

By President Thomas S. Monson

Stand in Holy Places

Communication with our Father in Heaven—including our prayers to Him and His inspiration to us—is necessary in order for us to weather the storms and trials of life.

y beloved brothers and sisters, we have heard fine messages this morning, and I commend each who has participated. We're particularly delighted to have Elder Robert D. Hales with us once again and feeling improved. We love you, Bob.

As I pondered what I would like to say to you this morning, I have felt impressed to share certain thoughts and feelings which I consider to be pertinent and timely. I pray that I may be guided in my remarks.

I have lived on this earth for 84 years now. To give you a little perspective, I was born the same year Charles Lindbergh flew the first solo nonstop flight from New York to Paris in a single-engine, single-seat monoplane. Much has changed during the 84 years since then. Man has long since been to the moon and back. In fact, yesterday's science fiction has become today's reality. And that reality, thanks to the technology of our times, is changing so fast we can barely keep up with it—if we do at all. For those of us who remember dial telephones and manual

typewriters, today's technology is more than merely amazing.

Also evolving at a rapid rate has been the moral compass of society. Behaviors which once were considered inappropriate and immoral are now not only tolerated but also viewed by ever so many as acceptable.

I recently read in the *Wall Street Journal* an article by Jonathan Sacks, Britain's chief rabbi. Among other things, he writes: "In virtually every Western society in the 1960s there was a moral revolution, an abandonment of its entire traditional ethic of self-restraint. All you need, sang the Beatles, is love. The Judeo-Christian moral code was jettisoned. In its place came [the adage]: [Do] whatever works for you. The Ten Commandments were rewritten as the Ten Creative Suggestions."

Rabbi Sacks goes on to lament:

"We have been spending our moral capital with the same reckless abandon that we have been spending our financial capital. . . .

"There are large parts of [the world] where religion is a thing of the past and there is no counter-voice to

the culture of buy it, spend it, wear it, flaunt it, because you're worth it. The message is that morality is passé, conscience is for wimps, and the single overriding command is 'Thou shalt not be found out.'"

My brothers and sisters, this—unfortunately—describes much of the world around us. Do we wring our hands in despair and wonder how we'll ever survive in such a world? No. Indeed, we have in our lives the gospel of Jesus Christ, and we know that morality is not passé, that our conscience is there to guide us, and that we are responsible for our actions.

Although the world has changed, the laws of God remain constant. They have not changed; they will not change. The Ten Commandments are just that—commandments. They are *not* suggestions. They are every bit as requisite today as they were when God gave them to the children of Israel. If we but listen, we hear the echo of God's voice, speaking to us here and now:

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image. . . .

"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain. . . .

"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. . . .

"Honour thy father and thy mother. . . .

"Thou shalt not kill.

"Thou shalt not commit adultery.

"Thou shalt not steal.

"Thou shalt not bear false witness. . . .

"Thou shalt not covet."2

Our code of conduct is definitive; it is not negotiable. It is found not only in the Ten Commandments but also in the Sermon on the Mount, given to us by the Savior when He walked upon the earth. It is found throughout His teachings. It is found in the words of modern revelation.

Our Father in Heaven is the same yesterday, today, and forever. The prophet Mormon tells us that God is "unchangeable from all eternity to all eternity." In this world where nearly everything seems to be changing, His constancy is something on which we can rely, an anchor to which we can hold fast and be safe, lest we be swept away into uncharted waters.

It may appear to you at times that those out in the world are having much more fun than you are. Some of you may feel restricted by the code of conduct to which we in the Church adhere. My brothers and sisters, I declare to you, however, that there is nothing which can bring more joy into our lives or more peace to our souls than the Spirit which can come to us as we follow the Savior and keep the commandments. That Spirit cannot be present at the kinds of activities in which so much of the world participates. The Apostle Paul declared the truth: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."4 The term natural man can refer to any of us if we allow ourselves to be so.

We must be vigilant in a world which has moved so far from that which is spiritual. It is essential that we reject anything that does not conform to our standards, refusing in the process to surrender that which we desire most: eternal life in the kingdom of God. The storms will still beat at our doors from time to time, for they are an inescapable part of our existence in mortality. We, however, will be far better equipped to deal with them, to learn from them, and to overcome them if we have the gospel

at our core and the love of the Savior in our hearts. The prophet Isaiah declared, "The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever." 5

As a means of being *in* the world but not being *of* the world, it is necessary that we communicate with our Heavenly Father through prayer. He wants us to do so; He'll answer our prayers. The Savior admonished us, as recorded in 3 Nephi 18, to "watch and pray always lest ye enter into temptation; for Satan desireth to have you. . . .

"Therefore ye must always pray unto the Father in my name;

"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." 6

I gained my testimony of the power of prayer when I was about 12 years old. I had worked hard to earn some money and had managed to save five dollars. This was during the Great Depression, when five dollars was a substantial sum of moneyespecially for a boy of 12. I gave all my coins, which totaled five dollars, to my father, and he gave me in return a five-dollar bill. I know there was something specific I planned to purchase with the five dollars, although all these years later I can't recall what it was. I just remember how important that money was to me.

At the time, we did not own a washing machine, so my mother would send to the laundry each week our clothes which needed to be washed. After a couple of days, a load of what we called "wet wash" would be returned to us, and Mother would hang the items on our clothesline out back to dry.

I had tucked my five-dollar bill in the pocket of my jeans. As you can probably guess, my jeans were sent to the laundry with the money still in the pocket. When I realized what had happened, I was sick with worry. I knew that pockets were routinely checked at the laundry prior to washing. If my money was not discovered and taken during that process, I knew it was almost certain the money would be dislodged during washing and would be claimed by a laundry worker who would have no idea to whom the money should be returned, even if he had the inclination to do so. The chances of getting back my five dollars were extremely remote —a fact which my dear mother confirmed when I told her I had left the money in my pocket.

I wanted that money; I needed that money; I had worked very hard to earn that money. I realized there was only one thing I could do. In my extremity I turned to my Father in Heaven and pleaded with Him to keep my money safe in that pocket somehow until our wet wash came back.

Two very long days later, when I knew it was about time for the delivery truck to bring our wash, I sat by the window, waiting. As the truck pulled up to the curb, my heart was pounding. As soon as the wet clothes were in the house, I grabbed my jeans and ran to my bedroom. I reached into the pocket with trembling hands. When I didn't find anything immediately, I thought all was lost. And then my fingers touched that wet five-dollar bill. As I pulled it from the pocket, relief flooded over me. I offered a heartfelt prayer of gratitude to my Father in Heaven, for I knew that He had answered my prayer.

Since that time of long ago, I have had countless prayers answered. Not a day has gone by that I have not communicated with my Father in Heaven through prayer. It is a relationship I cherish—one I would literally be lost without. If you do not now have such a relationship with your Father in Heaven, I urge you to work toward that goal. As you do so, you will be entitled to His inspiration and guidance in your life—necessities for each of us if we are to survive spiritually during our sojourn here on

earth. Such inspiration and guidance are gifts He freely gives if we but seek them. What treasures they are!

I am always humbled and grateful when my Heavenly Father communicates with me through His inspiration. I have learned to recognize it, to trust it, and to follow it. Time and time again I have been the recipient of such inspiration. One rather dramatic experience took place in August of 1987 during the dedication of the Frankfurt Germany Temple. President Ezra Taft Benson had been with us for the first day or two of the dedication but had returned home, and so it became my opportunity to conduct the remaining sessions.

On Saturday we had a session for our Dutch members who were in the Frankfurt Temple district. I was well acquainted with one of our outstanding leaders from the Netherlands, Brother Peter Mourik. Just prior to the session, I had the distinct impression that Brother Mourik should be called upon to speak to his fellow Dutch members during the session and that, in fact, he should be the first speaker. Not having seen him in the temple that morning, I passed a note to Elder Carlos E. Asay, our Area President, asking whether Peter Mourik was in attendance at the session. Just prior to standing up to begin the session, I received a note back from Elder Asay indicating that Brother Mourik was actually not in attendance, that he was involved elsewhere, and that he was planning to attend the dedicatory session in the temple the following day with the servicemen stakes.

As I stood at the pulpit to welcome the people and to outline the program, I received unmistakable inspiration once again that I was to announce Peter Mourik as the first speaker. This was counter to all my instincts, for I had just heard from Elder Asay that Brother Mourik was definitely *not* in the temple. Trusting in the inspiration, however, I announced the choir presentation and the prayer and then indicated that our first speaker would

be Brother Peter Mourik.

As I returned to my seat, I glanced toward Elder Asay; I saw on his face a look of alarm. He later told me that when I had announced Brother Mourik as the first speaker, he couldn't believe his ears. He said he knew that I had received his note and that I indeed had read it, and he couldn't fathom why I would then announce Brother Mourik as a speaker, knowing he wasn't anywhere in the temple.

During the time all of this was taking place, Peter Mourik was in a meeting at the area offices in Porthstrasse. As his meeting was going forward, he suddenly turned to Elder Thomas A. Hawkes Jr., who was then the regional representative, and asked, "How fast can you get me to the temple?"

Elder Hawkes, who was known to drive rather rapidly in his small sports car, answered, "I can have you there in 10 minutes! But why do you need to go to the temple?"

Brother Mourik admitted he did not know why he needed to go to the temple but that he knew he had to get there. The two of them set out for the temple immediately.

During the magnificent choir number, I glanced around, thinking that at any moment I would see Peter Mourik. I did not. Remarkably, however, I felt no alarm. I had a sweet, undeniable assurance that all would be well.

Brother Mourik entered the front door of the temple just as the opening prayer was concluding, still not knowing why he was there. As he hurried down the hall, he saw my image on the monitor and heard me announce, "We will now hear from Brother Peter Mourik."

To the astonishment of Elder Asay, Peter Mourik immediately walked into the room and took his place at the podium.

Following the session, Brother Mourik and I discussed that which had taken place prior to his opportunity to speak. I have pondered the inspiration which came that day not only to me but also to Peter Mourik. That remarkable experience has provided an undeniable witness to me of the importance of being worthy to receive such inspiration and then trusting it—and following it—when it comes. I know without question that the Lord intended for those who were present at that session of the Frankfurt Temple dedication to hear the powerful, touching testimony of His servant Brother Peter Mourik.

My beloved brothers and sisters, communication with our Father in Heaven—including our prayers to Him and His inspiration to us—is necessary in order for us to weather the storms and trials of life. The Lord invites us, "Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you; seek me diligently and ye shall find me." As we do so, we will feel His Spirit in our lives, providing us the desire and the courage to stand strong and firm in righteousness—to "stand . . . in holy places, and be not moved." 8

As the winds of change swirl around us and the moral fiber of society continues to disintegrate before our very eyes, may we remember the Lord's precious promise to those who trust in Him: "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."

What a promise! May such be our blessing, I sincerely pray in the sacred name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

- 1. Jonathan Sacks, "Reversing the Decay of London Undone," *Wall Street Journal*, Aug. 20, 2011, online.wsj.com; emphasis added. *Note:* Lord Sacks is the chief rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth.
- 2. Exodus 20:3-4, 7-8, 12-17.
- 3. Moroni 8:18.
- 4. 1 Corinthians 2:14.
- 5. Isaiah 32:17.
- 6. 3 Nephi 18:18-20.
- 7. Doctrine and Covenants 88:63.
- 8. Doctrine and Covenants 87:8.
- 9. Isaiah 41:10.

Teachings for Our

elchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society lessons on fourth Sundays will be devoted to "Teachings for Our Time." Each lesson can be prepared from one or more talks given in the most recent general conference (see chart below). Stake and district presidents may choose which talks should be used, or they may assign this responsibility to bishops and branch presidents. Leaders should stress the value of Melchizedek Priesthood brethren and Relief Society sisters studying the same talks on the same Sundays.

Those attending fourth-Sunday lessons are encouraged to study and bring to class the latest general conference issue of the magazine.

Suggestions for Preparing a Lesson from Talks

Pray that the Holy Spirit will be with you as you study and teach

the talk(s). You may be tempted to prepare the lesson using other materials, but the conference talks are the approved curriculum. Your assignment is to help others learn and live the gospel as taught in the most recent general conference of the Church.

Review the talk(s), looking for principles and doctrines that meet the needs of class members. Also look for stories, scripture references, and statements from the talk(s) that will help you teach these truths.

Make an outline of how to teach the principles and doctrines. Your outline should include questions that help class members:

- Look for principles and doctrines in the talk(s).
- Think about their meaning.
- Share understanding, ideas, experiences, and testimonies.
- Apply these principles and doctrines in their lives.

MONTHS LESSONS ARE TAUGHT	FOURTH-SUNDAY LESSON MATERIALS
November 2011–April 2012	Talks published in the November 2011 <i>Liahona</i> *
May 2012-October 2012	Talks published in the May 2012 <i>Liahona</i> *

^{*} These talks are available in many languages at conference.lds.org.



By President Dieter F. UchtdorfSecond Counselor in the First Presidency

You Matter to Him

The Lord uses a scale very different from the world's to weigh the worth of a soul.

oses, one of the greatest prophets the world has ever known, was raised by Pharaoh's daughter and spent the first 40 years of his life in the royal halls of Egypt. He knew firsthand the glory and grandeur of that ancient kingdom.

Years later, on the top of a distant mountain, far removed from the splendor and magnificence of mighty Egypt, Moses stood in the presence of God and spoke to Him face to face as a man speaks with his friend.1 During the course of that visitation, God showed Moses the workmanship of His hands, granting him a glimpse of His work and glory. When the vision ended, Moses fell to the earth for the space of many hours. When his strength finally returned, he realized something that, in all his years in Pharaoh's court, had never occurred to him before.

"I know," he said, "that man is nothing." ²

We Are Less Than We Suppose

The more we learn about the universe, the more we understand—at least in a small part—what Moses

knew. The universe is so large, mysterious, and glorious that it is incomprehensible to the human mind. "Worlds without number have I created," God said to Moses.³ The wonders of the night sky are a beautiful testimony of that truth.

There are few things that have filled me with such breathless awe as flying in the black of night across oceans and continents and looking out my cockpit window upon the infinite glory of millions of stars.

Astronomers have attempted to count the number of stars in the universe. One group of scientists estimates that the number of stars within range of our telescopes is 10 times greater than all the grains of sand on the world's beaches and deserts.⁴

This conclusion has a striking similarity to the declaration of the ancient prophet Enoch: "Were it possible that man could number the particles of the earth, yea, millions of earths like this, it would not be a beginning to the number of thy creations." 5

Given the vastness of God's creations, it's no wonder the great King Benjamin counseled his people to "always retain in remembrance, the greatness of God, and your own nothingness."6

We Are Greater Than We Suppose

But even though man is nothing, it fills me with wonder and awe to think that "the worth of souls is great in the sight of God."⁷

And while we may look at the vast expanse of the universe and say, "What is man in comparison to the glory of creation?" God Himself said we are the reason He created the universe! His work and glory—the purpose for this magnificent universe—is to save and exalt mankind. In other words, the vast expanse of eternity, the glories and mysteries of infinite space and time are all built for the benefit of ordinary mortals like you and me. Our Heavenly Father created the universe that we might reach our potential as His sons and daughters.

This is a paradox of man: compared to God, man is nothing; yet we are everything to God. While against the backdrop of infinite creation we may appear to be nothing, we have a spark of eternal fire burning within our breast. We have the incomprehensible promise of exaltation—worlds without end—within our grasp. And it is God's great desire to help us reach it.

The Folly of Pride

The great deceiver knows that one of his most effective tools in leading the children of God astray is to appeal to the extremes of the paradox of man. To some, he appeals to their prideful tendencies, puffing them up and encouraging them to believe in the fantasy of their own

self-importance and invincibility. He tells them they have transcended the ordinary and that because of ability, birthright, or social status, they are set apart from the common measure of all that surrounds them. He leads them to conclude that they are therefore not subject to anyone else's rules and not to be bothered by anyone else's problems.

Abraham Lincoln is said to have loved a poem that reads:

Oh why should the spirit of mortal be proud?
Like a swift-flitting meteor, a fast-flying cloud,
A flash of the lightning, a break of the wave,
Man passeth from life to his rest in the grave.

Disciples of Jesus Christ understand that compared to eternity, our existence in this mortal sphere is only "a small moment" in space and time. They know that a person's true value has little to do with what the world holds in high esteem. They know you could pile up the accumulated currency of the entire world and it could not buy a loaf of bread in the economy of heaven.

Those who will "inherit the kingdom of God" ¹¹ are those who become "as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love." ¹² "For every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." ¹³ Such disciples understand also "that when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God." ¹⁴

We Are Not Forgotten

Another way Satan deceives is through discouragement. He attempts to focus our sight on our own insignificance until we begin to doubt that we have much worth. He tells us that we are too small for anyone to take notice, that we are forgotten—especially by God.

Let me share with you a personal experience that may be of some help to those who feel insignificant, forgotten, or alone.

Many years ago I attended pilot training in the United States Air Force. I was far away from my home, a young West German soldier, born in Czechoslovakia, who had grown up in East Germany and spoke English only with great difficulty. I clearly remember my journey to our training base in Texas. I was on a plane, sitting next to a passenger who spoke with a heavy Southern accent. I could scarcely understand a word he said. I actually wondered if I had been taught the wrong language all along. I was terrified by the thought that I had to compete for the coveted top spots in pilot training against students who were native English speakers.

When I arrived on the air base in the small town of Big Spring, Texas, I looked for and found the Latter-day Saint branch, which consisted of a handful of wonderful members who were meeting in rented rooms on the air base itself. The members were in the process of building a small meetinghouse that would serve as a permanent place for the Church. Back in those days members provided much of the labor on new buildings.

Day after day I attended my pilot training and studied as hard as I could and then spent most of my spare time working on the new meetinghouse. There I learned that a two-by-four is not a dance step but a piece of wood. I also learned the important survival skill of missing my thumb when pounding a nail.

I spent so much time working on the meetinghouse that the branch president—who also happened to be one of our flight instructors expressed concern that I perhaps should spend more time studying.

My friends and fellow student pilots engaged themselves in freetime activities as well, although I think it's safe to say that some of those activities would not have been in alignment with today's For the Strength of Youth pamphlet. For my part, I enjoyed being an active part of this tiny west Texas branch, practicing my newly acquired carpentry skills, and improving my English as I fulfilled my callings to teach in the elders quorum and in Sunday School.

At the time, Big Spring, despite its name, was a small, insignificant, and unknown place. And I often felt exactly the same way about myself insignificant, unknown, and quite alone. Even so, I never once wondered if the Lord had forgotten me or if He would ever be able to find me there. I knew that it didn't matter to Heavenly Father where I was, where I ranked with others in my pilot training class, or what my calling in the Church was. What mattered to Him was that I was doing the best I could, that my heart was inclined toward Him, and that I was willing to help those around me. I knew if I did the best I could, all would be well.

And all was well.15

The Last Shall Be First

The Lord doesn't care at all if we spend our days working in marble halls or stable stalls. He knows where we are, no matter how humble our circumstances. He will use—in His own way and for His holy purposes—those who incline their hearts to Him.

God knows that some of the greatest souls who have ever lived are those who will never appear in the chronicles of history. They are the blessed, humble souls who emulate the Savior's example and spend the days of their lives doing good.¹⁶

One such couple, parents of a friend of mine, exemplify this principle for me. The husband worked at a steel mill in Utah. At lunch he would pull out his scriptures or a Church magazine and read. When the other workers saw this, they ridiculed him and challenged his beliefs. Whenever they did, he spoke to them with kindness and confidence. He did not

allow their disrespect to make him angry or upset.

Years later one of the more vocal mockers became very ill. Before he died, he requested that this humble man speak at his funeral—which he did.

This faithful member of the Church never had much in the way of social status or wealth, but his influence extended deeply to all who knew him. He died in an industrial accident while stopping to help another worker who was stranded in the snow.

Within a year his widow had to undergo brain surgery, which has left her unable to walk. But people love coming to spend time with her because she listens. She remembers. She cares. Unable to write, she memorizes her children's and grandchildren's telephone numbers. She lovingly remembers birthdays and anniversaries.

Those who visit her come away feeling better about life and about themselves. They feel her love. They know she cares. She never complains but spends her days blessing the lives of others. One of her friends said this woman was one of the few people she had ever known who truly exemplifies the love and life of Jesus Christ.

This couple would have been the first to say they were not of much importance in this world. But the Lord uses a scale very different from the world's to weigh the worth of a soul. He knows this faithful couple; He loves them. Their actions are a living witness of their strong faith in Him.

You Matter to Him

My dear brothers and sisters, it may be true that man is nothing in comparison to the greatness of the universe. At times we may even feel insignificant, invisible, alone, or forgotten. But always remember—you matter to Him! If you ever doubt that, consider these four divine principles:

First, God loves the humble and meek, for they are "greatest in the kingdom of heaven." ¹⁷

Second, the Lord entrusts "the fulness of [His] gospel [to] be proclaimed by the weak and the simple unto the ends of the world." ¹⁸ He has chosen "the weak things of the world [to] come forth and break down the mighty and strong ones" ¹⁹ and to put to shame "the things which are mighty." ²⁰

Third, no matter where you live, no matter how humble your circumstances, how meager your employment, how limited your abilities, how ordinary your appearance, or how little your calling in the Church may appear to you, you are not invisible to your Heavenly Father. He loves you. He knows your humble heart and your acts of love and kindness. Together, they form a lasting testimony of your fidelity and faith.

Fourth and finally, please understand that what you see and experience now is not what forever will be. You will not feel loneliness, sorrow, pain, or discouragement forever. We have the faithful promise of God that He will neither forget nor forsake those who incline their hearts to Him.²¹ Have hope and faith in that promise. Learn to love your Heavenly Father and become His disciple in word and in deed.

Be assured that if you but hold on, believe in Him, and remain faithful in keeping the commandments, one day you will experience for yourselves the promises revealed to the Apostle Paul: "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." ²²

Brothers and sisters, the most powerful Being in the universe is the Father of your spirit. He knows you. He loves you with a perfect love.

God sees you not only as a mortal being on a small planet who lives for a brief season—He sees you as His child. He sees you as the being you are capable and designed to become. He wants you to know that you matter to Him

May we ever believe, trust, and align our lives so that we will understand our true eternal worth and potential. May we be worthy of the precious blessings our Heavenly Father has in store for us is my prayer in the name of His Son, even Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

- 1. See Moses 1:2.
- 2. Moses 1:10.
- 3. Moses 1:33.
- See Andrew Craig, "Astronomers Count the Stars," BBC News, July 22, 2003, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/ nature/3085885.stm.
- 5. Moses 7:30.
- 6. Mosiah 4:11.
- 7. Doctrine and Covenants 18:10.
- 8. See Moses 1:38–39.
- 9. William Knox, "Mortality," in James Dalton Morrison, ed., *Masterpieces of Religious Verse* (1948), 397.
- 10. Doctrine and Covenants 121:7.
- 11. 3 Nephi 11:38.
- 12. Mosiah 3:19.
- 13. Luke 18:14; see also verses 9-13.
- 14. Mosiah 2:17.
- 15. Dieter F. Uchtdorf graduated first in his class.
- 16. See Acts 10:38.
- 17. Matthew 18:4; see also verses 1-3.
- 18. Doctrine and Covenants 1:23.
- 19. Doctrine and Covenants 1:19.
- 20. 1 Corinthians 1:27.
- 21. See Hebrews 13:5.
- 22. 1 Corinthians 2:9.