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Hold on a Little Longer

One of the enduring lessons of the Kirtland period is that our spirits need constant nourishment. We need to stay close to the Lord every day if we are to survive the adversity that we all must face.

Last summer my wife and I took our twin grandsons to Kirtland, Ohio. It was a special and precious opportunity for us to spend time with them before they left on their missions.

During our visit there, we learned to better understand the circumstances of the Prophet Joseph Smith and the Saints who lived in Kirtland. That era of Church history is known as a time of severe trials but also supreme blessings.

In Kirtland the Lord bestowed some of the most remarkable heavenly manifestations and spiritual gifts this world has ever experienced. Sixty-five sections of the Doctrine and Covenants were received in Kirtland and surrounding areas—revelations that brought new light and knowledge about topics such as the Second Coming, caring for the needy, the plan of salvation, priesthood authority, the Word of Wisdom, tithing, the temple, and the law of consecration.¹

It was a period of unparalleled spiritual growth. Indeed, the Spirit of God like a fire was burning. Moses, Elijah, and many other heavenly beings appeared during this time, including our Heavenly Father and His Son, the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ.²

One of the many revelations Joseph received in Kirtland was a revelation he called the “olive leaf . . . plucked from the Tree of Paradise, and the Lord’s message of peace to us” (introduction to D&C 88). This remarkable revelation includes the sublime invitation, “Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you; seek me diligently and ye shall find me” (D&C 88:63). As the Saints of Kirtland drew near unto the Lord, He truly did draw near unto them, pouring out the blessings of heaven upon the heads of the faithful.

A Spiritual Outpouring

Perhaps the culmination of these spiritual manifestations occurred during the dedication of the Kirtland Temple on March 27, 1836. One of those present was 28-year-old William Draper, who described the day as a “day of Pentecost.” He wrote: “There was such a time of the outpouring of the Spirit of the Lord, that my pen is inadequate to write it in full or my tongue to express it. But I will here say that the Spirit was poured out and came like a mighty rushing wind and filled the house, that many that were present spoke in tongues and had visions and saw angels and prophesied, and had a

general time of rejoicing such as had not been known in this generation.”³

These spiritual manifestations were not limited only to those inside the temple, for “the people of the neighborhood came running together (hearing an unusual sound within, and seeing a bright light like a pillar of fire resting upon the Temple), and were astonished at what was taking place.”⁴

Lorenzo Snow (1814–1901), later to be President of the Church, was living in Kirtland during this blessed period. He observed, “One would have imagined that after receiving these wonderful manifestations no temptation could have overthrown the Saints.”⁵

But, of course, great spiritual experiences do not make us exempt from opposition and trials. Just a few months after the temple dedication, a widespread economic crisis shook the United States, and Kirtland felt the effects deeply. Banks failed, leaving many in difficult financial straits. To make matters worse, many of the Saints who were immigrating to Kirtland came with very few material possessions, not knowing what they would do once they arrived or how they would survive.

Before long, persecutions arose and mobs formed against the Saints. Members of the Church—even some of those closest to the Prophet, many of whom were present at the dedication of the temple—apostatized and condemned Joseph as a fallen prophet.

As I walked near the Kirtland Temple with my wife and grandsons, I pondered how tragic it was that some could not remain faithful even after the spiritual manifestations they had witnessed. How sorrowful it was that they could not endure the ridicule and criticism of disbelievers. How sad that, when faced with financial trial or other struggles, they could not have reached inside themselves and found the strength to remain faithful. How unfortunate it was that they somehow lost sight of the miraculous spiritual harvest at the dedication of the temple.

The Lessons

What can we learn from this remarkable era in the history of the Church?

One of the great, enduring lessons of the Kirtland period is that our spirits need constant nourishment. As President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973) taught: “Testimony

isn’t something that you have today and you keep always. Testimony is either going to grow and grow to the brightness of certainty, or it is going to diminish to nothingness, depending upon what we do about it. I say, the testimony that we recapture day by day is the thing that saves us from the pitfalls of the adversary.”⁶ We need to stay close to the Lord every day if we are to survive the adversity that we all must face.

In some ways our world today is similar to Kirtland of the 1830s. We too live in times of financial distress. There are those who persecute and rail against the Church and its members. Individual and collective trials may sometimes seem overwhelming.

That is when we need, more than ever, to draw near unto the Lord. As we do, we will come to know what it means to have the Lord draw near unto us. As we seek Him ever more diligently, we will surely find Him. We will see clearly that the Lord does not abandon His Church or His faithful Saints. Our eyes will be opened, and we will see Him open the windows of heaven and shower us with more of His light. We will find the spiritual strength to survive even during the darkest night.

Although some of the Saints in Kirtland lost sight of the spiritual experiences they had, most did not. The majority, including William Draper, held fast to the spiritual knowledge God had given them and continued to follow the Prophet. Along the way they experienced more bitter trials but also more sweet spiritual growth until, ultimately, those who endured to the end were “received into . . . a state of never-ending happiness” (Mosiah 2:41).

You Can Hold On

If ever you are tempted to become discouraged or to lose faith, remember those faithful Saints who remained true in Kirtland. Hold on a little longer. You can do this! You are part of a special generation. You were prepared and preserved to live at this important time in the existence of our beautiful planet earth. You have a celestial pedigree and therefore have all the necessary talents to make your life an eternal success story.

The Lord has blessed you with a testimony of the truth. You have felt His influence and witnessed His power. And if you continue to seek Him, He will continue to grant you sacred experiences. With these and

other spiritual gifts, you will be able not only to change your own life for the better but also to bless your homes, wards or branches, communities, cities, states, and nations with your goodness.

It may be hard to see that at times, but hold on a little longer, for “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” and wait for Him (1 Corinthians 2:9; see also D&C 76:10; 133:45).

I bear witness of the truth of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and the truth of this, His Church. I testify with all my heart and soul that God lives, that Jesus Christ is His Son and stands at the head of this great Church. We have a prophet on the earth again, even President Thomas S. Monson.

May we ever remember the lesson of Kirtland and hold on a little longer—even when things look bleak. Know and remember this: the Lord loves you. He remembers you. And He will ever sustain those who “endure in faith to the end” (D&C 20:25).

NOTES

1. See, for example, sections 45; 56; 76; 84; 89; 97; and 104.
2. See D&C 76:23; 110:2–4, 11–13.
3. William Draper, “A Biographical Sketch of the Life and Travels and Birth and Parentage of William Draper” (1881), typescript, Church History Library, 2; spelling and capitalization standardized.
4. *History of the Church*, 2:428.
5. Lorenzo Snow, “Discourse,” *Deseret Weekly News*, June 8, 1889, 26.
6. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Harold B. Lee* (2000), 43.

IDEAS FOR TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

After prayerfully studying this message, consider the needs of those you teach, and choose points or passages from the message that you feel will be most useful to them. The Holy Ghost can help you prepare and teach the message (see D&C 42:14; 43:15–16). In addition to sharing your own testimony, you may feel impressed to ask the people you teach to share experiences or testimonies if they wish. (For other teaching ideas, see *Teaching, No Greater Call*.)

FOR YOUTH

Strengthening Your Testimony

Take this self-evaluation quiz to help you think about how you are doing in strengthening your testimony:

- Do I desire to believe?
- Do I fast and pray for a stronger testimony?
- Do I read and ponder the scriptures each day?
- Do I try to keep the commandments each day?
- Do I try to follow promptings from the Holy Ghost?
- Do I bear my testimony when prompted to do so?

FOR CHILDREN

Drawing Near to the Lord

In Kirtland, Ohio, the Prophet Joseph Smith received a revelation. The Lord told him, “Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you; seek me diligently and ye shall find me” (D&C 88:63). One way we can draw near to the Lord is by following His prophet.

Draw pictures of things President Thomas S. Monson has asked us to do:

- Pray.
- Be kind.
- Work hard to learn.
- Help others.
- Share your testimony.
- Read the scriptures.

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Becoming Self-Reliant



Teach these scriptures and quotations or, if needed, another principle that will bless the sisters you visit. Bear testimony of the doctrine. Invite those you visit to share what they have felt and learned.

What Is Self-Reliance?

“Self-reliance means using all of our blessings from Heavenly Father to care for ourselves and our families and to find solutions for our own problems.’ Each of us has a responsibility to try to avoid problems before they happen and to learn to overcome challenges when they occur. . . .

“How do we become self-reliant? We become self-reliant through obtaining sufficient knowledge, education, and literacy; by managing money and resources wisely, being spiritually strong, preparing for emergencies and eventualities; and by having physical health and social and emotional well-being.”¹

Julie B. Beck, Relief Society general president.

A Gospel Responsibility

“As we live providently and increase our gifts and talents, we become more self-reliant. Self-reliance is taking responsibility for our own

spiritual and temporal welfare and for those whom Heavenly Father has entrusted to our care. Only when we are self-reliant can we truly emulate the Savior in serving and blessing others.

“It is important to understand that self-reliance is a means to an end. Our ultimate goal is to become like the Savior, and that goal is enhanced by our unselfish service to others. Our ability to serve is increased or diminished by the level of our self-reliance.”²

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

“Self-reliance is a product of our work and undergirds all other welfare practices. It is an essential element in our spiritual as well as our temporal well-being. Regarding this principle, President Marion G. Romney [1897–1988] has said: ‘Let us work for what we need. Let us be self-reliant and independent. Salvation can be obtained on no other principle. Salvation is an individual matter, and we must work out our own salvation in temporal as well as in spiritual things.’ . . .

“President Spencer W. Kimball [1895–1985] further taught concerning self-reliance: ‘The responsibility for each person’s social, emotional, spiritual, physical, or economic well-being rests first upon himself,

HELPS FOR VISITING TEACHING

As a visiting teacher, you can seek personal inspiration to know how to best respond to the needs of those you are assigned to watch over. Then focus your efforts on strengthening each sister’s faith and family.

PERSONAL PREPARATION

Genesis 3:19
Matthew 6:33
D&C 82:18–19; 109:8

For more information, see www.providentliving.org; *All Is Safely Gathered In: Family Finances* (item no. 04007); and *All Is Safely Gathered In: Family Home Storage* (item no. 04008).

second upon his family, and third upon the Church if he is a faithful member thereof.”³

President Thomas S. Monson.

NOTES

1. “The Welfare Responsibilities of the Relief Society President,” *Basic Principles of Welfare and Self-Reliance* (2009), 4–5.
2. “A Gospel Vision of Welfare: Faith in Action,” *Basic Principles of Welfare and Self-Reliance* (2009), 1–2.
3. “Guiding Principles of Personal and Family Welfare,” *Liahona*, Feb. 1987, 3.

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