “amulets,” “talismans,” or “fetishes.”
4. David Meikle also painted *Nzongo Falls* working from photos of the falls. The Nzongo Falls are located approximately 81 miles (130 km) from Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo. The river at these falls became known as *Nzadi Inkisi*, or “River of Fetishes.” The name reflects the practice described in the text.
5. In AD 1000, the heads of the Icelandic clans met together for their annual, two-week *Allting*, an informal assembly that made laws that would be binding on all. A man named Thorgeir was asked to make the

decision for everyone about conversion to Christianity or continuing to worship Norse gods. After three days of seclusion in his tent, Thorgeir announced his decision: the clans would become Christian. As Thorgeir was returning to his village, he took his cherished Norse-god idols and cast them into a waterfall, now known as *Godafoss*, or “Waterfall of the Gods.” This action signified Thorgeir’s complete conversion to Christianity.

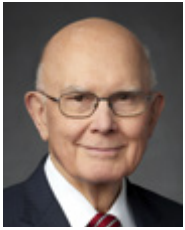
6. Alma 23:13; 24:17–18.
7. See Alma 23:6; David A. Bednar, “Converted unto the Lord,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2012, 106–9.
8. See Ezekiel 11:19–20; 2 Corinthians 3:3.
9. See Romans 10:14, 17.
10. See *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service*, rev. ed. (2018), 203.
11. See Dallin H. Oaks, “Taking upon Us the Name of Jesus Christ,” *Ensign*, May 1985, 80–83.
12. See Alma 5:12–14.
13. See Doctrine and Covenants 82:10.
14. The Congo River is the deepest, second-most powerful, and ninth-longest river in the world. Because it crosses the equator twice, at least one section of the river is always in a rainy season, resulting in regular water flow. The flow is relatively consistent all year long, averaging 41,000 cubic meters of water per second, even though the flow rate may vary over the years (range of 23,000–75,000 cubic meters per second).
15. Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 14:28 (in Luke 14:27, footnote b).
16. See 2 Nephi 9:18; Russell M. Nelson, “Joy and Spiritual Survival,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 81–84. President Nelson said, “Joy is a gift for the faithful” (page 84).
17. Alma 37:9.
18. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:77. In the mission leadership seminar in June 2019, after partaking of the sacrament, before beginning his formal message, President Russell M. Nelson said: “A thought has occurred to me that my making a covenant today is a lot more important than the message that I have prepared. I made a covenant as I partook of the sacrament that I would be willing to take upon me the name of Jesus Christ and that I am willing to obey His commandments. Often, I hear the expression that we partake of the sacrament to renew covenants made at baptism. While that’s true, it’s much more than that. I’ve made a new covenant. You have made new covenants. . . . Now in return for which He makes the statement that we will always have His Spirit to be with us. What a blessing!”
19. See 3 Nephi 18:12.



Banza Régine and Banza Mucioko



Mbuyi Nkitabungi and Mbuyi Maguy



BY PRESIDENT DALLIN H. OAKS
First Counselor in the First Presidency

Trust in the Lord

Our only sure reliance is to trust in the Lord and His love for His children.

My dear brothers and sisters, a letter I received some time ago introduces the subject of my talk. The writer was contemplating a temple marriage to a man whose eternal companion had died. She would be a second wife. She asked this question: would she be able to have her own house in the next life, or would she have to live with her husband and his first wife? I just told her to trust the Lord.

I continue with an experience I heard from a valued associate, which I share with his permission. After the death of his beloved wife and the mother of his children, a father remarried. Some grown children strongly objected to the remarriage and sought the counsel of a close relative who was a respected Church leader. After hearing the reasons for their objections, which focused on conditions and relationships in the spirit world or in the kingdoms of glory that follow the Final Judgment, this leader said: “You are worried about the wrong things. You should be worried about whether *you* will get to those places. Concentrate on that. If you get there, all of it will be more wonderful than you can imagine.”

What a comforting teaching! Trust in the Lord!

From letters I have received, I know that others are troubled by

questions about the spirit world we will inhabit after we die and before we are resurrected. Some assume that the spirit world will continue many of the temporal circumstances and issues we experience in this mortal life. What do we really know about conditions in the spirit world? I believe a BYU religion professor’s article on this subject had it right: “When we ask ourselves what we know about the spirit world from the standard works, the answer is ‘not as much as we often think.’”¹

Of course, we know from the scriptures that after our bodies die we continue to live as spirits in the spirit world. The scriptures also teach that this spirit world is divided between those who have been “righteous” or “just” during life and those who have been wicked. They also describe how some faithful spirits teach the gospel to those who have been wicked or rebellious (see 1 Peter 3:19; Doctrine and Covenants 138:19–20, 29, 32, 37). Most important, modern revelation reveals that the work of salvation goes forward in the spirit world (see Doctrine and Covenants 138:30–34, 58), and although we are urged not to procrastinate our repentance during mortality (see Alma 13:27), we are taught that some repentance is possible there (see Doctrine and Covenants 138:58).

The work of salvation in the spirit world consists of freeing spirits from what the scriptures frequently describe as “bondage.” All in the spirit world are under some form of bondage. President

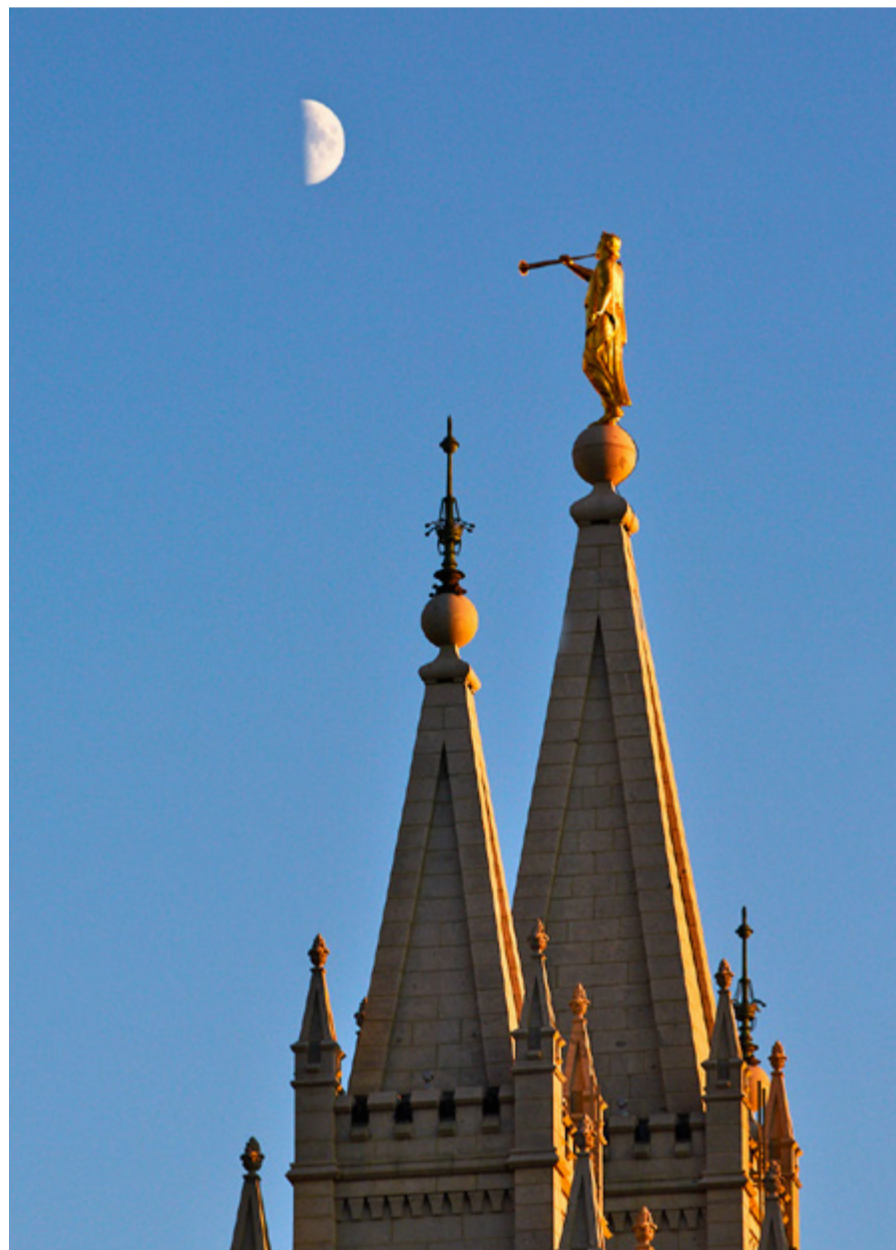


Joseph F. Smith's great revelation, canonized in section 138 of the Doctrine and Covenants, states that the righteous dead, who were in a state of "peace" (Doctrine and Covenants 138:22) as they anticipated the Resurrection (see Doctrine and Covenants 138:16), "had looked upon the long absence of their spirits from their bodies as a bondage" (Doctrine and Covenants 138:50).

The wicked also suffer an additional bondage. Because of unrepented sins, they are in what the Apostle Peter referred to as spirit "prison" (1 Peter 3:19; see also Doctrine and Covenants 138:42). These spirits are described as "bound" or as "captives" (Doctrine and Covenants 138:31, 42) or as "cast out into outer darkness" with "weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth" as they await resurrection and judgment (Alma 40:13–14).

Resurrection for all in the spirit world is assured by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ (see 1 Corinthians 15:22), though it occurs at different times for different groups. Until that appointed time, what the scriptures tell us about activity in the spirit world principally concerns the work of salvation. Little else is revealed. The gospel is preached to the ignorant, the unrepentant, and the rebellious so they can be freed from their bondage and go forward to the blessings a loving Heavenly Father has in store for them.

The spirit-world bondage that applies to righteous converted souls is their need to await—and perhaps even be allowed to prompt—the performance of their proxy ordinances on earth so they can be baptized and enjoy the blessings of the Holy Ghost (see Doctrine and Covenants 138:30–37, 57–58).² These mortal proxy ordinances also empower them to go forward under priesthood authority to enlarge the



hosts of the righteous who can preach the gospel to the spirits in prison.

Beyond these basics, our canon of scripture contains very little about the spirit world that follows death and precedes the Final Judgment.³ So what else do we know about the spirit world? Many members of the Church have had visions or other inspirations to inform them about how things operate or are organized in the spirit world, but these personal spiritual experiences are not to be understood or taught as the official doctrine of the Church. And, of course, there is abundant speculation

by members and others in published sources like books on near-death experiences.⁴

As to all of these, the wise cautions of Elders D. Todd Christofferson and Neil L. Andersen in earlier general conference messages are important to remember. Elder Christofferson taught: "It should be remembered that not every statement made by a Church leader, past or present, necessarily constitutes doctrine. It is commonly understood in the Church that a statement made by one leader on a single occasion often represents a personal,



though well-considered, opinion, not meant to be official or binding for the whole Church.”⁵

In the following conference, Elder Andersen taught this principle: “The doctrine is taught by all 15 members of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve. It is not hidden in an obscure paragraph of one talk.”⁶ The family proclamation, signed by all 15 prophets, seers, and revelators, is a wonderful illustration of that principle.

Beyond something as formal as the family proclamation, the prophetic teachings of the Presidents of the Church, affirmed by other prophets and apostles, are also an example of this. As to circumstances in the spirit world, the Prophet Joseph Smith gave two teachings near the close of his ministry that have been frequently taught by his successors. One of these is his teaching in the King Follett sermon that family members who were

righteous will be together in the world of spirits.⁷ Another is this statement at a funeral in the last year of his life: “The spirits of the just are exalted to a greater and more glorious work . . . [in] the world of spirits. . . . They are not far from us, and know and understand our thoughts, feelings, and motions, and are often pained therewith.”⁸

So, what about a question like I mentioned earlier about where spirits live? If that question seems strange or trivial to you, consider many of your own questions, or even those you have been tempted to answer on the basis of something you heard from another person sometime in the past. For all questions about the spirit world, I suggest two answers. *First*, remember that God loves His children and will surely do what is best for each of us. *Second*, remember this familiar Bible teaching, which has been most helpful to me on a multitude of unanswered questions:

“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

“In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths” (Proverbs 3:5–6).

Similarly, Nephi concluded his great psalm with these words: “O Lord, I have trusted in thee, and I will trust in thee forever. I will not put my trust in the arm of flesh” (2 Nephi 4:34).

We can all wonder privately about circumstances in the spirit world or even discuss these or other unanswered questions in family or other intimate settings. But let us not teach or use as official doctrine what does not meet the standards of official doctrine. To do so does not further the work of the Lord and may even discourage individuals from seeking their own comfort or edification through the personal revelation the Lord’s plan provides for each of us. Excessive reliance on personal teachings or speculations may even draw us aside from concentrating on learning and efforts that *will* further our understanding and help us go forward on the covenant path.

Trust in the Lord is a familiar and true teaching in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. That was Joseph Smith’s teaching when the early Saints experienced severe persecutions and seemingly insurmountable obstacles.⁹ That is still the best principle we can use when our efforts to learn or our attempts to find comfort encounter obstacles in matters not yet revealed or not adopted as the official doctrine of the Church.

That same principle applies to unanswered questions about sealings in the next life or desired readjustments because of events or transgressions in mortality. There is so much we do not know that our only sure reliance is to

trust in the Lord and His love for His children.

In conclusion, what we do know about the spirit world is that the Father's and the Son's work of salvation continues there. Our Savior initiated the work of declaring liberty to the captives (see 1 Peter 3:18–19; 4:6; Doctrine and Covenants 138:6–11, 18–21, 28–37), and that work continues as worthy and qualified messengers continue to preach the gospel, including repentance, to those who still need its cleansing effect (see Doctrine and Covenants 138:57). The object of all of that is described in the official doctrine of the Church, given in modern revelation.

“The dead who repent will be redeemed, through obedience to the ordinances of the house of God,

“And after they have paid the penalty of their transgressions, and are washed clean, shall receive a reward according to their works, for they

are heirs of salvation” (Doctrine and Covenants 138:58–59).

The duty of each of us is to teach the doctrine of the restored gospel, keep the commandments, love and help one another, and do the work of salvation in the holy temples.

I testify of the truth of what I have said here and of the truths taught and to be taught in this conference. This is all made possible because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. As we know from modern revelation, He “glorifies the Father, and *saves all the works of his hands*” (Doctrine and Covenants 76:43; emphasis added). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. “What’s on the Other Side? A Conversation with Brent L. Top on the Spirit World” (interview by R. Devan Jensen), *Religious Educator*, vol. 14, no. 2 (2013), 48.
2. See *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 309–10; Joseph Smith, “Journal, December 1842–June 1844;

Book 2,” p. 246, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org.

3. A revelation to Joseph Smith often quoted about the spirit world states, “That same sociality which exists among us here will exist among us there” (Doctrine and Covenants 130:2). This may describe a kingdom of glory rather than the spirit world, since it continues, “Only it will be coupled with eternal glory, which glory we do not now enjoy” (verse 2).
4. For example, George G. Ritchie, *Return from Tomorrow* (1978) and Raymond Moody, *Life after Life* (1975).
5. D. Todd Christofferson, “The Doctrine of Christ,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2012, 88; see also Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 42. See, for example, the description in Doctrine and Covenants 74:5 of a personal teaching by the Apostle Paul.
6. Neil L. Andersen, “Trial of Your Faith,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2012, 41.
7. See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 175.
8. *History of the Church*, 6:52; included in *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 326; often quoted, as in Henry B. Eyring, *To Draw Closer to God* (1997), 122; see also *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (1997), chapter 38, “The Spirit World.”
9. See *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 231–33.





PRESENTED BY PRESIDENT HENRY B. EYRING
Second Counselor in the First Presidency

Sustaining of General Authorities, Area Seventies, and General Officers of the Church

Brothers and sisters, 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 release

with appreciation for their devoted service Elders Wilford W. Andersen, Kim B. Clark, Lawrence E. Corbridge, Claudio R. M. Costa, Bradley D. Foster, O. Vincent Haleck, Donald L. Hallstrom, Steven E. Snow, and Larry Y. Wilson as General Authority Seventies and grant them emeritus status.

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

It is proposed that we release the following as Area Seventies: Julio C. Acosta, Blake R. Alder, Alain L. Allard, Omar A. Alvarez, Taiichi Aoba, Carlos F. Arredondo, Aley K. Auna Jr., Grant C. Bennett, Michael H. Bourne,





BY ELDER DAVID A. BEDNAR
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Rómulo V. Cabrera, Wilson B. Calderón, Hernando Camargo, José C. F. Campos, Nicolás Castañeda, Walter Chatora, Zeno Chow, Robert J. Dudfield, J. Kevin Ence, Meliula M. Fata, K. Mark Frost, Claude R. Gamiette, Maurício G. Gonzaga, Leonard D. Greer, Jose L. Isaguirre, Tae Gul Jung, Sergio L. Krasnoselsky, Milan F. Kunz, Bryan R. Larsen, G. Kenneth Lee, Geraldo Lima, W. Jean-Pierre Lono, Khumbulani Mdletshe, Dale H. Munk, Norman R. Nemrow, Yutaka Onda, Wolfgang Pilz, Raimundo Pacheco De Pinho, Gennady N. Podvodov, Abraham E. Quero, Marco A. Rais, Steven K. Randall, Francisco J. Ruiz de Mendoza, Edwin A. Sexton, Raúl H. Spitale, C. Walter Treviño, ‘Aisake K. Tukuafu, Juan A. Urra, Raul S. Villanueva, and Leonard Woo.

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

It is proposed that we sustain the following as new Area Seventies: Michel J. Carter, Alfred Kyungu, R. Pepper Murray, Ryan K. Olsen, and Iotua Tune.

Those in favor may manifest it.

Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Seventies, and General Officers of the Church 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 ever grateful for your continued faith and prayers in behalf of the leaders of the Church. ■

Watchful unto Prayer Continually

(Alma 34:39; Moroni 6:4; Luke 21:36)

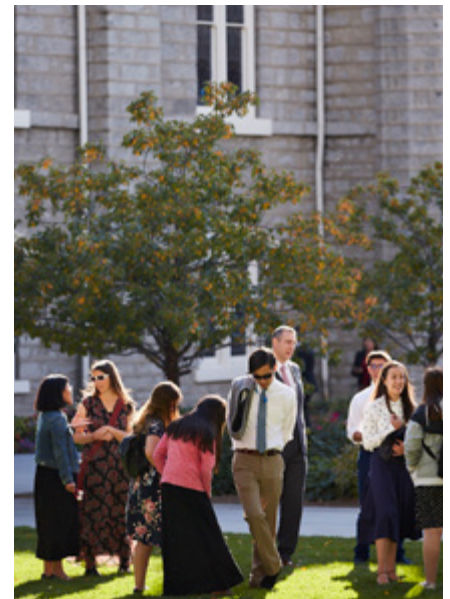
Constant vigilance is required to counteract complacency and casualness.

I earnestly pray for the assistance of the Holy Ghost for you and for me as we rejoice and worship together.

In April of 1976, Elder Boyd K. Packer spoke specifically to the youth of the Church in general conference. In his classic message entitled “Spiritual Crocodiles,” he described how during an assignment in Africa he observed well-camouflaged crocodiles waiting to prey on unsuspecting victims. He then likened the crocodiles to Satan, who preys on unwary youth by camouflaging the deadly nature of sin.

I was 23 years old when Elder Packer gave that talk, and Susan and I were anticipating the birth of our first child in just a few days. We were impressed with the content of his message about avoiding sin and the masterful way he used the ordinary behavior of animals to teach an important spiritual lesson.

Susan and I also have traveled to Africa on many assignments. And we have had opportunities to see the magnificent animals that live on that continent. Remembering the impact of Elder Packer’s talk in our lives, we have



tried to observe and learn lessons from the behavior of African wildlife.

I want to describe the characteristics and tactics of two cheetahs Susan and I watched hunting their prey and relate some of the things we observed to the daily living of the gospel of Jesus Christ.



Cheetahs and Topis

Cheetahs are the fastest land animals on earth and reach running speeds as high as 75 mph (120 km/h). These beautiful animals can accelerate from a standstill position to running as fast as 68 mph (109 km/h) in less than three seconds. Cheetahs are predators that sneak up on their prey and sprint a short distance to chase and attack.

Susan and I spent almost two hours watching two cheetahs stalking a large group of topis, Africa's most common and widespread antelopes. The tall, dry grass of the African savanna was golden brown and almost totally obscured the predators as they pursued a group of topis. The cheetahs were separated from each other by approximately 100 yards (91 m) but worked in tandem.

While one cheetah sat upright in the grass and did not move, the other cheetah crouched low to the ground and slowly crept closer to the unsuspecting topis. Then the cheetah

that had been sitting upright disappeared in the grass at exactly the same moment that the other cheetah sat upright. This alternating pattern of one cheetah crouching low and creeping forward while the other cheetah sat upright in the grass continued for a long time. The stealthy subtlety of the strategy was intended to distract and deceive the topis and thereby divert their attention away from the approaching danger. Patiently and steadily, the two cheetahs worked as a team to secure their next meal.

Positioned between the large group of topis and the approaching cheetahs were several older and stronger topis standing as sentinels on termite mounds. The enhanced view of the grasslands from the small hills enabled these guardian topis to watch for signs of danger.

Then suddenly, as the cheetahs appeared to be within striking distance, the entire group of topis turned and

ran away. I do not know if or how the sentinel topis communicated with the larger group, but somehow a warning was given, and all the topis moved to a place of safety.

And what did the cheetahs do next? Without any delay, the two cheetahs resumed their alternating pattern of one cheetah crouching low and creeping forward while the other cheetah sat upright in the grass. The pattern of pursuit continued. They did not stop. They did not rest or take a break. They were relentless in following their strategy of distraction and diversion. Susan and I watched the cheetahs disappear in the distance, always moving closer and closer to the group of topis.

That night Susan and I had a memorable conversation about what we had observed and learned. We also discussed this experience with our children and grandchildren and identified many valuable lessons. I now will describe three of those lessons.

Lesson #1—Beware of Evil's Beguiling Disguises

To me, cheetahs are sleek, alluring, and captivating creatures. A cheetah's yellowish-tan to greyish-white coat with black spots acts as a beautiful disguise that makes these animals almost invisible as they stalk their prey in the African grasslands.

In a similar way, spiritually dangerous ideas and actions frequently can appear to be attractive, desirable, or pleasurable. Thus, in our contemporary world, each of us needs to be aware of beguiling bad that pretends to be good. As Isaiah warned, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!"¹

In a paradoxical period when violating the sanctity of human life is heralded as a right and chaos is described as liberty, how blessed we are to live in this latter-day dispensation when restored gospel light can shine brightly in our lives and help us to discern the adversary's dark deceptions and distractions.

"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."²

Lesson #2—Stay Awake and Be Alert

For a topi, a brief moment of carelessness or inattentiveness could invite a swift attack from a cheetah. Likewise, spiritual complacency and casualness make us vulnerable to the advances of the adversary. Spiritual thoughtlessness invites great danger into our lives.

Nephi described how in the latter days Satan would attempt to pacify

and lull the children of God into a false sense of "carnal security, that they will say: All is well in Zion; yea, Zion prospereth, all is well—and *thus the devil cheateth their souls*, and leadeth them away carefully down to hell."³

Constant vigilance is required to counteract complacency and casualness. To be vigilant is the state or action of *keeping careful watch* for possible danger or difficulties. And keeping watch denotes the act of *staying awake* to guard and protect. Spiritually speaking, we need to stay awake and be alert to the promptings of the Holy Ghost and the signals that come from the Lord's watchmen on the towers.⁴

"Yea, and I also exhort you . . . that ye be watchful unto prayer continually, that ye may not be led away by the temptations of the devil, . . . for behold, he rewardeth you no good thing."⁵

Focusing our lives in and on the Savior and His gospel enables us to overcome the tendency of the natural man to be spiritually snoozy and lazy. As we are blessed with eyes to

see and ears to hear,⁶ the Holy Ghost can increase our capacity to look and listen when we may not typically think we need to look or listen or when we may not think anything can be seen or heard.

"Watch, therefore, that ye may be ready."⁷

Lesson #3—Understand the Intent of the Enemy

A cheetah is a predator that naturally preys on other animals. All day, every day, a cheetah is a predator.

Satan "is the enemy of righteousness and of those who seek to do the will of God."⁸ All day, every day, his only intent and sole purpose are to make the sons and daughters of God miserable like unto himself.⁹

The Father's plan of happiness is designed to provide direction for His children, to help them experience enduring joy, and to bring them safely home to Him with resurrected, exalted bodies. The devil labors to make the sons and daughters of God confused



For a topi, a brief moment of carelessness or inattentiveness could invite a swift attack from a cheetah. Likewise, spiritual complacency and casualness make us vulnerable to the advances of the adversary.



them at the time of their coming and was victorious.¹² And that same principle and promise applies to each of us.

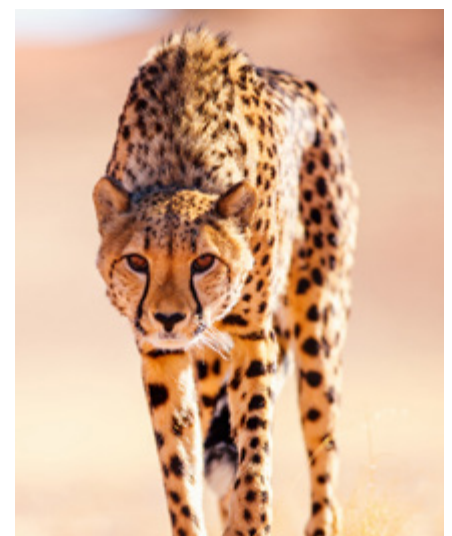
“If ye are prepared, ye shall not fear.

“And that ye might escape the power of the enemy.”¹³

Invitation, Promise, and Testimony

Just as important lessons can be learned by observing the behavior of cheetahs and topis, so each of us should look for the lessons and warnings found in the simple events of everyday life. As we seek for a mind and heart open to receive heavenly direction by the power of the Holy Ghost, then some of the greatest instructions that we can receive and many of the most powerful warnings that can safeguard us will originate in our own ordinary experiences. Powerful parables are contained in both the scriptures and in our daily lives.

I have highlighted only three of the many lessons that can be identified in the adventure Susan and I had in Africa. I invite and encourage you to reflect on this episode with the cheetahs and the topis and identify additional



and unhappy and to hinder their eternal progression. The adversary works relentlessly to attack the elements of the Father’s plan he hates the most.

Satan does not have a body, and his eternal progress has been halted. Just as water flowing in a riverbed is stopped by a dam, so the adversary’s eternal progress is thwarted because he does not have a physical body. Because of his rebellion, Lucifer has denied himself all of the mortal blessings and experiences made possible through a tabernacle of flesh and bones. One of the potent scriptural meanings of the word *damned* is illustrated in his inability to continue progressing and becoming like our Heavenly Father.

Because a physical body is so central to the Father’s plan of happiness and our spiritual development, Lucifer seeks to frustrate our progression by tempting us to use our bodies improperly. President Russell M. Nelson has taught that spiritual safety ultimately lies in “never taking the first enticing

step toward going where you should not go and doing what you should not do.’ . . . As human beings we all have [physical] appetites necessary for our survival. “These appetites are absolutely essential for the perpetuation of life. So, what does the adversary do? . . . He attacks us through our appetites. He tempts us to eat things we should not eat, to drink things we should not drink, and to love as we should not love!”¹⁰

One of the ultimate ironies of eternity is that the adversary, who is miserable precisely because he has no physical body, invites and entices us to share in his misery through the improper use of our bodies. The very tool he does not have and cannot use is thus the primary target of his attempts to lure us to physical and spiritual destruction.

Understanding the intent of an enemy is vital to effective preparation for possible attacks.¹¹ Precisely because Captain Moroni knew the intention of the Lamanites, he was prepared to meet



BY ELDER RUBÉN V. ALLIAUD
Of the Seventy

lessons for you and your family. Please remember always that your home is the true center of gospel learning and living.

As you respond in faith to this invitation, inspired thoughts will come to your mind, spiritual feelings will swell in your heart, and you will recognize actions that should be undertaken or continued so that you can “take upon you [the] whole armor [of God], that ye may be able to withstand the evil day, having done all, that ye may be able to stand.”¹⁴

I promise that the blessings of effective preparation and spiritual protection will flow into your life as you are watchful unto prayer vigilantly and continually.

I testify that pressing forward on the covenant path provides spiritual safety and invites enduring joy into our lives. And I witness that the risen and living Savior will sustain and strengthen us in times both good and bad. Of these truths I testify in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Isaiah 5:20.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 45:57; emphasis added.
3. 2 Nephi 28:21; emphasis added.
4. See Ezekiel 33:7; Doctrine and Covenants 101:44–58; Guide to the Scriptures, “Watch, Watchmen,” scriptures.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
5. Alma 34:39.
6. See Matthew 13:16.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 50:46.
8. Guide to the Scriptures, “Devil,” scriptures.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
9. See 2 Nephi 2:27.
10. Russell M. Nelson, in “Advice from the Prophet of the Church to Millennials Living in a Hectic World,” Newsroom, Feb. 18, 2018, newsroom.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
11. See Alma 2:7–13.
12. See Alma 43:29–33, 48–50.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 38:30–31.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 27:15.

Found through the Power of the Book of Mormon

All must experience and be found by the power of the truths contained in the Book of Mormon.

When I visit converts in their homes, one of the questions I frequently like to ask them is how they and their families learned about the Church and how they came to be baptized. It doesn’t matter if the person in that moment is an active member or hasn’t attended church for many years. The answer is always the same: with a smile and their countenance glowing, they begin to tell the story of how they were found. In fact, it seems that the story of conversion is always the story of how we are found.

Jesus Christ Himself is the Lord of lost things. He cares for lost things. That is surely why He taught the three parables that we find in the 15th chapter of Luke: the parable of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and, finally, the prodigal son. All these stories have a common denominator: It doesn’t matter why they were lost. It doesn’t matter even if they were aware they were lost. There reigns supreme a feeling of joy that exclaims, “Rejoice with me; for I have found [that] which



was lost.”¹ In the end, nothing is truly lost to Him.²

Allow me to share this afternoon with you one of the most precious things to me—the story of how I myself was found.

Just before I turned 15, I was invited by my uncle Manuel Bustos to spend some time with him and his family here in the United States. This would be a great opportunity for me to learn some English. My uncle had converted to the Church many years before, and he had a great missionary spirit. That is probably why my mother, without my knowing, spoke with him and said she would agree to the invitation on one condition: that he did not try to convince me to become a member of his Church. We were Catholics, and we had been for generations, and there was no reason to change. My uncle was in complete agreement and kept his word to the point that he didn’t want to answer even simple questions about the Church.

Of course, what my uncle and his sweet wife, Marjorie, could not avoid was being who they were.³

I was assigned a room that contained a large library of books. I could see that in this library there were roughly 200 copies of the Book of Mormon in different languages, 20 of them in Spanish.

One day, out of curiosity, I took down a copy of the Book of Mormon in Spanish.

It was one of those copies with a sky-blue soft cover, with the figure of the angel Moroni on the front. When I opened it, on the first page there was written the following promise: “And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.”

And then it added: “And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.”⁴

It is difficult to explain the impact that these scriptures had on my mind

and heart. To be honest, I was not looking for “the truth.” I was just a teenager, happy with his life, enjoying this new culture.

Nevertheless, with that promise in mind, I secretly began reading the book. As I read more, I understood that if I really wanted to get anything from this, I had better start to pray. And we all know what happens when you decide not only to read but also to pray about the Book of Mormon. Well, that is just what happened to me. It was something so special and so unique—yes, just the same as what has happened to millions of others around the world. I came to know by the power of the Holy Ghost that the Book of Mormon was true.

I then went to my uncle to explain to him what had happened and that I was ready to be baptized. My uncle could not contain his astonishment. He got into his car, drove to the airport, and returned back with my plane ticket to fly back home, with a note addressed to my mother that simply stated, “I had nothing to do with this!”

In a way he was right. I had been found directly by the power of the Book of Mormon.

There may be many who have been found through wonderful missionaries around the world, in every case through miraculous ways. Or maybe they have been found through friends that God has deliberately placed in their path. It might even be that they have been found by someone from this generation or through one of their ancestors.⁵ Whatever the case, in order to progress toward a true personal conversion, sooner rather than later, they all must experience and be found by the power of the truths contained in the Book of Mormon. At the same time, they must personally decide





to make a serious commitment to God that they will strive to keep His commandments.

When I returned to Buenos Aires, my mother realized that I truly wanted to be baptized. Since I had a somewhat rebellious spirit, instead of opposing me, she very wisely took my side. And without even knowing it, she did my baptismal interview herself. Indeed, I believe that her interview was even more in-depth than those that our missionaries conduct. She told me, “If you want to be baptized, I will support you. But first I’m going to ask you some questions, and I want you to think very hard and answer me honestly. Do you commit to attend church absolutely every Sunday?”

I told her, “Yes, of course I’m going to do that.”

“Do you have any idea how long church is?”

“Yes, I know,” I said.

She replied, “Well, if you get baptized, I am going to make sure that you attend.” Then she asked me if I was truly willing to never drink alcohol or smoke.

I answered, “Yes, of course I am going to comply with that as well.”

To which she added, “If you get baptized, I am going to make sure that that is the case.” And she proceeded on in that way with almost every commandment.

My uncle had called my mother to tell her not to worry, that I would

get over this soon. Four years later, when I received my call to serve in the Uruguay Montevideo Mission, my mother called my uncle to ask him exactly when I was going to get over all this. The truth is that from the time I was baptized, my mother was a happier mother.

I came to know that the Book of Mormon was crucial in the conversion process by experiencing firsthand the promise that “a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts.”⁶

Nephi explained the central purpose of the Book of Mormon in this way:

“For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God. . . .

“And [so] we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, [and] we prophesy of Christ, . . . that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins.”⁷

The entire Book of Mormon is imbued with that same sacred purpose.

For this reason, any reader who commits to a sincere study of it, with the spirit of prayer, will not only learn about Christ but will learn *from* Christ—especially if they make the decision to “try the virtue of the word”⁸ and not reject it prematurely due to prejudiced unbelief⁹ by what others have said about things that they have never read.

President Russell M. Nelson reflected: “When I think of the Book of Mormon, I think of the word *power*. The truths of the Book of Mormon have the *power* to heal, comfort, restore, succor, strengthen, console, and cheer our souls.”¹⁰

My invitation this afternoon to each of us, regardless of how long we’ve been a member of the Church, is to



BY PRESIDENT RUSSELL M. NELSON

allow the power of the truths of the Book of Mormon to find us and embrace us once again and day after day as we diligently seek for personal revelation. It will do so if we allow it.

I solemnly testify that the Book of Mormon contains the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ and that the Holy Ghost will confirm the truth of it time after time to anyone who, with a sincere heart, seeks knowledge unto the salvation of their soul.¹¹ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Luke 15:6; see also Luke 15:9, 32.
2. In its broadest sense, the scriptures account for prophecies that speak of the gathering of the lost tribes of Israel (see Russell M. Nelson, “The Gathering of Scattered Israel,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2006, 79–82). Even though they are lost, they are not lost to Him (see 3 Nephi 17:4). Also, it is interesting to note they don’t realize that they were lost until the time they are found, especially when they receive their patriarchal blessing.
3. Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf quoted Saint Francis of Assisi when he said, “Preach the gospel at all times and if necessary, use words” (“Waiting on the Road to Damascus,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2011, 77; see also William Fay and Linda Evans Shepherd, *Share Jesus without Fear* [1999], 22).
4. Moroni 10:4–5.
5. The conversion story of our ancestor is also our own story. Elder William R. Walker taught, “It would be a wonderful thing if every Latter-day Saint knew the conversion stories of their forefathers” (“Live True to the Faith,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 97). Hence, all of us in some way have been found directly or through our ancestors, thanks to our Heavenly Father, who knows the end from the beginning (see Abraham 2:8).
6. Introduction to the Book of Mormon; see also Alma 31:5.
7. 2 Nephi 25:23, 26.
8. Alma 31:5.
9. See Alma 32:28.
10. Russell M. Nelson, “The Book of Mormon: What Would Your Life Be Like without It?” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2017, 62.
11. See 3 Nephi 5:20.

Witnesses, Aaronic Priesthood Quorums, and Young Women Classes

The adjustments we will now announce are intended to help young men and young women develop their sacred personal potential.

Dear brothers and sisters, it is wonderful to be with you again in general conference. Earlier this week, announcements were made to members of the Church about changes in policy regarding who may serve as witnesses

to baptism and sealing ordinances. I would like to highlight those three points.

1. A proxy baptism for a deceased person may be witnessed by





anyone holding a current temple recommend, including a limited-use recommend.

2. Any endowed member with a current temple recommend may serve as a witness to sealing ordinances, living and proxy.
3. Any baptized member of the Church may serve as a witness of the baptism of a living person. This change pertains to all baptisms outside the temple.

These policy adjustments are procedural. The underlying doctrine and covenants are unchanged. They are equally efficacious in all ordinances. These changes should greatly enhance family participation in these ordinances.

I also wanted to speak with you at this time to introduce adjustments that pertain to our youth and their leaders.

You will remember that I have invited the youth of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to

enlist in the Lord's youth battalion to participate in the greatest cause on earth today—the gathering of Israel.¹ I issued this invitation to our youth because they are unusually gifted in reaching out to others and sharing what they believe in a convincing fashion. The cause of the gathering is an essential part of helping to prepare the world and its people for the Second Coming of the Lord.

In each ward, the Lord's youth battalion is led by a bishop, a dedicated servant of God. His first and foremost responsibility is to care for the young men and young women of his ward. The bishop and his counselors direct the work of the Aaronic Priesthood quorums and the Young Women classes in the ward.

The adjustments we will now announce are intended to help young men and young women develop their sacred personal potential. We also want to strengthen Aaronic Priesthood

quorums and Young Women classes and provide support to bishops and other adult leaders as they serve this rising generation.

Elder Quentin L. Cook will now discuss the adjustments that relate to the young men. And tonight, at the general women's session, Sister Bonnie H. Cordon, Young Women General President, will discuss the adjustments that relate to the young women.

The First Presidency and the Twelve are united in endorsing these efforts to strengthen our youth. Oh, how we love them and pray for them! They are the "hope of Israel, Zion's army, children of the promised day."² We express our complete confidence in our youth and our gratitude for them. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See Russell M. Nelson, "Hope of Israel" (worldwide devotional for youth, June 3, 2018), HopeofIsrael.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
2. "Hope of Israel," *Hymns*, no. 259.



BY ELDER QUENTIN L. COOK
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Adjustments to Strengthen Youth

More young men and young women will rise to the challenge and stay on the covenant path because of this laser-like focus on our youth.

Thank you, dear President Nelson, for that joyful revelatory guidance with respect to witnesses at baptisms and the direction you have asked us to share to help strengthen youth and develop their sacred potential.

Before I share those adjustments, we express our sincere appreciation for the exceptional way members have responded to developments in the ongoing Restoration of the gospel. As President Nelson suggested last year, you have taken your vitamins!¹

You joyfully study *Come, Follow Me* at home.² You have also responded to adjustments at church. Members of the elders quorum and Relief Society sisters unitedly do the work of salvation.³

Our gratitude is overflowing.⁴ We are particularly grateful that our youth continue to remain strong and faithful.

Our youth live in an exciting but also challenging time. The choices available have never been more dramatic. One example: the modern smartphone provides access to incredibly important and uplifting information, including family history and the holy scriptures. On the other hand, it contains

foolishness, immorality, and evil not readily available in the past.

To help our youth navigate this maze of choices, the Church has prepared three profound and comprehensive initiatives. First, curriculum has been strengthened and expanded to the home. Second, a children and youth program that includes exciting activities and personal development was presented just last Sunday by

President Russell M. Nelson, President M. Russell Ballard, and the General Officers. A third initiative is organizational changes to make youth a more significant focus of our bishops and other leaders. This focus must be spiritually powerful and help our youth become the youth battalion President Nelson has asked them to become.

Interlocking Patterns

These efforts, together with those announced during the last few years, are not isolated changes. Each of the adjustments is an integral part of an interlocking pattern to bless the Saints and prepare them to meet God.

One part of the pattern relates to the rising generation. Our youth are being asked to take more individual responsibility at younger ages—without parents and leaders taking over what youth can do for themselves.⁵

Announcement

Today we announce organizational changes for youth at ward and stake levels. As President Nelson explained, Sister Bonnie H. Cordon will discuss



changes for young women this evening. One purpose for the changes I will now discuss is to strengthen Aaronic Priesthood holders, quorums, and quorum presidencies. These changes align our practice with Doctrine and Covenants 107:15, which reads, “The bishopric is the presidency of this [Aaronic] priesthood, and holds the keys or authority of the same.”

One of the scriptural duties of the bishop is to preside over the priests and to sit in council with them, teaching them the duties of their office.⁶ In addition, the first counselor in the bishopric will have specific responsibility for teachers and the second counselor for deacons.

Accordingly, to align with this revelation in the Doctrine and Covenants, Young Men presidencies at the ward level will be discontinued. These faithful brethren have done much good, and we express appreciation to them.

It is our hope that bishoprics will give great emphasis and focus to the priesthood responsibilities of young men and help them in their quorum duties. Capable adult Young Men advisers will be called to assist the Aaronic Priesthood quorum presidencies and the bishopric in their duties.⁷ We are confident that more young men and young women will rise to the challenge and stay on the covenant path because of this laser-like focus on our youth.

In the Lord’s inspired pattern, the bishop has responsibility for everyone in the ward. He blesses the parents of youth as well as the youth. One bishop found that as he counseled with a young man struggling with pornography, he could help the young man in his repentance only as he helped the parents react with love and understanding. The young man’s healing

was a healing for his family and was possible through the bishop working in behalf of the entire family. The young man has now become a worthy Melchizedek Priesthood holder and full-time missionary.

As this account suggests, these adjustments will:

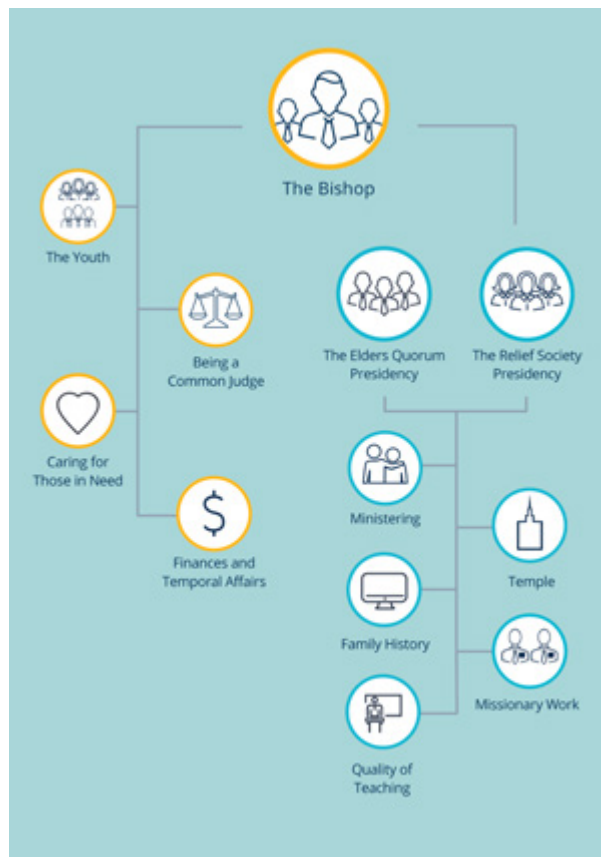
- Help bishops and their counselors focus on their core responsibilities to the youth and Primary children.
- Place the power and duties of the Aaronic Priesthood at the center of every young man’s personal life and goals.

These adjustments also:

- Emphasize the responsibilities of Aaronic Priesthood quorum presidencies and their direct reporting line to the bishopric.
- Motivate adult leaders to assist and mentor Aaronic Priesthood quorum presidencies in magnifying the power and authority of their office.

As noted, these adjustments do not lessen the bishopric’s responsibility for *young women*. As President Nelson just taught, “[The bishop’s] first and foremost responsibility is to care for the young men and *young women* of his ward.”⁸

How will our beloved and hard-working bishops fulfill this responsibility? As you remember, in 2018 Melchizedek Priesthood quorums were adjusted to work even more closely with Relief Societies so that elders



quorums and Relief Societies can, under the direction of the bishop, help shoulder important responsibilities that previously consumed much of his time. These responsibilities include missionary work and temple and family history work in the ward⁹—as well as much of the ministering to ward members.

The bishop *cannot* delegate some responsibilities, such as strengthening the youth, being a common judge, caring for those in need, and overseeing finances and temporal affairs. These are, however, fewer than we may have understood in the past. As Elder Jeffrey R. Holland explained last year when the adjustments to the Melchizedek Priesthood quorums were announced: “The bishop remains, of course, the presiding high priest of the ward. This new alignment [of elders quorums and Relief Societies] should let him preside over the work of the Melchizedek Priesthood and the Relief Society *without requiring him to do the work of either of those bodies.*”¹⁰



For instance, a Relief Society president and an elders quorum president, as assigned, can take a greater role in counseling with adults—as can a *Young Women president in counseling with young women*. While only the bishop can serve as a common judge, these other leaders are also entitled to revelation from heaven to help with challenges that do not require a common judge or involve abuse of any kind.¹¹

That doesn't mean a young woman cannot or should not talk to the bishop or to her parents. Their focus is the youth! But it does mean that a Young Women leader may best meet the needs of an individual young woman. The bishopric is as concerned for young women as for young men, but we recognize the strength that comes from having strong, engaged, and focused Young Women leaders who love and mentor, not taking over the roles of class presidencies but helping youth succeed in those roles.

Sister Cordon will share additional exciting changes for young women tonight. I, however, announce that ward Young Women presidents will

now report to and counsel directly with the bishop of the ward. In the past, this assignment could be delegated to a counselor, but going forward, young women will be a direct responsibility of the one who holds presiding keys for the ward. The Relief Society president will continue to report directly to the bishop.¹²

At the general and stake levels, we will continue to have Young Men presidencies. At the stake level, a high councilor will be the Young Men president¹³ and will, with the high councilors assigned to Young Women and Primary, be part of the stake Aaronic Priesthood–Young Women committee. These brethren will work with the stake Young Women presidency on this committee. With a counselor to the stake president as chair, this committee will have increased importance because many of the programs and activities in the new Children and Youth initiative will be at the stake level.

These high councilors, under the direction of the stake presidency, can serve as a resource to the bishop and Aaronic Priesthood quorums in a

manner similar to the service provided by high councilors to ward elders quorums.

As a related matter, another high councilor will serve as the stake Sunday School president and, as needed, could serve on the stake Aaronic Priesthood–Young Women committee.¹⁴

Additional organizational changes will be further explained in information sent to leaders. These changes include:

- The bishopric youth committee meeting will be replaced by a ward youth council.
- The word “Mutual” will be retired and become “Young Women activities,” “Aaronic Priesthood quorum activities,” or “youth activities,” which will be held weekly where possible.
- The ward budget for youth activities will be divided equitably between the young men and young women according to the number of youth in each organization. A sufficient amount will be provided for Primary activities.
- At all levels—ward, stake, and

general—we will use the term “organization” rather than the term “auxiliary.” Those who lead the General Relief Society, Young Women, Young Men, Primary, and Sunday School organizations will be known as “General Officers.” Those who lead organizations at the ward and stake levels will be known as “ward officers” and “stake officers.”¹⁵

The adjustments announced today may begin as soon as branches, wards, districts, and stakes are ready but should be in place by January 1, 2020. These adjustments, when combined and integrated with previous adjustments, represent a spiritual and organizational effort consistent with doctrine to bless and strengthen every man, woman, youth, and child, helping each to follow the example of our Savior, Jesus Christ, as we progress on the covenant path.

Dear brothers and sisters, I promise and testify that these comprehensive adjustments, under the direction of an inspired president and prophet, Russell M. Nelson, will empower and strengthen every member of the Church. Our youth will develop greater faith in the Savior, be protected from the temptations of the adversary, and stand prepared to meet life’s challenges. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See Russell M. Nelson, in “Latter-day Saint Prophet, Wife and Apostle Share Insights of Global Ministry,” Newsroom, Oct. 30, 2018, newsroom.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
2. In addition, you have made specific efforts to use the correct name of the Church as taught by President Russell M. Nelson and to remember our Savior with love and reverence as you do so.
3. “Members of the Church of Jesus Christ are sent forth ‘to labor in his vineyard for the salvation of the souls of men’ (Doctrine and Covenants 138:56). This work of salvation includes member missionary work, convert retention, activation of less-active members,



temple and family history work, and teaching the gospel. The bishopric directs this work in the ward, assisted by other members of the ward council” (*Handbook 2: Administering the Church*, 5.0, ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

4. As leaders, we love the members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for your goodness and your discipleship. We pay tribute to the individuals, the moms, the dads, the youth, and the children who are walking the covenant path—and doing so with dedication and joy.
5. In 2019, 11-year-old deacons began passing the sacrament, and 11-year-old young women and young men received limited-use temple recommends. Last year, President Nelson challenged our young men and young women to be part of a youth battalion to gather scattered Israel on both sides of the veil (see “Hope of Israel” [worldwide devotional for youth, June 3, 2018], HopeofIsrael.ChurchofJesusChrist.org). The response has been dramatic. Full-time missionaries now serve in an exceptional way at younger ages. Since October 6, 2012, young men have been eligible to serve at 18 years of age and young women at 19 years of age.
6. “Also the duty of the president over the Priesthood of Aaron is to preside over [the] priests, and sit in council with them, to teach them the duties of their office. . . . This president is to be a bishop; for this is one of the duties of this priesthood” (Doctrine and Covenants 107:87–88).
7. Adult leaders will also be called as Aaronic Priesthood quorum specialists to assist with programs and activities and to attend quorum meetings so that the bishopric can regularly visit Young Women classes and activities and occasionally visit Primary. Some specialists could be called to assist with a particular event, such as a camp; others could be called on a longer-term basis to assist the quorum advisers. There will always be at least two adult men in each quorum meeting, program, or activity. While roles and titles will change, we do not anticipate a decrease in the number of adult men serving

- and supporting Aaronic Priesthood quorums.
8. Russell M. Nelson, “Witnesses, Aaronic Priesthood Quorums, and Young Women Classes,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2019, 39, emphasis added; see also Ezra Taft Benson, “To the Young Women of the Church,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 85.
9. We are also advising bishops to spend more time with young single adult members and their own families.
10. Jeffrey R. Holland, general conference leadership meeting, Apr. 2018; see also “Effective Ministering,” ministering.ChurchofJesusChrist.org. Elder Holland taught that responsibilities the bishop cannot delegate are presiding over the Aaronic Priesthood quorums and the young women, being a common judge, watching over the finances and temporal affairs of the Church, and caring for the poor and needy. The elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies and others can take primary responsibility for missionary work, temple and family history work, the quality of teaching in the ward, and watching over and ministering to members of the Church.
11. In addition to circumstances requiring the keys of a common judge, issues of abuse of any kind should be handled by bishops in accordance with Church policy.
12. The stake Relief Society president will also continue to report directly to the stake president.
13. The stake Young Men president’s counselors may be called from the membership of the stake or, as needed, may be the high councilor assigned to the Young Women and the high councilor assigned to the Primary.
14. The brother who serves as Sunday School president has significant responsibility for youth curriculum on two Sundays each month.
15. The presidencies of the Relief Society, Young Women, Young Men, Sunday School, and Primary at the general and stake levels are General Officers or stake officers. At the ward level, the bishopric leads the young men, so Aaronic Priesthood quorum advisers are not ward officers.



BY MARK L. PACE
Sunday School General President

Come, Follow Me—the Lord’s Counterstrategy and Proactive Plan

The Lord prepares His people against the attacks of the adversary. Come, Follow Me is the Lord’s counterstrategy and proactive plan.

We rejoice in meeting together in this great general conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It is a blessing to receive the mind and will of the Lord through the teachings of His prophets and apostles. President Russell M. Nelson is the Lord’s living prophet. How grateful we are for his inspired counsel and direction received today.

I add my witness to those shared previously. I bear testimony of God, our Eternal Father. He lives and loves us and watches over us. His plan of happiness provides the blessing of this mortal life and our eventual return to His presence.

I also bear testimony of Jesus Christ. He is God’s Only Begotten Son. He *saved us* from death, and He redeems us from sin as we exercise faith in Him and repent. His infinite atoning sacrifice in our behalf brings the blessings of immortality and eternal life. Indeed, “God be thanked for the matchless gift of His divine son” (“The Living Christ:

The Testimony of the Apostles,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2017, inside front cover).

Latter-day Saints around the world are blessed to worship Jesus Christ in His temples. One of those temples is currently under construction in Winnipeg, Canada. My wife, Anne Marie, and I had the opportunity to

visit the construction site in August of this year. The temple is beautifully designed and will certainly be magnificent when completed. However, you can’t have a magnificent temple in Winnipeg, or anywhere else, without a solid and firm foundation.

The freeze-thaw cycle and expansive soil conditions in Winnipeg made it challenging to prepare the temple foundation. Therefore, it was determined that the foundation for this temple would consist of 70 steel piles encased in concrete. These piles are 60 feet (18 m) in length and 12 to 20 inches (30 to 50 cm) in diameter. They were driven into the ground until they hit bedrock, approximately 50 feet (15 m) below the surface. In this way, the 70 piles provide a solid, firm foundation for what will be the beautiful Winnipeg temple.

As Latter-day Saints, we seek a similar firm and sure foundation in our lives—a spiritual foundation needed for our journey through mortality and back to our heavenly home. That foundation is established on the bedrock of our conversion to the Lord Jesus Christ.

We recall the teachings of Helaman from the Book of Mormon: “And now,



my sons, remember, 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, . . . 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” (Helaman 5:12).

Gratefully, we live in a time when prophets and apostles teach us of the Savior Jesus Christ. Following their counsel helps us establish a firm foundation in Christ.

A year ago, in his opening remarks of the October 2018 general conference, President Russell M. Nelson provided this declaration and warning: “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*” (“Opening Remarks,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 7; emphasis added).

Following President Nelson’s message, Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles introduced the *Come, Follow Me* resource for individuals and families. His remarks included the following statements:

- “The new home-study *Come, Follow Me* resource . . . is designed to help members learn the gospel in the home.”



- “This resource is for every individual and family in the Church” [*Come, Follow Me—For Individuals and Families* (2019), vi].”
- “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.” (“Deep and Lasting Conversion to Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 9–10.)

Starting in January of this year, Latter-day Saints worldwide began studying the New Testament, with the *Come, Follow Me* resource as our guide. With a weekly schedule, *Come, Follow Me* helps us study the scriptures, the doctrine of the gospel, and the teachings of the prophets and apostles. It is a marvelous resource for us all.

After nine months of this worldwide scripture study effort, what do we see? We see Latter-day Saints everywhere growing in faith and devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. We see individuals and families setting aside time throughout the week to study the words of our Savior. We see improving gospel instruction in our Sunday classes as we study the scriptures at home and share our insights at church. We see greater family joy and unity as we have moved

from simply reading the scriptures to studying the scriptures in a profound way.

It has been my privilege to visit with many Latter-day Saints and hear firsthand of their experiences with *Come, Follow Me*. Their expressions of faith fill my heart with joy. Here are just a few of the comments I have heard from various members of the Church in different parts of the world:

- A father shared: “I enjoy *Come, Follow Me*, as it provides an opportunity to testify of the Savior to my children.”
- In another home, a child said: “This is a chance to hear my parents bear their testimonies.”
- A mother shared: “We have been inspired as to how to put God first. The time we [thought we] ‘didn’t have’ has been [filled] with hope, joy, peace, and success in ways we didn’t know were possible.”
- A couple observed: “We are reading the scriptures entirely differently than we have ever read them before. We are learning so much more than we have ever learned before. The Lord is wanting us to see things differently. The Lord is preparing us.”
- A mother remarked: “I love that we are learning the same things together. Before, we were reading it.



Today, we are learning it.”

- A sister shared this insightful perspective: “Before, you had the lesson and the scriptures supplemented it. Now, you have the scriptures and the lesson supplements it.”
- Another sister commented: “I feel a difference when I do it [compared to] when I don’t. I find it is easier to talk to others about Jesus Christ and our beliefs.”
- A grandmother remarked: “I call my children and grandchildren on Sundays, and we share insights from *Come, Follow Me* together.”
- A sister observed: “*Come, Follow Me* feels like the Savior is personally ministering to me. It is heaven inspired.”
- A father commented: “When we use *Come, Follow Me*, we are like the children of Israel, marking the side posts of our doors, protecting our families from the influence of the destroyer.”

Brothers and sisters, it is a joy to visit with you and hear how your efforts with *Come, Follow Me* are blessing your lives. Thank you for your devotion.

Studying the scriptures with *Come, Follow Me* as a guide is strengthening our conversion to Jesus Christ and His gospel. We are not simply trading one hour less in church on Sunday for one hour more of scripture study at home. Learning the gospel is a consistent effort throughout the week. As one sister insightfully shared, “The goal is not to make church one hour shorter; it is to make church six days longer!”

Now, consider again the warning our prophet, President Nelson, gave as he opened the October 2018 general conference:

“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” (Opening Remarks,” 7).

Then (approximately 29 hours later) on Sunday afternoon, he closed the conference with this promise: “As you diligently work to remodel your home into a center of gospel learning, . . . the influence of the adversary in your life and in your home will decrease” (“Becoming Exemplary Latter-day Saints,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 113).

How can the attacks of the adversary be increasing exponentially while at the same time the influence of the adversary is actually decreasing? It can happen, and it is happening throughout the Church, because the Lord prepares His people against the attacks of the adversary. *Come, Follow Me* is the Lord’s counterstrategy and proactive plan. As President Nelson taught, “The new home-centered, Church-supported integrated curriculum has the potential to unleash the power of families.” However, it does and will require our best efforts; we need to “[follow] through conscientiously and carefully to transform [our] home into a sanctuary of faith” (“Becoming Exemplary Latter-day Saints,” 113).

After all, as President Nelson also said, “We are each responsible for our individual spiritual growth” (“Opening Remarks,” 8).

With the *Come, Follow Me* resource, the Lord is preparing us “for the perilous times that we now face” (Quentin L. Cook, “Deep and Lasting Conversion,” 10). He is helping us establish that “sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall” (Helaman 5:12)—the foundation of a testimony anchored firmly in the bedrock of our conversion to the Lord Jesus Christ.

May our daily efforts in studying the scriptures fortify us and prove us worthy of these promised blessings. I so pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



BY ELDER L. TODD BUDGE
Of the Seventy

Consistent and Resilient Trust

Trusting in the Lord includes trusting in His timing and requires patience and endurance that outlast the storms of life.

Our son Dan got very sick on his mission in Africa and was taken to a medical facility with limited resources. As we read his first letter to us after his illness, we expected that he would be discouraged, but instead he wrote, “Even as I lay in the emergency room, I felt peace. I have never been so consistently and resiliently happy in my life.”

As my wife and I read these words, we were overcome with emotion. *Consistently and resiliently happy.* We

had never heard happiness described that way, but his words rang true. We knew that the happiness he described was not simply pleasure or an elevated mood but a peace and joy that come when we surrender ourselves to God and put our trust in Him in *all things*.¹ We too had had those times in our lives when God spoke peace to our souls and caused us to have hope in Christ even when life was hard and uncertain.²



Lehi teaches that if Adam and Eve had not fallen, “they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery; . . .

“But behold, *all things* have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth *all things*.

“Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy.”³

In a paradoxical way, afflictions and sorrow prepare us to experience joy if we will trust in the Lord and His plan for us. This truth is beautifully expressed by a 13th-century poet: “Sorrow prepares you for joy. It violently sweeps everything out of your house, so that new joy can find space to enter. It shakes the yellow leaves from the bough of your heart, so that fresh, green leaves can grow in their place. It pulls up the rotten roots, so that new roots hidden beneath have room to grow. Whatever sorrow shakes from your heart, far better things will take their place.”⁴

President Russell M. Nelson taught, “The joy the Savior offers [us] . . . is constant, assuring us that our ‘afflictions shall be but a small moment’ [Doctrine and Covenants 121:7] and be consecrated to our gain.”⁵ Our trials and afflictions can make space for greater joy.⁶

The good news of the gospel is not the promise of a life free of sorrow and tribulation but a life full of purpose and meaning—a life where our sorrows and afflictions can be “swallowed up in the joy of Christ.”⁷ The Savior declared, “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”⁸ His gospel is a message of hope. Sorrow coupled with hope in Jesus Christ holds the promise of enduring joy.

The account of the Jaredites’ journey to the promised land can be used as a

metaphor for our journey through mortality. The Lord promised the brother of Jared and his people that He would “go before [them] into a land which is choice above all the lands of the earth.”⁹ He commanded them to build barges, and they obediently went to work building them according to the Lord’s instructions. However, as the work progressed, the brother of Jared developed concerns that the Lord’s design for the barges was not sufficient. He cried out:

“O Lord, I have performed the work which thou hast commanded me, and I have made the barges according as thou hast directed me.

“And behold, O Lord, in them there is no light.”¹⁰

“O Lord, wilt thou suffer that we shall cross this great water in darkness?”¹¹

Have you ever poured out your soul to God in such a way? When striving to live as the Lord commands and righteous expectations are not met, have you ever wondered if you must go through this life in darkness?¹²

The brother of Jared then expressed an even greater concern about their ability to survive in the barges. He cried, “And also we shall perish, for in them we cannot breathe, save it is the air which is in them.”¹³ Have the difficulties of life ever made it hard for you to breathe and caused you to wonder how you can make it through the day, let alone make it back to your heavenly home?

After the Lord worked with the brother of Jared to resolve each of his concerns, He then explained, “Ye cannot cross this great deep save *I prepare* [a way for] you against the waves of the sea, and the winds which have gone forth, and the floods which shall come.”¹⁴

The Lord made it clear that ultimately the Jaredites could not make

it to the promised land without Him. They were not in control, and the only way they could make it across the great deep was to put their trust in Him. These experiences and tutoring from the Lord seemed to deepen the brother of Jared’s faith and strengthen his trust in the Lord.

Notice how his prayers changed from questions and concerns to expressions of faith and trust:

“I know, O Lord, that thou hast all power, and can do whatsoever thou wilt for the benefit of man; . . .

“Behold, O Lord, thou canst do this. We know that thou art able to show forth great power, which looks small unto the understanding of men.”¹⁵

It is recorded that the Jaredites then “got aboard of their . . . barges, and set forth into the sea, *commending* themselves unto the Lord their God.”¹⁶ To *commend* means to entrust or to surrender. The Jaredites did not get into the barges because they knew exactly how things would work on their journey. They got aboard because they had learned to trust in the Lord’s power, goodness, and mercy, and they were therefore willing to surrender themselves and any doubts or fears they may have had to the Lord.

Recently our grandson Abe was afraid to ride one of the carousel animals that move up and down. He preferred one that didn’t move. His grandmother finally persuaded him that it would be safe, so, trusting her, he got aboard. He then said with a big smile, “I don’t feel safe, but I am safe.” Perhaps that is how the Jaredites felt. Trusting God may not always feel safe at first, but joy follows.

The journey was not easy for the Jaredites. “They were many times buried in the depths of the sea, because of the mountain waves which broke upon them.”¹⁷ Yet it is recorded that “the wind did never cease to blow [them] *towards* the promised land.”¹⁸ As difficult as it is to understand, especially at the times in our lives when the headwinds are strong and the seas are turbulent, we can take comfort in knowing that God in His infinite goodness is always blowing us toward home.

The record continues, “They were driven forth; and no monster of the sea could break them, neither whale that could mar them; and they did have light continually, whether it was above the water or under the water.”¹⁹ We live in a world where the monster waves of death, physical and mental illness, and



trials and afflictions of every kind break upon us. Yet, through faith in Jesus Christ and choosing to trust in Him, *we too* can have light continually, whether above the water or under the water. *We* can have the assurance that God never does cease to blow us toward our heavenly home.

While being tossed about in the barges, the Jaredites “did sing praises unto the Lord; . . . and [they] did thank and praise the Lord all the day long; and when the night came, they did not cease to praise the Lord.”²⁰ They felt joy and thanksgiving even in the midst of their afflictions. They had not yet arrived in the promised land, yet they were rejoicing in the promised blessing because of their *consistent* and *resilient* trust in Him.²¹

The Jaredites were driven forth upon the water 344 days.²² Can you imagine that? Trusting in the Lord includes trusting in His timing and requires patience and endurance that outlast the storms of life.²³

Ultimately, the Jaredites “did land upon the shore of the promised land. And when they had set their feet upon the shores of the promised land they bowed themselves down upon the face of the land, and did humble themselves before the Lord, and did shed tears of joy before the Lord, because of the multitude of his tender mercies over them.”²⁴

If we are faithful in keeping our covenants, we too will one day arrive safely home and will bow before the Lord and shed tears of joy for the multitude of His tender mercies in our lives, including the sorrows that made space for more joy.²⁵

I testify that as we commend ourselves unto the Lord and consistently and resiliently trust in Jesus Christ and His divine purposes in our lives,



He will visit us with assurances, speak peace to our souls, and cause us to “hope for our deliverance in him.”²⁶

I witness that Jesus is the Christ. He is the source of all joy.²⁷ His grace is sufficient, and He is mighty to save.²⁸ He is the light, the life, and the hope of the world.²⁹ He will not let us perish.³⁰ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See Alma 36:3; 57:27.
2. See Alma 58:11.
3. 2 Nephi 2:23–25; emphasis added.
4. See *The Mathnawi of Jalalu'ddin Rumi* (1925–40), trans. Reynold A. Nicholson, vol. 5, 132.
5. Russell M. Nelson, “Joy and Spiritual Survival,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 82.
6. See Neal A. Maxwell, “Plow in Hope,” *Ensign*, May 2001, 60; *Liahona*, July 2001, 73: “Redeeming Jesus also ‘poured out his soul unto death.’ . . . As we on occasion ‘pour’ out our souls in personal pleadings, we are thus emptied, making room for more joy!”
7. Alma 31:38; see also Neal A. Maxwell, “Brim with Joy” (Brigham Young University devotional, Jan. 23, 1996), speeches.byu.edu: “When we reach a point of consecration, our afflictions will be swallowed up in the joy of Christ. It does not mean we won’t have afflictions, but they will be put in a perspective that permits us to deal with them. With our steady pursuit of joy and with each
8. John 16:33.
9. Ether 1:42.
10. Ether 2:18–19.
11. Ether 2:22.
12. See John 8:12.
13. Ether 2:19; compare Mark 4:38; see also Mark 4:35–41.
14. Ether 2:25; emphasis added.
15. Ether 3:4–5.
16. Ether 6:4; emphasis added.
17. Ether 6:6.
18. Ether 6:8; emphasis added; see also 1 Nephi 18:8.
19. Ether 6:10.
20. Ether 6:9; see also 1 Nephi 18:16.
21. Compare 1 Nephi 5:5. Though still in the wilderness, Lehi rejoiced in the promised blessing.
22. See Ether 6:11.
23. See Hebrews 10:36; Alma 34:41; Doctrine and Covenants 24:8; 64:32.
24. Ether 6:12.
25. See 1 Nephi 1:20; 8:8; Alma 33:16.
26. Alma 58:11.
27. See Russell M. Nelson, “Joy and Spiritual Survival,” 82.
28. See 2 Nephi 31:19; Alma 34:18; Moroni 10:32.
29. See “The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2017, inside front cover.
30. See 1 Nephi 1:14.



BY ELDER JORGE M. ALVARADO
Of the Seventy

After the Trial of Our Faith

As we follow God's voice and His covenant path, He will strengthen us in our trials.

When I was a child, Frank Talley, a member of the Church, offered to help my family fly from Puerto Rico to Salt Lake City so we could be sealed in the temple, but soon obstacles began to appear. One of my sisters, Marivid, became ill. Unsettled, my parents prayed about what to do and still felt prompted to make the journey. They trusted that as they faithfully followed the Lord's prompting, our family would be watched over and blessed—and we were.



No matter the obstacles we face in life, we can trust that Jesus Christ will prepare a way forward as we walk with faith. God has promised that all who live according to the covenants they have made with Him will, in His time, receive all His promised blessings. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland taught, “Some blessings come soon, some come late, and some don't come until heaven; but for those who embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ, *they come*.”¹

Moroni taught that “faith is things which are hoped for and not seen; wherefore, dispute not because ye see not, for ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith.”²

Our question is, What should we do to best meet the trials that come our way?

In his first public remarks as President of the Church, President Russell M. Nelson taught: “As a new Presidency, we want to begin with the end in mind. For this reason, we're speaking to you today from a temple. The end for which each of us strives is to be endowed with power in a house of the Lord, sealed as families, faithful to covenants made in a temple that qualify us for the greatest gift of

God—that of eternal life. The ordinances of the temple and the covenants you make there are key to strengthening your life, your marriage and family, and your ability to resist the attacks of the adversary. Your worship in the temple and your service there for your ancestors will bless you with increased personal revelation and peace and will fortify your commitment to stay on the covenant path.”³

As we follow God's voice and His covenant path, He will strengthen us in our trials.

My family's trip to the temple years ago was difficult, but as we approached the temple in Salt Lake City, Utah, my mother, full of joy and faith, said, “We are going to be OK; the Lord will protect us.” We were sealed as a family, and my sister recovered. This happened only after the trial of my parents' faith and in following the Lord's promptings.

This example of my parents still influences our lives today. Their example taught us the *why* of gospel doctrine and helped us understand the meaning, purpose, and blessings that the gospel brings. Understanding the *why* of the gospel of Jesus Christ can also help us face our trials with faith.

Ultimately, everything God invites and commands us to do is an expression of His love for us and His desire to give us the blessings reserved for the faithful. We cannot assume that our children will learn to love the gospel on their own; it is our responsibility to teach them. As we help our children learn how to use their agency wisely, our example can inspire them to make their own righteous choices. Their faithful living will in turn help their children to know the truth of the gospel for themselves.

Young men and young women, hear the prophet today talking to you. Seek to learn divine truths and seek to understand the gospel for yourselves. President Nelson recently counseled: “What wisdom do you lack? . . . Follow the example of the Prophet Joseph. Find a quiet place. . . . Humble yourself before God. Pour out your heart to your Heavenly Father. Turn to Him for answers.”⁴ As you seek guidance from your loving Heavenly Father, listening to the counsel of living prophets and watching the example of righteous parents, you too can become a strong link of faith in your family.

To parents with children who have left the covenant path, gently go back. Help them comprehend the gospel’s truths. Start now; it is never too late.

Our example of righteous living can make a great difference. President Nelson has said: “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.”⁵

The scriptures teach, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”⁶

They also say, “And now, as the preaching of the word had a great tendency to lead the people to do that which was just—yea, it had had more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than the sword, or anything else, which had happened unto them—therefore Alma thought it was expedient that they should try the virtue of the word of God.”⁷

A story is told of a woman who was upset that her son was eating too much candy. No matter how much she told him to stop, he continued to satisfy



his sweet tooth. Totally frustrated, she decided to take her son to see a wise man whom he respected.

She approached him and said, “Sir, my son eats too much candy. Would you please tell him to stop eating it?”

He listened carefully then said to her son, “Go home and come back in two weeks.”

She took her son and went home, perplexed why he had not asked the boy to stop eating so much candy.





Two weeks later they returned. The wise man looked directly at the boy and said, “Boy, you should stop eating so much candy. It is not good for your health.”

The boy nodded and promised he would.

The boy’s mother asked, “Why didn’t you tell him that two weeks ago?”

The wise man smiled. “Two weeks ago I was still eating too much candy myself.”

This man lived with such integrity that he knew his advice would carry power only if he was following his own counsel.

The influence we have on our children is more powerful as they see us walking faithfully on the covenant path. The Book of Mormon prophet Jacob is an example of such righteousness.

His son Enos wrote of the impact of his father’s teachings:

“I, Enos, knowing my father that he was a just man—for he taught me in his language, and also in the nurture and admonition of the Lord—and blessed be the name of my God for it. . . .

“ . . . And the words which I had often heard my father speak concerning eternal life, and the joy of the saints, sunk deep into my heart.”⁸

The mothers of the stripling warriors lived the gospel, and their children were filled with conviction. Their leader reported:

“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.”⁹

Enos and the stripling warriors were strengthened by the faith of their parents, which helped them meet their own trials of faith.

We are blessed with the restored gospel of Jesus Christ in our days, which lifts us when we feel discouraged or troubled. We are reassured that our efforts will bear fruit in the Lord’s own due time if we press forward through the trials of our faith.

My wife and I, with the Area Presidency, recently accompanied Elder David A. Bednar to the dedication of the Port-au-Prince Haiti Temple. Our son Jorge, who came with us, said about his experience: “Amazing, Papa! As soon as Elder Bednar started with the dedicatory prayer, I could feel the room fill with warmth and light. The prayer added so much to my understanding of the purpose of a temple.

It really is the house of the Lord.”

In the Book of Mormon, Nephi teaches that as we desire to know the will of God, He will strengthen us. He wrote, “I, Nephi, being exceedingly young . . . and also having great desires to know of the mysteries of God, wherefore, I did cry unto the Lord; and behold he did visit me, and did soften my heart that I did believe all the words which had been spoken by my father; wherefore, I did not rebel against him like unto my brothers.”¹⁰

Brothers and sisters, let us help our children and all around us to follow God’s covenant path so that the Spirit might teach them and soften their hearts to desire to follow Him throughout their life.

As I consider the example of my parents, I realize that our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ will show us the way back to our heavenly home. I know miracles come after the trial of our faith.

I bear testimony of Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice. I know He is our Savior and Deliverer. He and our Heavenly Father came that morning in the spring of 1820 to young Joseph Smith, the prophet of the Restoration. President Russell M. Nelson is the prophet of our day. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Jeffrey R. Holland, “An High Priest of Good Things to Come,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 38; *Liahona*, Jan. 2000, 45.
2. Ether 12:6.
3. Russell M. Nelson, “As We Go Forward Together,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Apr. 2018, 7.
4. Russell M. Nelson, “Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2018, 95.
5. Russell M. Nelson, “Opening Remarks,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 7.
6. Proverbs 22:6.
7. Alma 31:5.
8. Enos 1:1, 3.
9. Alma 56:47–48.
10. 1 Nephi 2:16.



BY ELDER RONALD A. RASBAND
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Standing by Our Promises and Covenants

I invite you to consider the promises and covenants you make with the Lord, and with others, with great integrity, knowing that your word is your bond.

Dear brothers and sisters, as we close this session, may we each hold in our hearts the witness borne today of the truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are blessed to have this sacred time together to reinforce our promise to the Lord Jesus Christ that we are His servants and He is our Savior.

The importance of making and keeping promises and covenants weighs heavy on my mind. How important is it to you to keep your word? to be trusted? to do what you say you will do? to strive to honor your sacred covenants? to have integrity? By living true to our promises to the Lord and to others, we walk the covenant path back to our Father in Heaven and we feel His love in our lives.

Our Savior, Jesus Christ, is our great Exemplar when it comes to making and keeping promises and covenants. He came to earth promising to do the will of the Father. He taught gospel principles in word and in deed. He atoned for our sins that we might live again. He has honored every one of His promises.

Can the same be said of each of us? What are the dangers if we cheat a

little, slip a little, or do not quite follow through with our commitments? What if we walk away from our covenants? Will others come unto Christ in light of our example? Is your word your bond? Keeping promises is not a habit; it is a characteristic of being a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Ever mindful of our frailties in mortal life, the Lord promised, “Be of good

cheer, and do not fear, for I the Lord am with you, and will stand by you.”¹ I have felt His presence when needing reassurance, comfort, or greater spiritual insight or strength, and I have been deeply humbled and am grateful for His divine companionship.

The Lord has said, “Every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am.”² That is perhaps His ultimate promise.

I learned the importance of keeping my word in my youth. One such example is when I stood at attention to recite the Scout Oath. Our association with the Boy Scouts of America, as it now concludes, will always be an important legacy to me and this Church. To the Scouting organization, to the scores of men and women who have served diligently as Scout leaders, to the moms—real credit goes there—and to the young men who have participated in Scouting, we say, “Thank you.”

In this very session, our dear prophet, President Russell M. Nelson,





and Elder Quentin L. Cook have announced adjustments that will re-focus our attention on youth and align our organizations with revealed truth. In addition, just last Sunday, President Nelson and President M. Russell Ballard explained the new Children and Youth of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints program for the entire Church. It is a worldwide initiative focused on our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles are unified in this new direction, and I personally bear my witness that the Lord has guided us every step of the way. I am excited for the children and youth of the Church to experience this integrated focus on them both at home

and at church—through gospel learning, service and activities, and personal development.

The youth theme for this coming year, 2020, speaks of Nephi’s classic promise to “go and do.” He wrote, “And it came to pass that I, Nephi, said unto my father: I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them.”³ Although it was uttered long ago, we in the Church stand on that promise today.

To “go and do” means rising above the ways of the world, receiving and acting on personal revelation, living

righteously with hope and faith in the future, making and keeping covenants to follow Jesus Christ, and thereby increasing our love for Him, the Savior of the world.

A covenant is a two-way promise between us and the Lord. As members of the Church, we covenant at baptism to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ, to live as He lived. Like those baptized at the Waters of Mormon, we covenant to become His people, “to bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light; . . . to mourn with those that mourn; . . . comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places.”⁴ Our ministering one to another in the Church reflects our commitment to honor those very promises.

When we partake of the sacrament, we renew that covenant to take upon us His name and make additional promises to improve. Our daily thoughts and actions, both large and small, reflect our commitment to Him. His sacred promise in return is “If ye do always remember me ye shall have my Spirit to be with you.”⁵

My question today is, do we stand by our promises and covenants, or are they sometimes half-hearted commitments, casually made and hence easily broken? When we say to someone, “I will pray for you,” do we? When we commit, “I will be there to help,” will we? When we obligate ourselves to pay a debt, do we? When we raise our hands to sustain a fellow member in a new calling, which means to give support, do we?

One evening in my youth, my mother sat with me at the foot of her bed and spoke fervently of the importance of living the Word of Wisdom. “I know from the experiences of

others, from years ago,” she said, “the loss of spirituality and sensitivity that comes from not following the Word of Wisdom.” She looked right into my eyes, and I felt her words penetrate my heart: “Promise me, Ronnie, today [she called me Ronnie], that you will always live the Word of Wisdom.” I solemnly made that promise to her, and I have held to it all these years.

That commitment served me well when I was in my youth and in later years when I was in business circles where substances flowed freely. I made a decision in advance to follow God’s laws, and I never had to revisit it. The Lord has said, “I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise.”⁶ What is He saying to those who abide by the Word of Wisdom? That we will have the promise of health, strength, wisdom, knowledge, and angels to protect us.⁷

Some years ago, Sister Rasband and I were at the Salt Lake Temple for

the sealing of one of our daughters. As we stood outside the temple with a younger daughter not yet old enough to attend the ceremony, we spoke of the importance of being sealed in the holy temple of God. As my mother had taught me years before, we said to our daughter, “We want you safely sealed in the temple, and we want you to promise us that when you find your eternal companion, you will make a date with him to be sealed in the temple.” She gave us her word.

She has since stated that our talk and her promise protected her and reminded her “what was most important.” She later made sacred covenants as she was sealed to her husband in the temple.

President Nelson has taught: “We . . . increase the Savior’s power in our lives when we make sacred covenants and keep those covenants with precision. Our covenants bind us to Him and give us godly power.”⁸



When we keep promises to one another, we are more likely to keep promises to the Lord. Remember the Lord’s words: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”⁹

Reflect with me on examples of promises in the scriptures. Ammon and the sons of Mosiah in the Book of Mormon committed “to preach the word of God.”¹⁰ When Ammon was captured by Lamanite forces, he was taken before the Lamanite King Lamoni. He committed to the king, “I will be thy servant.”¹¹ When raiders came to steal the king’s sheep, Ammon cut off their





arms. So astonished was the king, he listened to Ammon’s message of the gospel and was converted.

Ruth, in the Old Testament, promised her mother-in-law, “Whither thou goest, I will go.”¹² She lived true to her word. The good Samaritan, in a parable in the New Testament, promised the innkeeper if he would care for the injured traveler, “Whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.”¹³ Zoram, in the Book of Mormon, promised to go into the wilderness with Nephi and his brothers. Nephi recounted, “When Zoram had made an oath unto us, our fears did cease concerning him.”¹⁴

What of the ancient promise “made to the fathers” as described in the

scriptures that “the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers”?¹⁵ In the pre-earth life when we chose God’s plan, we made a promise to help gather Israel on both sides of the veil. “We went into a partnership with the Lord,” Elder John A. Widtsoe explained years ago. “The working out of the plan became then not merely the Father’s work, and the Savior’s work, but also our work.”¹⁶

“[The] gathering is the most important thing taking place on earth today,” President Nelson has said as he has traveled the world. “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

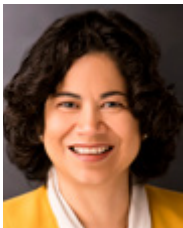
the message of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.”¹⁷

As an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, I conclude with an invitation and promise. First, the invitation: I invite you to consider the promises and covenants you make with the Lord, and with others, with great integrity, knowing that your word is your bond. Second, I promise you, as you do this, the Lord will establish your words and sanction your deeds as you strive with unwearied diligence to build up your lives, your families, and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He will be with you, my dear brothers and sisters, and you can, with confidence, look forward to being “received into heaven, that thereby [you] may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness . . . for the Lord God hath spoken it.”¹⁸

Of this I testify and promise in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 68:6.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 93:1.
3. 1 Nephi 3:7.
4. Mosiah 18:8–9.
5. 3 Nephi 18:7.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 82:10.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 89:18–21.
8. Russell M. Nelson, “Drawing the Power of Jesus Christ into Our Lives,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2017, 41.
9. Matthew 25:40.
10. Alma 17:14.
11. Alma 17:25.
12. Ruth 1:16.
13. Luke 10:35.
14. 1 Nephi 4:37.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 2:2; see also Doctrine and Covenants 27:9; 128:17; Joseph Smith—History 1:39.
16. John A. Widtsoe, “The Worth of Souls,” *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, Oct. 1934, 189.
17. Russell M. Nelson, “Hope of Israel” (worldwide youth devotional, June 3, 2018), HopeofIsrael.ChurchofJesusChrist.org, 8.
18. Mosiah 2:41.



BY REYNA I. ABURTO
Second Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency

Thru Cloud and Sunshine, Lord, Abide with Me!

I testify that “thru cloud and sunshine” the Lord will abide with us, that our “afflictions [can be] swallowed up in the joy of Christ.”

One of our beloved hymns expresses the plea “Thru cloud and sunshine, Lord, abide with me!”¹ I was once on a plane as it approached a large storm. Looking out the window, I could see a dense blanket of clouds below us. The rays of the setting sun reflected off the clouds, causing them to shine with intense brightness. Soon, the plane descended through the heavy clouds, and we were suddenly enveloped in a thick darkness that completely blinded us to the intense light we had witnessed just moments earlier.²

Black clouds may also form in our lives, which can blind us to God’s light and even cause us to question if that light exists for us anymore. Some of those clouds are of depression, anxiety, and other forms of mental and emotional affliction. They can distort the way we perceive ourselves, others, and even God. They affect women and men of all ages in all corners of the world.

Likewise damaging is the desensitizing cloud of skepticism that can affect

others who have not experienced these challenges. Like any part of the body, the brain is subject to illnesses, trauma, and chemical imbalances. When our minds are suffering, it is appropriate to seek help from God, from those around us, and from medical and mental health professionals.

“All human beings—male and female—are created in the image of

God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and . . . each has a divine nature and destiny.”³ Like our Heavenly Parents and our Savior, we have a physical body⁴ and experience emotions.⁵

My dear sisters, it is normal to feel sad or worried once in a while. Sadness and anxiety are natural human emotions.⁶ However, if we are constantly sad and if our pain blocks our ability to feel the love of our Heavenly Father and His Son and the influence of the Holy Ghost, then we may be suffering from depression, anxiety, or another emotional condition.

My daughter once wrote: “There was a time . . . [when] I was extremely sad all of the time. I always thought that sadness was something to be ashamed of, and that it was a sign of weakness. So I kept my sadness to myself. . . . I felt completely worthless.”⁷

A friend described it this way: “Since my early childhood, I have faced a constant battle with feelings of hopelessness, darkness, loneliness, and fear and the sense that I am broken or defective. I did everything to hide my pain and to never give the impression that I was anything but thriving and strong.”⁸





My dear friends, it can happen to any of us—especially when, as believers in the plan of happiness, we place unnecessary burdens on ourselves by thinking we need to be perfect now. Such thoughts can be overwhelming. Achieving perfection is a process that will take place throughout our mortal life and beyond—and only through the grace of Jesus Christ.⁹

In contrast, when we open up about our emotional challenges, admitting we are not perfect, we give others permission to share their struggles. Together we realize there is hope and we do not have to suffer alone.¹⁰

As disciples of Jesus Christ, we have made a covenant with God that we “are willing to bear one another’s burdens” and “to mourn with those that mourn.”¹¹ This may include becoming informed about emotional illnesses, finding resources that can help address these struggles, and ultimately bringing ourselves and others to Christ, who is the Master Healer.¹² Even if we do not know how to relate to what others are going through, validating that their pain is real can be an important first

step in finding understanding and healing.¹³

In some cases, the cause of depression or anxiety can be identified, while other times it may be harder to discern.¹⁴ Our brains may suffer because of stress¹⁵ or staggering fatigue,¹⁶ which can sometimes be improved through adjustments in diet, sleep, and exercise. Other times, therapy or medication under the direction of trained professionals may also be needed.

Untreated mental or emotional illness can lead to increased isolation, misunderstandings, broken relationships, self-harm, and even suicide. I know this firsthand, as my own father died by suicide many years ago. His death was shocking and heartbreaking for my family and me. It has taken me years to work through my grief, and it was only recently that I learned talking about suicide in appropriate ways actually helps to prevent it rather than encourage it.¹⁷ I have now openly discussed my father’s death with my children and witnessed the healing that the Savior can give on both sides of the veil.¹⁸

Sadly, many who suffer from severe depression distance themselves from their fellow Saints because they feel they do not fit some imaginary mold. We can help them know and feel that they do indeed belong with us. It is important to recognize that depression is not the result of weakness, nor is it usually the result of sin.¹⁹ It “thrives in secrecy but shrinks in empathy.”²⁰ Together, we can break through the clouds of isolation and stigma so the burden of shame is lifted and miracles of healing can occur.

During His mortal ministry, Jesus Christ healed the sick and the afflicted, but each person had to exercise faith in Him and act to receive His healing. Some walked for long distances, others extended their hand to touch His garment, and others had to be carried to Him in order to be healed.²¹ When it comes to healing, don’t we all need Him desperately? “Are we not all beggars?”²²

Let us follow the Savior’s path and increase our compassion, diminish our tendency to judge, and stop being the inspectors of the spirituality of others. Listening with love is one of the greatest gifts we can offer, and we may be able to help carry or lift the heavy clouds that suffocate our loved ones and friends²³ so that, through our love, they can once again feel the Holy Ghost and perceive the light that emanates from Jesus Christ.

If you are constantly surrounded by a “mist of darkness,”²⁴ turn to Heavenly Father. Nothing that you have experienced can change the eternal truth that you are His child and that He loves you.²⁵ Remember that Christ is your Savior and Redeemer, and God is your Father. They understand. Picture Them close by you, listening and offering support.²⁶ “[They] will console you in your

afflictions.”²⁷ Do all you can, and trust in the Lord’s atoning grace.

Your struggles do not define you, but they can *refine* you.²⁸ Because of a “thorn in the flesh,”²⁹ you may have the ability to feel more compassion toward others. As guided by the Holy Ghost, share your story in order to “succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees.”³⁰

For those of us currently struggling or supporting someone who is struggling, let us be willing to follow God’s commandments so we may always have His Spirit with us.³¹ Let us do the “small and simple things”³² that will give us spiritual strength. As President Russell M. Nelson said, “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, and regular time committed to temple and family history work.”³³

Let us all remember that our Savior, Jesus Christ, “[has taken] upon him [our] infirmities, that his bowels may be



filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know . . . how to succor [us] according to [our] infirmities.”³⁴ He came “to bind up the brokenhearted, . . . to comfort all that mourn; . . . to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.”³⁵

I testify to you that “thru cloud and sunshine” the Lord will abide with us, our “afflictions [can be] swallowed up in the joy of Christ,”³⁶ and “it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do.”³⁷ I testify that Jesus Christ will return to the earth “with healing in his wings.”³⁸ Ultimately, He “shall wipe away all tears from [our] eyes; and there shall be no more . . . sorrow.”³⁹ For all who will “come unto Christ, and be perfected in him,”⁴⁰ the “sun shall no more go down; . . . for the Lord shall be [our] everlasting light, and the days of [our] mourning shall be ended.”⁴¹ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. “Abide with Me!” *Hymns*, no. 166.
2. When we were above the clouds, we could not visualize the darkness that lay just a few feet below us, and when we were enveloped in the darkness underneath, it was difficult to visualize the radiance of the sun that shone just a few feet above us.
3. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2017, 145.
4. “The spirit and the body are the soul of man” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:15). “Your body is the temple for your spirit. And how you use your body affects your spirit” (Russell M. Nelson, “Decisions for Eternity,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 107).
5. See, for example, Isaiah 65:19; Luke 7:13; 3 Nephi 17:6–7; Moses 7:28. Learning to identify and value our emotions can help us use them constructively to become more like our Savior, Jesus Christ.
6. See “Sadness and Depression,” kidshealth.org/en/kids/depression.html.
7. Hermana Elena Aburto blog, hermanaelenaaburto.blogspot.com/2015/08. She also wrote:
“That trial gave me the chance to truly exercise my faith in the plan of salvation. For I knew that my Heavenly Father loved me, and that He had a plan just for me, and that Christ understood exactly what I was going through.”
“God does not shame you when you are lacking a skill. He is happy to help you improve and repent. He doesn’t expect you to fix everything at once. You don’t have to do this alone” (iwillhealthee.blogspot.com/2018/09).
8. Personal correspondence. She also wrote:
“The healing balm of my Savior’s Atonement has been the most constant source of peace and refuge throughout my journey. When I feel alone in my struggle, I am reminded that He has already experienced exactly what I am going through on my behalf. . . . There is so much hope in knowing that my future perfected, resurrected body will not be plagued by this mortal [affliction].”
9. See Russell M. Nelson, “Perfection Pending,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 86–88; Jeffrey R. Holland, “Be Ye Therefore Perfect—Eventually,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2017, 40–42; J. Devn Cornish, “Am I Good Enough? Will I Make It?” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 32–34; Cecil O. Samuelson, “What Does It Mean to Be Perfect?” *New Era*, Jan. 2006, 10–13.
10. It is important to talk about these issues with our children, families, and friends in our homes, wards, and communities.
11. Mosiah 18:8–9.
12. See Russell M. Nelson, “Jesus Christ—the Master Healer,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2005, 85–88; Carole M. Stephens, “The Master Healer,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 9–12.
13. Knowing how to recognize signs and symptoms in ourselves and others can be helpful. We can also learn to detect inaccurate or unhealthy thinking patterns and how to replace them with more accurate and healthier ones.
14. Depression can also result from positive life changes—such as the birth of a child or a new job—and can occur when things are good in a person’s life.
15. See “Understanding Stress,” *Adjusting to Missionary Life* (2013), 5–10.
16. See Jeffrey R. Holland, “Like a Broken Vessel,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 40.
17. See Dale G. Renlund, “Understanding Suicide” (video), ChurchofJesusChrist.org; “Talking about Suicide” (video), ChurchofJesusChrist.org; Kenishi Shimokawa, “Understanding Suicide: Warning Signs and Prevention,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Oct. 2016, 35–39.
18. “The beginning of healing requires childlike faith in the unalterable fact that Father in Heaven loves you and has supplied a way to heal. His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, laid



BY LISA L. HARKNESS
First Counselor in the Primary General Presidency

Honoring His Name

With covenant identity and belonging, we are called by the name of Jesus Christ.

down His life to provide that healing. But there is no magic solution, no simple balm to provide healing, nor is there an easy path to the complete remedy. The cure requires profound faith in Jesus Christ and in His infinite capacity to heal” (Richard G. Scott, “To Heal the Shattering Consequences of Abuse,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2008, 42). When there is a problem, our tendency is to fix it. However, we do not have to become sole fixers of ourselves or of others. We do not have to do everything ourselves. On more than one occasion in my life, I have sought therapists to help me deal with difficult times.

19. See John 9:1–7.
20. Jane Clayton Johnson, *Silent Souls Weeping* (2018), 197.
21. See Matthew 9:2–7, 20–22; 14:35–36; Mark 1:40–42; 2:3–5; 3 Nephi 17:6–7.
22. Mosiah 4:19; see also Jeffrey R. Holland, “Are We Not All Beggars?” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 40–42.
23. See Romans 2:19; 13:12; see also Jeffrey R. Holland, “Come unto Me” (Brigham Young University devotional, Mar. 2, 1997), speeches.byu.edu.
24. 1 Nephi 8:23; see also 1 Nephi 12:4, 17; 3 Nephi 8:22.
25. See Psalm 82:6; Romans 8:16–18; Doctrine and Covenants 24:1; 76:24; Moses 1:1–39.
26. See *Adjusting to Missionary Life*, 20; see also Micah 7:8; Matthew 4:16; Luke 1:78–79; John 8:12.
27. Jacob 3:1; see also Ephesians 5:8; Colossians 1:10–14; Mosiah 24:13–14; Alma 38:5. Read your patriarchal blessing or ask for a priesthood blessing so you can hear and remember how much Heavenly Father loves you and wants to bless you.
28. See 2 Corinthians 4:16–18; Doctrine and Covenants 121:7–8, 33; 122:5–9.
29. 2 Corinthians 12:7.
30. Doctrine and Covenants 81:5; see also Isaiah 35:3.
31. See Moroni 4:3; Doctrine and Covenants 20:77.
32. Alma 37:6.
33. Russell M. Nelson, “Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2018, 95.
34. Alma 7:12; see also Isaiah 53:4; 2 Nephi 9:21; Mosiah 14:4.
35. Isaiah 61:1–3; see also Luke 4:18.
36. Alma 31:38; see also Alma 32:43; 33:23.
37. 2 Nephi 25:23.
38. Malachi 4:2; 3 Nephi 25:2.
39. Revelation 21:4.
40. Moroni 10:32.
41. Isaiah 60:20.

As parents excitedly await the birth of a child, they have the responsibility of choosing a name for their new baby. Perhaps when you were born, you received a name that was passed down in your family for generations. Or maybe the name you were given was popular in the year or area in which you were born.

The prophet Helaman and his wife gave meaningful family names to their infant sons Nephi and Lehi. Helaman later told his sons:

“I have given unto you the names of our first parents . . . that when you

remember your names ye may remember them; and when ye remember them ye may remember their works . . . that it is said, and also written, that they were good.

“Therefore, my sons, I would that ye should do that which is good.”¹

Nephi’s and Lehi’s names helped them remember the good works of their ancestors and encouraged them to do good as well.

Sisters, no matter where we live, what language we speak, or whether we are 8 years old or 108, we all share a special name that has these same purposes.



“For as many of [us] as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ . . . for [we] are all one in Christ Jesus.”²

As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, “we first pledge[d] our willingness to take upon us the name of Christ . . . by the ordinance of baptism.”³ Through this covenant, we promised to always remember Him, keep His commandments, and serve others. Our willingness to keep this covenant is renewed each Sabbath day when we partake of the sacrament and rejoice once again in *the blessing* of “walk[ing] in newness of life.”⁴

The name we were given at birth reflects our individual identity and gives us belonging within our earthly families. However, when we were “born again” at baptism, our understanding of who we are was enlarged. “Because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, . . . for behold, . . . he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him.”⁵

Thus, with covenant identity and belonging, we are called by the name of Jesus Christ. And “there [is] no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent.”⁶

The name of Jesus was known long before His birth. To King Benjamin, an angel prophesied, “And he shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, . . . and his mother shall be called Mary.”⁷ His work of “redeeming love”⁸ was also made known to God’s children whenever the gospel has been on the earth, from the days of Adam and Eve until our present day, so they could “know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins.”⁹



Last year, President Russell M. Nelson extended “a prophetic plea” to the sisters “to shape the future by helping to gather scattered Israel.” He invited us to read the Book of Mormon and “mark each verse that speaks of or refers to the Savior.” He asked that we “be intentional about talking of Christ, rejoicing in Christ, and preaching of Christ with [our family] and friends.” Perhaps you have begun to recognize the fruits of his promise that “you and they will be drawn closer to the Savior. . . . And changes, even miracles, will begin to happen.”¹⁰

Our promise to always remember the Savior gives us strength to stand for truth and righteousness—whether we are in a large crowd or in our solitary places, where no one knows our actions except for God. When we remember Him and His name we bear, we have no place for self-degrading comparisons or overbearing judgments. With our eyes on the Savior, we see ourselves for who

we really are—a cherished child of God.

Our covenant remembering quiets worldly worries, turns self-doubt into courage, and gives hope in times of trial.

And when we stumble and fall in our progression along the covenant path, we have only to remember His name and His loving-kindness toward us. “For he has all power, all wisdom, and all understanding; he comprehendeth all things, and he is a merciful Being . . . to those who will repent and believe on his name.”¹¹ Surely there is no sweeter sound than the name of Jesus to all those who, with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, seek to “do better and be better.”¹²

President Nelson taught: “The day is gone when you can be a quiet and comfortable Christian. Your religion is not just about showing up for church on Sunday. It is about showing up as a true disciple from Sunday morning through Saturday night. . . . There is no



such thing as a ‘part-time’ disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ.”¹³

Our willingness to take upon us the name of Christ is more than a formal exchange of words. It is not a passive promise or a cultural contrivance. It is not a rite of passage or a name tag that we wear. It is not a saying that we simply place on a shelf or hang on a wall. His is a name that is “put on,”¹⁴ written in our hearts, and “engraven upon [our] countenances.”¹⁵

The Savior’s atoning sacrifice should be remembered, always, through our thoughts, actions, and interactions with others. Not only does He remember *our names*, but He remembers *us* always. The Savior declared:

“For can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee, O house of Israel.

“Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.”¹⁶

President George Albert Smith taught, “Honor the names that you bear, because some day you will have the privilege and the obligation of reporting . . . to your Father in heaven . . . what you have done with [those names].”¹⁷

Like the carefully chosen names of Nephi and Lehi, can it be said and written of us that we are true disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ? Do we honor the name of Jesus Christ that we have willingly taken upon ourselves? Are we both “a minister and a witness”¹⁸ of His loving-kindness and His redeeming power?

Not long ago, I was listening to the Book of Mormon. In the last chapter of 2 Nephi, I *heard* Nephi say something that I had never *read* the same way before. All throughout his record, he teaches and testifies of the “Redeemer,” the “Holy One of Israel,” the “Lamb of God,” and the “Messiah.” But as he closed his account, I heard him say these words: “I glory in plainness; I glory in truth; I glory in *my Jesus*, for he hath redeemed my soul.”¹⁹ When I heard these words, my heart rejoiced and I had to listen over and over again. I recognized and responded to that verse just as I recognize and respond to my own name.

The Lord has said, “Yea, blessed is this people who are willing to bear my name; for in my name shall they be called; and they are mine.”²⁰

As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, may we

“gladly [take upon us] the name of Christ”²¹ by honoring His name with love, devotion, and good works. I testify that He is “the Lamb of God, yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father.”²² In the name of His holy child, Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Helaman 5:6–7.
2. Galatians 3:27–28.
3. D. Todd Christofferson, “The Power of Covenants,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2009, 20.
4. Romans 6:4.
5. Mosiah 5:7.
6. Mosiah 3:17.
7. Mosiah 3:8.
8. Alma 26:13.
9. 2 Nephi 25:26.
10. Russell M. Nelson, “Sisters’ Participation in the Gathering of Israel,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 69–70.
11. Alma 26:35.
12. Russell M. Nelson, “We Can Do Better and Be Better,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2019, 68.
13. Russell M. Nelson, “Disciples of Jesus Christ—Defenders of Marriage” (Brigham Young University commencement, Aug. 14, 2014), 3, speeches.byu.edu.
14. Galatians 3:27.
15. Alma 5:19.
16. 1 Nephi 21:15–16.
17. George Albert Smith, “Your Good Name,” *Improvement Era*, Mar. 1947, 139.
18. Acts 26:16.
19. 2 Nephi 33:6; emphasis added.
20. Mosiah 26:18.
21. Alma 46:15.
22. 1 Nephi 11:21.



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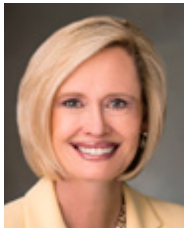
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BY BONNIE H. CORDON
Young Women General President

Beloved Daughters

At the heart of all we do in Young Women is our desire to help you gain unshakable faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

My dear sisters, it is a joy to be with you! We are witnessing an outpouring of revelation that is both soul stretching and exhilarating.

As we begin, I would like to introduce you to some friends; they are young women unique in talent, custom, and individual and family circumstance. Each of them, like all of you, has captured my heart.

First, meet Bella. She stands strong as the only young woman in her branch in Iceland.

Meet devoted Josephine from Africa, who has recommitted to studying the Book of Mormon every day. She is discovering the power and the blessings that come from this simple, faithful act.

And finally, meet my dear friend Ashtyn, an extraordinary young woman who passed away after a six-year battle with cancer. Her strong testimony of the Atonement of Jesus Christ still echoes in my heart.

You are *all* remarkable young women. You are unique, each with your own gifts and experiences yet alike in a very important and eternal way.

You are literally the spirit daughters of Heavenly Parents, and nothing can separate you from Their love and the love of your Savior.¹ As you draw closer

to Him, even taking the smallest baby steps forward, you will discover the lasting peace that settles into your soul as a faithful disciple of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

President Russell M. Nelson, our dearly beloved prophet, has asked that I share some inspired changes that will help you “develop [your] sacred personal potential”² and increase your righteous influence. I will address four areas of adjustment tonight.

Young Women Theme

First, at the heart of all we do in Young Women is our desire to help you gain unshakable faith in the Lord Jesus Christ³ and a sure knowledge of your divine identity as a daughter of God.

Tonight, I would like to announce a revision to the Young Women theme. I

pray you will feel the Holy Ghost testify of the truth of these words as I say the new theme:

I am a beloved daughter of heavenly parents,⁴ with a divine nature and eternal destiny.⁵

As a disciple of Jesus Christ,⁶ I strive to become like Him.⁷ I seek and act upon personal revelation⁸ and minister to others in His holy name.⁹

I will stand as a witness of God at all times and in all things and in all places.¹⁰

As I strive to qualify for exaltation,¹¹ I cherish the gift of repentance¹² and seek to improve each day.¹³ With faith,¹⁴ I will strengthen my home and family,¹⁵ make and keep sacred covenants,¹⁶ and receive the ordinances¹⁷ and blessings of the holy temple.¹⁸

Notice the shift from “we” to “I.” These truths apply to you individually. You *are* a beloved daughter of Heavenly Parents. You *are* a covenant disciple of our Savior, Jesus Christ. I invite you to study and ponder these words. I know that as you do, you will gain a testimony of their truthfulness. Understanding these truths will change the way you face challenges. Knowing your identity and purpose will help you align your will with the Savior’s.

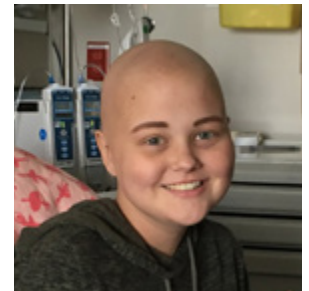
Peace and guidance will be yours as you follow Jesus Christ.



Bella, from Iceland



Josephine, from Africa



Ashtyn, who battled cancer



Young Women Classes

The second area of change affects Young Women classes. Elder Neal A. Maxwell said, “So often what people need so much is to be sheltered from the storms of life in the sanctuary of belonging.”¹⁹ Our classes must be sanctuaries from the storms, secure places of love and belonging. In an effort to build greater unity, strengthen friendships, and increase that feeling of belonging within Young Women, we are making some adjustments to class structure.

For over 100 years, young women have been divided into three classes. Beginning immediately, we invite Young Women leaders and bishops to prayerfully consider the needs of each young woman and organize them according to the ward’s specific circumstances. Here are some examples of how this might look.

- If you have few young women, you could have one Young Women class with everyone meeting together.
- Perhaps you have a large group of young women age 12 and then a small group of young women who are older. You may decide to have two classes: Young Women 12 and Young Women 13–18.
- Or if you have a large ward with 60 young women attending, you may have six classes, one for each age, organized by year.

However your classes are organized, you young women are vital in building unity. Be a light to those around you. Be the source of love and care you are hoping to receive from others. With a prayer in your heart, continue to reach out and be that force for good. As you do so, your life will be filled with kindness. You will have a better feeling

toward others and will begin to see their goodness in return.

Young Women Class Names

Third, with this new class organization, all classes will be referred to by the unifying name of “Young Women.”²⁰ We will retire the names “Beehive,” “Mia Maid,” and “Laurel.”

Strengthen Class Presidencies

The final area I wish to address is the importance of class presidencies. No matter how Young Women classes are organized, *every class should have a class presidency!*²¹ It is by divine design that young women are called to lead in their youth.

The role and purpose of class presidencies have been strengthened and more clearly defined. The work of salvation is one of these significant responsibilities, particularly in the areas of ministering, missionary work, activation, and temple and family history work.²² Yes, this is how we gather Israel²³—a glorious work for all young women as members of the Lord’s youth battalion.

As you know, at every level of the Church, the Lord calls presidencies to lead His people. Young women, being a member of a class presidency may be your first opportunity to participate in this inspired pattern of leadership. Adult leaders, make the calling of class presidencies a priority and then lead side-by-side with them, mentoring and guiding them so they can succeed.²⁴ Whatever level of leadership experience a class presidency has, start where they are and help them develop the skills



Chloe

and confidence that will bless them as leaders. Stay close to them, but don't take over. The Spirit will guide you as you guide them.

To illustrate the vital role of parents and leaders as mentors, let me tell you a story. Chloe was called to serve as a class president. Her wise priesthood leader encouraged her to seek the Lord's help in recommending names for her presidency. Chloe prayed and received inspiration for whom to recommend as her counselors rather quickly. As she continued to ponder and pray about a secretary, the Spirit repeatedly drew her focus to a young woman who surprised her—someone who rarely came to church or activities.

Feeling a little insecure with the prompting, Chloe talked with her mother, who explained that one of the ways we can receive revelation is through recurring thoughts. With renewed confidence, Chloe felt she could recommend this young woman. The bishop extended the call, and the young woman accepted. After being set apart, this sweet secretary said, "You know, I've never felt as though I had a place or was needed anywhere. I didn't feel I fit in. But with this calling, I feel as though Heavenly Father has a purpose and a place for me." As Chloe and her mother left the meeting, Chloe turned to her mother and said, with tears in her eyes, "Revelation is real! Revelation really works!"

Class presidencies, you have been called of God and trusted to lead a group of His daughters. "The Lord knows you. . . . He chose you."²⁵ You have been *set apart* by one who has priesthood authority; this means as you perform the duties of your calling, you exercise priesthood authority. You have an important work to do. Be sensitive to and act on the promptings of the



Holy Ghost. As you do so, you can serve with confidence, for you do not serve alone!

Class presidents, we need your wisdom, voice, and energy in the new ward youth council that Elder Quentin L. Cook announced today. You are an essential part of the solution to meeting the needs of your brothers and sisters.²⁶

These changes in class organization and leadership may begin as soon as wards and branches are ready but should be in place by January 1, 2020.

My dear sisters, I bear witness that these adjustments I have spoken of today are inspired direction from the

Lord. As we diligently implement these adjustments, may we never lose sight of our purpose: to strengthen our resolve to follow Jesus Christ and help others come unto Him. I testify that this is His Church. How grateful I am that He allows us to be a very important part of His sacred work.

I pray that the same Spirit that has guided these adjustments will guide you as you press forward on the covenant path. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See Romans 8:35–39.
2. Russell M. Nelson, "Witnesses, Aaronic Priesthood Quorums, and Young Women Classes," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2019, 39.
3. See Proverbs 3:5–7; Jacob 7:5.
4. See Romans 8:16–17; Doctrine and Covenants 76:24; "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2017, 145.
5. See 2 Peter 1:3–4; Alma 37:44; Doctrine and Covenants 78:18; "The Family: A Proclamation to the World."
6. See John 13:14–15, 35.
7. See Matthew 22:37–39; 25:40; 3 Nephi 12:48.
8. See John 16:13; 3 Nephi 14:7–8; Moroni 7:13; 10:5; Doctrine and Covenants 8:2; 9:8; 11:13.
9. See Matthew 20:26–28; 22:37–39; 25:34–40; 3 Nephi 26:19.
10. See Isaiah 43:10; Mosiah 18:9; Doctrine and Covenants 14:8.
11. See Romans 8:17; 2 Nephi 9:18; 31:20; Doctrine and Covenants 84:38; 132:49; Moses 1:39.
12. See Helaman 12:23; Moroni 10:33; Doctrine and Covenants 58:42.





BY PRESIDENT HENRY B. EYRING
Second Counselor in the First Presidency

13. See Alma 34:33; Doctrine and Covenants 82:18.
14. See Hebrews 11; 2 Nephi 31:19–20; Alma 32:21.
15. See Joshua 24:15; Doctrine and Covenants 109:8; 132:19.
16. See Exodus 19:5; 1 Nephi 14:14; 2 Nephi 11:5; Doctrine and Covenants 54:6; 66:2; 90:24.
17. See Mosiah 13:30; Alma 30:3; Doctrine and Covenants 84:20–22; Articles of Faith 1:3.
18. See Psalm 24:3; Isaiah 2:3; Ezekiel 37:26.
19. Neal A. Maxwell, *All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience* (1979), 55.
20. Classes should be referred to by the unifying title of “Young Women.” To identify a specific class, include the age—for example, “Young Women 12–14”; “Young Women 15–18” (see *Handbook 2: Administering the Church*, 10.1.5, ChurchofJesusChrist.org).
21. A class presidency should be called for each Young Women class. Where possible, a full presidency should be called, with a president, two counselors, and a secretary. If needed, a partial presidency may be called (see *Handbook 2*, 10.3.5).
22. See *Handbook 2*, 10.3.5.
23. See Russell M. Nelson “Hope of Israel” (worldwide youth devotional, June 3, 2018), HopeofIsrael.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
24. Additional instruction is available for adult Young Women leaders in *Handbook 2*, chapter 10.
25. Henry B. Eyring, “Rise to Your Call,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2002, 76.
26. If you have only one class and one class presidency, the full presidency can participate in ward youth council with the Aaronic Priesthood quorum presidents so there is a balance of young women and young men (see *Handbook 2*, 18.2.9).

Covenant Women in Partnership with God

Becoming a covenant woman in partnership with God is how great and good daughters of God have always mothered, led, and ministered.

I am grateful for the blessing of addressing you, the covenant daughters of God. Tonight, my purpose is to encourage you in the great service to which you are called. Yes, every daughter of God listening to my voice has received a call from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Your call began when you were placed into mortality, in a place and time chosen for you by a God who knows you perfectly and loves you as His daughter. In the spirit world, He knew you and taught you and placed you where you would have the

opportunity, rare in the history of the world, to be invited into a baptismal font. There, you would hear these words spoken by a called servant of Jesus Christ: “Having been commissioned of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.”¹

When you came out of the water, you had accepted another call to serve. As a new covenant daughter of God, you made a promise and received an assignment in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, of which you were then confirmed a member.



You covenanted with God to take upon yourself the name of Jesus Christ, to keep His commandments, and to serve Him.

For each one who makes these covenants, the service that the Lord calls him or her to do will be suited perfectly to that person. The covenant daughters and sons of God, however, all share one important and joyful call. It is to serve others for Him.

Speaking to sisters, President Russell M. Nelson gave a wonderful summary of the Lord's call to you to join Him in His work. President Nelson described your call in this way: "The Lord said, 'My work and my glory [is] to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.' (Moses 1:39.) So His devoted daughter-disciple may truly say, 'My work and my glory is to help my loved ones reach that heavenly goal.'

"To help another human being reach one's celestial potential is part of the divine mission of woman. As mother, teacher, or nurturing Saint, she molds living clay to the shape of her hopes. In partnership with God, her divine mission is to help spirits live and souls be lifted. This is the measure of her creation. It is ennobling, edifying, and exalting."²

You cannot know when, or for what length of time, your personal mission will be focused on service in calls such as mother, leader, or ministering sister. The Lord, out of love, does not leave us the choice of the timing, duration, or sequence of our assignments. Yet you know from scripture and living prophets that all of these assignments will come, either in this life or in the next, to every daughter of God. And all of them are preparation for eternal life in loving families—"the greatest of all the gifts of God."³



You will be wise to bend every effort to prepare now with the end in mind. That task is made simpler because each of these assignments requires much of the same preparation.

Let's start with the assignment to be a ministering sister. Whether you have that assignment as a 10-year-old daughter in a family where the father has died, or as a Relief Society president whose town was recently affected by fire, or when you are in a hospital recovering from surgery—you have a chance to fulfill your call from the Lord to be His ministering daughter.

Those appear to be very different ministering assignments. Yet they all

require the preparation of a powerful, loving heart, a fearless faith that the Lord gives no command save He prepares a way, and a desire to go and do for Him.⁴

Because she was prepared, the 10-year-old daughter put her arms around her widowed mother and prayed to know how to help her family. And she keeps at it.

The Relief Society president had prepared to minister before the unexpected fire in her area. She had come to know and love the people. Her faith in Jesus Christ had grown over the years from having received answers to her prayers for the Lord to help her in



small services for Him. Because of her long preparation, she was ready and eager to organize her sisters to minister to people and families in distress.

A sister recovering in a hospital from surgery was prepared to minister to her fellow patients. She had spent a lifetime ministering for the Lord to every stranger as if he or she was a neighbor and a friend. When she felt in her heart the call to minister in the hospital, she served others so bravely and with such love that the other patients began to hope she wouldn't recover too soon.

In the same way that you prepare to minister, you can and must prepare for your call to be a leader for the Lord when it comes. It will require faith in Jesus Christ, rooted in your deep love of the scriptures, to lead people and to teach His word without fear. Then you will be prepared to have the Holy Ghost as your constant companion. You will be eager to say, "I will," when your counselor in the Young Women presidency says, with panic in her voice, "Sister Alvarez is sick today. Who will teach her class?"

It takes much the same preparation for the wonderful day when the Lord calls you to an assignment as a mother. But it will also take an even more loving heart than you needed earlier. It will take faith in Jesus Christ beyond what has ever before been in

your heart. And it will take a capacity to pray for the influence, direction, and comfort of the Holy Ghost beyond what you may have felt was even possible.

You might reasonably ask how a man of any age can know what mothers need. It's a valid question. Men can't know everything, but we can learn some lessons by revelation from God. And we can also learn much by observation, when we take the opportunity to seek the Spirit to help us understand what we observe.

I have been observing Kathleen Johnson Eyring for the 57 years we

have been married. She is the mother of four boys and two girls. To date, she has accepted the call to be a mothering influence on more than a hundred direct family members and hundreds more whom she has adopted into her mother heart.

You remember President Nelson's perfect description of a woman's divine mission—including her mission of mothering: "As mother, teacher, or nurturing Saint, she molds living clay to the shape of her hopes. In partnership with God, her divine mission is to help spirits live and souls be lifted. This is the measure of her creation."⁵





BY PRESIDENT DALLIN H. OAKS
First Counselor in the First Presidency

As nearly as I can discern, my wife, Kathleen, has followed that charge, given to our Father’s daughters. The key appears to me to be the words “she molds living clay to the shape of her hopes . . . in partnership with God.” She did not force. She molded. And she had a template for her hopes, and to which she tried to mold those she loved and mothered. Her template was the gospel of Jesus Christ—as I could see through prayerful observation over the years.

Becoming a covenant woman in partnership with God is how great and good daughters of God have always mothered, led, and ministered, serving in whatever way and place He has prepared for them. I promise that you will find joy in your journey to your heavenly home as you return to Him as a covenant-keeping daughter of God.

I testify that God the Father lives and He loves you. He will answer your prayers. His Beloved Son leads, in every detail, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Russell M. Nelson is His living prophet. And Joseph Smith saw and spoke with God the Father and Jesus Christ in a grove of trees in Palmyra, New York. I know that is true. I also testify that Jesus Christ is your Savior; He loves you. And through His Atonement, you can be purified and lifted to the high and holy callings which will come to you. I so testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 20:73.
2. Russell M. Nelson, “Woman—Of Infinite Worth,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, 22.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
4. See 1 Nephi 3:7.
5. Russell M. Nelson, “Woman—Of Infinite Worth,” 22.

Two Great Commandments

We must try to keep both of the great commandments. To do so, we walk a fine line between law and love.

My dear sisters in the gospel of Jesus Christ, I greet you as divinely assigned guardians of the eternal family. President Russell M. Nelson has taught us, “This Church was restored so that families could be formed, sealed, and exalted eternally.”¹ That teaching has important implications for persons who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender, commonly referred to as LGBT.² President Nelson has also reminded us that we don’t “have to [always] agree with each other to love each other.”³ These prophetic teachings are important for family discussions to answer the questions of children and youth. I have prayerfully sought inspiration to speak to this audience because you are uniquely affected by these questions, which directly or indirectly affect every family in the Church.

I.

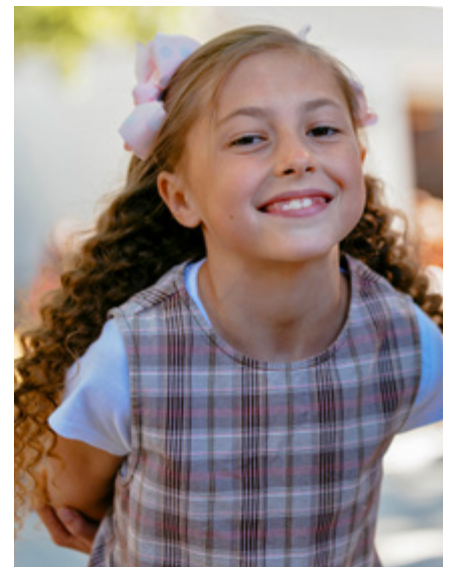
I begin with what Jesus taught were the two great commandments.

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

“This is the first and great commandment.

“And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”⁴

This means we are commanded to love everyone, since Jesus’s parable of the good Samaritan teaches that everyone is our neighbor.⁵ But our zeal to keep this second commandment must not cause us to forget the first, to



love God with all our heart, soul, and mind. We show that love by “keep[ing] [His] commandments.”⁶ God requires us to obey His commandments because only through that obedience, including repentance, can we return to live in His presence and become perfect as He is.

In his recent talk to the young adults of the Church, President Russell M. Nelson spoke of what he called the “strong connection between God’s love and His laws.”⁷ The laws that apply most significantly to the issues relating to those identifying as LGBT are God’s law of marriage and its companion law of chastity. Both are essential in our Father in Heaven’s plan of salvation for His children. As President Nelson taught, “God’s laws are motivated entirely by His infinite love for us and His desire for us to become all we can become.”⁸

President Nelson taught: “Many countries . . . have legalized same-sex marriage. As members of the Church, we respect the laws of the land . . . , including civil marriage. The truth

is, however, that in the beginning . . . marriage was ordained by God! And to this day it is defined by Him as being between a man and a woman. God has not changed *His* definition of marriage.”

President Nelson continued: “God has also not changed His law of chastity. Requirements to enter the temple have not changed.”⁹

President Nelson reminded all of us that “our commission as Apostles is to teach nothing but truth. That commission does *not* give [Apostles] the authority to modify divine law.”¹⁰ Thus, my sisters, the leaders of the Church must always teach the unique importance of marriage between a man and a woman and the related law of chastity.

II.

The work of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is ultimately concerned with preparing the children of God for the celestial kingdom, and most particularly for its highest glory, exaltation or eternal life. That highest

destiny is possible only through marriage for eternity.¹¹ Eternal life includes the creative powers inherent in the combination of male and female¹²—what modern revelation describes as the “continuation of the seeds forever and ever.”¹³

In his talk to young adults, President Nelson taught, “Abiding by God’s laws will keep you safe as you progress toward eventual exaltation”¹⁴—that is, to become like God, with the exalted life and divine potential of our Heavenly Parents. That is the destiny we desire for all we love. Because of that love, we cannot let our love supersede the commandments and the plan and work of God, which we know will bring those we love their greatest happiness.

But there are many we love, including some who have the restored gospel, who do not believe in or choose not to follow God’s commandments about marriage and the law of chastity. What about them?

God’s doctrine shows that all of us are His children and that He has



created us to have joy.¹⁵ Modern revelation teaches that God has provided a plan for a mortal experience in which all can choose obedience to seek His highest blessings or make choices that lead to one of the less glorious kingdoms.¹⁶ Because of God's great love for all of His children, those lesser kingdoms are still more wonderful than mortals can comprehend.¹⁷ The Atonement of Jesus Christ makes all of this possible, as He "glorifies the Father, and *saves all the works of his hands*."¹⁸

III.

I have spoken of the first commandment, but what of the second? How do we keep the commandment to love our neighbors? We seek to persuade our members that those who follow lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender teachings and actions should be treated with the love our Savior commands us to show toward all our neighbors. Thus, when same-sex marriage was declared legal in the United States, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve declared: "The gospel of Jesus Christ teaches us to love and treat all people with kindness and civility—even when we disagree. We affirm that those who avail themselves of laws or court rulings authorizing same-sex marriage should not be treated disrespectfully."¹⁹

Further, we must never persecute those who do not share our beliefs and commitments.²⁰ Regretfully, some persons facing these issues continue to feel marginalized and rejected by some members and leaders in our families, wards, and stakes. We must all strive to be kinder and more civil.

IV.

For reasons we do not understand, we have different challenges in our



mortal experiences. But we do know that God will help each of us overcome these challenges if we sincerely seek His help. After suffering and repenting for violations of laws we have been taught, we are all destined for a kingdom of glory. The ultimate and final judgment will be by the Lord, who alone has the required knowledge, wisdom, and grace to judge each of us.

Meanwhile, we must try to keep both of the great commandments. To do so, we walk a fine line between law and love—keeping the commandments and walking the covenant path, while loving our neighbors along the way. This walk requires us to seek divine inspiration on what to support and what to oppose and how to love and listen respectfully and teach in the process. Our walk demands that we not compromise on commandments but show forth a full measure of understanding and love. Our walk must be considerate of children who are uncertain about their sexual orientation, but it discourages premature labeling because, in most children, such uncertainty decreases significantly over time.²¹ Our walk opposes recruitment away from the covenant path, and it denies support to any who lead people away from the Lord. In all of this we

remember that God promises hope and ultimate joy and blessings for all who keep His commandments.

V.

Mothers and fathers and all of us are responsible to teach both of the two great commandments. For the women of the Church, President Spencer W. Kimball described that duty in this great prophecy: "Much of the major growth that is coming to the Church in the last days will come because many of the good women of the world . . . will be drawn to the Church in large numbers. This will happen to the degree that the women of the Church reflect righteousness and articulateness in their lives and to the degree that the women of the Church are seen as distinct and different . . . from the women of the world. . . . Thus it will be that female exemplars of the Church will be a significant force in both the numerical and the spiritual growth of the Church in the last days."²²

Speaking of that prophecy, President Russell M. Nelson declared that "the day that President Kimball foresaw is today. You are the women he foresaw!"²³ Little did we who heard that prophecy 40 years ago realize that among those the women of this Church



BY PRESIDENT RUSSELL M. NELSON

may save will be their own dear friends and family who are currently influenced by worldly priorities and devilish distortions. My prayer and blessing is that you will teach and act to fulfill that prophecy, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

Spiritual Treasures

As you exercise faith in the Lord and His priesthood power, your ability to draw upon this spiritual treasure that the Lord has made available will increase.

NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson, "Celestial Marriage," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 93.
2. Other initials are too numerous to mention, but these principal ones are sufficient for this talk.
3. Russell M. Nelson, remarks at the annual convention of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Detroit, Michigan, July 21, 2019.
4. Matthew 22:37–39.
5. See Luke 10:29–37.
6. John 14:15.
7. Russell M. Nelson, "The Love and Laws of God" (Brigham Young University devotional, Sept. 17, 2019), speeches.byu.edu.
8. Russell M. Nelson, "The Love and Laws of God."
9. Russell M. Nelson, "The Love and Laws of God."
10. Russell M. Nelson, "The Love and Laws of God."
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:7–13.
12. See 1 Corinthians 11:11; Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–4.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 132:19.
14. Russell M. Nelson, "The Love and Laws of God."
15. See 2 Nephi 2:25.
16. See Doctrine and Covenants 76:71–113.
17. See Doctrine and Covenants 76:89.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 76:43; emphasis added.
19. "Response to the Supreme Court Decision Legalizing Same-Sex Marriage in the United States," enclosure to First Presidency letter, June 29, 2015.
20. See Dallin H. Oaks, "Loving Others and Living with Differences," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 25–28; "Love and Law," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2009, 26–29.
21. See, for example, Michelle Forcier, "Adolescent Sexuality," UpToDate, June 3, 2019, uptodate.com/contents/adolescent-sexuality.
22. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* (2006), 222–23.
23. Russell M. Nelson, "A Plea to My Sisters," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 96.

Thank you for that beautiful music. As we all stood to sing that intermediate hymn, "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet," I had two overpowering thoughts come to me. One is about the Prophet Joseph Smith, the prophet of this dispensation. My love and admiration for him grows with every passing day. The second thought occurred as I looked at my wife, my daughters, granddaughters, and great-granddaughters. I felt like I'd like to claim every one of you as part of my family.

Several months ago, at the end of a temple endowment session, I said to my wife Wendy, "I hope the sisters understand the spiritual treasures that are theirs in the temple." Sisters, I often find myself thinking about you, including two months ago when Wendy and I visited Harmony, Pennsylvania.

This was our second trip there. Both times we have been deeply moved as we walked on that sacred ground. It was near Harmony that John the Baptist appeared to Joseph Smith and restored the Aaronic Priesthood.



It was there that the Apostles Peter, James, and John appeared to restore the Melchizedek Priesthood.

It was in Harmony that Emma Hale Smith served as her husband's first scribe while the Prophet translated the Book of Mormon.

It was also in Harmony that Joseph received a revelation manifesting the Lord's will to Emma. The Lord instructed Emma to expound the scriptures, to exhort the Church, to receive the Holy Ghost, and to spend her time "learning much." Emma was also counseled to "lay aside the things of this world and seek for the things of a better" and to hold fast to her covenants with God. The Lord concluded His instruction with these compelling words: "This is my voice unto all."¹

Everything that happened in this area has profound implications for *your* lives. The restoration of the priesthood, along with the Lord's counsel to Emma, can guide and bless each of you. How I yearn for you to understand that the restoration of the priesthood is just as relevant to you as a woman as it is to any man. Because the Melchizedek Priesthood has been restored, both covenant-keeping women and men have access to "all the spiritual blessings of the church"² or, we might say, to all the spiritual treasures the Lord has for His children.

Every woman and every man who makes covenants with God and keeps those covenants, and who participates worthily in priesthood ordinances, has direct access to the power of God. Those who are endowed in the house of the Lord receive a gift of God's priesthood power by virtue of their covenant, along with a gift of knowledge to know how to draw upon that power.

The heavens are just as open to *women* who are endowed with God's



power flowing from their priesthood covenants as they are to men who bear the priesthood. I pray that truth will register upon each of your hearts because I believe it will change your life. Sisters, you have the right to draw liberally upon the Savior's power to help your family and others you love.

Now, you might be saying to yourself, "This sounds wonderful, but how do I do it? How do I draw the Savior's power into my life?"

You won't find this process spelled out in any manual. The Holy Ghost will be your personal tutor as you seek to understand what the Lord would have you know and do. This process is neither quick nor easy, but it *is* spiritually invigorating. What could possibly be more exciting than to labor with the Spirit to understand God's power—priesthood power?

What I *can* tell you is that accessing the power of God in your life requires the same things that the Lord instructed Emma and each of you to do.

So, I invite you to study prayerfully section 25 of the Doctrine and Covenants and discover what the Holy

Ghost will teach *you*. Your personal spiritual endeavor will bring you joy as you gain, understand, and use the power with which you have been endowed.

Part of this endeavor will require you to put aside many things of this world. Sometimes we speak almost casually about walking away from the world with its contention, pervasive temptations, and false philosophies. But *truly* doing so requires you to examine your life meticulously and regularly. As you do so, the Holy Ghost will prompt you about what is no longer needful, what is no longer worthy of your time and energy.

As you shift your focus away from worldly distractions, some things that seem important to you now will recede in priority. You will need to say no to some things, even though they may seem harmless. As you embark upon and continue this lifelong process of consecrating your life to the Lord, the changes in your perspective, feelings, and spiritual strength will amaze you!

Now a little word of warning: There are those who would undermine your ability to call upon the power of God.

There are some who would have you doubt yourself and minimize your stellar spiritual capacity as a righteous woman.

Most certainly, the adversary does not want you to understand the covenant you made at baptism or the profound endowment of knowledge and power you have received or will receive in the temple—the house of the Lord. And Satan certainly does not want you to understand that every time you worthily serve and worship in the temple, you leave armed with God’s power and with His angels having “charge over” you.³

Satan and his minions will constantly contrive roadblocks to prevent you from understanding the spiritual gifts with which you have been and can be blessed. Unfortunately, some roadblocks may be the result of another’s misbehavior. It grieves me to think that any of you have felt marginalized or have not been believed by a priesthood leader or have been abused or betrayed by a husband, father, or a supposed friend. I feel deep sorrow that any of

you have felt sidelined, disrespected, or misjudged. Such offenses have no place in the kingdom of God.

Conversely, it thrills me when I learn of priesthood leaders who eagerly seek the participation of women in ward and stake councils. I am inspired by each husband who demonstrates that his most important priesthood responsibility is to care for his wife.⁴ I praise that man who deeply respects his wife’s ability to receive revelation and treasures her as an equal partner in their marriage.

When a man understands the majesty and power of a righteous, seeking, endowed Latter-day Saint woman, is it any wonder that he feels like standing when she enters the room?

From the dawning of time, women have been blessed with a unique moral compass—the ability to distinguish right from wrong. This gift is enhanced in those who make and keep covenants. And it diminishes in those who willfully ignore the commandments of God.

I hasten to add that I do not absolve men in any way from God’s

requirement for *them also* to distinguish between right and wrong. But my dear sisters, your ability to discern truth from error, to be society’s guardians of morality, is crucial in these latter days. And we depend upon you to teach others to do likewise. Let me be very clear about this: if the world loses the moral rectitude of its women, the world will *never* recover.

We Latter-day Saints are not of the world; we are of covenant Israel. We are called to prepare a people for the Second Coming of the Lord.

Now, may I clarify several additional points with respect to women and priesthood. When you are set apart to serve in a calling under the direction of one who holds priesthood keys—such as your bishop or stake president—you are given priesthood authority to function in that calling.

Similarly, in the holy temple you are authorized to perform and officiate in priesthood ordinances *every time* you attend. Your temple endowment prepares you to do so.



If you are endowed but not currently married to a man who bears the priesthood and someone says to you, “I’m sorry you don’t have the priesthood in your home,” please understand that that statement is incorrect. You may not have a priesthood *bearer* in your home, but you have received and made sacred covenants with God in His temple. From those covenants flows an endowment of His priesthood power upon you. And remember, if your husband should die, *you* would preside in your home.

As a righteous, endowed Latter-day Saint woman, you speak and teach with power and authority from God. Whether by exhortation or conversation, we need your voice teaching the doctrine of Christ. We need your input in family, ward, and stake councils. Your participation is essential and never ornamental!

My dear sisters, your power will increase as you serve others. Your prayers, fasting, time in the scriptures, service in the temple, and family history work will open the heavens to you.

I entreat you to study prayerfully *all* the truths you can find about priesthood power. You might begin with Doctrine and Covenants sections 84 and 107. Those sections will lead you to other passages. The scriptures and teachings by modern prophets, seers, and revelators are filled with these truths. As your understanding increases and as you exercise faith in the Lord and His priesthood power, your ability to draw upon this spiritual treasure that the Lord has made available will increase. As you do so, you will find yourselves better able to help create eternal families that are united, sealed in the temple of the Lord, and full of love for our Heavenly Father and for Jesus Christ.



All our efforts to minister to each other, proclaim the gospel, perfect the Saints, and redeem the dead converge in the holy temple. We now have 166 temples throughout the world, and more are coming.

As you know, the Salt Lake Temple, Temple Square, and the adjoining plaza near the Church Office Building will be renewed in a project that will begin at the close of this year. *This* sacred temple must be preserved and prepared to inspire future generations, just as it has influenced us in this generation.

As the Church grows, more temples will be built so that more families can have access to that greatest of all blessings, that of eternal life.⁵ We regard a temple as *the* most sacred structure in the Church. Whenever plans are announced to construct a new temple, it becomes an important part of our history. As we have discussed here tonight, you sisters are vital to the work of the temple, and the temple is where you will receive your highest spiritual treasures.

Please listen carefully and reverently as I will now announce plans to build eight new temples. If one is announced in a place that is meaningful to you, I

suggest that you simply bow your head prayerfully with gratitude in your heart. We are pleased to announce plans to construct temples in the following locations: Freetown, Sierra Leone; Orem, Utah; Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea; Bentonville, Arkansas; Bacolod, Philippines; McAllen, Texas; Cobán, Guatemala; and Taylorsville, Utah. Thank you, dear sisters. We deeply appreciate your receipt of these plans and your reverent response.

Now, in closing, I would like to leave a blessing upon you, that you may understand the priesthood power with which you have been endowed and that you will augment that power by exercising your faith in the Lord and in His power.

Dear sisters, with deep respect and gratitude, I express my love for you. Humbly, I declare that God lives! Jesus is the Christ. This is His Church. I so testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 25:7–16.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 107:18; emphasis added.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 109:22.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 131:2–4.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.



BY ELDER GERRIT W. GONG
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Covenant Belonging

To belong with God and to walk with each other on His covenant path is to be blessed by covenant belonging.

Dear brothers and sisters, the story is told of a Primary child learning to pray. “Thank you for the letter A, the letter B, . . . the letter G.” The child’s prayer continues, “Thank you for the letters X, Y, Z. Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for the number 1, the number 2.” The Primary teacher worries but wisely waits. The child says, “Thank you for the number 5, the number 6—and thank you for my Primary teacher.

She’s the only person who’s ever let me finish my prayer.”

Heavenly Father does hear every child’s prayer. With infinite love, He beckons us to come believe and belong by covenant.

This world is full of mirage, illusion, sleight of hand. So much seems transitory and superficial. When we put aside the masks, pretense, crowd-sourced likes and dislikes, we yearn for more than fleeting veneer, ephemeral connection, or the pursuit of worldly self-interest. Gratefully, there is a way through to answers that matter.

When we come to God’s great commandments to love Him and those around us by covenant, we do so not as stranger or guest but as His child at home.¹ The age-old paradox is still true. In losing our worldly self through covenant belonging, we find and become our best eternal self²—free, alive, real—and define our most important relationships. Covenant belonging is to make and keep solemn promises to God and each other through

sacred ordinances that invite the power of godliness to be manifest in our lives.³ When we covenant all we are, we can become more than we are. Covenant belonging gives us place, narrative, capacity to become. It produces faith unto life and salvation.⁴

Divine covenants become a source of love for and from God and thereby for and with each other. God, our Heavenly Father, loves us more and knows us better than we love or know ourselves. Faith in Jesus Christ and personal change (repentance) bring mercy, grace, forgiveness. These comfort the hurt, loneliness, injustice we experience in mortality. Being God, our Heavenly Father wants us to receive God’s greatest gift—His joy, His eternal life.⁵

Our God is a God of covenant. By His nature, He “keepeth covenant and showeth mercy.”⁶ His covenants endure “so long as time shall last, or the earth shall stand, or there shall be one man upon the face thereof to be saved.”⁷ We are not meant to wander in existential uncertainty and doubt but to rejoice in cherished covenant relationships “stronger than the cords of death.”⁸

God’s ordinances and covenants are universal in their requirement and individual in their opportunity. In God’s fairness, each individual in every place and age can receive saving ordinances. Agency applies—individuals choose whether to accept offered ordinances. God’s ordinances provide guideposts on His path of covenants. We call God’s plan to bring His children home the plan of redemption, plan of salvation, plan of happiness. Redemption, salvation, celestial happiness are possible because Jesus Christ “wrought out this perfect atonement.”⁹

To belong with God and to walk with each other on His covenant path is to be blessed by covenant belonging.





for the gathering of God’s children, prophesied as a new covenant.¹⁵ As we read the Book of Mormon, by ourselves and with others, whether silently or aloud, we can ask God “with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ,” and receive by the power of the Holy Ghost God’s assurance that the Book of Mormon is true.¹⁶ This includes assurance that Jesus Christ is our Savior, Joseph Smith is the prophet of the Restoration, and the Lord’s Church is called by His name—The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.¹⁷

The Book of Mormon speaks by ancient and modern covenant to you who are the children of Lehi, “children of the prophets.”¹⁸ Your forefathers received a covenant promise that you, their descendants, would recognize a voice as if from the dust in the Book of Mormon.¹⁹ That voice you feel as you read testifies you are “children of the covenant”²⁰ and Jesus is your Good Shepherd.

The Book of Mormon invites each of us, in Alma’s words, to enter “into a covenant with [the Lord], that [we] will serve him and keep his commandments, that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon [us].”²¹ When we want to change for the better—as one person put it, “to stop being miserable and to be happy being happy”—we can become open to direction, help, and strength. We can come by covenant to belong with God and a community of faithful believers and receive the blessings promised in the doctrine of Christ²²—now.

Restored priesthood authority and power to bless all His children is a third dimension of covenant belonging. In this dispensation, John the Baptist and the Apostles Peter, James, and John have come as glorified messengers from God to restore His priesthood

First, covenant belonging centers in Jesus Christ as “mediator of the new covenant.”¹⁰ All things can work together for our good when we are “sanctified in Christ . . . in the covenant of the Father.”¹¹ Every good and promised blessing comes to those who remain faithful to the end. The “happy state of those that keep the commandments of God” is to be “blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual,” and to “dwell with God in . . . never-ending happiness.”¹²

As we honor our covenants, we may sometimes feel we are in the company of angels. And we will be—those we love and who bless us on this side of the veil and those who love and bless us from the other side of the veil.

Recently Sister Gong and I saw covenant belonging at its tender best in a hospital room. A young father desperately needed a kidney transplant. His family had wept, fasted, and prayed for him to receive a kidney. When news came that a life-saving kidney had just

become available, his wife quietly said, “I hope the other family is OK.” To belong by covenant is, in the words of the Apostle Paul, “that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.”¹³

Along life’s path, we may lose faith in God, but He never loses faith in us. As it were, His porch light is always on. He invites us to come or return to the covenants that mark His path. He waits ready to embrace us, even when we are “yet a great way off.”¹⁴ When we look with an eye of faith for the patterns, arc, or connected dots of our experience, we can see His tender mercies and encouragement, especially in our trials, sorrows, and challenges, as well as in our joys. However often we stumble or fall, if we keep moving toward Him, He will help us, a step at a time.

Second, the Book of Mormon is evidence we can hold in our hand of covenant belonging. The Book of Mormon is the promised instrument

authority.²³ God’s priesthood and His ordinances sweeten relationships on earth and can seal covenant relationships in heaven.²⁴

Priesthood can bless literally from cradle to grave—from an infant’s name and blessing to a grave dedication. Priesthood blessings heal, comfort, counsel. A father was angry with his son until forgiving love came as the father gave his son a tender priesthood blessing. The only member of the Church in her family, a dear young woman was uncertain about God’s love for her until she received an inspired priesthood blessing. Across the world, noble patriarchs prepare spiritually to give patriarchal blessings. As the patriarch lays his hands on your head, he feels and expresses God’s love for you. He pronounces your lineage in the house of Israel. He indicates blessings from the Lord. Typically thoughtful, one patriarch’s wife told me how she and her family invite the Spirit, especially on days their papa is giving patriarchal blessings.

Finally, the blessings of covenant belonging come when we follow the Lord’s prophet and rejoice in temple-covenant living, including in marriage. Covenant marriage becomes supernal and eternal as we daily choose the happiness of our spouse and family before our own. As “me” becomes “we,” we

grow together. We grow old together; we grow young together. As we bless each other across a lifetime of forgetting ourselves, we find our hopes and joys sanctified in time and eternity.

While situations differ, when we do all we can, the best we can, and sincerely ask and seek His help along the way, the Lord will guide us, in His time and manner, by the Holy Ghost.²⁵ Marriage covenants are binding by mutual choice of those making them—a reminder of God’s and our respect for agency and the blessing of His help when we unitedly seek it.

The fruits of covenant belonging across family generations are felt in our homes and hearts. Please allow me to illustrate with personal examples.

When Sister Gong and I were falling in love toward marriage, I learned about agency and decisions. For a period of time, we were in school studying in two different countries on two different continents. It is why I can honestly say I earned a PhD in international relations.

When I asked, “Heavenly Father, should I marry Susan?” I felt peace. But it was when I learned to pray with real intent, “Heavenly Father, I love Susan and want to marry her. I promise I will be the best husband and father I can be”—when I acted and made my best decisions, it was then the strongest

spiritual confirmations came.

Now our Gong and Lindsay FamilySearch family trees, stories, and photos help us discover and connect through the lived experience of generational covenant belonging.²⁶ For us, respected progenitors include:

Great-Grandma Alice Blauer Bangerter, who had three marriage proposals in one day, later asked her husband to rig a foot pedal to her butter churn so she could churn butter, knit, and read at the same time.

Great-Grandpa Loy Kuei Char carried his children on his back and his family’s few belongings on a donkey as they crossed the lava fields on Hawaii’s Big Island. Generations of Char family commitment and sacrifice bless our family today.

Gram Mary Alice Powell Lindsay was left with five young children when her husband and oldest son both died suddenly just days apart. A widow for 47 years, Gram raised her family with sustaining love from local leaders and members. During those many years, Gram promised the Lord if He would help her, she would never complain. The Lord helped her. She never complained.

Dear brothers and sisters, as witnessed by the Holy Ghost, everything good and eternal is centered in the living reality of God, our Eternal Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ, and His Atonement. Our Lord, Jesus Christ, is the Mediator of the new covenant. Testifying of Jesus Christ is a covenant purpose of the Book of Mormon.²⁷ By oath and covenant, God’s restored priesthood authority is intended to bless all God’s children, including through covenant marriage, generational family, and individual blessings.

Our Savior declares, “I am Alpha and Omega, Christ the Lord; yea, even



Alice Blauer Bangerter



Loy Kuei Char



Mary Alice Powell Lindsay



BY CRISTINA B. FRANCO
 Second Counselor in the Primary General Presidency

I am he, the beginning and the end, the Redeemer of the world.”²⁸

With us at the beginning, He is with us, in all our covenant belonging, to the end. I so testify in the sacred and holy name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See Isaac Watts, “My Shepherd Will Supply My Need,” *Ensign*, Sept. 2015, 73.
2. See Matthew 10:39.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:20.
4. See *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 69.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 109:1.
7. Moroni 7:36; see also Moroni 7:32.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 121:44.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 76:69.
10. Hebrews 12:24; Doctrine and Covenants 76:69; 107:19; see also Joseph Smith Translation, Galatians 3:20 (in the Bible appendix).
11. Moroni 10:33; see also Doctrine and Covenants 90:24; 98:3.
12. Mosiah 2:41.
13. Romans 1:12; see also Mosiah 18:8–9.
14. Luke 15:20.
15. See title page of the Book of Mormon; Doctrine and Covenants 84:57.
16. Moroni 10:4.
17. See 3 Nephi 27:7–8; Doctrine and Covenants 115:3.
18. 3 Nephi 20:25.
19. See 2 Nephi 26:16; 33:13.
20. 3 Nephi 20:26.
21. Mosiah 18:10.
22. See 2 Nephi 31:2, 12–13.
23. See Doctrine and Covenants 13; 27:12; see also introduction to the Doctrine and Covenants.
24. See Doctrine and Covenants 128:8; see also Exodus 19:5–6; Doctrine and Covenants 84:40. Those who worthily keep covenants become a precious treasure, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation. Covenants sanctify. Those who keep covenants become sanctified to the Lord.
25. See Doctrine and Covenants 8:2.
26. Generations can learn from each other, even as each generation learns for itself. The Christian writer Søren Kierkegaard intriguingly suggests, “Whatever the one generation may learn from the other, the genuinely humane no generation learns from the foregoing” (*Fear and Trembling*, trans. Vigilius Haufniensi [2018], 117).
27. See title page of the Book of Mormon.
28. Doctrine and Covenants 19:1.

Finding Joy in Sharing the Gospel

We have a loving Father in Heaven, who is waiting for us to turn to Him to bless our lives and the lives of those around us.

One of my favorite Primary songs begins with these words:

I belong to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

I know who I am.

I know God’s plan.

I’ll follow him in faith.

I believe in the Savior, Jesus Christ.¹

What a simple and beautiful statement of the truths we believe!

As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we know who we are. We know that “God is the Father of our spirits. We are . . . His children, and He loves us. We lived [with Him in heaven] before we [came to] earth.”

We know God’s plan. We were there with Him as He presented it. Our Father in Heaven’s “whole purpose—His work and His glory—is to enable each of us to enjoy all His blessings. He . . . provided a perfect plan to accomplish His purpose. We understood and accepted this plan . . . of happiness, . . . redemption, and . . . salvation” before we came to earth.

“Jesus Christ is central to God’s plan. Through His Atonement, Jesus Christ fulfilled His Father’s purpose and made it possible for each of us to enjoy immortality and exaltation. Satan, or the devil, is an enemy to God’s plan” and has been from the beginning.



“Agency, or the ability to choose, is one of God’s greatest gifts to His children. . . . We must choose whether to follow Jesus Christ or follow Satan.”

These are simple truths we can share with others.

Let me tell you of a time when my mother shared such simple truths by simply being open to having a conversation and recognizing an opportunity.

Many years ago, my mother was returning to Argentina for a visit with my brother. My mom never really liked flying, so she asked one of my sons to give her a blessing of comfort and protection. He felt prompted to also bless his grandma with special guidance and direction from the Holy Ghost to strengthen and touch the hearts of many who were desirous to learn of the gospel.

At the Salt Lake airport, my mother and brother met a seven-year-old girl who was returning home from a skiing trip with her family. Her parents noticed how long she had been talking to my mom and brother and decided to join them. They introduced themselves and their daughter as Eduardo, Maria

Susana, and Giada Pol. There was a natural and warm connection to this sweet family.

Both families were excited to be traveling together on the same flight to Buenos Aires, Argentina. As their conversation continued, my mother noted that until that moment, they’d never heard about the restored Church of Jesus Christ.

One of the first questions Susana asked was “Would you tell me about that beautiful museum with the golden statue on top?”

My mom explained that the beautiful edifice was not a museum but a temple of the Lord where we make covenants with God so we can return to live with Him one day. Susana confessed to my mom that before their trip to Salt Lake, she had prayed for something to strengthen her spirit.

During the flight, my mom bore her simple but strong testimony of the gospel and invited Susana to find the missionaries in her hometown. Susana asked my mom, “How will I find them?”

My mom replied, “You can’t miss them; they are either two young men

dressed in white shirts and ties or two nicely dressed young women, and they always wear a tag showing their name and also “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”

The families exchanged phone numbers and said goodbye at the Buenos Aires airport. Susana, who since then has become my good friend, has told me many times that she felt so sad to leave my mom at the airport. She said, “Your mom glowed. I can’t explain it, but she had a brightness about her that I didn’t want to leave behind.”

As soon as Susana got back to her hometown, she and her daughter, Giada, went to share this experience with Susana’s mom, who lived just a few blocks away from their home. As they were driving, Susana happened to see two young men walking down the street dressed as my mom had described. She stopped her car in the middle of the street, got out, and asked these two young men, “Are you by chance from the Church of Jesus Christ?”

They said, “Yes.”

“Missionaries?” she asked.

They both replied, “Yes, we are!”

She then said, “Get into my car; you’re coming home to teach me.”

Two months later, Maria Susana was baptized. Her daughter, Giada, was also baptized when she turned nine. We are still working on Eduardo, whom we love no matter what.

Since then, Susana has become one of the greatest missionaries I have ever met. She is like the sons of Mosiah, bringing many souls to Christ.

In one of our conversations, I asked her, “What is your secret? How do you share the gospel with others?”

She told me, “It is very simple. Every day before I leave my house, I pray, asking Heavenly Father to direct





me to someone who needs the gospel in their life. I sometimes take a Book of Mormon to share with them or pass-along cards from the missionaries—and when I start talking to someone, I simply ask them if they have heard about the Church.”

Susana also said, “Other times I just smile while I am waiting for the train. One day a man looked at me and said, ‘What are you smiling about?’ He kind of caught me off guard.

“I replied, ‘I’m smiling because I’m happy!’

“He then said, ‘And what are you so happy about?’

“I answered, ‘I am a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and that makes me happy. Have you heard about it?’”

When he said no, she gave him a pass-along card and invited him to attend the upcoming Sunday services. The following Sunday, she greeted him at the door.

President Dallin H. Oaks taught: “There are three things all members can do to help share the gospel. . . .

“*First*, we can all pray for desire to help with this vital part of the work of salvation. . . .

“*Second*, we can keep the commandments. . . . Faithful members will always have the Savior’s Spirit . . . with them to guide them as they seek to participate in the great work of sharing the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

“*Third*, we can pray for inspiration on what *we* can do . . . to share the gospel with others . . . [and] pray with a commitment to act upon the inspiration [we] receive.”³

Brothers, sisters, children, and youth, can we be like my friend Susana and share the gospel with others? Can we invite a friend who is not of our faith to come to church with us on Sunday? Or can we perhaps share a copy of the Book of Mormon with a relative or a friend? Can we

help others find their ancestors on FamilySearch or share with others what we have learned during the week as we have been studying *Come, Follow Me*? Can we be more like our Savior, Jesus Christ, and share with others what brings us joy to our lives? The answer to all of these questions is yes! We can do it!

In the scriptures we read that “members of the Church of Jesus Christ are sent forth ‘to labor in his vineyard for the salvation of the souls of men’ (Doctrine and Covenants 138:56). This work of salvation includes member missionary work, convert retention, activation of less-active members, temple and family history work, and teaching the gospel.”⁴

My dear friends, the Lord needs us to gather Israel. In the Doctrine and Covenants, He has said, “Neither take ye thought beforehand what ye shall say; but treasure up in your minds continually the words of life, and it



BY ELDER DIETER F. UCHTDORF
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

shall be given you in the very hour that portion that shall be meted unto every man.”⁵

In addition, He has promised us:

“And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!

“And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me into the kingdom of my Father, how great will be your joy if you should bring many souls unto me!”⁶

The Primary song I began with concludes with this profound statement:

*I believe in the Savior, Jesus Christ.
I'll honor his name.
I'll do what is right;
I'll follow his light.
His truth I will proclaim.*⁷

I bear witness that these words are true and that we have a loving Father in Heaven, who is waiting for us to turn to Him to bless our lives and the lives of those around us. May we have the desire to bring our brothers and sisters to Christ is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. “The Church of Jesus Christ,” *Children’s Songbook*, 77.
2. *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service*, rev. ed. (2018), 48.
3. Dallin H. Oaks, “Sharing the Restored Gospel,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 58.
4. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church*, 5.0, ChurchofJesusChrist.org; see also L. Whitney Clayton, “The Work of Salvation: Then and Now,” *Ensign*, Sept. 2014, 63; *Liahona*, Sept. 2014, 23.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 84:85.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 18:15–16.
7. “The Church of Jesus Christ,” 77.

Your Great Adventure

The Savior invites us, each day, to set aside our comforts and securities and join Him on the journey of discipleship.

Of Hobbits

A beloved children’s fantasy novel written many years ago begins with the sentence “In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit.”¹

The story of Bilbo Baggins is about a most normal and unremarkable hobbit who is presented with a most remarkable opportunity—the wonderful chance at adventure and the promise of a great reward.

The problem is that most self-respecting hobbits want nothing to

do with adventures. Their lives are all about comfort. They enjoy eating six meals a day when they can get them and spend their days in their gardens, swapping tales with visitors, singing, playing musical instruments, and basking in the simple joys of life.

However, when Bilbo is presented with the prospect of a grand adventure, something surges deep within his heart. He understands from the outset that the journey will be challenging. Even dangerous. There is even a possibility he might not return.

And yet, the call to adventure has reached deep into his heart. And so, this unremarkable hobbit leaves comfort behind and enters the path to a great adventure that will take him all the way to “there and back again.”²

Your Adventure

Perhaps one of the reasons this story resonates with so many is because it is our story too.

Long, long ago, even before we were born, in an age dimmed by time and clouded from memory, we too were invited to embark on an adventure. It was proposed by God, our Heavenly Father. Accepting this adventure would mean leaving the comfort





and security of His immediate presence. It would mean coming to earth for a journey filled with unknown danger and trial.

We knew it would not be easy.

But we also knew that we would gain precious treasures, including a physical body and experiencing the intense joys and sorrows of mortality. We would learn to strive, to seek, and to struggle. We would discover truths about God and ourselves.

Of course, we knew we would make many mistakes along the way. But we also had a promise: that because of the great sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we could be cleansed of our transgressions, refined and purified in our spirits, and one day resurrected and reunited with those we love.

We learned how much God loves us. He gave us life, and He wants us to succeed. Therefore, He prepared a Savior for us. “Nevertheless,” our Father in Heaven said, “thou mayest choose for thyself, for it is given unto thee.”³

There must have been parts of the mortal adventure that worried and even terrified God’s children, since a large number of our spiritual brothers and sisters decided against it.⁴

By the gift and power of moral agency, we determined that the potential of what we could learn and eternally become was well worth the risk.⁵

And so, trusting the promises and power of God and His Beloved Son, we accepted the challenge.

I did.

And so did you.

We agreed to leave the security of our first estate and embark on our own great adventure of “there and back again.”

The Call to Adventure

And yet, mortal life has a way of distracting us, doesn’t it? We tend to lose sight of our great quest, preferring comfort and ease over growth and progress.

Still, there remains something undeniable, deep within our hearts, that hungers for a higher and nobler purpose. This hunger is one reason why people are drawn to the gospel and Church of Jesus Christ. The restored gospel is, in a sense, a renewal of the call to adventure we accepted so long ago. The Savior invites us, each day, to set aside our comforts and securities and join Him on the journey of discipleship.

There are many bends in this road. There are hills, valleys, and detours. There may even be metaphorical spiders, trolls, and even a dragon or two. But if you stay on the path and trust in God, you will eventually find the way to your glorious destiny and back to your heavenly home.

So how do you begin?

It’s quite simple.

Incline Your Heart to God

First, you need to choose to incline your heart to God. Strive each day to find Him. Learn to love Him. And then let that love inspire you to learn, understand, and follow His teachings and learn to keep God’s commandments. The restored gospel of Jesus Christ is given to us in a plain and simple way that a child can understand. Yet the gospel of Jesus Christ has the answers to the most complex questions in life and has such profound depth and complexity that even with a lifetime of study and pondering, we can scarcely comprehend even the smallest part.

If you hesitate in this adventure because you doubt your ability, remember that discipleship is not about doing things perfectly; it’s about doing things intentionally. It is your choices that show what you truly are, far more than your abilities.⁶

Even when you fail, you can choose not to give up, but rather discover your courage, press forward, and rise up. That is the great test of the journey.

God knows that you are not perfect, that you will fail at times. God loves you no less when you struggle than when you triumph.



Like a loving parent, He merely wants you to keep intentionally trying. Discipleship is like learning to play the piano. Perhaps all you can do at first is play a barely recognizable rendition of “Chopsticks.” But if you continue practicing, the simple tunes will one day give way to wondrous sonatas, rhapsodies, and concertos.

Now, that day may not come during this life, but it will come. All God asks is that you consciously keep striving.

Reach Out in Love to Others

There is something interesting, almost paradoxical, about this path you’ve chosen: the only way for you to progress in your gospel adventure is to help others progress as well.

To help others is the path of discipleship. Faith, hope, love, compassion, and service refine us as disciples.

Through your efforts to help the poor and the needy, to reach out to those in distress, your own character is purified and forged, your spirit is enlarged, and you walk a little taller.

But this love cannot come with expectations of repayment. It cannot be the kind of service that expects recognition, adulation, or favor.

True disciples of Jesus Christ love God and His children without expectation of something in return. We love those who disappoint us, who don’t like us. Even those who ridicule, abuse, and seek to hurt us.

When you fill your hearts with the pure love of Christ, you leave no room for rancor, judgment, and shaming. You keep God’s commandments because you love Him. In the process, you slowly become more Christlike in your thoughts and deeds.⁷ And what adventure could be greater than this?

Share Your Story

The third thing we strive to master in this journey is to take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ and not be ashamed of being a member of the Church of Jesus Christ.

We do not hide our faith.
We do not bury it.

To the contrary, we talk about our journey with others in normal and natural ways. That’s what friends do—they talk about things that are important to them. Things that are close to their heart and make a difference to them.

That’s what you do. You tell your stories and experiences as a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Sometimes your stories make people laugh. Sometimes they bring them to tears. Sometimes they will help people to continue in patience, resilience, and courage to face another hour, another day and come a little closer to God.

Share your experiences in person, on social media, in groups, everywhere.

One of the last things Jesus told His disciples was that they were to go throughout the world and share the story of the risen Christ.⁸ Today we too joyfully accept that great commission.

What a glorious message we have to share: because of Jesus Christ, every man, woman, and child can return home safely to their heavenly home and there dwell in glory and righteousness!

There is even more good news to share.

God has appeared to man in our day! We have a living prophet.

May I remind you that God does not need you to “sell” the restored gospel or the Church of Jesus Christ.

He simply expects you not to hide it under a bushel.

And if people decide the Church is not for them, that is their decision.

It does not mean you have failed. You continue to treat them kindly. Nor does it exclude that you invite them again.

The difference between casual social contacts and compassionate, courageous discipleship is—invitation!

We love and respect all of God’s children, regardless of their position in

life, regardless of their race or religion, regardless of their life's decisions.

For our part, we will say, "Come and see! Find out for yourself how walking the path of discipleship will be rewarding and ennobling."

We invite people to "come and help, as we try to make the world a better place."

And we say, "Come and stay! We are your brothers and sisters. We are not perfect. We trust God and seek to keep His commandments.

"Join with us, and you will make us better. And, in the process, you will become better as well. Let's take this adventure together."

When Should I Start?

When our friend Bilbo Baggins felt the call to adventure stir within him, he decided to get a good night's rest, enjoy a hearty breakfast, and start out first thing in the morning.

When Bilbo awoke, he noticed his house was a mess, and he was almost distracted from his noble plan.

But then his friend Gandalf came and asked, "Whenever *are* you going to come?"⁹ To catch up with his friends, Bilbo had to decide for himself what to do.

And so, the very normal and unremarkable hobbit found himself darting out his front door to the path of adventure so quickly that he forgot his hat, walking stick, and pocket handkerchief. He even left his second breakfast unfinished.

Perhaps there is a lesson here for us as well.

If you and I have felt the stirrings to join the great adventure of living and sharing what our loving Heavenly Father prepared for us a long time ago, I assure you, today is the day to follow God's Son and our Savior on His path of service and discipleship.

We could spend a lifetime waiting for that moment when everything lines up perfectly. But now is the time to commit fully to seeking God, ministering to others, and sharing our experience with others.

Leave behind your hat, walking stick, handkerchief, and messy house.¹⁰

To those of us already walking that path, take courage, exercise compassion, have confidence, and continue!

To those who have left the path, please come back, join again with us, make us stronger.

And to those who have not yet begun, why delay? If you want to experience the wonders of this great spiritual journey, set foot upon your own grand adventure! Speak with the missionaries. Speak with your Latter-day Saint friends. Speak with them about this marvelous work and a wonder.¹¹

It's time to begin!

Come, Join with Us!

If you sense that your life could have more meaning, a higher purpose, stronger family bonds, and a closer connection with God, please, come, join with us.

If you seek a community of people who are working to become the best versions of themselves, help those in need, and make this world a better place, come, join with us!

Come and see what this marvelous, wondrous, and adventurous journey is all about.

Along the way you will discover yourself.

You will discover meaning.

You will discover God.

You will discover the most adventurous and glorious journey of your life.

Of this I testify in the name of our Redeemer and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit or There and Back Again* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001), 3.
2. Subtitle of *The Hobbit*.
3. Moses 3:17.
4. See Job 38:4–7 (the sons of God shouted





BY ELDER WALTER F. GONZÁLEZ
Of the Seventy

The Savior's Touch

As we come unto Him, God will come to our rescue, whether to heal us or to give us the strength to face any situation.

- for joy); Isaiah 14:12–13 (“exalt my throne above the stars of God”); Revelation 12:7–11 (there was a war in heaven).
5. “The Prophet Joseph Smith described *agency* as ‘that free independence of mind which heaven has so graciously bestowed upon the human family as one of its choicest gifts’ [*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (1977), 49]. This ‘free independence of mind,’ or agency, is the power that allows individuals to be ‘agents unto themselves’ (D&C 58:28). It encompasses both the exercise of the will to choose between good and evil or differing levels of good or evil and also the opportunity to experience the consequences of that choice. Heavenly Father loves His children so much that He wants us to reach our full potential—to become as He is. To progress, a person must possess the innate capacity to make his or her desired choice. Agency is so fundamental to His plan for His children that ‘even God could not make men like himself without making them free’ [David O. McKay, “Whither Shall We Go? Or Life’s Supreme Decision,” *Deseret News*, June 8, 1935, 1]” (Byron R. Merrill, “Agency and Freedom in the Divine Plan,” in Roy A. Prete, ed., *Window of Faith: Latter-day Saint Perspectives on World History* [2005], 162).
 6. In her novel *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, author J. K. Rowling has Hogwarts headmaster Dumbledore say something quite similar to young Harry Potter. It is wonderful advice to us as well. I have used it in messages before and think it is worth repeating.
 7. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, *we shall be like him*; for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2; emphasis added).
While such a transformation may be beyond our ability to comprehend, “the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:
“And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, *and joint-heirs with Christ*; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.
“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the *glory which shall be revealed in us*” (Romans 8:16–18; emphasis added).
 8. See Matthew 28:16–20.
 9. Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, 33.
 10. See Luke 9:59–62.
 11. See LeGrand Richards, *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*, rev. ed. (1966).

Roughly 2,000 years ago, the Savior came down from the mountain after teaching the Beatitudes and other gospel principles. As He walked, He was approached by a man sick with leprosy. The man showed reverence and respect as he knelt before Christ, seeking relief from his affliction. His request was simple: “Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.”

The Savior then extended His hand and, touching him, said, “I will; be thou clean.”¹

We learn here that our Savior always wants to bless us. Some blessings may come immediately, others may take longer, and some may even come after this life, but blessings will come in due time.

Much like the leper, we can find strength and comfort in this life by accepting His will and knowing that He wants to bless us. We can find the strength to face any challenge, to overcome temptations, and to understand and endure our difficult circumstances. Surely, in one of the most crushing





moments of His life, the Savior's strength to endure was deepened as He said to His Father, "Thy will be done."²

The leper did not make his request in a pretentious or demanding manner. His words reveal a humble attitude, with high expectations but also with a sincere desire that the will of the Savior be done. This is an example of the attitude with which we should come unto Christ. We can come unto Christ with the certainty that His desire currently is and always will be the best for our mortal and eternal lives. He has an eternal perspective that we do not have. We must come unto Christ with a sincere desire that our will be swallowed up in the will of the Father, as His was.³ This will prepare us for eternal life.

It is very hard to imagine the physical and emotional suffering that weighed on the leper who came unto the Savior. Leprosy affects the nerves and skin, causing disfigurement and disability. Additionally, it led to great social stigma. Someone stricken with leprosy had to leave their loved ones and live isolated from society. Lepers were considered unclean, both physically and spiritually. For this reason, the law of Moses required that lepers wear torn clothing and call out, "Unclean!" as they walked.⁴ Sick and despised, lepers ended up living in abandoned houses or in the tombs.⁵ It is not hard to imagine that the leper who

approached the Savior was broken.

Sometimes—in one way or another—we too can feel broken, whether due to our own actions or those of others, due to circumstances we can or cannot control. In such moments, we can place our will in His hands.

Some years ago, Zulma—my wife, my better half, my best part—received some difficult news just two weeks before the wedding of one of our children. She had a tumor in her parotid gland, and it was growing rapidly. Her face began swelling, and she was to immediately undergo a delicate operation. Many thoughts ran through her mind and weighed on her heart. Was the tumor malignant? How would her body recover? Would her face become paralyzed? How intense would the pain be? Would her face be permanently scarred? Would the tumor return once removed? Would she be able to attend the wedding of our son? As she lay in the operating room, she felt broken.

In that very important moment, the Spirit whispered to her that she had to accept the will of the Father. She then decided to place her trust in God. She strongly felt that whatever the result, His will would be the best for her. Soon she drifted into surgical sleep.

Later, she wrote poetically in her diary: "On the surgeon's table I bowed before Thee, and surrendering to Thy will, I fell asleep. I knew I could trust

Thee, knowing that nothing bad can come from Thee."

She found strength and comfort from surrendering her will to that of the Father. That day, God blessed her greatly.

Whatever our circumstances might be, we can exercise our faith to come unto Christ and find a God we can trust. As one of my children, Gabriel, once wrote:

*According to the prophet, God's face is brighter than the sun and His hair is whiter than snow and His voice roars like the rushing of a river, and next to Him man is nothing. . . . I am crushed as I realize that even I am nothing. And only then do I fumble my way to a God I can trust. And only then do I discover the God I can trust.*⁶

A God we can trust emboldens our hope. We can trust Him because He loves us and wants what is best for us in every circumstance.

The leper came forward because of the power of hope. The world gave him no solutions, not even comfort. Thus, the Savior's simple touch must have felt like a caress unto his entire soul. We can only imagine the deep feelings of gratitude the leper must have had at

the Savior's touch, especially when he heard the words "I will; be thou clean."

The story states that "immediately his leprosy was cleansed."⁷

We too can feel the touch of the Savior's loving, healing hand. What joy, hope, and gratefulness come to our souls in knowing that He wants to help us to be clean! As we come unto Him, God will come to our rescue, whether to heal us or to give us the strength to face any situation.

At any rate, accepting His will—not our own—will help us understand our circumstances. Nothing bad can come from God. He knows what is best for us. Perhaps He will not remove our burdens right away. Sometimes He can make those burdens feel lighter, as He did with Alma and his people.⁸ Ultimately, because of covenants, the burdens will be lifted,⁹ either in this life or at the holy Resurrection.

A sincere desire that His will be done, along with an understanding of our Redeemer's divine nature, helps us develop the kind of faith that the leper showed in order to be cleansed. Jesus Christ is a God of love, a God of hope, a God of healing, a God who wants to bless us and help us be clean. That is what He wanted before coming to this earth when He volunteered to rescue us when we fall into transgression. That is what He wanted in Gethsemane when He faced humanly incomprehensible pain during the agony of paying the price of sin. That is what He wants now when He pleads on our behalf before the Father.¹⁰ That is why His voice echoes still: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."¹¹

He can heal us and lift us up because He has the ability to do it. He took upon Himself all the pains of body and spirit so that His bowels



would be filled with mercy in order to be able to help us in all things and to heal us and lift us up.¹² The words of Isaiah, as cited by Abinadi, put it beautifully and movingly:

"Surely he has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. . . .

... He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."¹³

This same concept is taught in this poem:

*"O Carpenter of Nazareth,
This heart, that's broken past repair,
This life, that's shattered nigh to death,
Oh, can You mend them, Carpenter?"*

*And by His kind and ready hand,
His own sweet life is woven through
Our broken lives, until they stand
A New Creation—"all things new."*

*"The shattered [substance] of [the] heart,
Desire, ambition, hope, and faith,
Mould Thou into the perfect part,
O, Carpenter of Nazareth!"¹⁴*

If you feel that in any way you are not clean, if you feel broken, please know that you can be made clean, you can be mended, because He loves you. Trust that nothing bad can come from Him.

Because He "descended below all things,"¹⁵ He makes it possible for all

things that have been broken in our lives to be mended, and thus we can be reconciled with God. Through Him, all things are reconciled, both things that are on the earth and things that are in heaven, making "peace through the blood of his cross."¹⁶

Let us come unto Christ, taking all necessary steps. As we do, may our attitude be one of saying, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." If we do so, we can receive the Master's healing touch, alongside the sweet echo of His voice: "I will; be thou clean."

The Savior is a God we can trust. He is the Christ, the Anointed One, the Messiah, of whom I testify in His holy name, even Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Matthew 8:2–3.
2. Matthew 26:42.
3. See Mosiah 15:7.
4. See Leviticus 13:45.
5. See Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* (1973), 1:174.
6. See also Proverbs 3:5–6; Doctrine and Covenants 110:2–3; Moses 1:2–10.
7. Matthew 8:3.
8. See Mosiah 24:8–15.
9. See Mosiah 24:13–16.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 45:3–5.
11. Matthew 11:28.
12. See Alma 7:12.
13. Mosiah 14:4–5.
14. George Blair, "The Carpenter of Nazareth," in Obert C. Tanner, *Christ's Ideals for Living* (Sunday School manual, 1955), 22; in Jeffrey R. Holland, "Broken Things to Mend," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2006, 71.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 88:6.
16. Colossians 1:20; see also 2 Corinthians 5:18–20.



BY ELDER GARY E. STEVENSON
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Deceive Me Not

As we obey God's commandments, we will always be led in the right way and will not be deceived.

Today, I offer words of counsel for everyone, but *especially* for you of the rising generation—Primary children, young men, and young women. You are deeply loved by the Lord's prophet for our day, President Russell M. Nelson—so much so that he spoke

to many of you last year in a special worldwide youth devotional broadcast titled “Hope of Israel.”¹ We often hear President Nelson calling you exactly that—the “hope of Israel,” the rising generation and the future of the restored Church of Jesus Christ.

My young friends, I would like to begin by sharing two family stories.

The 102nd Dalmatian

Years ago, I arrived home from work and was startled to see white paint splattered everywhere—on the ground, the garage door, and our red-brick house. I inspected the scene more closely and discovered the paint was still wet. A trail of paint led toward the backyard, and so I followed it. There, I found my five-year-old son with a paintbrush in his hand, chasing our dog. Our beautiful black Labrador was splattered almost half white!

“What are you doing?” I asked in an animated voice.

My son stopped, looked at me, looked at the dog, looked at the paintbrush dripping with paint, and said, “I just want him to look like the black-spotted dogs in the movie—you know, the one with 101 Dalmatians.”

I loved our dog. I thought he was perfect, but that day my son had a different idea.

The Striped Kitty Cat

My second story centers around Great-Uncle Grover, who lived in a house out in the country, far from the city. Uncle Grover was getting very old. We thought our sons should meet him before he died. So, one afternoon, we took a long drive to his humble house. We sat together to visit and introduce him to our sons. Not long into the conversation, our two young boys, maybe five and six years old, wanted to go outside and play.

Uncle Grover, hearing their request, bent over with his face in theirs. His face was so weathered and unfamiliar that the boys were a little scared of him. He said to them, in his gravelly voice, “Be careful—there are a lot of skunks out there.” Hearing this, Lesa and I were more than startled; we were worried that they might get sprayed by a skunk! The boys soon went outside to play as we continued to visit.

Later, when we got in the car to go home, I inquired of the boys, “Did you see a skunk?” One of them replied, “No, we didn’t see any skunks, but we did see a black kitty cat with a white stripe on its back!”

The Great Deceiver

These stories about innocent children discovering something about life and reality may make each of us smile, but they also illustrate a more profound concept.

In the first story, our young son had a beautiful dog as a pet; notwithstanding, he grabbed a gallon of paint and, with paintbrush in hand, determined to create his own imagined reality.

In the second account, the boys were blissfully unaware of the unsavory threat they faced from a skunk. Unable to properly identify what they had





actually encountered, they ran the risk of suffering some unfortunate consequences. These are stories of mistaken identity—presuming the real thing to be something else. In each case, the consequences were minor.

However, many today grapple with these same issues on a much larger scale. They are either unable to see things as they truly are or are unsatisfied with truth. Moreover, there are forces at play today designed to deliberately lead us away from absolute truth. These deceptions and lies go far beyond innocent mistaken identity and often have dire, not minor, consequences.

Satan, the father of lies and the great deceiver, would have us question things as they really are and either ignore eternal truths or replace them with something that appears more pleasing. “He maketh war with the saints of God”² and has spent millennia calculating and practicing the ability to persuade God’s children to believe that *good is evil* and *evil is good*.

He has made a reputation for himself convincing mortals that skunks are just kittens or that, with an application

of paint, you can turn a Labrador into a Dalmatian!

Let’s now turn to an example of this very principle found in the scriptures, when the Lord’s prophet Moses came face-to-face with this same issue.

“Moses was caught up into an exceedingly high mountain[;] . . . he saw God face to face, and he talked with him.”³ God taught Moses about his eternal identity. Though Moses was mortal and imperfect, God taught that Moses was “in the similitude of mine Only Begotten; and mine Only Begotten . . . shall be the Savior.”⁴

To summarize, in this marvelous vision, Moses beheld God, and he also learned something important about himself: he was indeed a *son of God*.

Listen carefully to what happened as this wondrous vision closed. “And it came to pass that . . . Satan came tempting him,” saying, “Moses, son of *man*, worship me!”⁵ Moses courageously replied: “Who art *thou*? For behold, I am a son of *God*, in the similitude of his Only Begotten; and where is *thy* glory, that I should worship *thee*?”⁶

In other words, Moses said: “You

cannot deceive me, for I know who I am. I was created in the image of God. You don’t have His light and glory. So why should I worship you or fall prey to your deception?”

Now pay attention to how Moses further responds. He declares, “Get thee hence, Satan; *deceive me not*.”⁷

There is much we can learn from Moses’s mighty response to temptation from the adversary. I invite you to respond the same way when you feel influenced by temptation. Command the enemy of your soul by saying: “Go away! You have *no* glory. Do not tempt or lie to me! For I know I am a child of God. And I will always call upon my God for His help.”

The adversary, however, does not easily abandon his destructive motives to deceive and demean us. He certainly did not do so with Moses, instead desiring to cause Moses to forget who he was eternally.

As if he were throwing a childish tantrum, “Satan cried with a loud voice, and ranted upon the earth, and commanded, saying: I am the Only Begotten, worship me.”⁸

Let's review. Did you hear what he just said? "I am the Only Begotten. Worship *me!*"

The great deceiver said, in effect, "Don't worry; I won't harm you—I'm not a skunk; I am just an innocent black-and-white kitty cat."

Moses then called upon God and received His divine strength. Even though the adversary trembled and the earth shook, Moses *did not yield*. His voice was certain and clear. "Depart from me, Satan," he declared, "for this one God only will I worship, which is the God of glory."⁹

Finally, he "departed . . . from the presence of Moses."¹⁰

After the Lord appeared and blessed Moses for his obedience, the Lord said: "Blessed art thou, Moses, for . . . thou shalt be made stronger than many waters. . . ."

"And lo, I am with thee, even unto the end of thy days."¹¹

Moses's resistance of the adversary is a vivid and enlightening example for each of us, no matter our stage in life. It is a powerful message for you personally—to know what to do when he tries to deceive you. For you, like Moses, have been blessed with the gift of heavenly help.

Commandments and Blessings

How might you find this heavenly help, even as Moses did, and not be deceived or give in to temptation? A clear channel for divine assistance was reaffirmed in this dispensation by the Lord Himself when He declared: "Wherefore, I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments."¹² Using simpler words, we might say that the Lord, who



knows "the end from the beginning,"¹³ knows the unique difficulties of our day. Therefore, He has provided a way for us to resist challenges and temptations, many of which come as a direct result of the deceitful influences of the adversary and his attacks.

The way is simple. Through His servants, God speaks to us, His children, and gives us commandments. We could restate the verse I just quoted to say, "I the Lord . . . called upon my servant [President Russell M. Nelson], and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments." Isn't that a glorious truth?

I bear solemn witness that the Lord did in all reality speak to Joseph Smith from heaven, beginning with the grand First Vision. He also speaks to President Nelson in our time. I testify that God communed with prophets in past ages and gave them commandments designed to lead His children to happiness in this life and glory in the next.

God continues to give commandments to our living prophet today. Examples abound—a more home-centered, Church-supported balance in gospel instruction; the replacement of home and visiting teaching with ministering; adjustments to temple procedures and ordinances; and the

new Children and Youth program. I marvel at the goodness and compassion of a loving Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, who restored the Savior's Church to earth once again and have called a prophet in our day. The Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ offsets *perilous* times with the *fulness* of times.

Wickedness Never Was Happiness

Obedience to commandments given to our prophet is a key not only in avoiding the influence of the deceiver but also in experiencing lasting joy and happiness. This divine formula is rather simple: righteousness, or obedience to commandments, brings blessings, and blessings bring happiness, or joy, into our lives.

However, in the same way that the adversary tried to deceive Moses, he seeks to trick you. He has always pretended to be something that he is not. He always attempts to hide who he truly is. He claims that obedience will make your life miserable and that it will rob you of happiness.

Can you think of some of his ploys to deceive? For instance, he disguises the destructive consequences of illicit drugs or drinking and instead suggests that it will bring pleasure. He immerses us in the various negative elements that can exist in social media, including debilitating comparisons and idealized reality. In addition, he camouflages other dark, harmful content found online, such as pornography, blatant attacks on others through cyberbullying, and sowing misinformation to cause doubt and fear in our hearts and minds. Cunningly he whispers, "Just follow me, and you will surely be happy."

The words written so many centuries ago by a Book of Mormon prophet are especially relevant for our day:



BY PRESIDENT RUSSELL M. NELSON

“Wickedness *never* was happiness.”¹⁴ May we recognize Satan’s deceptions for what they are. May we withstand and see through the lies and influences of the one who seeks to destroy our souls and steal from us our present joy and future glory.

My dear brothers and sisters, we must continue to be faithful and vigilant, for so is the only way to discern truth and to hear the voice of the Lord through His servants. “For the Spirit speaketh the truth and lieth not. . . . These things are manifested unto us plainly, for the salvation of our souls. . . . For God also spake them unto prophets of old.”¹⁵ We are the Saints of Almighty God, the hope of Israel! Will we falter? “Shall we shrink or shun the fight? No! . . . To God’s command, soul, heart, and hand, faithful and true we will ever stand.”¹⁶

I bear my witness of the *Holy One of Israel*—even the name of Jesus Christ. I testify of His abiding love, truth, and joy that are made possible by His infinite and eternal sacrifice. As we obey His commandments, we will always be led in the right way and will not be deceived. In the sacred name of our Savior, Jesus Christ, amen. ■

I bear my witness of the *Holy One of Israel*—even the name of Jesus Christ. I testify of His abiding love, truth, and joy that are made possible by His infinite and eternal sacrifice. As we obey His commandments, we will always be led in the right way and will not be deceived. In the sacred name of our Savior, Jesus Christ, amen. ■

The Second Great Commandment

Our greatest joy comes as we help our brothers and sisters.

My dear brothers and sisters, thank you for all you are doing to help gather Israel on both sides of the veil, to strengthen your families, and to bless the lives of those in need. Thank you for living as true followers of Jesus Christ.¹ You know and love to obey His two great commandments, to love God and to love your neighbors.²

During the last six months, Sister Nelson and I have met thousands of Saints as we have traveled to Central and South America, the islands of the Pacific, and various cities in the United

States. As we travel, our hope is to build *your* faith. Yet we always return having had *our* faith strengthened by the members and friends we meet. May I share three meaningful moments from our recent experiences?

In May, Sister Nelson and I traveled with Elder Gerrit W. and Sister Susan Gong to the South Pacific. While in Auckland, New Zealand, we had the honor of meeting with imams from two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, where just two months earlier, innocent worshippers had been



While in Auckland, New Zealand, President and Sister Nelson met with imams from two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand.

NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson, “Hope of Israel” (worldwide youth devotional, June 3, 2018), HopeofIsrael.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 76:29.
3. Moses 1:1–2.
4. Moses 1:6.
5. Moses 1:12; emphasis added.
6. Moses 1:13; emphasis added.
7. Moses 1:16; emphasis added.
8. Moses 1:19.
9. Moses 1:20.
10. Moses 1:22.
11. Moses 1:25–26.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 1:17.
13. Abraham 2:8.
14. Alma 41:10; emphasis added.
15. Jacob 4:13.
16. “True to the Faith,” *Hymns*, no. 254.

gunned down in an act of horrible violence.

We extended our sympathy to these brothers of another faith and reaffirmed our mutual commitment to religious freedom.

We also offered volunteer labor and modest financial assistance to rebuild their mosques. Our meeting with these Muslim leaders was filled with tender expressions of brotherhood.

In August, along with Elder Quentin L. and Sister Mary Cook, Sister Nelson and I met individuals in Buenos Aires, Argentina—most of them not of our faith—whose lives have been changed by wheelchairs provided to them through our Latter-day Saint Charities. We were inspired as they expressed joy-filled gratitude for their newfound mobility.

A third precious moment occurred just a few weeks ago here in Salt Lake City. It came from a unique letter I received on my birthday from a young woman I will call Mary—age 14.

Mary wrote about things she and I had in common: “You have 10 kids. We have 10 kids. You speak Mandarin. Seven of the kids in my family, including me, were adopted from China, so Mandarin is our first language. You are a heart surgeon. My sister has had two open-heart [operations]. You like two-hour church. We like two-hour church. You have perfect pitch. My brother has perfect pitch too. He is blind like me.”

Mary’s words touched me deeply, revealing not only her great spirit but also the consecration of her mother and father.

Latter-day Saints, as with other followers of Jesus Christ, are always looking for ways to help, to lift, and to love others. They who are willing to be called the Lord’s people “are willing to bear one another’s burdens, . . . to



mourn with those that mourn; . . . and [to] comfort those that stand in need of comfort.”³

They truly seek to live the first and second great commandments. When we love *God* with all our hearts, He turns our hearts to the well-being of *others* in a beautiful, virtuous cycle.

It would be impossible to calculate the amount of service that Latter-day Saints render around the globe every day of every year, but it *is* possible to calculate the good the Church as an organization does to bless men and women—boys and girls—who are in need of a helping hand.

The Church’s humanitarian outreach was launched in 1984. Then a Churchwide fast was held to raise funds to assist those afflicted by a devastating drought in eastern Africa. Church

members donated \$6.4 million on that *single* fast day.

Then-Elder M. Russell Ballard and Brother Glenn L. Pace were dispatched to Ethiopia to assess how those consecrated funds could best be used. This effort proved to be the beginning of what would later be known as Latter-day Saint Charities.

Since that time, Latter-day Saint Charities has provided more than *two billion* dollars in aid to assist those in need throughout the world. This assistance is offered to recipients regardless of their church affiliation, nationality, race, sexual orientation, gender, or political persuasion.

That is not all. To assist members of the Lord’s Church in distress, we love and live the ancient law of the fast.⁴ We go hungry to help others who are



hungry. One day each month, we go without food and donate the cost of that food (and more) to help those in need.

I will never forget my first visit to West Africa in 1986. The Saints came to our meetings in great numbers. Though they had little in terms of material possessions, most came dressed in spotless white clothing.

I asked the stake president how he cared for members who had so little. He replied that their bishops knew their people well. If members could afford two meals a day, no help was needed. But if they could afford only one meal or less—even with family help—bishops provided food, financed from fast offerings. Then he added this remarkable fact: their fast-offering contributions usually *exceeded* their expenses. Surplus fast offerings were then sent to people *elsewhere* whose needs exceeded theirs. Those stalwart African Saints taught me a great lesson about the power of the *law* and the *spirit* of the fast.

As members of the Church, we feel a kinship to those who suffer in any way.⁵

As sons and daughters of God, we are all brothers and sisters. We heed an Old Testament admonition: “Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy.”⁶

We also strive to live the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ as recorded in Matthew 25:

“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:

“Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me. . . .

“ . . . Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”⁷

Let me cite just a few examples of how the Church follows these teachings of the Savior.

To help relieve hunger, the Church operates 124 bishops’ storehouses throughout the world. Through them, approximately 400,000 food orders are given each year to individuals in need. In locations where no storehouse exists, bishops and branch presidents draw

from fast-offering funds of the Church to provide food and supplies for their needy members.

However, the challenge of hunger goes far beyond the boundaries of the Church. It is increasing throughout the world. A recent United Nations report indicated that the number of undernourished people in the world now exceeds 820 million—or almost one in nine of the earth’s inhabitants.⁸

What a sobering statistic! How grateful we are for your contributions. Thanks to your heartfelt generosity, millions throughout the world will receive much-needed food, clothing, temporary shelter, wheelchairs, medicines, clean water, and more.

Much sickness throughout the world is caused because of unclean water. To date, the Church’s humanitarian initiative has helped provide clean water in hundreds of communities in 76 countries.

A project in Luputa, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, is a great example. With a population exceeding 100,000, the town had *no running water*. Citizens had to walk long distances for sources of safe water. A mountain spring was discovered 18 miles (29 km) away, but townspeople could not access that water on a regular basis.

When our humanitarian missionaries learned about this challenge, they worked with the leaders of Luputa by supplying materials and training to pipe the water to the city. The people of Luputa spent *three years* digging a one-meter-deep trench through rock and jungle. By working together, the joyful day finally arrived when fresh, clean water was available to all in that village.

The Church also helps refugees, whether from civil strife, the ravages of nature, or religious persecution. More than 70 million people are now displaced from their homes.⁹

In the year 2018 alone, the Church provided emergency supplies to refugees in 56 countries. In addition, many Church members volunteer their time to help refugees integrate into new communities. We thank every one of you who reach out to help those who are trying to establish new homes.

Through generous donations to Deseret Industries outlets in the United States, millions of pounds of clothing are collected and sorted each year. While local bishops use this vast inventory to help members in need, the *greatest* portion is donated to other charitable organizations who distribute the items worldwide.

And just last year, the Church provided vision care for more than 300,000 people in 35 countries, newborn care for thousands of mothers and infants in 39 countries, and wheelchairs for more than 50,000 people living in dozens of countries.

The Church is well known for being among the first responders when tragedy strikes. Even *before* a hurricane hits, Church leaders and staff in the affected locations are mapping out plans for how they will deliver relief supplies and volunteer assistance to those who will be impacted.

Last year alone, the Church carried out more than 100 disaster-relief projects around the world, helping victims of hurricanes, fires, floods, earthquakes, and other calamities. Whenever possible, our Church members in yellow Helping Hands vests mobilize in great numbers to help those afflicted by the disaster. This kind of service, rendered by so many of you, is the very essence of ministering.

My dear brothers and sisters, the activities I have described are merely a small part of the growing welfare and humanitarian outreach of The Church

of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.¹⁰ And *you* are the ones who make all this possible. Because of your exemplary lives, your generous hearts, and your helping hands, it is no wonder that many communities and government leaders are praising your efforts.¹¹

Since becoming President of the Church, I have been amazed at how many presidents, prime ministers, and ambassadors have sincerely thanked me for our humanitarian aid to their people. And they have also expressed

gratitude for the strength that our faithful members bring to their country as loyal, contributing citizens.

I have also marveled as world leaders have visited the First Presidency expressing *their hope* for the Church to be established in their lands. Why? Because they know that Latter-day Saints will help to build strong families and communities, making life better for others *wherever* they live.

Regardless of where we call home, members of the Church feel passionately





BY PRESIDENT HENRY B. EYRING
Second Counselor in the First Presidency

Holiness and the Plan of Happiness

Greater happiness comes from greater personal holiness.

about the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Thus, *our* greatest joy comes as we help our brothers and sisters, no matter where we live in this wonderful world.

Giving help to others—making a conscientious effort to care about others as much as or *more* than we care about ourselves—is our joy. Especially, I might add, when it is not convenient and when it takes us out of our comfort zone. *Living* that second great commandment is the *key* to becoming a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

My dear brothers and sisters, you are living exemplars of the fruits that come from following the teachings of Jesus Christ. I thank you! I love you!

I know that God lives. Jesus is the Christ. His Church has been restored in these latter days to fulfill its divine purposes. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See Moroni 7:48.
2. See Matthew 22:37–39; Luke 10:27.
3. Mosiah 18:8–9.
4. See Isaiah 58:3–12.
5. In early Church history, courageous pioneers were also hungry, homeless, and harassed.
6. Deuteronomy 15:11.
7. Matthew 25:35–36, 40.
8. See Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and others, *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2019*, 6, fao.org/3/ca5162en/ca5162en.pdf.
9. See “Worldwide Displacement Tops 70 Million, UN Refugee Chief Urges Greater Solidarity in Response,” United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees website, June 19, 2019, unhcr.org/en-us.
10. For additional information on the Church’s charitable efforts, please see ChurchofJesusChrist.org/topics/welfare; LatterDaySaintCharities.org; [facebook.com/LatterDaySaintCharities](https://www.facebook.com/LatterDaySaintCharities); JustServe.org.
11. “The most effective tract we will carry will be the goodness of our own lives and example” (Gordon B. Hinckley, “Find the Lambs, Feed the Sheep,” *Ensign*, May 1999, 107; *Liahona*, July 1999, 121).

My dear brothers and sisters, I have prayed for the power to help you in your personal search for happiness. Some might feel happy enough already, yet surely no one would reject the offer of more happiness. Anyone would be eager to accept a guaranteed offer of lasting happiness.

That is what Heavenly Father; His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ; and the Holy Ghost have offered every spirit child of Heavenly Father who now lives, will live, or ever has lived in this world. That offer is sometimes called the plan of happiness. It was so called by the prophet Alma as he taught his son, who was mired in the misery of sin. Alma knew that wickedness could never be happiness for his son—or for any child of Heavenly Father.¹

He taught his son that increasing in holiness was the only path to happiness. He made it plain that greater holiness is made possible through the Atonement of Jesus Christ cleansing and perfecting us.² Only by faith in Jesus Christ, continuing repentance, and keeping covenants are we able to claim the lasting happiness we all yearn to experience and retain.

My prayer for today is that I may help you understand that greater

happiness comes from greater personal holiness so that you will act upon that belief. I will then share what I know for myself about what we can do to qualify for that gift of becoming ever more holy.

The scriptures teach us that among other things, we can be sanctified or become more holy when we exercise faith in Christ,³ demonstrate our obedience,⁴ repent,⁵ sacrifice for Him,⁶ receive sacred ordinances, and keep our





covenants with Him.⁷ Qualifying for the gift of holiness requires humility,⁸ meekness,⁹ and patience.¹⁰

One experience of wanting more holiness came for me in the Salt Lake Temple. I entered the temple for the first time having been told little of what to expect. I had seen the words on the building: “Holiness to the Lord” and “The House of the Lord.” I felt a great sense of anticipation. Yet I wondered if I was prepared to enter.

My mother and father walked ahead of me as we entered the temple. We were asked to show our recommends, certifying our worthiness.

My parents knew the man at the recommend desk. So they lingered a moment to speak with him. I went ahead alone into a large space where everything was sparkling white. I looked up at a ceiling so high above me it seemed an open sky. In that moment, a clear impression came to me that I had been there before.

But then, I heard a very soft voice—it was not my own. The softly spoken words were these: “You have never been

here before. You are remembering a moment before you were born. You were in a sacred place like this. You felt the Savior was about to come into the place where you stood. And you felt happiness because you were eager to see Him.”

That experience in the Salt Lake Temple lasted only a moment. Yet the memory of it still brings peace, joy, and quiet happiness.

I learned many lessons that day. One was that the Holy Ghost speaks in a still, small voice. I can hear Him when there is spiritual peace in my heart. He brings a feeling of happiness and assurance that I am becoming more holy. And that always brings the happiness I felt in those first moments in a temple of God.

You have observed in your own life and in the lives of others the miracle of happiness coming from growing holiness, becoming more like the Savior. In recent weeks, I have been at the bedside of people who could face death with full faith in the Savior and with happy countenances.

One was a man surrounded by his family. He and his wife were chatting quietly as my son and I entered. I had known them for many years. I had seen the Atonement of Jesus Christ work in their lives and in the lives of their family members.

They had together chosen to end medical efforts to prolong his life. There was a quiet feeling as he spoke to us. He smiled as he expressed gratitude for the gospel and its purifying effects on him and the family he loved. He spoke of his happy years of service in the temple. At this man’s request, my son anointed his head with consecrated oil. I sealed the anointing. As I did, I had a clear impression to tell him that he would soon see his Savior, face-to-face.

I promised him that he would feel happiness, love, and the Savior’s approval. He smiled warmly as we left. His last words to me were “Tell Kathy I love her.” My wife, Kathleen, over many years had encouraged generations of his family to accept the Savior’s invitation to come unto Him, make and keep



sacred covenants, and so qualify for the happiness that comes as a result of that greater holiness.

He died hours later. Within weeks of his passing, his widow brought a gift to my wife and me. She smiled as we talked. She said pleasantly, “I expected that I would feel sad and lonely. I feel so happy. Do you think that’s all right?”

Knowing how much she loved her husband and how both of them had come to know, love, and serve the Lord, I told her that her feelings of happiness were a promised gift because she had, by her faithful service, been made more holy. Her holiness had qualified her for that happiness.

Some listening today may be wondering: “Why do I not feel the peace and happiness promised to those who have been faithful? I have been faithful through terrible adversity, but I don’t feel happiness.”

Even the Prophet Joseph Smith faced this test. He prayed for relief when he was confined in a jail in Liberty, Missouri. He had been faithful to the Lord. He had grown in holiness. Yet he felt happiness had been denied.

The Lord taught him the lesson of patience we all will need at some time, and perhaps for long periods, in our mortal testing. Here is the Lord’s message to His faithful and suffering prophet:

“And if thou shouldst be cast into the pit, or into the hands of murderers,

and the sentence of death passed upon thee; if thou be cast into the deep; if the billowing surge conspire against thee; if fierce winds become thine enemy; if the heavens gather blackness, and all the elements combine to hedge up the way; and above all, if the very jaws of hell shall gape open the mouth wide after thee, know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good.

“The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he?”

“Therefore, hold on thy way, and the priesthood shall remain with thee; for their bounds are set, they cannot pass. Thy days are known, and thy years shall not be numbered less; therefore, fear not what man can do, for God shall be with you forever and ever.”¹¹

That was the same instructive lesson the Lord gave Job, who paid a heavy price to allow the Atonement to make him more holy. We know that Job was holy, from the introduction we have of him: “There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.”¹²

Then Job lost his wealth, his family, and even his health. You might remember that Job doubted that his greater holiness, gained through greater adversity, had qualified him for greater happiness. It seemed to Job that holiness had brought misery.

Yet the Lord gave Job the same correcting lesson He gave Joseph Smith. He let Job see his heartbreaking situation with spiritual eyes.

He said:

“Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me.

“Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding.

“Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it?

“Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof;

“When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?”¹³

Then, after Job repented of calling God unfair, Job was permitted to see his trials in a higher and holier way. He had repented.

“Then Job answered the Lord, and said,

“I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee.

“Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.

“Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.

“I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee.

“Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”¹⁴

After Job repented and so became more holy, the Lord blessed him beyond all he had lost. But perhaps the greatest blessing for Job was to have increased in holiness through adversity and repentance. He was qualified to

have greater happiness in the days he had yet to live.

Greater holiness will not come simply by asking for it. It will come by doing what is needed for God to change us.

President Russell M. Nelson has given what seems to me the best counsel of how to move along the covenant path to greater holiness. He pointed the way when he urged:

“Experience the strengthening power of daily repentance—of doing and being a little better each day.

“When we choose to repent, we choose to change! We allow the Savior to transform us into the best version of ourselves. We choose to grow spiritually and receive joy—the joy of redemption in Him. When we choose to repent, we choose to become more like Jesus Christ!”

President Nelson went on to give us this encouragement in our efforts to become holier: “The Lord does not expect perfection from us at this point. . . . But He does expect us to become increasingly pure. Daily repentance is the pathway to purity.”¹⁵



President Dallin H. Oaks, in an earlier conference address, also helped me see more clearly how we grow in holiness and how we can know we are moving toward it. He said: “How do we achieve spirituality? How do we attain that degree of holiness where we can have the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost? How do we come to view and evaluate things of this world with the perspective of eternity?”¹⁶

President Oaks’s answer begins with greater faith in Jesus Christ as our loving Savior. That leads us to seek forgiveness every day and to remember Him every day by keeping His commandments. That greater faith in Jesus Christ comes as we feast daily on His word.

The hymn “More Holiness Give Me” suggests a way to pray for help in becoming more holy. The author wisely suggests that the holiness we seek is a gift from a loving God, granted over time, after all we can do. You remember the last verse:

*More purity give me,
More strength to o’ercome,
More freedom from earth-stains,
More longing for home.
More fit for the kingdom,
More used would I be,
More blessed and holy—
More, Savior, like thee.*¹⁷

Whatever our personal circumstance, wherever we may be on the covenant path home, may our prayers for greater holiness be answered. I know that as our petition is granted, our happiness will increase. It may come slowly, but it will come. I have that assurance from a loving Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

I testify that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, that President Russell M. Nelson is our living prophet today. God the Father lives and loves us. He wants us to come home to Him in families. Our loving Savior invites us to follow Him on our journey there. They have prepared the way. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See Alma 41:10.
2. See Alma 42:4–16.
3. See Acts 26:18; Ether 4:7.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:34.
5. See 3 Nephi 27:19–20.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:50.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 97:8.
8. See Helaman 3:35.
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 101:1–5.
10. See 1 John 3:2–3; Doctrine and Covenants 112:13.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 122:7–9.
12. Job 1:1.
13. Job 38:3–7.
14. Job 42:1–6.
15. Russell M. Nelson, “We Can Do Better and Be Better,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2019, 67, 68.
16. Dallin H. Oaks, “Spirituality,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1985, 63.
17. “More Holiness Give Me,” *Hymns*, no. 131.



BY ELDER HANS T. BOOM
Of the Seventy

Knowing, Loving, and Growing

*May we all come to understand our part
in this great ministering work so that we
will become more like Him.*

In 2016 The Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square came to visit the Netherlands and Belgium. And since I was involved in that exciting event, I had the opportunity to enjoy their performance twice.

During their performance I was thinking about what a tremendous undertaking it was to move a choir of that size. My mind was drawn to the big gong, which was difficult and probably costly to ship over in comparison with the violin, the trumpet, or other instruments you could easily carry under your arm. But looking at the actual involvement of this gong, I realized it was only hit a few times, whereas the other smaller instruments were involved for most of the concert. I reflected that without the sound of the gong, the performance would not be the same and so the effort had to be made to move this big gong all the way across the ocean.

Sometimes we might feel that we are, like that gong, good enough only to play a minor part in the performance. But let me tell you that your sound is making all the difference.

We need all instruments. Some of us learn easily and do very well in school, while others have artistic talents. Some design and build things or nurse, protect, or teach others. We are all needed to bring color and meaning to this world.

To those who feel they do not have anything to contribute or believe that they are of no importance or

consequence to anybody, to others who might feel they are on top of the world, and anybody in between, I would like to address this message.

Wherever you are on the path of life, some of you might feel so overburdened that you do not even consider yourself on that path. I want to invite you to step out of the darkness into the light. The gospel light will provide warmth and healing and will help you understand who you really are and what your purpose in life is.

Some of us have been wandering on forbidden paths, trying to find happiness there.

We are invited by a loving Heavenly Father to walk the path of discipleship and to return to Him. He loves us with a perfect love.¹

What is the way? The way is to help each other understand who we are by ministering to each other.

To me, ministering is exercising divine love.² In that way we create an environment where both the giver and receiver obtain a desire to repent. In



other words, we change direction and come closer to and become more like our Savior, Jesus Christ.

For instance, there is no need to constantly tell our spouse or children how they can improve; they know that already. It is in creating this environment of love that they will be empowered to make the necessary changes in their lives and become better people.

In this way repentance becomes a daily process of refining that might include apologizing for poor behavior. I remember and still experience situations where I have been too quick to judge or too slow to listen. And at the end of the day, during my personal prayer, I felt loving counsel from heaven to repent and become better. The loving environment first created by my parents, brother, and sisters and later by my wife, children, and friends has helped me to become a better person.

We all know where we can do better. There is no need to repeatedly remind each other, but there is a need to love and minister to each other and, in doing so, provide a climate of willingness to change.

In this same environment we are learning who we really are and what our role will be in this last chapter of the world's history prior to the Second Coming of the Savior.

If you are wondering about your part, I would like to invite you to find a place where you can be alone and ask Heavenly Father to make known to you which part to play. The answer will probably come gradually and then more clearly when we have set our feet more firmly on the covenant and ministering path.

We are experiencing some of the same difficulties that Joseph Smith confronted while he was "in the midst of [a] war of words and tumult of opinions." As we read in his own account,



he often said to himself: "What is to be done? Who of all these parties are right; or, are they all wrong together? If any one of them be right, which [one] is it, and how shall I know it?"³

With the knowledge he found in the Epistle of James, which states, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him,"⁴ Joseph "at length came to the determination to 'ask of God.'"⁵

We further read that "it was the first time in [his] life that [he] had made such an attempt, for amidst all [his] anxieties [he] had never as yet made the attempt to pray vocally."⁶

And so it can be for us the very first time we address our Maker in a way

that we have never done before.

Because of Joseph's attempt, Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to him, calling him by name, and as a result we have a much clearer understanding of who we are and that we really do matter.

We further read that in his tender teenage years, Joseph "was persecuted by those who ought to have been [his] friends and [who were supposed] to have treated [him] kindly."⁷ And so we might expect some opposition as we are living a life of discipleship.

If you currently feel you are not able to be part of the orchestra and the path of repentance appears difficult to you, please know that if we keep at it, the burden will be taken from our shoulders and there will be light again. Heavenly Father will never leave us when we reach for Him. We can fall and get up, and He will help us brush off the dirt from our knees.

Some of us are wounded, but the first-aid kit of the Lord has bandages big enough to cover all of our wounds.

So it is that love, that perfect love that we also call charity or "the pure love of Christ,"⁸ which is needed in our homes where parents minister to their children and children to their parents. Through that love, hearts will be changed and desires born to do His will.

It is that love that is needed in our dealings with each other as children of





BY PRESIDENT M. RUSSELL BALLARD
Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

our Heavenly Father and as members of His Church and that will enable us to include all the musical instruments in our orchestras so we will be able to perform gloriously with the angelic choirs of heaven when the Savior comes again.

It is that love, that light that needs to shine and brighten our surroundings as we go about our daily lives. People will notice the light and will be drawn to it. That is the kind of missionary work that will draw others to “*come and see, come and help, and come and stay.*”⁹ Please, when you have received your witness about this great work and our part in it, let us rejoice together with our beloved Prophet Joseph Smith, who declared, “For I had seen a vision; I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it.”¹⁰

I testify to you that I know who I am, and I do know who you are. We are all children of a Heavenly Father who loves us. And He did not send us here to fail but to return gloriously to Him. That we may all come to understand our part in this great ministering work so that we will become more like Him when the Savior comes again is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See D. Todd Christofferson, “Abide in My Love,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 48.
2. See Russell M. Nelson, “Divine Love,” *Ensign*, Feb. 2003, 20–25; *Liahona*, Feb. 2003, 12–17.
3. Joseph Smith—History 1:10.
4. James 1:5; see also Joseph Smith—History 1:11.
5. Joseph Smith—History 1:13.
6. Joseph Smith—History 1:14.
7. Joseph Smith—History 1:28.
8. Moroni 7:47.
9. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Missionary Work: Sharing What Is in Your Heart,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2019, 17.
10. Joseph Smith—History 1:25.

Giving Our Spirits Control over Our Bodies

One of the most important things we can learn in this life is how to emphasize our eternal spiritual nature and control our evil desires.

My dear brothers and sisters, as October general conference approached last year, I prepared my conference talk to highlight the 100th anniversary of the vision of the spirit world given to President Joseph F. Smith on October 3, 1918.

A few days after I had submitted my talk for translation, my beloved eternal companion, Barbara, completed her mortal probation and passed into the spirit world.

As the days have turned into weeks, then months, and now a year since Barbara’s passing, I find myself more fully appreciating this scripture: “Thou shalt live together in love, insomuch that thou shalt weep for the loss of them that die.”¹ Barbara and I were blessed to “live together in love” for 67 years. But I have learned in a very real way what it means to “weep for the loss” of those we love. Oh, how I love and miss her!



I suppose most of us fail to fully appreciate what others do for us until they are gone. I knew Barbara was always busy, but I did not fully understand the constant family, Church, and community demands upon her time. There were daily consecrated efforts repeated thousands of times through the years that kept our family functioning. And through it all, no one in our family ever heard her raise her voice or say an unkind word.

Floods of memories have washed over me this past year. I have thought about the physically demanding choice she made to be the mother of seven children. Being a homemaker was the only career she ever wanted, and she was in every aspect a consummate professional.

Often I have wondered how she kept track of our children and me. Meal preparation alone was a truly daunting task, not to mention activities such as doing the mountains of laundry our family generated every week and keeping shoes and appropriately sized clothing on the children. We all turned to her on a myriad of other issues that were important to us. And because they were important to us, they were also important to her. She was, in a word, magnificent—as a wife, as a mother, as a friend, as a neighbor, and as a daughter of God.

Now that she has moved on, I am happy that I chose to sit next to her when I came home from the office during the last few months of her life, to hold her hand as we watched the endings of some of her favorite musicals—over and over again because Alzheimer’s would not allow her to remember that she had seen them just the afternoon before. Memories of those special hand-holding sessions are now very, very precious to me.



Brothers and sisters, please do not miss an opportunity to look into the eyes of your family members with love. Children and parents, reach out to each other and express your love and appreciation. Like me, some of you may wake up one day to discover that the time for such important communication has passed. Live each day together with hearts filled with gratitude, good memories, service, and much love.

During this past year, I have pondered more intently than ever before about our Heavenly Father’s plan. In teaching his son Corianton, Alma referred to it as “the great plan of happiness.”²

The word that keeps coming to my mind now when I consider the plan is “reunion.” It is a plan, designed by our loving Father in Heaven, that has at its center the grand and glorious possibilities of family reunion—of eternally



reuniting husbands and wives, parents and children, generation upon generation in the household of God.

That thought brings me comfort and the assurance that I will be with Barbara again. Although she physically suffered toward the end of her life, her spirit was strong, noble, and pure. She had prepared herself in all things so that when the day comes, she can stand before “the pleasing bar of God,”³ full of confidence and peaceful assurance. But here I am, in two days 91 years old, and I’m still wondering, “Am I ready? Am I doing everything I need to do to be able to hold her hand once again?”

The most simple, basic certainty of life is this: We are all going to die. Whether we die old or young, easy or hard, wealthy or indigent, beloved or lonely, nobody escapes death.

A few years ago, President Gordon B. Hinckley said something that is particularly meaningful about this: “How sweet is the assurance, how comforting is the peace that come from the knowledge that if we marry right and live right, our relationship will continue, notwithstanding the certainty of death and the passage of time.”⁴

I certainly married right. Of that there can be no doubt. But that isn’t enough, according to President Hinckley. I also have to live right.⁵

Today, “living right” can be a pretty confusing concept, especially if you spend much time on social media, where any voice can declare real truths or false concepts about God and His plan for His children. Thankfully, members of the Church have eternally true gospel principles to know how to live so that we might be better prepared when we must die.

Just a few months before I was born, my Apostle grandfather, Elder Melvin J. Ballard, gave a talk that, for some people, captured the essence of what it means to live right. Titled “Struggle for the Soul,” his talk focused on the ongoing battle between our physical bodies and our eternal spirits.

He said, “The greatest conflict that any man or woman will ever have . . . will be the battle that is had with self,” explaining that Satan, “the enemy of our souls,” attacks us through “the lusts, the appetites, the ambitions of the flesh.”⁶ So the primary battle is between our divine and spiritual nature and the

carnal natural man. Brothers and sisters, remember, we can receive spiritual help through the influence of the Holy Ghost that can “teach you all things.”⁷ Help can also come through the power and blessings of the priesthood.

Now, I ask, how is this battle going with each one of you?

President David O. McKay said: “Man’s earthly existence is but a test as to whether he will concentrate his efforts, his mind, his soul, upon things which contribute to the comfort and gratification of his physical nature, or whether he will make as his life’s [purpose] the acquisition of spiritual qualities.”⁸

This battle between our carnal and our spiritual natures isn’t a new thing. In his final sermon to his people, King Benjamin taught that “the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord.”⁹

The Apostle Paul taught that “they that are after the flesh do mind the

things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

“For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.”¹⁰

It seems clear to me that one of the most important things we can learn in this life is how to emphasize our eternal spiritual nature and control our evil desires. This should not be that difficult. After all, our spirit, which has been around a lot longer than our physical body, has already been successful in choosing righteousness over evil in the premortal realm. Before this earth was formed, we lived in the spirit world as sons and daughters of Heavenly Parents, who loved us and continue to love us now.

And yes, we did have to make life-changing decisions and choices in that premortal realm. Every person who has ever lived or ever will live on this planet made an essential decision to choose to accept Heavenly Father’s plan for our salvation. So we all came to earth with a proven track record of a successful spiritual nature and eternal destiny.

Think about that for a moment. This is who you and I really are and who you have always been: a son or daughter of God, with spiritual roots in eternity and a future overflowing with infinite possibilities. You are—first, foremost, and always—a spiritual being. And so when we choose to put our carnal nature ahead of our spiritual nature, we are choosing something that is contrary to our real, true, authentic spiritual selves.

Still, there’s no question that flesh and earthly impulses complicate the decision-making. With a veil of forgetfulness drawn between the premortal spirit world and this mortal world, we can lose sight of our relationship to

God and our spiritual nature, and our carnal nature can give priority to *what we want right now*. Learning to choose the things of the Spirit over the things of the flesh is one of the primary reasons why this earthly experience is part of Heavenly Father’s plan. It’s also why the plan is built upon the solid, sure foundation of the Atonement of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ so that our sins, including the errors we make when we yield to the flesh, can be overcome through constant repentance and we can live spiritually focused. Now is the time to control our bodily appetites to comply with the spiritual doctrine of Christ. That is why we must not procrastinate the day of our repentance.¹¹

Repentance, therefore, becomes an indispensable weapon in our battle over self. Just last general conference, President Russell M. Nelson referred to this battle and reminded us that “when we choose to repent, we choose to change! We allow the Savior to



transform us into the best version of ourselves. We choose to grow spiritually and receive joy—the joy of redemption in Him. When we choose to repent, we choose to become more like Jesus Christ!”¹²

Every night as I review my day in prayer with my Father in Heaven, I ask to be forgiven if I did anything wrong and promise to try to be better tomorrow. I believe this regular daily repentance helps my spirit remind my body who is in charge of me.

Another resource is the weekly opportunity we all have to refresh ourselves spiritually by partaking of the sacrament in remembrance of the Atonement and the perfect love that our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, has for us.

Brothers and sisters, I encourage you to slow down a bit and think about where you are now in subjugating your carnal nature and empowering your divine, spiritual nature so when the time comes, you may pass into the spirit world to a joyful reunion with your loved ones—for which I testify and humbly pray in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 42:45.
2. Alma 42:8.
3. Jacob 6:13.
4. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Gordon B. Hinckley* (2016), 157.
5. The Lord revealed that we must live according to our covenants in order to receive the promised blessings (see Doctrine and Covenants 82:10; 132:5–7, 19).
6. Melvin J. Ballard, “Struggle for the Soul” (address given at the Salt Lake Tabernacle, May 5, 1928).
7. John 14:26.
8. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: David O. McKay* (2003), 14.
9. Mosiah 3:19.
10. Romans 8:5–6.
11. See Alma 34:33.
12. Russell M. Nelson, “We Can Do Better and Be Better,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2019, 67.



BY ELDER PETER M. JOHNSON
Of the Seventy

Power to Overcome the Adversary

How do we find peace, remember who we are, and overcome the three Ds of the adversary?

Brothers and sisters, thank you for all you do to become, and to help others become, true followers of Jesus Christ and enjoy the blessings of the holy temple. Thank you for your goodness. You are wonderful; you are beautiful.

It is my prayer that we will recognize the *confirming* influence of the Holy Ghost as we come to fully understand that we are children of God. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” states: “All human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny.”¹ We are “choice spirits who were reserved to come forth in the fulness of times to take part in laying the foundations of the great latter-day work.”² President Russell M. Nelson declared: “You were taught in the spirit world to prepare you for anything and everything you would encounter during this latter part of these latter days (see D&C 138:56). That teaching endures within you!”³

You are elect sons and daughters of God. You have the power to overcome the adversary. The adversary, however, is aware of who you are. He knows of your divine heritage and seeks to limit

your earthly and heavenly potential by using the three Ds:

- Deception
- Distraction
- Discouragement

Deception

The adversary used the tool of deception in the days of Moses. The Lord declared to Moses:

“Behold, thou art my son. . . .

“I have a work for thee, . . . and thou art in the similitude of mine Only Begotten.”⁴

Shortly after this glorious vision, Satan attempted to deceive Moses. The words he used are interesting: “Moses, son of man, worship me.”⁵ The deception was not only in the invitation to worship Satan but also in the way he described Moses as a son of man. Remember, the Lord had just told Moses he was a son of God, created in the similitude of the Only Begotten.

The adversary was relentless in his attempts to deceive Moses, but Moses resisted, saying, “Depart from me, Satan, for this one God only will I worship, which is the God of glory.”⁶ Moses remembered who he was—a son of God.

The Lord’s words to Moses apply to you and to me. We are created in God’s own image, and He has a work for us to do. The adversary attempts to deceive by having us forget who we truly are. If we do not understand who we are, then it is difficult to recognize who we can become.

Distraction

The adversary also attempts to distract us away from Christ and His covenant path. Elder Ronald A. Rasband shared the following: “The adversary’s design is to distract us from spiritual witnesses, while the Lord’s desire is to enlighten and engage us in His work.”⁷

In our day, there are many distractions, including Twitter, Facebook, virtual reality games, and much more. These technological advances are amazing, but if we are not careful, they can distract us from fulfilling our divine potential. Using them appropriately can bring forth the power of heaven



and allow us to witness miracles as we seek to gather scattered Israel on both sides of the veil.

Let us be careful and not casual in our use of technology.⁸ Continually seek for ways that technology can draw us closer to the Savior and allow us to accomplish His work as we prepare for His Second Coming.

Discouragement

Lastly, the adversary desires for us to become discouraged. We may get discouraged when we compare ourselves to others or feel we are not living up to expectations, including our own.

When I started my doctoral program, I felt discouraged. The program accepted only four students that year, and the other students were brilliant. They had higher test scores and more work experience at senior management positions, and they exuded confidence in their abilities. After my first two weeks in the program, feelings of discouragement and doubt began to take hold, almost overwhelming me.

I decided that if I were going to complete this four-year program, I would finish reading the Book of Mormon each semester. Each day as I read, I recognized the Savior's declaration that the Holy Ghost would teach me all things and would bring all things to my remembrance.⁹ It reaffirmed who I am as a son of God, reminded me not to compare myself with the others, and gave me the confidence in my divine role to succeed.¹⁰

My dear friends, please do not let anyone steal your happiness. Do not compare yourself to others. Please remember the loving words of the Savior: "*Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*"¹¹



So how do we do it? How do we find this peace, remember who we are, and overcome the three Ds of the adversary?

First, remember that the first and great commandment is to love God with our heart, might, mind, and strength.¹² All that we do should be motivated by our love for Him and for His Son. As we develop our love for Them by keeping Their commandments, our capacity to love ourselves and to love others will increase. We will begin to serve family, friends, and neighbors because we will see them as the Savior sees them—as sons and daughters of God.¹³

Second, pray unto the Father in the name of Jesus Christ every day, every day, every day.¹⁴ It is through prayer that we can feel the love of God and

show our love for Him. Through prayer we express gratitude and ask for the strength and the courage to submit our will to God's and be guided and directed in all things.

I encourage you to "*pray* unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, . . . that ye may become the sons [and daughters] of God; that when he shall appear we shall *be* like him."¹⁵

Third, read and study the Book of Mormon every day, every day, every day.¹⁶ My Book of Mormon studies tend to go better when I read with a question in mind. As we read with a question, we can receive revelation and recognize that the Prophet Joseph Smith spoke truth when he declared, "The Book of Mormon [is] the most correct of any book on earth, . . . and



a man [or a woman will] get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.”¹⁷ The Book of Mormon contains the words of Christ and helps us remember who we are.

Lastly, prayerfully partake of the sacrament every week, every week, every week. It is through covenants and priesthood ordinances, including the sacrament, that the power of godliness is manifest in our lives.¹⁸ Elder David A. Bednar taught: “The ordinance of the sacrament is a holy and repeated invitation to repent sincerely and to be renewed spiritually. The act of partaking of the sacrament, in and of itself, does not remit sins. But as we prepare conscientiously and participate in this holy ordinance with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, then the promise is that we may *always* have the Spirit of the Lord to be with us.”¹⁹

As we humbly partake of the sacrament, we remember Jesus’s suffering in that sacred garden called Gethsemane and His sacrifice on the cross. We express gratitude to the Father for sending His Only Begotten Son, our Redeemer, and show our willingness to keep His commandments and to always remember Him.²⁰ There is a spiritual enlightenment associated with the

sacrament—it is personal, it is powerful, and it is needed.

My friends, I promise that as we strive to love God with all our heart, pray in the name of Jesus Christ, study the Book of Mormon, and prayerfully partake of the sacrament, we will have the ability, with the strength of the Lord, to overcome the *deceptive* practices of the adversary, to minimize *distractions* that limit our divine potential, and to resist the *discouragement* that



diminishes our capacity to feel the love of our Heavenly Father and His Son. We will come to *fully* understand who we are as sons and daughters of God.

Brothers and sisters, I share with you my love and declare unto you my witness that I know Heavenly Father lives and Jesus is the Christ. I love Them. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is God’s kingdom upon the earth. We have a *divine appointment* to gather Israel and prepare the world for the Second Coming of the Messiah. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2017, 145.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 138:53; see also Doctrine and Covenants 138:54–56.
3. Russell M. Nelson, “Stand as True Millennials,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2016, 26; *Liahona*, Oct. 2016, 48.
4. Moses 1:4, 6.
5. Moses 1:12.
6. Moses 1:20; see also Moses 1:16–19, 21.
7. Ronald A. Rasband, “Lest Thou Forget,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 115.
8. See Becky Craven, “Careful versus Casual,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2019, 9–11.
9. See John 14:26.
10. Our divine role to succeed is to obtain eternal life regardless of whether one obtains what the world views as success in earthly endeavors. The Holy Ghost reminds us of our divine role and of who we can become as we remain on the covenant path and overcome, with the strength of the Lord, the temptations of the adversary.
11. John 14:27; emphasis added.
12. See Matthew 22:37–38.
13. See John 3:16; 1 John 4:19; Mosiah 2:17.
14. See 3 Nephi 18:18–21.
15. Moroni 7:48; emphasis added.
16. See Kevin W. Pearson, “Stay by the Tree,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 114–16.
17. Introduction to the Book of Mormon.
18. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:20–21.
19. David A. Bednar, “Always Retain a Remission of Your Sins,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2016, 61–62.
20. See Moroni 4:2–3; 5:1–2; Doctrine and Covenants 20:76–79. Please note that we are living in a time when we desperately need His Spirit to be with us always.



BY ELDER ULISSES SOARES
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Take Up Our Cross

Taking upon yourselves your crosses and following the Savior means continuing with faith on the Lord's path and not indulging in worldly habits.

Dear brothers and sisters, we have received wonderful teachings from our leaders during these last two days. I testify to you that if we strive to apply these inspired and timely teachings in our lives, the Lord, through His grace, will help each of us carry our cross and make our burdens light.¹

While in the vicinity of Caesarea Philippi, the Savior revealed to His disciples what He would suffer at the hands of the elders, chief priests, and scribes in Jerusalem. He specifically taught them about His death and glorious Resurrection.² At that point in time, His disciples did not completely understand His divine mission on earth. Peter himself, when he heard what the Savior had said, took Him aside and rebuked Him, saying, “Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.”³

To help His disciples to understand that devotion to His work includes submission and suffering, the Savior emphatically declared:

“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

“For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

“For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”⁴

Through this declaration, the Savior emphasized that all those who are willing to follow Him need to deny themselves and control their desires, appetites, and passions, sacrificing everything, even life itself if necessary, being entirely submissive to the will of the Father—just as He

did.⁵ This is, in fact, the price to be paid for the salvation of a soul. Jesus purposely and metaphorically used the symbol of a cross to help His disciples better understand what sacrifice and devotion to the Lord's cause would truly mean. The image of a cross was well known among His disciples and the inhabitants of the Roman Empire because Romans forced victims of crucifixion to publicly carry their own cross or crossbeam to the place where their execution would occur.⁶

It was only after the Savior's Resurrection that the disciples' minds were opened to understand all that had been written about Him⁷ and what would be required of them from that time on.⁸

In the same fashion, all of us, brothers and sisters, need to open our minds and our hearts in order to more fully understand the relevance of taking upon ourselves our crosses and following Him. We learn through the scriptures that those who wish to take their





cross upon themselves love Jesus Christ in such a way that they deny themselves of all ungodliness and of every worldly lust and keep His commandments.⁹

Our determination to cast off all that is contrary to God’s will and to sacrifice all we are asked to give and to strive to follow His teachings will help us to endure in the path of Jesus Christ’s gospel—even in the face of tribulation, the weakness of our souls, or the social pressure and worldly philosophies that oppose His teachings.

For example, for those who have not yet found an eternal companion and may be feeling lonely and hopeless, or for those who have been divorced and feel abandoned and forgotten, I assure you that accepting the Savior’s invitation of taking upon yourselves your crosses and following Him means continuing with faith on the Lord’s path, maintaining a pattern of dignity, and not indulging in worldly habits that will eventually take away our hope in God’s love and mercy.

The same principles apply to those of you who are experiencing same-gender attraction and feel discouraged and helpless. And maybe for this reason some of you are feeling that the gospel

of Jesus Christ is not for you anymore. If that is the case, I want to assure you that there is always hope in God the Father and in His plan of happiness, in Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice, and in living Their loving commandments. In His perfect wisdom, power, justice, and mercy, the Lord may seal us His, that we may be brought to His presence and have everlasting salvation, if we are steadfast and immovable in keeping the commandments¹⁰ and are always abounding in good works.¹¹

To those who have committed serious sins, accepting this same invitation means, among other things, to humble yourself before God, to counsel with appropriate Church leaders, and to repent and forsake your sins. This process will also bless all who are fighting against debilitating addictions, including opioids, drugs, alcohol, and pornography. Taking these steps brings you closer to the Savior, who can ultimately free you from guilt, sorrow, and spiritual and physical slavery. Additionally, you may also desire to seek the support of your family, friends, and competent medical and counseling professionals.

Please never give up after subsequent failures and consider yourself

incapable of abandoning sins and overcoming addiction. You cannot afford to stop trying and thereafter continue in weakness and sin! Always strive to do your best, manifesting through your works the desire to cleanse the inner vessel, as taught by the Savior.¹² Sometimes solutions to certain challenges come after months and months of continuous effort. The promise found in the Book of Mormon that “it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do,”¹³ is applicable in these circumstances. Please remember that the Savior’s gift of grace “is not necessarily limited in time to ‘after’ all we can do. We may receive His grace before, during, and after the time when we expend our own efforts.”¹⁴

I testify that as we continually strive to overcome our challenges, God will bless us with the gifts of faith to be healed and of the working of miracles.¹⁵ He will do for us what we are not capable of doing for ourselves.

Additionally, for those who feel bitter, angry, offended, or chained to sorrows for something you feel is undeserved, to take up one’s cross and follow the Savior means to strive to lay aside these feelings and turn to

the Lord so He can free us from this state of mind and help us to find peace. Unfortunately, if we hold on to these negative feelings and emotions, we may find ourselves living without the influence of the Lord's Spirit in our lives. We cannot repent *for* other people, but we can forgive them—by refusing to be held hostages by those who have harmed us.¹⁶

The scriptures teach that there is a way out of these situations—by inviting our Savior to help us to replace our stony hearts with new hearts.¹⁷ For this to happen, we need to come before the Lord with our weaknesses¹⁸ and implore His help and forgiveness,¹⁹ especially during the sacred moment when we partake of the sacrament each Sunday. May we choose to seek His help and take an important and difficult step by forgiving those who have hurt us so that our wounds may begin to heal. I promise you that in your doing so, your nights will be full of the relief that comes from a mind at peace with the Lord.

While in Liberty Jail in 1839, the Prophet Joseph Smith wrote an epistle to Church members containing prophecies that are so very applicable in all these circumstances and situations. He wrote, "All thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, shall be revealed and set forth upon all who have endured valiantly for the gospel of Jesus Christ."²⁰ Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, those who have taken upon themselves the name of the Savior, trusting in His promises and persevering to the end, will be saved²¹ and may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness.²²

We all face adverse circumstances in our lives that make us feel sad, helpless, hopeless, and sometimes even weakened. Some of these feelings may

lead us to question the Lord: "Why am I experiencing these situations?" or "Why are my expectations not met? After all, I am doing everything in my power to carry my cross and follow the Savior!"

My dear friends, we must remember that taking our cross upon ourselves includes being humble and trusting in God and in His infinite wisdom. We must acknowledge that He is aware of each of us and of our needs. It is also necessary to accept the fact that the Lord's timing is different than ours. Sometimes we seek for a blessing and set a time limit for the Lord to fulfill it. We cannot condition our faithfulness to Him by imposing upon Him a deadline for the answers to our desires. When we do this, we resemble the skeptical Nephites from ancient times, who mocked their brothers and sisters by saying that the time was past for the fulfillment of the words spoken by Samuel the Lamanite, creating confusion among those who believed.²³ We need to trust the Lord enough to be still and know that He is God, that He



Sister Franca Calamassi with her four children at the temple.

knows all things, and that He is aware of each of us.²⁴

I recently had the opportunity to minister to a widowed sister named Franca Calamassi, who is suffering from a debilitating illness. Sister Calamassi was the first member of her family to join the restored Church of Jesus Christ. Although her husband was never baptized, he consented to meet with the missionaries and often attended Church meetings. Despite these circumstances, Sister Calamassi remained faithful and raised her four children in the gospel of Jesus Christ. A year following her husband's passing, Sister Calamassi took her children to the temple, and they participated in sacred ordinances and were sealed together as a family. The promises associated with these ordinances brought her much hope, joy, and happiness that helped her carry on in life.

When the first symptoms of the disease began to appear, her bishop gave her a blessing. At that time she told her bishop that she was ready to accept the Lord's will, expressing her faith to be healed as well as her faith to endure her illness to the end.

During my visit, while holding Sister Calamassi's hand and looking into her eyes, I saw an angelic glow emanating from her countenance—reflecting her confidence in God's plan and her perfect brightness of hope in the Father's love and plan for her.²⁵ I felt her firm determination to endure in her faith until the end by taking up her cross, despite the challenges she was facing. This sister's life is a testimony of Christ, a statement of her faith and devotion to Him.

Brothers and sisters, I want to testify to you that taking upon us our cross and following the Savior requires us to follow His example and strive to



BY ELDER NEIL L. ANDERSEN
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

become like Him,²⁶ patiently facing the circumstances of life, denying and despising the appetites of the natural man, and waiting on the Lord. The Psalmist wrote:

“Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.”²⁷

“He is our help and our shield.”²⁸

I testify to you that following our Master’s footsteps and waiting on Him who is the ultimate healer of our lives will provide rest to our souls and make our burdens easy and light.²⁹ Of these things I testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See Matthew 11:29–30; James 2:24; 2 Nephi 25:23.
2. See Matthew 16:21.
3. Matthew 16:22.
4. Matthew 16:24–26.
5. See John 6:38.
6. See John 19:16–17.
7. See Mark 16:17–20; Luke 24:36–53.
8. See Matthew 28:19–20.
9. See Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 16:25–29 (in the Bible appendix); see also Guide to the Scriptures, “Lust”; “Natural Man”; “Sensual, Sensuality”; “Wicked, Wickedness”; scriptures.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
10. See Alma 1:25.
11. See Mosiah 5:15.
12. See Alma 60:23.
13. 2 Nephi 25:23.
14. See Bruce C. Hafen, *The Broken Heart: Applying the Atonement to Life’s Experiences* (1989), 155–56.
15. See Doctrine and Covenants 46:19, 21.
16. See Neal A. Maxwell, “Repentance,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 32.
17. See Ezekiel 18:31; 36:26.
18. See Ether 12:27.
19. See 1 Nephi 7:21.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 121:29.
21. See 3 Nephi 27:6.
22. See Mosiah 2:41.
23. See 3 Nephi 1:4–7.
24. See Doctrine and Covenants 101:16.
25. See 2 Nephi 31:20.
26. See Matthew 5:48; 3 Nephi 12:48; 27:27.
27. Psalm 27:14.
28. Psalm 33:20.
29. See Matthew 11:30; Mosiah 24:14.

Fruit

Keep your eyes and your hearts centered on the Savior Jesus Christ and the eternal joy that comes only through Him.

I know what you are thinking! Just one more speaker and we will hear from President Nelson. Hoping to keep you alert for a few minutes as we await our beloved prophet, I have selected a very appealing topic: my subject is fruit.

With the color, texture, and sweetness of berries, bananas, watermelons, and mangoes, or of more exotic fruit like kiwano or pomegranate, fruit has long been a treasured delicacy.

During His earthly ministry, the Savior compared good fruit to things of

eternal worth. He said, “Ye shall know them by their fruits.”¹ “Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit.”² He encouraged us to gather “fruit unto life eternal.”³

In a vivid dream that we all know well in the Book of Mormon, the prophet Lehi finds himself in “a dark and dreary wilderness.” There is filthy water, a mist of darkness, strange roads, and forbidden paths, as well as a rod of iron⁴ along a strait and narrow path leading to a beautiful tree with “fruit



During His earthly ministry, the Savior compared good fruit to things of eternal worth.

[that makes] one happy.” Recounting the dream, Lehi says: “I did . . . partake of the fruit; . . . it was most sweet, above all that I [had] ever . . . tasted. . . . [And] it filled my soul with exceedingly great joy.” *This* fruit was “[more] desirable [than any] other fruit.”⁵

The Meaning of the Tree and the Fruit

What does this tree with its most precious fruit symbolize? It represents “the love of God”⁶ and proclaims our Heavenly Father’s marvelous plan of redemption. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”⁷

This precious fruit symbolizes the wondrous blessings of the Savior’s incomparable Atonement. Not only will we live again following our mortality, but through our faith in Jesus Christ, our repentance, and our keeping the commandments, we can be forgiven of our sins and one day stand clean and pure before our Father and His Son.

Partaking of the fruit of the tree also symbolizes that we embrace the ordinances and covenants of the restored gospel—being baptized, receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, and entering the house of the Lord to be endowed with power from on high. Through the grace of Jesus Christ and by honoring our covenants, we receive the immeasurable promise of living with our righteous family throughout eternity.⁸

No wonder the angel described the fruit as “the most joyous to the soul.”⁹ It truly is!

The Challenge of Staying True

As we have all learned, even after savoring the precious fruit of the restored gospel, staying true and

faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ is still not easily done. As has been said many times in this conference, we continue to face distractions and deceptions, confusion and commotion, enticements and temptations that attempt to pull our hearts away from the Savior and the joys and beauties we have experienced in following Him.

Because of this adversity, Lehi’s dream also includes a warning! On the other side of the river is a spacious building with people of all ages pointing their fingers, mocking, and scoffing at the righteous followers of Jesus Christ.

The people in the building are ridiculing and laughing at those keeping the commandments, hoping to discredit and deride their faith in Jesus Christ and in His gospel. And because of the verbal attacks of doubt and disdain launched at the believers, some of those who have tasted of the fruit begin to feel ashamed of the gospel they once embraced. The false allures of the world seduce them; they turn away from the tree and from the fruit and, in the

words of the scripture, “[fall] away into forbidden paths and [are] lost.”¹⁰

In our world today, the adversary’s construction crews are working overtime, hastily inflating the large and spacious building. The expansion has spread across the river, hoping to envelop our homes, while the pointers and the scoffers wail day and night on their internet megaphones.¹¹

President Nelson explained, “The adversary is quadrupling his efforts to disrupt testimonies and impede the work of the Lord.”¹² Let us remember Lehi’s words: “We heeded them not.”¹³

Although we need not fear, we are to be on guard. At times, little things can upend our spiritual balance. Please don’t allow your questions, the insults of others, faithless friends, or unfortunate mistakes and disappointments to turn you away from the sweet, pure, and soul-satisfying blessings that come from the precious fruit of the tree. Keep your eyes and your hearts centered on the Savior Jesus Christ and the eternal joy that comes only through Him.



As we have all learned, even after savoring the precious fruit of the restored gospel, staying true and faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ is still not easily done.



The Faith of Jason Hall

In June my wife, Kathy, and I attended the funeral of Jason Hall. At the time of his passing, he was 48 years old and serving as an elders quorum president.

Here are Jason’s words about an event that changed his life:

“[At age 15] I [was] in a diving accident. . . . I [broke] my neck and was paralyzed from the chest down. I lost complete control of my legs and partial control of my arms. I could no longer walk, stand, . . . or feed myself. I could barely breathe or speak.”¹⁴

“‘Dear Father [in Heaven],’ I begged, ‘if I could only have my hands, I know I could make it. Please, Father, please. . . .’

“. . . ‘Keep my legs, Father; I just [pray for] the use of my hands.’”¹⁵

Jason never received the use of his hands. Can you hear the voices from the spacious building? “Jason Hall, God does not hear your prayers! If God is a loving God, how could He leave you like this? Why have faith in Christ?” Jason Hall heard their voices, but he did not heed them. Instead he feasted upon the fruit of the tree. His faith in Jesus Christ became immovable. He graduated from the university and married Kolette Coleman in the temple, describing her as the love of his life.¹⁶ After 16 years of marriage, another miracle, their precious son, Coleman, was born.

How did they grow their faith? Kolette explained: “We trusted in God’s plan. And it gave us hope. We knew that Jason would [in a future day] be whole. . . . We knew that God provided us a Savior, whose atoning sacrifice enables us to keep looking forward when we want to give up.”¹⁷

Speaking at Jason’s funeral, 10-year-old Coleman said his dad taught him: “Heavenly Father [has] a plan for us, earth life would be awesome, and we could live in families. . . . But . . . we would have to go through hard things and we would make mistakes.”

Coleman continued: “Heavenly Father sent His Son, Jesus, to earth. His job was to be perfect. To heal people. To love them. And then to suffer for all of our pain, sorrows, and sins. Then He died for us.” Then Coleman added, “Because He did this, Jesus knows how I feel right now.

“Three days after Jesus died, He . . . came alive again, with His body perfect. This is important to me because I know that . . . my [dad’s] body will be perfect and we will be together as a family.”

Coleman concluded: “Every night since I was a baby, my dad said to me, ‘Dad loves you, Heavenly Father loves you, and you’re a good boy.’”¹⁸

Joy Comes Because of Jesus Christ

President Russell M. Nelson described why the Hall family feels joy and hope. He said:

“The joy we feel has little to do with the circumstances of our lives and everything to do with the focus of our lives.



Jason, Coleman, and Kolette Hall

“When the focus of our lives is on God’s plan of salvation . . . and Jesus Christ and His gospel, we can feel joy regardless of what is happening—or not happening—in our lives. Joy comes from and because of Him. He is the source of all joy. . . .

“If we look to the world . . . , we will never know joy. . . . [Joy] is the gift that comes from intentionally trying to live a righteous life, as taught by Jesus Christ.”¹⁹

A Promise as You Return

If you have been without the fruit of the tree for some time, please know that the Savior’s arms are always outstretched to you. He lovingly beckons, “Repent and come unto me.”²⁰ His fruit is plentiful and always in season. It cannot be purchased with money, and no one who honestly desires it is denied.²¹

If you desire to return to the tree and taste the fruit once again, begin by praying to your Heavenly Father. Believe in Jesus Christ and the power of His atoning sacrifice. I promise you that as you look to the Savior “in every thought,”²² the fruit of the tree will be yours once again, delicious to your taste, joyous to your soul, “the greatest of all the gifts of God.”²³

Three weeks ago today, I saw the joy of the Savior’s fruit on full display as Kathy and I attended the Lisbon Portugal Temple dedication. The truths of the restored gospel opened to Portugal in 1975 as religious freedom became available. Many noble Saints who first tasted of the fruit when there were no congregations, no chapels, and no temple closer than 1,000 miles (1,600 km) rejoiced with us that the precious fruit of the tree is now in a house of the Lord in Lisbon, Portugal. How I honor and revere these Latter-day



Saints who have kept their hearts riveted on the Savior.

The Savior said, “He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.”²⁴

Speaking this morning to the members of the Church across the world, President Nelson said, “My dear brothers and sisters, you are living exemplars of the fruits that come from following the teachings of Jesus Christ.” Then he added: “I thank you! I love you!”²⁵

We love you, President Nelson.

I am an eyewitness to the power of revelation that rests upon our dear President. He is the prophet of God. Like Lehi of old, President Russell M. Nelson beckons to us and all of God’s family to come and partake of the fruit of the tree. May we have the humility and strength to follow his counsel.

I humbly witness that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. His love, His power, and His grace bring all things of lasting worth. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Matthew 7:16.
2. Matthew 7:17.
3. John 4:36.
4. In early January 2007, while preparing for a Brigham Young University devotional address as a member of the Presidency of the Seventy to be given on March 4, 2007, I asked Elder David A. Bednar what he was preparing for his February 4, 2007, address before the same audience. I was taken aback when he responded that his talk was about holding fast to the iron rod. This was the exact title I had chosen for my talk. After sharing our text with one another, we realized that our approaches were different. His talk, entitled “A Reservoir of Living Water,” emphasized the rod of iron, or the word of God, as encompassing the scriptures. In his talk he asked, “Are you and I daily reading, studying, and searching the scriptures in a way that enables us to hold fast to the rod of iron?” (speeches.byu.edu).



BY PRESIDENT RUSSELL M. NELSON

Closing Remarks

Individual worthiness requires a total conversion of mind and heart to be more like the Lord.

Then, just a week after my conversation with Elder Bednar, President Boyd K. Packer gave a BYU devotional address entitled “Lehi’s Dream and You.” President Packer emphasized the rod of iron as the personal revelation and inspiration that come to us through the Holy Ghost. He said: “If you hold to the rod, you can *feel* your way forward with the gift of the Holy Ghost. . . . Grasp the iron rod, and do not let go. Through the power of the Holy Ghost, you can *feel* your way through life” (Jan. 16, 2007, speeches.byu.edu).

My subject, “Hold Fast to the Words of the Prophets,” in March 2007 was the iron rod as representing the words of the living prophets (Mar. 4, 2007, speeches.byu.edu).

The connection of these three talks was no coincidence. The hand of the Lord was at work as three talks, prepared for the same audience, identified three aspects of the iron rod, or the word of God: (1) the scriptures, or the words of ancient prophets; (2) the words of living prophets; and (3) the power of the Holy Ghost. It was an important learning experience for me.

5. See 1 Nephi 8:4–12.
6. 1 Nephi 11:25.
7. John 3:16.
8. See David A. Bednar, “Lehi’s Dream: Holding Fast to the Rod,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Oct. 2011, 32–37.
9. 1 Nephi 11:23.
10. 1 Nephi 8:28.
11. See Boyd K. Packer, “Lehi’s Dream and You” (Brigham Young University devotional, Jan. 16, 2007), speeches.byu.edu.
12. Russell M. Nelson, “We Can Do Better and Be Better,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2019, 68.
13. 1 Nephi 8:33.
14. Stephen Jason Hall, “The Gift of Home,” *New Era*, Dec. 1994, 12.
15. Stephen Jason Hall, “Helping Hands,” *New Era*, Oct. 1995, 46, 47.
16. Personal correspondence to Elder Andersen from Kolette Hall.
17. Personal correspondence to Elder Andersen from Kolette Hall.
18. Funeral talk by Coleman Hall, shared with Elder Andersen by Kolette Hall.
19. Russell M. Nelson, “Joy and Spiritual Survival,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 82, 84.
20. 3 Nephi 21:6.
21. See 2 Nephi 26:25, 33.
22. Doctrine and Covenants 6:36.
23. 1 Nephi 15:36.
24. John 15:5.
25. Russell M. Nelson, “The Second Great Commandment,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2019, 100.

My beloved brothers and sisters, as we come to the end of this historic conference, we thank the Lord for inspiring the messages and the music that have edified us. We have truly enjoyed a spiritual feast.

We know the restored gospel of Jesus Christ will bring hope and joy to people who will hear and heed His doctrine. We also know that each home can become a true sanctuary of faith, where peace, love, and the Spirit of the Lord may dwell.

Of course, the crowning jewel of the Restoration is the holy temple. Its sacred ordinances and covenants are pivotal to preparing a people who are ready to welcome the Savior at His Second Coming. Presently we have 166 dedicated temples, and more are coming.

An open house will be held prior to the dedication of each new and renovated temple. Many friends not of our faith will participate in tours of those temples and will learn something about temple blessings. And some of those visitors will be moved upon to know more. Some will sincerely ask how they might qualify for the blessings of the temple.

As members of the Church, we need to be prepared to answer their questions. We can explain that the blessings of the temple are available to any and

all people who will prepare themselves. But before they can enter a dedicated temple, they need to qualify. The Lord wants all His children to partake of the eternal blessings available in His temple. He has directed what each person must do to qualify to enter His holy house.



A good place for us to begin such a teaching opportunity is to call attention to the words etched on the temple's exterior: "Holiness to the Lord: The House of the Lord." President Henry B. Eyring's message today and many others have inspired us to become more holy. Each temple is a holy place; each temple patron strives to become more holy.

All requirements to enter the temple relate to personal holiness. To assess that readiness, each person who wants to enjoy the blessings of the temple will have two interviews: first with a bishop, bishopric counselor, or branch president; second with a stake or mission president or one of his counselors. In those interviews, several questions will be asked.

Some of those questions have recently been edited for clarity. I would like to review them for you now:

1. Do you have faith in and a testimony of God, the Eternal Father; His Son, Jesus Christ; and the Holy Ghost?
2. Do you have a testimony of the Atonement of Jesus Christ and of His role as your Savior and Redeemer?
3. Do you have a testimony of the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ?
4. Do you sustain the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as the prophet, seer, and revelator and as the only person on the earth authorized to exercise all priesthood keys?

Do you sustain the members of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators?

Do you sustain the other General Authorities and local leaders of the Church?



5. The Lord has said that all things are to be "done in cleanliness" before Him (Doctrine and Covenants 42:41).

Do you strive for moral cleanliness in your thoughts and behavior?

Do you obey the law of chastity?

6. Do you follow the teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ in your private and public behavior with members of your family and others?
7. Do you support or promote any teachings, practices, or doctrine contrary to those of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?
8. Do you strive to keep the Sabbath day holy, both at home and at church; attend your meetings; prepare for and worthily partake of the sacrament; and live your life in harmony with the laws and commandments of the gospel?
9. Do you strive to be honest in all that you do?
10. Are you a full-tithe payer?
11. Do you understand and obey the Word of Wisdom?
12. Do you have any financial or other obligations to a former spouse or to children?
If yes, are you current in meeting those obligations?
13. Do you keep the covenants that you made in the temple, including wearing the temple garment as instructed in the endowment?
14. Are there serious sins in your life

that need to be resolved with priesthood authorities as part of your repentance?

15. Do you consider yourself worthy to enter the Lord's house and participate in temple ordinances?

Tomorrow, these revised temple recommend questions will be distributed to Church leaders throughout the world.

In addition to their answering those questions honestly, it is understood that each adult temple patron will wear the sacred garment of the priesthood under their regular clothing. This is symbolic of an inner commitment to strive each day to become more like the Lord. It also reminds us to remain faithful each day to covenants made and to walk on the covenant path each day in a higher and holier way.

Now, for just a moment, I would like to speak to our youth. We encourage you to qualify for limited-use temple recommends. You will be asked only those questions applicable to you in your preparation for the ordinances of proxy baptism and confirmation. We are very grateful for your worthiness and willingness to participate in that sacred temple work. We thank you!

Individual worthiness to enter the Lord's house requires much individual spiritual preparation. But with the Lord's help, nothing is impossible. In some respects, it is easier to build a temple than it is to build a people

prepared for a temple. Individual worthiness requires a total conversion of mind and heart to be more like the Lord, to be an honest citizen, to be a better example, and to be a holier person.

I testify that such preparatory work brings innumerable blessings in this life and inconceivable blessings for the life to come, including the perpetuation of your family unit throughout all eternity “in a state of never-ending happiness.”¹

Now I would like to turn to another topic: plans for the coming year. In the springtime of the year 2020, it will be exactly 200 years since Joseph Smith experienced the theophany that we know as the First Vision. God the Father and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to Joseph, a 14-year-old youth. That event marked the onset of the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ in its fulness, precisely as foretold in the Holy Bible.²

Then came a succession of visits from heavenly messengers, including Moroni, John the Baptist, and the early Apostles Peter, James, and John. Others followed, including Moses, Elias, and Elijah. Each brought divine authority to bless God’s children on the earth once again.

Miraculously, we have also received the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ, a companion scripture to the Holy Bible. The revelations published in the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price have also greatly enriched our understanding of God’s commandments and eternal truth.

The keys and offices of the priesthood have been restored, including the offices of Apostle, Seventy, patriarch, high priest, elder, bishop, priest, teacher, and deacon. And women who love the Lord serve valiantly in



the Relief Society, Primary, Young Women, Sunday School, and other Church callings—all vital parts of the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ in its fulness.

Thus, the year 2020 will be designated as a bicentennial year. General conference next April will be different from any previous conference. In the next six months, I hope that every member and every family will prepare for a unique conference that will commemorate the very foundations of the restored gospel.

You may wish to begin your preparation by reading afresh Joseph Smith’s account of the First Vision as recorded in the Pearl of Great Price. Our course of study for next year in *Come, Follow Me* is the Book of Mormon. You may wish to ponder important questions such as, “How would my life be different if my knowledge gained from the Book of Mormon were suddenly taken away?” or “How have the events that followed the First Vision made a difference for me and my loved ones?” Also, with the Book of Mormon videos now becoming available, you may wish

to incorporate them in your individual and family study.

Select your own questions. Design your own plan. Immerse yourself in the glorious light of the Restoration. As you do, general conference next April will be not only memorable; it will be unforgettable.

Now in closing, I leave with you my love and my blessing that each of you may become happier and holier with each passing day. Meanwhile, please be assured that revelation continues in the Church and will continue under the Lord’s direction until “the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done.”³

I so bless you, reaffirming my love for you, with my testimony that God lives! Jesus is the Christ! This is His Church and we are His people. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Mosiah 2:41.
2. See Isaiah 2:2; 29; Ezekiel 37:15–20, 26–28; Daniel 2:44; Amos 3:7; Acts 3:21; Ephesians 1:10; Revelation 14:6.
3. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 142.

Recommend Questions Updated and Other Temple News

Updates to temple recommend interview questions were presented by President Russell M. Nelson during October 2019 general conference (see page 121). Temple standards remain the same, but some of the questions have been reworded to be clearer. Appropriate Church leaders should have received a First Presidency letter dated October 6, 2019, which includes the updated questions.

President Nelson also announced plans for eight new temples (see page 79). The new temples will be in Freetown, Sierra Leone; Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea; Bentonville, Arkansas, USA; Bacolod, Philippines; McAllen, Texas, USA; Cobán, Guatemala; and Orem and Taylorsville, Utah, USA.

Since the April 2019 general conference, temples have been dedicated in Kinshasha, Democratic Republic of the Congo; Lisbon, Portugal; Port-au-Prince, Haiti; and Fortaleza, Brazil; and

rededicated in Oakland, California, USA; Memphis, Tennessee, USA; Frankfurt, Germany; Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA; and Raleigh, North Carolina, USA.

Ground was broken for temples in Yigo, Guam; Praia, Cabo Verde; San Juan, Puerto Rico; Lima, Peru (Los Olivos); and Belém, Brazil, and sites were selected for temples in Auckland, New Zealand, and Layton and Saratoga Springs, Utah, USA.

Plans were made public for the renovation of the Salt Lake Temple, which will close in December and reopen in 2024, and the St. George Utah Temple, which closes in November 2019 and will reopen in 2022. ■

For more about temples, go to temples.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

Church Adjusts Policy for Witnessing Ordinances

At a general conference leadership meeting where General Authorities and General Officers of the Church receive instruction from the First Presidency, President Russell M. Nelson announced procedural adjustments in Church policy regarding who may serve as witnesses at baptisms and sealings.

A First Presidency letter dated October 2, 2019, details the adjustments:

“As invited by presiding authorities:

1. “Any member holding a current temple recommend, including a limited-use recommend, may serve as a witness to a proxy baptism.
2. “Any endowed member with a current temple recommend may serve as a witness to a living or proxy sealing.
3. “Any baptized member of the Church, including children and youth, may serve as a witness to the baptism of a living person.” ■



From left: Fortaleza Brazil Temple, Lisbon Portugal Temple, Kinshasha Democratic Republic of the Congo Temple, and the Port-au-Prince Haiti Temple

Leaders Introduce the New Children and Youth Effort

Children and Youth will be implemented in January 2020 to help young people follow the Savior as they grow spiritually, socially, physically, and intellectually. For addresses in this magazine that discuss Children and Youth, see pages 40 and 53.

“The time has come for a new approach, designed to help today’s children and youth throughout the world,” President Russell M. Nelson said in a special broadcast on September 29, 2019.

“Instead of giving you many specific assignments,” he said to the children and youth, “we are inviting you to counsel with the Lord about how you can grow in a balanced way. It will be rewarding and fun, but it will also take some effort on your part. You will need to seek personal revelation. You will need to choose for yourself how to act on it. Sometimes the Spirit may prompt you to do things that are difficult. I think you are up to the challenge. You can do hard things.”

President Nelson also said that parents have an essential role to play. “Please build strong relationships with your children and youth,” he said. “Leaders at church can help, but these are your children. No one can have a greater influence on their success than you. Give them love, encouragement, and counsel, but resist the temptation to take over for them. They will do best as they exercise their own agency.

“This counsel applies also to our wonderful leaders and teachers of children and youth,” President Nelson continued. “We need to let the young people lead, particularly those who

have been called and set apart to serve in class and quorum presidencies. Priesthood authority will have been delegated to them. They will learn how to receive inspiration in leading their class or quorum.”

In the same presentation, President M. Russell Ballard, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, introduced the vision of Children and Youth: to “strengthen the rising generation’s faith in Jesus Christ, and help children, youth, and their families progress along the covenant path as

they meet life’s challenges.”¹ He said that “helping children and youth to gain a testimony of Jesus Christ will bless them and all of us all of our lives.”

After youth in the broadcast joined in an activity to demonstrate use of the *Introductory Guide for Children and Youth*, President Ballard said: “This is just the beginning. Today, we just got started on this activity. This is something that will go on in your families and as you work together. We invite you to continue the activity. . . .



Parents, please continue this at home.” He emphasized that “this is a home-centered, Church-supported program” and that “families are involved together in this program. That’s what’s going to make it so great.”

In many areas of the world, parents and leaders also received their own introductory guide. Other areas will have Children and Youth translated in their languages later in 2020.

Gospel learning, service and activities, and personal development (including setting and accomplishing goals) will be the keys parts of Children and Youth, and youth should lead in planning. Children and youth

seek personal revelation as they progress along the covenant path, with support from family, leaders, and others. President Ballard noted that Children and Youth is a worldwide effort and therefore is adaptable to “where you live and your family circumstances.”

Additional details and resources will be provided at a Face to Face broadcast for children and youth on November 17, 2019, featuring Elder Gerrit W. Gong of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Children and youth turning ages 8 to 18 during 2020, their parents, and Young Women leaders, Aaronic Priesthood advisers, and Primary leaders are invited to attend. Submit your questions about the Children and Youth program to Elder Gong at facetoface.ChurchofJesusChrist.org. After the live event, which will be broadcast in 18 languages, video will be archived so that it can be streamed or downloaded at any time. ■

See ChildrenandYouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org as well as ChildrenandYouthLeaders.ChurchofJesusChrist.org for additional information, including information about the Face to Face event.

NOTE

1. *Children and Youth of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: An Introductory Guide for Parents and Leaders* (2019), 1.



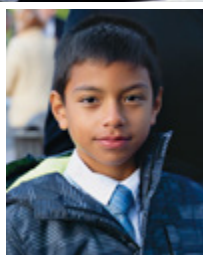
FSY Conferences to Support Children and Youth Program

As part of the Church's efforts to unify its programs for children and youth around the world, beginning in 2020, stakes in the United States and Canada will sponsor biennial For the Strength of Youth (FSY) conferences.

FSY conferences have been held outside the United States and Canada for more than a decade and will continue as in the past.

Additional information will be provided during the Face to Face event on November 17, 2019. ■

Read a more detailed article at ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/1119125. For information about the Face to Face event, visit facetoface.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.



Organizational Changes Focus on Strengthening Youth

As part of the effort to further enable the youth of the Church to reach their divine potential, adjustments in the Young Men and Young Women organizations were announced at the October 2019 general conference by President Russell M. Nelson (see page 38) and explained by Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (see page 40) and Sister Bonnie H. Cordon, Young Women General President (see page 67).

These changes emphasize that a bishop's "first and foremost responsibility is to care for the young men and young women of his ward," President Nelson said. Changes include discontinuing ward Young Men presidencies. The bishopric, as the presidency of the Aaronic Priesthood, will be assisted by quorum advisers and in some cases specialists. The ward Young Women president will report directly to the bishop.

Quorum and class presidencies will focus on the work of salvation, including member missionary work, convert retention, activation, temple and family history work, and teaching the gospel. Youth quorum and class presidents plan and conduct Sunday meetings, service projects, and other activities.

Activities for youth are no longer called "Mutual" but can be called "Young Women activities," "Aaronic Priesthood quorum activities," or "youth activities." Budget allowances for youth activities should be divided

with equal proportions, according to the number of youth in each organization.

The Young Women theme has been revised, and the number of Young Women classes should be organized according to the number and needs of the young women. Classes will be named "Young Women," followed by the ages of those in the class, such as "Young Women 12–14," or simply "Young Women" if all meet together. The names "Beehive," "Mia Maid," and "Laurel" will no longer be used.

A member of the stake high council will serve as the stake Young Men president, and the stake Young Men presidency will serve on the stake Aaronic Priesthood–Young Women committee with the stake Young Women presidency, the high councilor assigned to the Young Women, and the high councilor assigned to Primary.

In other changes, Relief Society, Young Women, Young Men, Primary, and Sunday School will be referred to as "organizations" rather than "auxiliaries," and leaders will be referred to as "General Officers" at the Churchwide level and as "stake officers" and "ward officers" at the local level. ■



Four Ways to Get Ready for April 2020

The year 2020 will mark the 200th anniversary of the First Vision, which occurred in the spring of 1820. Accordingly, President Russell M. Nelson announced that the upcoming conference in April "will commemorate the very foundations of the restored gospel" (see page 122).

He encouraged every member and family to prepare for this "unique conference" and suggested possible ways to do so:

1. Read again Joseph Smith's account of the First Vision.
2. As you study *Come, Follow Me* in 2020, ponder questions about knowledge gained and blessings received because of the Book of Mormon.
3. Consider using the new Book of Mormon videos in individual and family study.
4. Select your own questions and design your own plan to "immerse yourself in the glorious light of the Restoration."

"As you do," President Nelson said, "general conference next April will be not only memorable; it will be unforgettable." ■

Activity Ideas

There are many ways to help members learn from general conference messages. Here are a few examples; you may have other ideas that will work better in your quorum or Relief Society.



- ***Discuss in groups.***
Divide members into small groups, and assign each group a different section of the conference message to read and discuss. Then ask each group to share a truth they learned. Or you could form groups with people who studied different sections and let them share with each other what they learned.
- ***Answer questions.***
Invite the members to answer questions like the following about the conference message: What gospel truths do we find in this message? How can we apply these truths? What invitations and promised blessings were given? What does this message teach us about the work God wants us to do?
- ***Share quotations.***
Invite members to share quotations from the conference message that inspire them to fulfill their responsibilities in the work of salvation. Encourage them to consider how they could share these quotations to bless someone, including loved ones and people they minister to.
- ***Share an object lesson.***
In advance, invite a few members to bring objects from home that they could use to teach about the conference message. During the meeting, ask the members to explain how those objects relate to the message.
- ***Prepare a lesson to teach at home.***
Ask members to work in pairs to plan a home evening lesson based on the conference message. How could we make the message relevant to our families? How might we share this message with people we minister to?
- ***Share experiences.***
Read together several statements from the conference message. Ask members to share examples from the scriptures and from their lives that illustrate or reinforce the doctrine taught in these statements.
- ***Learn about a scripture.***
Invite members to read a scripture referenced in the conference message. Ask them to discuss how the teachings in the message help them better understand the scripture.
- ***Find an answer.***
Ahead of time, create a few questions that can be answered using the conference message. Focus on questions that prompt deep thinking or application of gospel principles (see *Teaching in the Savior's Way* [2016], 31–32). Then allow members to select a question and find answers in the message. Invite them to discuss their answers in small groups.
- ***Find a phrase.***
Invite members to search the conference message, looking for phrases that are meaningful to them. Ask them to share the phrases and what they learn from them. How do these teachings help us accomplish the Lord's work?
- ***Create something.***
Invite members to make a poster or bookmark that includes a short inspirational statement from the conference message. Give them an opportunity to share what they made. ■



Christ on the Road to Jerusalem,
by Michael Coleman

“The crowning jewel of the Restoration is the holy temple. Its sacred ordinances and covenants are pivotal to preparing a people who are ready to welcome the Savior at His Second Coming”
“ . . . Each temple is a holy place; each temple patron strives to become more holy.”

President Russell M. Nelson, “Closing Remarks,” 120, 121.



“The year 2020 will be designated as a bicentennial year. General conference next April will be different from any previous conference,” said President Russell M. Nelson during the closing session of the 189th Semiannual General Conference of the Church. “In the next six months, I hope that every member and every family will prepare for a unique conference that will commemorate the very foundations of the restored gospel. . . .”

“. . . As you do, general conference next April will be not only memorable; it will be unforgettable.”

For ideas on how to prepare for the April 2020 general conference, see pages 122 and 126.