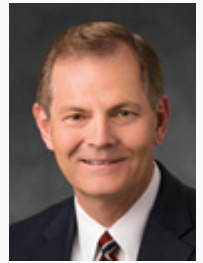




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Blessings of a Gospel Perspective

A gospel perspective will give you greater clarity regarding how you think about your life priorities, solve problems, and face personal temptations.

What a great blessing it is to be members of the Church of Jesus Christ in the dispensation when a restoration of the keys of the kingdom and the fulfillment of prophecy allow us to witness firsthand “the gospel roll forth unto the ends of the earth, as the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands shall roll forth, until it has filled the whole earth” (Doctrine and Covenants 65:2).

This prophecy, given by Daniel of the Old Testament and subsequently repeated in this dispensation, seems to be in the midst of its fulfillment as we observe over 3,300 organized stakes in the Church today. In the past 50 years, membership in the Church has grown from 2.1 million to more than 16 million.¹

As impressive to me as is this prolific growth and change is the fact that the principles and practices of the gospel remain the same, including the divine-governance model revealed for the Church of Jesus Christ. This model allows the organization of stakes, designed to provide “for a defense, and for a refuge from the storm, and from wrath when it shall be poured out without mixture upon the whole earth” (Doctrine and Covenants 115:6).

One of the greatest miracles of your mortal existence will be your ability to find balance between your spirituality and other important life roles.

Brothers and sisters, the Lord is generous in the blessings He grants to us. Understanding that blessings are a function of our obedience to commandments and that keeping commandments is a demonstration of our love of the Lord are valuable precepts to learn. Gospel principles such as these provide an important perspective for us.

This leads to two points I would like to emphasize. I note that President Dallin H. Oaks, First Counselor in the First Presidency, previously shared these two points with young single adults in 2015.

Maintain a Gospel Perspective

President Oaks has said that “*perspective* means to see all the facts in a meaningful relationship, the whole view.”² Here are some things you understand when you see from a gospel perspective:

- You are a child of a loving Heavenly Father (see Doctrine and Covenants 76:24).
- You are here on earth for a purpose, with the ability to make choices (see 2 Nephi 2:27; 10:23).
- “For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things” (2 Nephi 2:11).
- Jesus Christ is our Savior and advocate with the Father (see 1 John 2:1; Doctrine and Covenants 110:4).

Consider what happens if your gospel perspective becomes the lens you look through in every aspect of your life. A gospel perspective will give you greater clarity regarding how you think about your life priorities, solve problems, and face personal temptations. This can truly affect your overall approach to your entire life and the various decisions you will make along the way.

With this outlook, we know that the Lord desires that we partake of the sacrament each week and that we study the scriptures and pray to Him daily. In addition, we know that Satan will tempt us not to follow our Savior or listen to the Holy Ghost’s quiet promptings. We can then be more aware that the adversary strives to take away our agency and ability to withstand his efforts through addiction, including drugs and pornography.

In stark contrast, the lens of the gospel gives us a clear vision of the importance of creating families—choosing to marry and raising children in righteousness. This view also opens our eyes to see that the adversary would like to destroy the family unit altogether and confuse gender roles, thus leading to a decrease in the value society places on the formation and building of families.

Maintain a Spiritual Balance

President Oaks stated: “When young adults have the perspective—the overall view—it is vital for them to maintain spiritual *balance* in their lives. To do this, you must abstain from some of the attractions of the world and also do the things necessary to draw closer to the Savior.”³

On one hand, you have many pressing issues and life priorities of all sizes and varieties, all needing attention, focus,

and direction. The list for each of you may be quite different based upon your personal circumstances, but within them you will certainly find education, employment, marriage, and both emotional and physical wellness. Of course, your challenge is to balance these important life roles against your spirituality.

President Oaks also counseled that you must be careful as you “allocate your time so that you will not starve yourself spiritually during the time when your primary-programmed activities are on other things. That principle explains why it is especially important for young adults . . . to follow the counsel to attend their Church meetings, serve in the Church, have daily scripture study, have daily kneeling family prayer, and serve in Church callings.”⁴

In the midst of your personal and diverse needs, to balance life’s pursuits and challenges with your spirituality, you will come to realize that balance is achievable. The Lord does not require you to do something you cannot accomplish. I heard President Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018) on numerous occasions counsel that “whom the Lord calls, the Lord qualifies.”⁵ I think this especially applies to members of the Church.

As daunting as keeping this balance may seem, I promise that one of the greatest miracles of your mortal existence will be your ability to find balance between your spirituality and other important life roles. This can take place in a way that will allow you not just to maintain your spirituality and life’s important roles at status quo but also to grow and develop in both of these important areas.

The main reason this is possible is that the Lord is the fulcrum. He is the absolute center point of balance. And He has divine interest in you personally as one of His children.

But this outcome is predicated on your appropriate focus and effort to find balance.

From my observation and personal experience, it seems that we have a tendency throughout our life to tip more heavily one way or the other. To remain balanced in our lives requires our constant effort and care. Actively choose to stay steady.

Interestingly, it can go both ways. There may be times when you find that you need to exercise care to keep clearly focused on your school or professional work, with “Church service done in Church-service time.”⁶ However, remember to keep the Lord as your fulcrum so you can find your appropriate spiritual equilibrium.

The Lord Will Help You

When we keep a gospel perspective, it is easy to understand the fundamental truth that the Lord will help us. A basic gospel principle is that we are children of loving Heavenly Parents. It is only natural for Them to help us in every way to return to our heavenly home.

I would like to share an example of how the Lord can help you. One of my youth leaders, Thad Carlson, shared it with me many years ago. Thad, who recently passed away, had an enormous impact on me while I was growing up. He was raised during the Great Depression, the ninth of 14 children. His family made a living by farming and raising cattle. It was a difficult time financially, and their greatest asset was their herd of cattle.

In Thad’s youth, one of his responsibilities was to care for and, when necessary, herd the cattle to assure that they found the best feed—a big job for a young boy. He was able to do this with the aid of a smart cow pony who knew exactly what to do with little direction. The pony was named Old Smoky.

Remember to maintain a gospel perspective. Look at the world around you through the lens of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

But Old Smoky had one fault: he never wanted to be caught. Whenever anyone approached him, he would run away, knowing that he was going to be put to work.

One day, after Old Smoky was caught, bridled, and saddled, young Thad rode out to the pasture where the cattle were grazing. The ground was dry, and so was the pasture, but Thad noticed that the grass outside the pasture along the sides of some railroad tracks was longer and greener. So he thought he would herd the cows outside the fenced pasture and let them enjoy some of the good feed along the railroad tracks.

With the help of Old Smoky, Thad herded the cattle out of the pasture, where they began to move back and forth along the railroad tracks feeding on the better, greener grass. The contented cows seemed to be taking care of themselves, so Thad got off his horse and sat on the reins of the bridle, enjoying the surroundings around him, playing and amusing himself. Looking to graze in the green grass himself, however, Old Smoky eventually drifted away, his reins slipping out from under Thad.

This idyllic and peaceful moment came to a crashing and abrupt halt when Thad suddenly heard a loud noise from far away. It was the whistle of an oncoming locomotive barreling down the very rail tracks where his cattle herd was lazily scattered right in front of him! He recognized that the consequences could be devastating to the herd and also to his family if he did not act quickly to get the cattle back into the pasture and away from the oncoming train. He felt that he would never be able to forgive himself for not fulfilling his trusted responsibility.

Thad swiftly jumped to his feet and ran to grab the reins of Old Smoky. Old Smoky saw Thad coming and quickly danced away from him, not wanting to be caught. Breathless

and desperate, with images of dead cows and family tragedy flashing through his mind, Thad knew he had to act fast.

He later recorded what happened: “My Primary teacher had taught us to pray and reinforced teachings learned from my mother. With no other recourse, I dropped to my knees and started to pray for help to clear the cows off the tracks.”

Thad didn’t hear a voice, but a clear thought came to him: “Notice how the cows can walk by Old Smoky and he doesn’t move. So . . . now that you are on your knees, also get on your hands. Play like you’re a cow and crawl over to Old Smoky.”

Thad said: “I did. He didn’t move. I grabbed his reins, led him to the fence, hopped on his back, and we raced like the wind to get the cows back into the pasture. Old Smoky was unusually brilliant at every twist and turn.”

Later, when Thad was in high school, it fully dawned on him that he had received a clear answer to his prayer in a critical time of need. He observed, “Angels administered to Old Smoky beyond my ability, and our family was spared a tragedy.” Later he said: “This was the first of many promptings that [were] to come to me. ‘And whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is right, believing that ye shall receive, behold it shall be given unto you’ (3 Nephi 18:20).”⁷

We all have our cattle to clear off the railroad tracks before the train arrives. Our perils come in many different shapes and sizes. Some are even as serious as Thad’s dangerous situation, with life-threatening or soul-threatening consequences for us or our loved ones.

Other situations we face may not have such serious consequences but nevertheless weigh heavily on our minds and hearts. One thing is certain—each of us will have adversity and affliction in our lives because they are part of our mortal experience. But remember, the Lord will help us!

I love these words found in the Book of Mormon: “We see that God is mindful of every people, whatsoever land they may be in; yea, he numbereth his people, and his bowels of mercy are over all the earth” (Alma 26:37).

That means each of us. What a great comfort to know that the Lord will help us.

Faith, Hope, and a Gospel Perspective

By way of summary, I encourage you to remember to maintain a gospel perspective. Look at the world around you through the lens of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Maintain a spiritual balance. We all face challenges and opportunities in our various life roles, and they are best served when we balance them with our faith in Jesus Christ and in His Atonement.

Finally, have faith and hope that the Lord will help you. This knowledge is what helps you confidently face the challenges that are an inevitable part of your mortal mission. ■

From a devotional address, "A Gospel Perspective," given at Brigham Young University–Hawaii on September 19, 2017.

NOTES

1. See "Statistical Report, 2018," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2019, 112.
2. Dallin H. Oaks, young single adult fireside, Feb. 8, 2015, Salt Lake City, Utah (unpublished).
3. Dallin H. Oaks, young single adult fireside, Feb. 8, 2015.
4. Dallin H. Oaks, young single adult fireside, Feb. 8, 2015.
5. Thomas S. Monson, "Duty Calls," *Ensign*, May 1996, 44.
6. Dallin H. Oaks, young single adult fireside, Feb. 8, 2015.
7. Thad Carlson, personal correspondence.

