



Apostles Speak TO US



JOY AND SPIRITUAL SURVIVAL

"I would like to discuss a principle that is key to our spiritual survival. It is a principle that will only become more important as the tragedies and travesties around us increase. . . .

"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. . . .

"How, then, can we claim that joy? We can start by 'looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith' [Hebrews 12:2] 'in every thought' [D&C 6:36]. We can give thanks for Him in our prayers and by keeping covenants we've made with Him and our Heavenly Father. As our Savior becomes more and more real to us and as we plead for His joy to be given to us, our joy will increase.

"Joy is powerful, and focusing on joy brings God's power into our lives. 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! . . .

"... Joy is a gift for the faithful. It is the gift that comes from intentionally trying to live a righteous life, as taught by Jesus Christ."

President Russell M. Nelson, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



SHARING THE RESTORED GOSPEL

"We need the help of every member, and every member can help, since there are many tasks to perform as we share the restored gospel with every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. . . .

"There are three things all members can do to help share the gospel, regardless of the circumstances in which they live and work. All of us should do all of these.

"*First*, we can all pray for desire to help with this vital part of the work of salvation. All efforts begin with *desire*.

"*Second*, we can keep the commandments ourselves. Faithful, obedient members are the most persuasive witnesses of the truth and value of the restored gospel. Even more important, faithful members will always have the Savior's Spirit to be 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 in our individual circumstances to share the gospel with others. . . .

"As an Apostle of the Lord, I urge every member and family in the Church to pray for the Lord to help them find persons prepared to receive the message of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. . . .

"... I . . . promise that with faith in the Lord's help, we will be guided, be inspired, and find great joy in this eternally important work of love. We will come to understand that success in sharing the gospel is inviting people with love and genuine intent to help them, no matter what their response."

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



“From President Nelson’s talk, I now have a better understanding of joy, so I can share it with others. I also know that through trials or success I can still experience joy!”

Kaleigh J., 13, Nevada, USA



TO WHOM SHALL WE GO?

“One of the most heart-wrenching stories in scripture occurred when ‘many of [the Lord’s] disciples’ found it hard to accept His teachings and doctrine, and they ‘went back, and *walked no more with him*’ [John 6:66; emphasis added]. . .

“Today is no different. For some, Christ’s invitation to believe and remain continues to be hard—or difficult to accept. Some disciples struggle to understand a specific Church policy or teaching. Others find concerns in our history or in the imperfections of some members and leaders, past and present. Still others find it difficult to live a religion that requires so much. Finally, some have become ‘weary in well-doing’ [D&C 64:33]. . .

“If any one of you is faltering in your faith, I ask you the same question that Peter asked: ‘To whom shall [you] go?’ [John 6:68]. If you choose to become inactive or to leave the restored Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, where will you go? What will you do? . . .

“... Before you make that spiritually perilous choice to leave, I encourage you to stop and think carefully before giving up whatever it was that brought you to your testimony of the restored Church of Jesus Christ in the first place. Stop and think about what you have felt here and why you felt it. Think about the times when the Holy Ghost has borne witness to you of eternal truth. . .

“... He will never abandon His Church and . . . He will never abandon any one of us.”

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



“COME, FOLLOW ME” BY PRACTICING CHRISTIAN LOVE AND SERVICE

“Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel was in the hospital recovering from open-heart surgery when he was visited by his five-year-old grandson. As the little boy looked into his grandfather’s eyes, he saw his pain. ‘Grandpa,’ he asked, ‘if I loved you more, would you [hurt less]?’ [in Elie Wiesel, *Open Heart*, trans. Marion Wiesel (2012), 70]. Today I ask a similar question of each of us: ‘If we love the Savior more, will we suffer less?’ . . .

“As the Savior’s latter-day disciples, we come unto Him by loving and serving God’s children. As we do, we may not be able to avoid tribulation, affliction, and suffering in the flesh, but we will suffer less spiritually. Even in our trials we can experience joy and peace.

“Our Christian love and service naturally begin in the home. . .

“As we follow Jesus Christ, His love motivates us to support each other on our mortal journey. We cannot do it alone. . .

“Teach[ing] one another the doctrine of the kingdom’ [D&C 88:77] is a way to love and serve each other. . .

“I testify that the Savior’s true posture toward us is the one posed by the outstretched arms of Thorvaldsen’s statue *Christus*. He continues to stretch forth His hands, beckoning, ‘Come, follow me.’ We follow Him by loving and serving one another and keeping His commandments.”

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



“I’ve just recently started home teaching, and when I heard Elder Holland’s story, I felt inspired to make sure I do my home teaching. Home teachers are there to bless and comfort those in need.”

Jack T., 14, Ohio, USA



EMISSARIES TO THE CHURCH

“Brethren, the appeal I am making tonight is for you to lift your vision of home teaching. Please, in newer, better ways see yourselves as emissaries of the Lord to His children. That means leaving behind the tradition of a frantic, law of Moses–like, end-of-the-month calendar in which you rush to give a scripted message from the Church magazines that the family has already read. We would hope, rather, that you will establish an era of genuine, gospel-oriented concern for the members, watching over and caring for each other, addressing spiritual and temporal needs in any way that helps.

“Now, as for what ‘counts’ as home teaching, every good thing you do ‘counts,’ so report it all! Indeed, the report that matters most is how you have blessed and cared for those within your stewardship, which has virtually nothing to do with a specific calendar or a particular location. What matters is that you love your people and are fulfilling the commandment ‘to watch over the church always’ [D&C 20:53]....

“...When we speak of home teaching or watchcare or personal priesthood ministry—call it what you will—this is what we are talking about. We are asking you as home teachers to be God’s emissaries to His children, to love and care and pray for the people you are assigned, as we love and care and pray for you. May you be vigilant in tending the flock of God in ways consistent with your circumstances.”

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



“IF YE HAD KNOWN ME”

“Jesus said: ... ‘If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also’ [John 14:7]....

“We come to know the Father as we come to know His Beloved Son.

“...Four essential steps that can help us come to know the Lord are exercising faith in Him, following Him, serving Him, and believing Him....

“The exercise of faith in Jesus Christ is relying upon His merits, mercy, and grace. ... As our faith in the Lord increases, we trust in Him and have confidence in His power to redeem, heal, and strengthen us....

“The Savior has admonished us to become as He is. ... Following the Lord includes emulating Him. We continue to come to know the Lord as we seek through the power of His Atonement to become like Him....

“We more fully come to know the Lord as we serve Him and labor in His kingdom. As we do so, He generously blesses us with heavenly help, spiritual gifts, and increased capacity....

“We come to know the Savior as we do our best to go where He wants us to go, as we strive to say what He wants us to say, and as we become what He wants us to become....

“...Believing Him with our whole soul comes as we press forward along the covenant pathway, surrender our will to His, and submit to His priorities and timing for us.”

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



VALIANT IN THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS

“There are a number of stumbling blocks to our valor that can prevent us from reaching the goal of eternal life...”

“One Stumbling Block Is the Philosophies of Men

“... The preferred strategy of the adversary is to lead people away from God and cause them to stumble by emphasizing the philosophies of men over the Savior and His teachings....”

“... Some members of the Church ... lose their bearings and become influenced by the cause of the moment—many of which are clearly not righteous....”

“Another Stumbling Block Is Refusing to See Sin in Its True Light

“... Many people ... have no remorse or willingness to acknowledge their conduct as being morally wrong. Even some who profess a belief in the Father and the Son wrongfully take the position that a loving Father in Heaven should exact no consequences for conduct that is contrary to His commandments....”

“Looking beyond the Mark Is a Stumbling Block ...

“... Some members elevate causes, many of which are good, to a status superior to basic gospel doctrine. ... If we elevate anything above our devotion to the Savior, ... then we are looking beyond the mark. Jesus Christ is the mark!”

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



“ABIDE IN MY LOVE”

“One of the terms we hear often today is that God’s love is ‘unconditional.’ While in one sense that is true, the descriptor *unconditional* appears nowhere in scripture. Rather, His love is described in scripture as ‘great and wonderful love’ [D&C 138:3], ‘perfect love’ [1 John 4:18; Moroni 8:16], ‘redeeming love’ [Alma 5:26], and ‘everlasting love’ [Jeremiah 31:3]. These are better terms because the word *unconditional* can convey mistaken impressions about divine love, such as, God tolerates and excuses anything we do because His love is unconditional, or God makes no demands upon us because His love is unconditional, or *all* are saved in the heavenly kingdom of God because His love is unconditional. God’s love is infinite and it will endure forever, but what it means for each of us depends on how we respond to His love....”

“To ‘continue in’ or ‘abide in’ the Savior’s love means to receive His grace and be perfected by it. To receive His grace, we must have faith in Jesus Christ and keep His commandments, including repenting of our sins, being baptized for the remission of sins, receiving the Holy Ghost, and continuing in the path of obedience....”

“To abide in God’s love in this sense means to submit fully to His will. It means to accept His correction when needed. ... It means to love and serve one another as Jesus has loved and served us. It means to learn ‘to abide the law of a celestial kingdom’ so that we can ‘abide a celestial glory’ [D&C 88:22].”

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



"I decided to make a calendar for something nice I can do each day to help somebody else be happy. President Uchtdorf's story about 'fourth floor, last door' taught me to always keep trying, because I never know when I'll end up helping someone."

Lisa D., 13, Utah, USA



A WITNESS OF GOD

"Our concern for our brothers and sisters and our desire to please God bring a compelling urgency to share and strengthen the kingdom of God across the world. . . .

"I suggest that you stop feeling guilty about any insufficiency you think you have in sharing the gospel. Rather, pray . . . for opportunities. . . .

"Be open about your faith in Christ. When the occasion presents itself, speak of His life, His teachings, and His incomparable gift to all mankind. Share His powerful truths from the Book of Mormon. He has given us this promise: 'Whosoever . . . shall confess me before men, him will I confess . . . before my Father . . . in heaven' [Matthew 10:32]. I promise you that as you pray often and sincerely for opportunities to 'stand as a witness of God,' those opportunities will come, and those who seek more light and knowledge will be put before you. As you respond to spiritual promptings, the Holy Ghost will carry your words to the heart of another, and one day the Savior will confess you before His Father. . . .

"Please don't see your efforts to share the love of the Savior with another as a pass/fail test with your grade determined by how positively your friends respond to your feelings or invitation to meet the missionaries. With our mortal eyes, we cannot judge the effect of our efforts, nor can we establish the timetable. When you share the love of the Savior with another, your grade is always an A+."

Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



LEST THOU FORGET

"Jesus Christ knows about fierce struggles and trials. He gave His life for us. His final hours were brutal, beyond anything we can even comprehend, but His sacrifice for each one of us was the ultimate expression of His pure love.

"... Do not forget, Heavenly Father knows and loves each of you, and He is always ready to help. . . .

"... To all who wish to bolster their faith, I give you this promise: as you faithfully live the gospel of Jesus Christ and abide by its teachings, your testimony will be protected and it will grow. Keep the covenants you have made, regardless of the actions of those around you. Be diligent parents, brothers and sisters, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and friends who strengthen loved ones with personal testimony and who share spiritual experiences. Remain faithful and steadfast, even if storms of doubt invade your lives through the actions of others. Seek that which will edify and fortify you spiritually. Avoid counterfeit offerings of so-called 'truths' which are so pervasive, and remember to record your feelings of 'love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, [and] temperance' [Galatians 5:22-23].

"In the midst of life's greatest storms, do not forget your divine heritage as a son or daughter of God or your eternal destiny to one day return to live with Him, which will surpass anything the world has to offer."

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



LOOK TO THE BOOK, LOOK TO THE LORD

“Each of you can . . . receive a personal witness of this book! Do you realize that the Book of Mormon was written for you—and for your day? This book is one of the blessings of living in what we call the dispensation of the fulness of times. . . .

“In order to help the Book of Mormon become the keystone of your testimony, I offer you a challenge. I recently learned that many young people spend an average of seven hours a day looking at TV, computer, and smartphone screens. With this in mind, would you make a small change? Will you replace some of that daily screen time—particularly that devoted to social media, the internet, gaming, or television—with reading the Book of Mormon? If the studies I referred to are accurate, you could easily find time for daily study of the Book of Mormon even if for only 10 minutes a day. And you can study in a way that allows you to enjoy it and understand it—either on your device or in book form. . . .

“Within the book’s pages, you will discover the infinite love and incomprehensible grace of God. As you strive to follow the teachings you find there, your joy will expand, your understanding will increase, and the answers you seek to the many challenges mortality presents will be opened to you. As you look to the book, you look to the Lord. The Book of Mormon is the revealed word of God.”

Elder Gary E. Stevenson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



REPENTANCE: A JOYFUL CHOICE

“Real repentance must involve faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, faith that He can change us, faith that He can forgive us, and faith that He will help us avoid more mistakes. . . . Without the Redeemer, the inherent hope and joy evaporate, and repentance becomes simply miserable behavior modification. But by exercising faith in Him, we become converted to His ability and willingness to forgive sin. . . .

“ . . . Repentance is a choice.

“We can—and sometimes do—make different choices. Such choices may not seem intrinsically wrong, but they prevent us from becoming truly penitent and thus preclude our pursuit of real repentance. . . .

“Jesus Christ can forgive because He paid the price for our sins. Our Redeemer chooses to forgive because of His incomparable compassion, mercy, and love. Our Savior wants to forgive because this is one of His divine attributes. And, like the Good Shepherd He is, He is joyful when we choose to repent.

“Even as we feel godly sorrow for our actions, when we choose to repent, we immediately invite the Savior into our lives. . . .

“The fact that we can repent is the good news of the gospel! Guilt can be ‘swept away’ [Enos 1:6]. . . . Repentance is not only possible but also joyful because of our Savior. . . .

“ . . . May we choose to repent, forsake our sins, and turn our hearts and wills around to follow our Savior.”

Elder Dale G. Renlund of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles