



Overcoming Racism and Prejudice: We Can Build Bridges

*As we help to gather Israel and establish Zion,
we can promote respect for all of God's children.*

One of the powerful truths of the restored gospel—one that has profound implications—is that “each of us has a divine potential because each is a child of God. Each is equal in His eyes.”¹

As Church members seek to follow the commission to be one (see Doctrine and Covenants 38:27) and to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion (see Doctrine and Covenants 6:6), President Russell M. Nelson has invited us “to lead out in abandoning attitudes and actions of prejudice” and shared several ways we can “promote respect for all of God’s children.”² He has encouraged us, as we build Zion, to also build bridges of friendship, cooperation, and understanding.³

“We are all connected, and we have a God-given responsibility to help make life better for those around us,” he said. “We don’t have to be alike or look alike to have love for each other. We don’t even have to agree with each other to love each other. If we have any hope of reclaiming the goodwill and sense of humanity for which we yearn, it must begin with each of us, one person at a time.”⁴

There Is Room for Everyone

President Nelson has urged us to “expand our circle of love to embrace the whole human family.”⁵ How can we as Church members help to create a global community of

Saints in which everyone feels welcome and strives to live in peace and harmony with each other regardless of race, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation, age, gender, education, socioeconomic status, ability level, or any other difference?

The answer is, of course, through our Savior Jesus Christ. As President Dallin H. Oaks, First Counselor in the First Presidency, said, “Only the gospel of Jesus Christ can unite and bring peace to people of all races and nationalities.”⁶ Jesus Christ can change our hearts (see Mosiah 5:2). He has “power to heal” (Mark 3:15).

As we come unto Christ ourselves, we gain a deeper understanding of the profound truth President Nelson taught, that the Lord “invites *all* to come unto Him.”⁷

There is room in the Savior’s Church for everyone who is willing to follow Him and “let God prevail” in their lives. God’s favor is not dependent on race, the color of our skin, or other characteristics but on our devotion to Him and our willingness to keep His commandments.⁸

We Can Lead Out in Reaching Out

If we find in ourselves anything that reflects attitudes or behaviors based on prejudice, we need to abandon it in our efforts to become one, because if we are not one, we are not His (see Doctrine and Covenants 35:2; 38:27). “Members of the Church should lead out in promoting respect for all of God’s children. . . . They strive to be

persons of goodwill toward all, rejecting prejudice of any kind.”⁹

As members of “the body of Christ” (1 Corinthians 12:27), we need each other, “that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it” (1 Corinthians 12:25–26).

Prayer, study, and humble reflection can help us see how we can better love God and all of His children. Establishing goodwill may mean overcoming our own biases, assumptions, or stereotypes as we interact with each other. Making an effort to understand the experiences of those who aren’t like us can open our eyes to different but important perspectives.

President Oaks also said that “suspicion or even hostility give way to friendship or even love when personal contacts produce understanding and mutual respect.”¹⁰

In the following pages, you will see experiences, reflections, and insights about building bridges as we build Zion. ■

NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson, “Let God Prevail,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2020, 94.
2. Russell M. Nelson, “Let God Prevail,” 94.
3. See Tad Walch, “President Nelson’s Yearlong Call for Unity,” *Deseret News*, Oct. 1, 2019, deseretnews.com.
4. Russell M. Nelson, in Walch, “President Nelson’s Yearlong Call for Unity.”
5. Russell M. Nelson, “Blessed Are the Peacemakers,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2002, 41; see also *Teachings of Russell M. Nelson* (2018), 83.
6. Dallin H. Oaks, “Racism and Other Challenges” (Brigham Young University devotional, Oct. 27, 2020), 6, speeches.byu.edu.
7. Russell M. Nelson, “Let God Prevail,” 94; see also 2 Nephi 26:33.
8. See Russell M. Nelson, “Let God Prevail,” 94; see also *General Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 38.6.14, ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
9. *General Handbook*, 38.6.14.
10. Dallin H. Oaks, “Love Your Enemies,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2020, 27.