

**Pres. Russell M. Nelson**

President of the Church

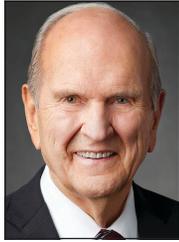
The world has been overturned in recent months by a global pandemic, raging wildfires and other natural disasters.

"I grieve with each of you who has lost a loved one during this time. And I pray for all who are currently suffering."

Yet the work of the Lord moves steadily forward. "Amid social distancing, face masks and Zoom meetings, we have learned to do some things differently, and some even more effectively. Unusual times can bring unusual rewards."

Missionaries have been "resourceful, resilient and truly remarkable." Temples were closed for a time and construction projects briefly delayed. But they too are moving forward. Family history has increased and new wards and stakes have been created. The Church has provided pandemic humanitarian aid for 895 projects in 150 countries.

Through it all, one can know that he or she is loved by Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. "They care for us! They and Their holy angels are watching over us. I know that this is true."

**Elder David A. Bednar**

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Tests in "the school of mortality" are a vital element in eternal progression. Scriptural words such as "prove," "examine" and "try" are used to describe knowledge about, understanding of and devotion to the plan of happiness and the Savior's Atonement.

"The year 2020 has been marked, in part, by a global pandemic that has proved, examined and tried us in many ways. I pray that we as individuals and families are learning the valuable lessons that only challenging experiences can teach us."

Two principles can guide individuals facing proving and trying circumstances — preparation and pressing forward with a steadfastness in Christ.

"I invite each of us to 'consider (our) ways' (Haggai, 1:5, 7) and 'examine (ourselves), whether (we) be in the faith; (and) prove (our) own selves' (2 Cor. 13:5). What have we learned during these recent months of lifestyle adjustments and restrictions? What do we need to improve in our lives spiritually, physically, socially, emotionally and intellectually? Now is the time to prepare and prove ourselves willing and able to do all things whatsoever the Lord our God shall command us."

**Elder Scott D. Whiting**

General Authority Seventy

Latter-day Saints are commanded by the Savior to become "even as [He is]."

"Consider asking a trusted family member, spouse, friend, or spiritual leader what attribute of Jesus Christ we are in need of." It is vital to also ask Heavenly Father where to focus efforts. "He has a perfect view of us and will lovingly show us our weakness."

President Russell M. Nelson taught: "When we choose to repent, we choose to change!"

After committing to change and repent, the next step is to choose an attribute to strive to develop. As one strives to obtain this attribute, it will come gradually through His grace. Efforts to obtain these attributes will require prayers for His assistance.

By focusing deeply on one attribute, other attributes begin to accrue.

It is important to record experiences and what one is learning. "As I study with one of His attributes deep in my mind, the scriptures become new as I see examples of this attribute." Real progress requires sustained effort and sacrifice.

"I know that becoming like Him through His divine help and strength is achievable step by step."

**Sister Michelle D. Craig**

Young Women general presidency

The Old Testament story of a young man who served the prophet Elisha teaches that each individual has the power to ask the Lord through prayer to "open your eyes to see things you would not normally see."

With the Lord's help, all can learn to see clearly "who we really are — sons and daughters of heavenly parents." And when one's true identity and purpose becomes clear, it is much easier to learn to see others as God does.

"As I pray for the Lord to open my eyes to see things I might not normally see, I often ask myself two questions and pay attention to the impressions that come. 'What am I doing that I should stop doing?' and 'What am I not doing that I should start doing?'"

These questions lead to opportunities to see others and act on behalf of the Lord to meet their needs.

"As with all gifts the Father so willingly offers, seeing deeply requires us to ask Him — and then act." By asking to see others and then acting by "loving, serving, and affirming their worth and potential as prompted."

**Elder Quentin L. Cook**

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Members of the Lord's Church should commit "to live righteously and be united as never before."

Righteousness and unity are "profoundly significant," because when people love God with all their hearts and righteously strive to become like Him, there is less strife and contention in society.

Unity is enhanced when people are treated with dignity and respect even though they are different outwardly.

"As leaders, we are not under the illusion that in the past all relationships were perfect, all conduct was Christlike, or all decisions were just. However, our faith teaches that we are all children of our Father in Heaven, and we worship Him and His Son, Jesus Christ, who is our Savior. Our desire is that our hearts and minds will be knit in righteousness and unity, and we will be one with Them" (Doctrine and Covenants 45:71).

This is a moment of particularly strong divisions. "The millions who have accepted the gospel of Jesus Christ have committed themselves to achieving both righteousness and unity. We are all aware that we can do better, and that is our challenge in this day."

**Elder Ronald A. Rasband**

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Latter-day Saint temples stand as testaments of faith in eternal life. The words "Holiness to the Lord" on the outside of a temple show that it is the Lord's house. "He sets the standards by which we enter as His guests."

The phrase "recommended to the Lord" puts additional perspective on being interviewed regularly by Church leaders. Rather than a hall pass, holding a temple recommend means one lives in harmony with the teachings of the Church and is committed to living the Lord's laws. "Your temple recommend opens the gates of heaven for you and others with rights and ordinances of eternal significance."

During President Howard W. Hunter's first address as prophet, he said, "It would please the Lord if every adult member would be worthy of — and carry — a current temple recommend."

Though temples throughout the world are closed or in limited use due to the COVID-19 pandemic, being worthy to attend the temple has not been suspended. "Whether you have access to a temple or not, you need a current temple recommend to stay firmly on the covenant path."

**Pres. Dallin H. Oaks**

First counselor, First Presidency

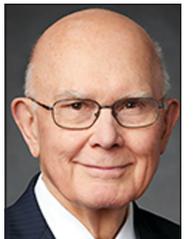
Followers of Christ must forego the anger and hatred with which political choices are debated or denounced. A "well-known but rarely practiced" teaching of the Savior is to "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:43-44).

The first step to learning to love an enemy is to follow the Savior's teaching not to "contend with anger" and to understand the power of love. Another essential part of loving enemies is to "render unto Caesar" by keeping the laws of one's country.

The Savior's teaching to love enemies is based on the reality that all are beloved children of God. "That eternal principle and some basic principles of law were tested in the recent protests in many American cities."

There have been racial injustices. "As citizens and as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we must do better to help root out racism."

Loyalty to established law instead of temporary "allies," or ideologies, is the best way to love enemies in seeking unity in diversity.



**Elder D. Todd Christofferson**

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

A sustainable, flourishing society is one that promotes happiness, progress, peace and well-being among its members. There are two examples of such thriving societies found in the scriptures: the city of Enoch, or Zion, and the Nephites and Lamanites for two centuries after the Savior's ministry in the Americas.



"The societies in these two examples ... were obedient to God in their personal lives and they looked after one another's physical and spiritual welfare."

A thriving society can fail, however, if it abandons the virtues that uphold its peace and prosperity, turns from a sense of accountability to God and trusts instead in the arm of flesh.

The institutions of family and religion are and have been crucial for endowing individuals and communities with the virtues that sustain an enduring society.

"These virtues, rooted in scripture, include integrity, responsibility and accountability, compassion, marriage and fidelity in marriage, respect for others and the property of others, service and the necessity and dignity of work, among others."

**Brother Steven J. Lund**

Young Men general president

Tanner Christian Lund, the youngest son of President Steven J. Lund and Sister Kalleen Lund, taught others a timeless lesson in finding joy in Christ shortly before cancer claimed his young life.

One Sunday, 12-year-old Tanner was determined to fulfill an assignment to pass the sacrament. His mother assured him that someone else could do it for him.

"Yes," said Tanner. "But I see how people look at me when I pass the sacrament. I think it helps them."

That day, every eye in the chapel was on Tanner as he performed his sacred Aaronic Priesthood duty.

"Somehow, Tanner expressed a silent sermon as he solemnly, haltingly moved from row to row, his bald head moist with perspiration, representing the Savior in the way that deacons do. His once indomitable deacon's body was itself a little bruised, broken and torn, willingly suffering to serve by bearing the emblems of the Savior's Atonement into our lives."

Tanner's commitment to serve the Lord and others signaled an "unspoken miracle."

The surest way to find joy in Christ is to join Him by helping others.

**Elder Gerrit W. Gong**

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

The tender mercies of the Lord are found among life's daily challenges for those with "faithful hearts and eyes to see." Through challenges and sacrifice, the blessings of heaven can be found in mortality.

As disciples of Christ, "We are invited to change the world for the better, from the inside out, one person, one family, one neighborhood at a time" by living and sharing the gospel. And the contributions of each individual in the service of the Lord are valuable.

"As we hearken to the Lord's spirit of prophecy, we can become in our own way part of the fulfillment of His prophecies and promises — part of the gospel blessing the world."

The restoration of the gospel began with a young teenage boy in the early 1800s. What began with an initial 5,000 printed copies of the Book of Mormon in 1830 has led to 192 million copies published in 112 languages around the world.

Through small and simple means, in which the Lord invites His disciples to participate, His great work is brought to pass.

**Bishop W. Christopher Waddell**

First counselor, Presiding Bishopric

Since the beginning of time, the Lord has provided direction to help His people prepare — spiritually and temporally — against the calamities of mortality.



God's children are blessed to be led by prophets who understand the need to prepare for the calamities of the day — while also recognizing the limitations or restrictions that people may encounter in striving to follow the counsel of the prophets.

The effects of COVID-19 and other devastating natural disasters are no respecter of persons. Jobs have been lost, incomes have been reduced and opportunities have been upended.

"You have been blessed with bishops and branch presidents who seek out members of their congregations who have temporal needs, and who have access to tools and resources that can help you reestablish your lives and place you on the path to self-reliance as you apply principles of preparedness."

Better days await, but the "temporal peaks and valleys of mortality" will continue. By becoming temporally prepared, one can face life's trials with increased confidence and peace.

**Elder Matthew S. Holland**

General Authority Seventy

The very purpose of repentance is to take certain misery and transform it into pure bliss. "Thanks to His 'immediate goodness' (Mosiah 25:10), the instant we come unto Christ — demonstrating faith in Him and a true change of heart — the crushing weight of our sins starts to shift from our backs to His. This is only possible because He without sin suffered the 'infinite and unspeakable agony' of every single sin in the universe of His creations, for all of His creations — a suffering so severe, blood oozed out of His every pore."



Sometimes an individual's pain comes not from sin but honest mistakes, the actions of others, or forces beyond his or her control. "Regardless of the causes of our worst hurts and heartaches, the ultimate source of relief is the same: Jesus Christ. He alone holds the full power and healing balm to correct every mistake, right every wrong, adjust every imperfection, mend every wound, and deliver every delayed blessing."

Through the goodness of Jesus Christ, "We can escape the deserved agonies of our moral failings and overcome the undeserved agonies of our mortal misfortunes."

**Elder William K. Jackson**

General Authority Seventy

The world is home to a great diversity of people and cultures. However, "an over-fixation on one's cultural identity may lead to the rejection of worthwhile — even godly — ideas, attributes and behavior."



Many of the world's problems are a result of clashes between differing ideas and customs arising from culture. "But virtually all conflict and chaos would quickly fade if the world would only accept its original culture, the one we all possessed not so very long ago." This "greatest of all cultures" is founded on the Savior's teachings and is available to everyone today.

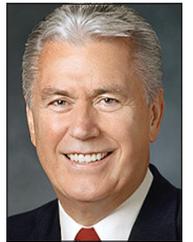
The "culture of Christ" is grounded in testimony that Heavenly Father exists and loves each one of His children. It is a culture of revelation centered on the word of God, that champions the principle of agency, and is governed by the priesthood. It is a culture of learning and study, faith and obedience, prayer, and covenants and ordinances.

"In the culture of Christ, women are elevated to their proper and eternal status," and the sanctity of the family is sanctioned.

**Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf**

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

God uses adversity to bring about His purposes. Though this pandemic is neither wanted nor expected, God has prepared His children and His Church for this time.



"We will endure this, yes. But we will do more than simply grit our teeth, hold on and wait for things to return to the old normal. We will move forward, and we will be better as a result."

Men and women are like seeds, and for seeds to reach their potential, they must be buried before they can sprout. "It is my witness that though at times we may feel buried by the trials of life, or surrounded by emotional darkness, the love of God and the blessings of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ will bring something unimaginable to spring forth."

Every dispensation has faced times of trial and hardship, with twofold learnings. The righteous are not given a free pass that allows them to avoid the valleys of shadow. Also, Heavenly Father knows all suffering and will not abandon His children.

"God has something unimaginable in mind for you personally and the Church collectively — a marvelous work and a wonder."

**Sister Sharon Eubank**

Relief Society general presidency

In an imperfect world, individuals can often feel powerless to make a difference. Here are three suggestions that may help make the changes needed to create Zion:

First, have mercy. "We often think of substance in terms of food or money, but perhaps what we all need more of in our ministering is mercy."

Second, "Make your boat swing." In the sport of rowing, there is something called "swing," which only happens when "all are rowing in such perfect unison that not a single action is out of sync."

Such unity allows individuals to "be part of a collective force that changes the world for good."

Third, "Clear away the bad as fast as the good can grow." In the allegory of the vineyard in Jacob 5, the Lord of the vineyard laments that a good tree in good ground is corrupted to bring forth wild fruit.

The instruction the allegory teaches is: "Unity doesn't magically happen; it takes work. It's messy, sometimes it's uncomfortable, and it happens gradually when we clear away the bad as fast as the good can grow." Although the Lord expects His children to do their part, "We are never alone in our efforts to create unity."

**Sister Becky Craven**

Young Women general presidency

The Savior offers many tremendous blessings. He gives much more than the value of what could ever be returned to him. "In return for His priceless payment for each of us, the Lord asks us for a change of heart."

"Jesus Christ has given us a continuous pattern for change. He invites us to exercise faith in him, which inspires us to repent. As we repent and turn our hearts to Him, we gain a greater desire to make and live sacred covenants. We endure to the end by continuing to apply these principles throughout our lives and inviting the Lord to change us."

As small, steady, deliberate changes are made, it's important to not become discouraged. Change is a lifelong process in which the Lord is patient with His children.

Through Jesus Christ, strength is given to make lasting changes. As one turns to Him, He will increase the capacity to change.

The Holy Ghost will also provide support and guidance as effort is put forward.

Some may have fallen from the covenant path and need our help. It can be difficult for them to come back on their own. Latter-day Saints should make an effort to help others return and heal.

Maintaining change takes effort, but because of Jesus Christ, change is possible.

**Sister Cristina B. Franco**

Primary general presidency

All are a little broken, cracked and damaged. However, "as we come unto Jesus Christ by exercising faith in Him, repenting and making and keeping covenants, our brokenness — whatever its cause — can be healed. This process, which invites the Savior's healing power into our lives, does not just restore us to what we were before but makes us better than we ever were."

To heal brokenness by coming unto Him, faith in Jesus Christ is required. "Because He has experienced all our pains, afflictions and infirmities, He knows how to help us rise above our daily difficulties."

Joy, peace and consolation are available to those who come unto Him. "All that is (hard and challenging) about life can be made right through the Atonement of Jesus Christ."

Of the Savior's ability to heal and lighten burdens, Elder Tad R. Callister has taught: "One of the blessings of the Atonement is that we can receive of the Savior's succoring powers."

"Jesus Christ is our loving Savior, Redeemer, the Master Healer and Faithful Friend. If we turn to him, he will heal us and make us whole again. I testify this is his church and he is preparing to return once again to this Earth to reign with power and glory."

**Pres. Henry B. Eyring**

Second counselor, First Presidency

Heavenly Father's "beloved daughters" will play a crucial role in the establishment of Zion.

The Prophet Joseph Smith promised the early Relief Society sisters that, if they live up to their privileges, they would enjoy the association of angels.

"That marvelous potential lies within you, and you are being prepared for it."

Heavenly Father's daughters have a gift to allay contention and promote righteousness with their love of God and love for all those they serve.

"Sisters, you were given the blessing of being daughters of God with special gifts. ... It is not by accident that the Relief Society, the first Church organization specifically for Heavenly Father's daughters, has as its motto 'Charity Never Filleth.'"

Faith in Christ, coupled with the full effects of His Atonement, will qualify His followers for the "supernal gift" to live in promised Zion. "There you will be sisters in Zion, loved in person by the Lord and those you have blessed."

The sisters of the Church are citizens of the Lord's kingdom on Earth.

"You are daughters of a loving Heavenly Father, who sent you into the world with unique gifts that you promised to use to bless others."

**Pres. Dallin H. Oaks**

First counselor, First Presidency

Amid the present troubling circumstances many are facing, the Savior's assurance is needed today. "The Lord has special love and concern for His precious daughters."

Opposition is an essential part of Heavenly Father's plan for helping His children grow, but all trials and tribulations are temporary. Joy can be found in the principles and promises of the gospel and in the fruit of one's labors.

The Prophet Joseph Smith and early Saints faced immense challenges. While crossing the Plains and establishing their homes and the Church in the barren Salt Lake Valley, the Saints were of hope and good cheer. "At what could have been thought their lowest level, the pioneers rose to new heights."

There is "boundless power" in the doctrine of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, and unshakable faith in this doctrine brings guidance, joy, strength and confidence and enlightened minds — promised gifts from Heavenly Father.

"By understanding and conforming our lives to that doctrine, including the divine gift of repentance, we can be of good cheer as we keep ourselves on the path toward our eternal destiny — reunion and exaltation with our loving Heavenly Parents."

**Pres. Russell M. Nelson**

President of the Church

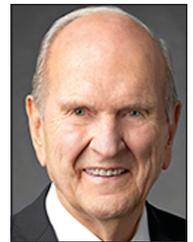
The Lord has spoken of this modern day with somber prophecies and glorious pronouncements and reassured, "If ye are prepared ye shall not fear."

Temporal preparation is important, but even more important is spiritual and emotional preparation. As commander of the Nephite armies, Captain Moroni prepared his people in three essential ways.

First, Moroni helped the Nephites create "places of security" with embankments, forts and walls. "A place of security is anywhere you can feel the presence of the Holy Ghost and be guided by Him" — including the home, the temple and following counsel of local leaders.

Second, Moroni prepared "the minds of the people to be faithful unto the Lord." Just as the Salt Lake Temple's foundation is being strengthened, spiritual foundations must be solid. Regular immersion in the Book of Mormon builds faith. Increasing one's capacity to receive revelation will bring increased direction and "boundless gifts of the Spirit."

Third, Moroni never stopped physically or spiritually preparing his people. The adversary never stops attacking. "The more self-reliant we are — temporally, emotionally and spiritually — the more prepared we are to thwart Satan's relentless assaults."



**Pres. M. Russell Ballard**

Acting president, Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Near the close of His mortal ministry, Jesus Christ taught His disciples to “watch ye therefore, and pray always” to be counted as worthy to “escape all these things” that would cause commotion.

“Certainly, we live in a time during which things are in commotion. Many people fear the future, and many hearts have turned away from their faith in God and His Son Jesus Christ.”

News reports are filled with accounts of violence, moral denigration and a deadly global pandemic. Lives are being disrupted and many feel isolated and alone.

“Each night when I pray, I ask the Lord to bless all who are burdened with grief, pain, loneliness and sadness. I know that other Church leaders echo that same prayer. Our hearts, individually and collectively, go out to you and our prayers go to God on your behalf.”

Prayers are needed today for the nations of the earth.

“No matter how you pray or to whom you pray, please exercise your faith – whatever your faith may be – and pray for your country and for your national leaders. ... This is not about politics or policy. This is about peace and the healing that can come to individual souls as well as to the souls of countries.”

**Sister Lisa L. Harkness**

Primary general presidency

In mortality, there is a tendency “when we find ourselves in the middle of trials, troubles or afflictions to cry out, ‘Master, carest thou not that I perish? Save me.’”

“Certainly, the Savior of the world understands our mortal limitations, for He teaches us how to feel peace and calm even when the winds blow fiercely around us and billowing waves threaten to sink our hopes.”

For anyone with just the smallest particle of faith, Christ invites, saying, “Come unto me,” “Believe on my name,” “Learn of me, and “Listen to my words.”

Recent events around the globe have buffeted nations, communities and individuals with unforeseen trials. In such times of turmoil, “Our faith can feel stretched to the limits of our endurance and understanding.” But it is in these “rough stretches of our journey” that faith is often fortified.

“Regardless of our circumstances, we can intentionally make efforts to build and increase our faith in Jesus Christ. ... Our faith increases as we choose to believe rather than doubt, forgive rather than judge, repent rather than rebel. Our faith is refined as we patiently rely on the merits and mercy and grace of the Holy Messiah.”

**Elder Ulisses Soares**

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Seeking the Savior in every thought and following Him with a full purpose of heart requires aligning one’s mind and desires with His. This means living life in harmony with the gospel of Jesus Christ and focusing “on everything that is good.”

Despite continuous efforts to seek the Lord, inappropriate thoughts may penetrate the mind. If permitted and invited to stay, such thoughts can shape the desires of one’s heart, what they will become and what they will inherit for eternity. By choosing to have wholesome thoughts, “We can become more aligned with Jesus Christ” and more influenced by the Spirit.

Yielding to temptation is like approaching a magnet with a metal object. The magnet’s force attracts the object and holds it tightly. When the object is moved away, the magnet loses power. “As we resist temptation, it fades away and loses its power over our mind and heart, and consequently, over our actions.”

Such adjustment requires daily and constant effort, in addition to relying on the Savior. “Fighting against temptation takes a lifetime of diligence and faithfulness,” but the Lord is ready to help and promises blessings to those who endure to the end.

**Elder Carlos A. Godoy**

Presidency of the Seventy

Recognize the importance of angels in one’s life – the angels on “this side of the veil that walk among us in our everyday lives” and are reminders of God’s love.

The missionaries who share the gospel with others, a good friend who makes one better, a diligent seminary teacher or a trusted youth leader can aptly be called “angels among us.”

“Thanks to all these angels, and many others I encountered during those important early years [following my conversion], I received enough strength to remain on the covenant path as I gained a spiritual witness of the truth.”

To new converts, do not give up on your efforts to be a part of the gospel family – it is the true Church of Jesus Christ.

“When it comes to your happiness and salvation, it is always worth the effort to keep trying. It is worth the effort to adjust your lifestyle and traditions. The Lord is aware of the challenges you face. He knows you, He loves you, and I promise, He will send angels to help you.”

To Church members, remember it is not easy for new converts or others who may feel different to instantly fit in. The Lord is aware of the challenges they face, and He is looking for angels willing to help. The Lord is always looking for willing volunteers to be angels in others’ lives.

**Elder Neil L. Andersen**

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

While spiritual conviction is increasing in some, faith in Jesus Christ is diminishing in parts of the world. “We have taken upon ourselves the name of the Savior upon us. What more are we to do?”

Part of the answer comes in following President Russell M. Nelson, who has invited members to follow his example and study the 2,200 scripture references of Jesus Christ listed in the Topical Guide. President Nelson has also encouraged individuals to use the correct name of the Church.

“I promise you that as you prepare yourselves as President Nelson did, you too will be different, thinking more about the Savior, speaking of Him more frequently and with less hesitation. As you come to know and love Him even more deeply, your words will flow more comfortably, as they do when you speak of one of your children or of a dear friend. Those listening to you will feel less like debating or dismissing you, and more like learning from you.”

Members can do a little better about speaking of Jesus Christ in their homes, with their children, in worship services, and with those around them, including on social media. “As the world speaks less of Jesus Christ, let us speak more of Him.”

**Pres. Russell M. Nelson**

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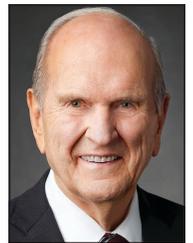
The Lord is gathering those who are willing to let God prevail in their lives. For centuries, prophets have foretold this gathering, and it is happening right now.

“This pre-millennial gathering is an individual saga of expanding faith and spiritual courage for millions of people. And as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or ‘latter-day covenant Israel,’ we have been charged to assist the Lord with this pivotal work.”

The gospel net to gather scattered Israel is expansive. There is room for each person who will fully embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ. Each convert becomes one of God’s covenant children.

“Each of us has a divine potential because each is a child of God. Each is equal in His eyes. ...

“Brothers and sisters, please listen carefully to what I am about to say. God does not love one race more than another. His doctrine on this matter is clear. He invites all to come unto Him, ‘black and white, bond and free, male and female’ (2 Nephi 26:33). I assure you that your standing before God is not determined by the color of your skin. Favor or disfavor with God is dependent upon your devotion to God and His commandments, and not the color of your skin.”



**Pres. Henry B. Eyring**

Second counselor, First Presidency

God's purpose in the creation of this world was "to give His children the opportunity to prove themselves able and willing to choose the right when it is hard." By so doing, each person would have the opportunity to change their natures to become more like Him and "He knew that would require unshakable faith in Him."



Because Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ love all, they want all to return to them and become more like Them. But considering the trials and difficulties of this world, "You might reasonably wonder why a loving and all-powerful God allows our mortal test to be so hard."

The Lord knows that for one to live in His presence in families forever, one must grow in spiritual cleanliness and stature. To make that possible, "Heavenly Father gave us a Savior and the power to choose for ourselves by faith to keep His commandments and to repent and so come unto Him."

At the center of Heavenly Father's plan is the opportunity for "our becoming ever more like his Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. In all things, the Savior's example is our best guide."

He, too, had need to prove Himself and thus "endured for all of Heavenly Father's children, paying the price for all our sins." By suffering for all mortality, the Savior "knows how to succor you in whatever tests you face."

**Elder Jeremy R. Jaggi**

General Authority Seventy

Instead of joy and rejoicing, the year 2020 has brought with it the COVID-19 pandemic, civil unrest, natural disasters and economic challenges. "Our Heavenly Father may be allowing us time to reflect and consider our understanding of patience and our conscious decision to choose joy."



"Of all the zealous social, religious and political endeavors of our day, let 'disciple of Jesus Christ' be our most pronounced and affirming affiliation."

"Just as the trying of our faith works patience within us, when we exercise patience, our faith increases. As our faith increases, so does our joy."

COVID-19 has created an opportunity for patience to "have her perfect work" (James 1:4). Meetinghouses and temples have been closed for a season, but focus on home-centered learning can increase faith in the gospel and temple blessings.

Many people have lost jobs or opportunities due to the pandemic, but joy is found in the fact that Church members have increased voluntary fast offerings and contributions to humanitarian funds.

"Be of good cheer" is the commandment from the Lord, not be of good fear."

It can take time and patience to receive desired blessings, even when doing everything right.

**Elder Gary E. Stevenson**

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Latter-day Saints around the globe have had their lives upended. Missions, temple work and traditional Sabbath-day worship were disrupted. Some have lost loved ones. Many have dealt with heartbreaking disappointment, sorrow and discouragement.



"So how do we heal, endure and move forward when things seemed broken?"

Nephi from the Book of Mormon provides a timeless answer. He knew many afflictions during his lifetime. Yet his gospel perspective allowed him to see that he had been "highly favored of the Lord."

"Times of affliction and disappointment do not change the watchful eye of the Lord as He favorably looks upon us, blessing us."

Latter-day Saints have endured the challenges of the past several months because adjustments were made by a living prophet before there was any hint of a pandemic. Each adjustment is an example of being "highly favored of the Lord."

One day, the pandemic-caused disruptions and disappointments will be overshadowed by the "choice blessings and increased faith and testimonies." They are evidence of the Lord's favor.

**Brother Milton Camargo**

Sunday School general presidency

While visiting the Americas after His resurrection, the Savior repeated an invitation He extended to His disciples in Jerusalem: "Ask, and it shall be given unto you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (3 Nephi 14:7).



President Russell M. Nelson has given a similar invitation — to pray about the longings of one's heart and then listen, record thoughts and act on them. This is a pattern to "grow into the principle of revelation."

President Nelson also said revelation is essential to spiritual survival. Why? Because the world can be confusing and noisy. "Communication with our Father in Heaven enables us to sort through what is true and what is false, what is relevant to the Lord's plan for us and what is not."

Asking reveals one's desires and faith, and learning to understand the voice of the Lord takes time and patience. His voice doesn't always come in strong impressions from the Spirit; rather, the still, small voice is "reaffirming, encouraging and comforting."

Seeking requires mental and spiritual effort, humbly trusting in the Lord's promises. He will expand understanding "line upon line, precept upon precept" (2 Nephi 28:30). Knocking means to act in faith. By actively following Him, the Lord opens the way. Revelation often comes while doing good.

**Elder Dale G. Renlund**

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Without the blessings that come from Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, a person can never realize salvation. But because of Christ's atonement, returning to Their presence is possible.



"We can be redeemed and stand pure and clean before God."

The prophet Micah taught: "[God] hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:8).

To "do justly" means acting honorably with God and other people. To "do justly" and "walk humbly with God" is to intentionally "withdraw our hand" from iniquity, walk in His statutes and remain authentically faithful.

A just person turns away from sin and toward God, makes covenants with Him and keeps those covenants. A just person chooses to obey the commandments of God, repents when falling short and keeps on trying."

Christ's sacrifice for sin and salvation from spiritual death are available to all who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit.

"A broken heart and contrite spirit prompt us to joyfully repent and try to become more like our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. As we do so, we receive the Savior's cleansing, healing and strengthening power.

**Elder Kelly R. Johnson**

General Authority Seventy

Filling one's heart and soul with the word of God and a foundation of faith in Jesus Christ is crucial to drawing upon the power of God for help in these challenging times. "Without getting the word of God and faith in Jesus Christ deep into our hearts, our testimonies and faith may fail, and we may lose access to the power God wants to give us. Superficial faith is insufficient. Only faith and the word of God that fill our inner soul are sufficient to sustain us — and to allow us to access His power."



Having the word of God deep in the soul, coupled with faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement, allows individuals to draw upon the power of God to overcome the adversary. "As we face challenges, we can rely upon the promise of the Lord taught by Paul: 'For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind'" (1 Timothy 1:7).

While regular temple attendance is impossible right now, "There is no expiration date associated with the power God bestows upon those who make and keep temple covenants or a restriction from accessing that power during a pandemic; His power diminishes in our lives only if we fail to keep our covenants and do not live in a way that allows us to continually qualify to receive His power."

**Elder Jeffrey R. Holland**

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

How long does one wait for relief from pandemics or personal trials, from hardships and burdens — even when spiritual efforts and pleading prayers do not yield yearned-for results?

“While we work and wait together for the answers to some of our prayers, I offer you my apostolic promise that they are heard and they are answered, though perhaps not at the time or in the way we wanted. But they are always answered at the time and in the way an omniscient and eternally compassionate parent should answer them.”

Faith means trusting God in good times and bad, “even if that includes some suffering until we see His arm revealed in our behalf.” Such is difficult when many believe the highest good in life is to avoid all suffering.

“Christianity is comforting but often it is not comfortable. The path to holiness and happiness here and hereafter is a long and sometimes rocky one. It takes time and tenacity to walk it. But, of course, the reward for doing so is monumental.”

Likening faith to a seed, Alma says the harvest comes “by and by.”

COVID and cancer, doubt and dismay, financial trouble and family trials — when will these burdens be lifted? The answer is “by and by.”

**Pres. Russell M. Nelson**

President of the Church

Despite the commotion in the world, the Lord wants His children to look forward with joyful anticipation.

To truly embrace a new normal, “I invite you to turn your heart, mind and soul increasingly to our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.”

This can be done by repenting daily, be increasingly pure in thought, word and deed, minister to others, keep an eternal perspective, magnify callings, and live each day more prepared to meet the Savior. This is why there are temples. “The Lord’s ordinances and covenants prepare us for eternal life, the greatest of all God’s blessings.”

The COVID-19 pandemic required a temporary closure of all temples globally, followed by a carefully coordinated, phased reopening. In the past few months, thousands of couples have been sealed and thousands received their own endowments. “We look forward to the day when all worthy members of the Church can again serve their ancestors, and worship, in a holy temple.”

“I bless you with an increased desire and ability to obey the laws of God. I promise that as you do, you will be showered with blessings, including greater courage, increased personal revelation, sweeter harmony in your homes and joy even amid uncertainty.”

