



By President Thomas S. Monson

Consider the Blessings

Our Heavenly Father is aware of our needs and will help us as we call upon Him for assistance.

My beloved brothers and sisters, this conference marks 49 years since I was sustained, on October 4, 1963, as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Forty-nine years is a long time. In many ways, however, the time seems very short since I stood at the pulpit in the Tabernacle and gave my very first general conference address.

Much has changed since October 4, 1963. We live in a unique time in the world's history. We are blessed with so very much. And yet it is sometimes difficult to view the problems and permissiveness around us and not become discouraged. I have found that, rather than dwelling on the negative, if we will take a step back and consider the blessings in our lives, including seemingly small, sometimes overlooked blessings, we can find greater happiness.

As I have reviewed the past 49 years, I have made some discoveries. One is that countless experiences I have had were not necessarily those one would consider extraordinary. In fact, at the time they transpired, they often seemed unremarkable and even ordinary. And yet, in retrospect, they

enriched and blessed lives—not the least of which was my own. I would recommend this same exercise to you—namely, that you take an inventory of your life and look specifically for the blessings, large and small, you have received.

Reinforced constantly during my own review of the years has been my knowledge that our prayers are heard and answered. We are familiar with the truth found in 2 Nephi in the Book of Mormon: “Men are, that they might have joy.”¹ I testify that much of that joy comes as we recognize that we can communicate with our Heavenly Father through prayer and that those prayers will be heard and answered—perhaps not how and when we expected they would be answered, but they *will* be answered and by a Heavenly Father who knows and loves us perfectly and who desires our happiness. Hasn't He promised us, “Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers”?²

For the next few minutes allotted to me, I would like to share with you just a tiny sampling of the experiences I have had wherein prayers

were heard and answered and which, in retrospect, brought blessings into my life as well as the lives of others. My daily journal, kept over all these years, has helped provide some specifics which I most likely would not otherwise be able to recount.

In early 1965, I was assigned to attend stake conferences and to hold other meetings throughout the South Pacific area. This was my first visit to that part of the world, and it was a time never to be forgotten. Much that was spiritual in nature occurred during this assignment as I met with leaders, members, and missionaries.

On the weekend of Saturday and Sunday, February 20 and 21, we were in Brisbane, Australia, to hold regular conference sessions of the Brisbane Stake. During meetings on Saturday, I was introduced to the district president from an adjoining area. As I shook his hand, I had a strong impression that I needed to speak with him and to provide counsel, and so I asked him if he would accompany me to the Sunday morning session the following day so that this could be accomplished.

Following the Sunday session, we had an opportunity to visit together. We talked of his many responsibilities as district president. As we did so, I felt impressed to offer him specific suggestions concerning missionary work and how he and his members could help the full-time missionaries in their labors in his area. I later learned that this man had been praying for guidance in this regard. To him our visit was a special witness that his prayers were heard and answered. This was

a seemingly unremarkable meeting but one which I am convinced was guided by the Spirit and which made a difference in that district president's life and administration, in the lives of his members, and in the success of the missionaries there.

My brothers and sisters, the Lord's purposes are often accomplished as we pay heed to the guidance of the Spirit. I believe that the more we act upon the inspiration and impressions which come to us, the more the Lord will entrust to us His errands.

I have learned, as I have mentioned in previous messages, never to postpone a prompting. On one occasion many years ago, I was swimming laps at the old Deseret Gym in Salt Lake City when I felt the inspiration to go to the University Hospital to visit a good friend of mine who had lost the use of his lower limbs because of a malignancy and the surgery which followed. I immediately left the pool, dressed, and was soon on my way to see this good man.

When I arrived at his room, I found that it was empty. Upon inquiry I learned I would probably find him in the swimming pool area of the hospital, an area which was used for physical therapy. Such turned out to be the case. He had guided himself there in his wheelchair and was the only occupant of the room. He was on the far side of the pool, near the deep end. I called to him, and he maneuvered his wheelchair over to greet me. We had an enjoyable visit, and I accompanied him back to his hospital room, where I gave him a blessing.

I learned later from my friend that he had been utterly despondent that day and had been contemplating taking his own life. He had prayed for relief but began to feel that his prayers had gone unanswered. He went to the pool with the thought that this would be a way to end his misery—by guiding his wheelchair into the deep end of the pool. I had arrived at a critical moment, in response to what I know was inspiration from on high.

My friend was able to live many more years—years filled with happiness and gratitude. How pleased I am to have been an instrument in the Lord's hands on that critical day at the swimming pool.

On another occasion, as Sister Monson and I were driving home after visiting friends, I felt impressed that we should go into town—a drive of many miles—to pay a visit to an elderly widow who had once lived in our ward. Her name was Zella Thomas. At the time, she was a resident in a care center. That early afternoon we found her to be extremely frail but lying peacefully on her bed.

Zella had long been blind, but she recognized our voices immediately. She asked if I might give her a blessing, adding that she was prepared to die if the Lord wanted her to return home. There was a sweet, peaceful spirit in the room, and all of us knew that her remaining time in mortality would be brief. Zella took me by the hand and said that she had prayed fervently that I would come to see her and provide her a blessing. I told her that we had come because of direct inspiration from our Heavenly Father. I kissed her on the forehead, knowing that I perhaps would not again see her in mortality. Such proved to be the case, for she passed away the following day. To have been able to provide some comfort and peace to our sweet Zella was a blessing to her and to me.

The opportunity to be a blessing in the life of another often comes unexpectedly. On one extremely cold Saturday night during the winter of 1983–84, Sister Monson and I drove several miles to the mountain valley of Midway, Utah, where we have a home. The temperature that night was minus 24 degrees Fahrenheit (–31°C), and we wanted to make certain all was well at our home there. We checked and found that it was fine, so we left to return to Salt Lake City. We barely made it the few miles to the highway before our car stopped working. We were completely stranded. I have

seldom, if ever, been as cold as we were that night.

Reluctantly we began walking toward the nearest town, the cars whizzing past us. Finally one car stopped, and a young man offered to help. We eventually found that the diesel fuel in our gas tank had thickened because of the cold, making it impossible for us to drive the car. This kind young man drove us back to our Midway home. I attempted to reimburse him for his services, but he graciously declined. He indicated that he was a Boy Scout and wanted to do a good turn. I identified myself to him, and he expressed his appreciation for the privilege to be of help. Assuming that he was about missionary age, I asked him if he had plans to serve a mission. He indicated he was not certain just what he wanted to do.

On the following Monday morning, I wrote a letter to this young man and thanked him for his kindness. In the letter I encouraged him to serve a full-time mission. I enclosed a copy of one of my books and underscored the chapters on missionary service.

About a week later the young man's mother telephoned and advised that her son was an outstanding young man but that because of certain influences in his life, his long-held desire to serve a mission had diminished. She indicated she and his father had fasted and prayed that his heart would be changed. They had placed his name on the prayer roll of the Provo Utah Temple. They hoped that somehow, in some way, his heart would be touched for good and he would return to his desire to fill a mission and to serve the Lord faithfully. The mother wanted me to know that she looked upon the events of that cold evening as an answer to their prayers in his behalf. I said, "I agree with you."

After several months and more communication with this young man, Sister Monson and I were overjoyed to attend his missionary farewell prior to his departure for the Canada Vancouver Mission.

Was it chance that our paths crossed on that cold December night? I do not for one moment believe so. Rather, I believe our meeting was an answer to a mother's and father's heartfelt prayers for the son they cherished.

Again, my brothers and sisters, our Heavenly Father is aware of our needs and will help us as we call upon Him for assistance. I believe that no concern of ours is too small or insignificant. The Lord is in the details of our lives.

I should like to conclude by relating one recent experience which had an impact on hundreds. It occurred at the cultural celebration for the Kansas City Temple, just five months ago. As with so much that happens in our lives, at the time it seemed to be just another experience where everything worked out. However, as I learned of the circumstances associated with the cultural celebration the evening before the temple was dedicated, I realized that the performance that night was not ordinary. Rather, it was quite remarkable.

As with all cultural events held in conjunction with temple dedications, the youth in the Kansas City Missouri Temple District had rehearsed the performance in separate groups in their own areas. The plan was that they would meet all together in the large rented municipal center on the Saturday morning of the performance so that they could learn when and where to enter, where they were to stand, how much space should be between them and the person next to them, how to exit the main floor, and so forth—many details which they would have to grasp during the day as those in charge put the various scenes together so that the final performance would be polished and professional.

There was just one major problem that day. The entire production was dependent on prerecorded segments that would be shown on the large screen known as a Jumbotron. These recorded segments were critical to the entire production. They not only tied it all together, but each televised segment would introduce the next performance. The video segments provided the framework on which the entire production depended. And the Jumbotron was not working.

Technicians worked frantically to solve the problem while the youth waited, hundreds of them, losing precious rehearsal time. The situation began to look impossible.

The writer and director of the celebration, Susan Cooper, later explained: "As we moved from plan A to B to Z, we knew that it wasn't working. . . . As we were looking at the schedule, we knew that it was going to be beyond us, but we knew that we had one of the greatest strengths on the floor below—3,000 youth. We needed to go down and tell [them] what was happening and draw upon their faith."³

Just an hour before the audience would begin to enter the center, 3,000 youth knelt on the floor and prayed together. They prayed that those working on the Jumbotron would be inspired to know what to do to repair it; they asked their Heavenly Father to make up for what they themselves could not do because of the shortage of time.

Said one who wrote about it afterward, "It was a prayer the youth will never forget, not because the floor was hard, but because the Spirit melted their bones."⁴

It was not long before one of the technicians came to tell them that the problem had been discovered and

corrected. He attributed the solution to luck, but all those youth knew better.

When we entered the municipal center that evening, we had no idea of the difficulties of the day. Only later did we learn of them. What we witnessed, however, was a beautiful, polished performance—one of the best I have seen. The youth radiated a glorious, powerful spirit which was felt by all who were present. They seemed to know just where to enter, where to stand, and how to interact with all the other performers around them. When I learned that their rehearsals had been cut short and that many of the numbers had not been rehearsed by the entire group, I was astonished. No one would have known. The Lord had indeed made up the difference.

I never cease to be amazed by how the Lord can motivate and direct the length and breadth of His kingdom and yet have time to provide inspiration concerning one individual—or one cultural celebration or one Jumbotron. The fact that He can, that He does, is a testimony to me.

My brothers and sisters, the Lord is in all of our lives. He loves us. He wants to bless us. He wants us to seek His help. As He guides us and directs us and as He hears and answers our prayers, we will find the happiness here and now that He desires for us. May we be aware of His blessings in our lives, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior, amen.

NOTES

1. 2 Nephi 2:25.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 112:10.
3. Susan Cooper, in Maurine Proctor, "Nothing's Too Hard for the Lord: The Kansas City Cultural Celebration," *Meridian Magazine*, May 9, 2012, ldsmag.com.
4. Proctor, *Meridian Magazine*, May 9, 2012.

Teachings for Our Time

Melchizedek 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 emphasize 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. Consider including 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
October 2012–April 2013	Talks given in the October 2012 general conference*
April 2013–October 2013	Talks given in the April 2013 general conference*

**For April and October fourth-Sunday lessons, talk(s) may be selected from the previous conference or from the most recent one. The talks are available in many languages at conference.lds.org.*



By President Dieter F. Uchtdorf
Second Counselor in the First Presidency

Of Regrets and Resolutions

Of Regrets

President Monson, we love you. Thank you for the inspired and historic announcement on the building of new temples and missionary service. Because of them, I'm sure great blessings will come to us and to many future generations.

My dear brothers and sisters, my dear friends! We are all mortal. I hope this does not come as a surprise to anyone.

None of us will be on earth very long. We have a number of precious years which, in the eternal perspective, barely amount to the blink of an eye.

And then we depart. Our spirits "are taken home to that God who gave [us] life."¹ We lay our bodies down and leave behind the things of this world as we move to the next realm of our existence.

When we are young, it seems that we will live forever. We think there is a limitless supply of sunrises waiting just beyond the horizon, and the future looks to us like an unbroken road stretching endlessly before us.

However, the older we get, the more we tend to look back and marvel at how short that road really is.

We wonder how the years could have passed so quickly. And we begin to think about the choices we made and the things we have done. In the process, we remember many sweet moments that give warmth to our souls and joy to our hearts. But we also remember the regrets—the things we wish we could go back and change.

A nurse who cares for the terminally ill says that she has often asked a simple question of her patients as they prepared to depart this life.

"Do you have any regrets?" she would ask.²

Being so close to that final day of mortality often gives clarity to thought and provides insight and perspective. So when these people were asked about their regrets, they opened their hearts. They reflected about what they would change if only they could turn back the clock.

As I considered what they had said, it struck me how the foundational principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ can affect our life's direction for good, if only we will apply them.

There is nothing mysterious about the principles of the gospel. We have studied them in the scriptures, we have

discussed them in Sunday School, and we have heard them from the pulpit many times. These divine principles and values are straightforward and clear; they are beautiful, profound, and powerful; and they can definitely help us to avoid future regrets.

I Wish I Had Spent More Time with the People I Love

Perhaps the most universal regret dying patients expressed was that they wished they had spent more time with the people they love.

Men in particular sang this universal lament: they "deeply regretted spending so much of their lives on the [daily] treadmill of ... work."³ Many had lost out on choice memories that come from spending time with family and friends. They missed developing a deep connection with those who meant the most to them.

Isn't it true that we often get so busy? And, sad to say, we even wear our busyness as a badge of honor, as though being busy, by itself, was an accomplishment or sign of a superior life.

Is it?

I think of our Lord and Exemplar, Jesus Christ, and His short life among the people of Galilee and Jerusalem. I have tried to imagine Him bustling between meetings or multi-tasking to get a list of urgent things accomplished.

I can't see it.

Instead I see the compassionate and caring Son of God purposefully living each day. When He interacted with those around Him, they felt important and loved. He knew the infinite value of the people He met. He blessed them, ministered to them. He

lifted them up, healed them. He gave them the precious gift of His time.

In our day it is easy to merely pretend to spend time with others. With the click of a mouse, we can “connect” with thousands of “friends” without ever having to face a single one of them. Technology can be a wonderful thing, and it is very useful when we cannot be near our loved ones. My wife and I live far away from precious family members; we know how that is. However, I believe that we are not headed in the right direction, individually and as a society, when we connect with family or friends mostly by reposting humorous pictures, forwarding trivial things, or linking our loved ones to sites on the Internet. I suppose there is a place for this kind of activity, but how much time are we willing to spend on it? If we fail to give our best personal self and undivided time to those who are truly important to us, one day we will regret it.

Let us resolve to cherish those we love by spending meaningful time with them, doing things together, and cultivating treasured memories.

I Wish I Had Lived Up to My Potential

Another regret people expressed was that they failed to become the person they felt they could and should have been. When they looked back on their lives, they realized that they never lived up to their potential, that too many songs remained unsung.

I am not speaking here of climbing the ladder of success in our various professions. That ladder, no matter how lofty it may appear on this earth, barely amounts to a single step in the great eternal journey awaiting us.

Rather, I am speaking of becoming the person God, our Heavenly Father, intended us to be.

We arrive in this world, as the poet said, “trailing clouds of glory”⁴ from the premortal sphere.

Our Heavenly Father sees our real potential. He knows things about us that we do not know ourselves. He prompts us during our lifetime to

fulfill the measure of our creation, to live a good life, and to return to His presence.

Why, then, do we devote so much of our time and energy to things that are so fleeting, so inconsequential, and so superficial? Do we refuse to see the folly in the pursuit of the trivial and transient?

Would it not be wiser for us to “lay up for [ourselves] treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal”?⁵

How do we do this? By following the example of the Savior, by incorporating His teachings in our daily lives, by truly loving God and our fellowman.

We certainly cannot do this with a dragging-our-feet, staring-at-our-watch, complaining-as-we-go approach to discipleship.

When it comes to living the gospel, we should not be like the boy who dipped his toe in the water and then claimed he went swimming. As sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father, we are capable of so much more. For that, good intentions are not enough. We must *do*. Even more important, we must *become* what Heavenly Father wants us to be.

Declaring our testimony of the gospel is good, but being a living example of the restored gospel is better. Wishing to be more faithful to our covenants is good; actually being faithful to sacred covenants—including living a virtuous life, paying our tithes and offerings, keeping the Word of Wisdom, and serving those in need—is much better. Announcing that we will dedicate more time for family prayer, scripture study, and wholesome family activities is good; but actually doing all these things steadily will bring heavenly blessings to our lives.

Discipleship is the pursuit of holiness and happiness. It is the path to our best and happiest self.

Let us resolve to follow the Savior and work with diligence to become the

person we were designed to become. Let us listen to and obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit. As we do so, Heavenly Father will reveal to us things we never knew about ourselves. He will illuminate the path ahead and open our eyes to see our unknown and perhaps unimagined talents.

The more we devote ourselves to the pursuit of holiness and happiness, the less likely we will be on a path to regrets. The more we rely on the Savior’s grace, the more we will feel that we are on the track our Father in Heaven has intended for us.

I Wish I Had Let Myself Be Happier

Another regret of those who knew they were dying may be somewhat surprising. They wished they had let themselves be happier.

So often we get caught up in the illusion that there is something just beyond our reach that would bring us happiness: a better family situation, a better financial situation, or the end of a challenging trial.

The older we get, the more we look back and realize that external circumstances don’t really matter or determine our happiness.

We do matter. *We* determine our happiness.

You and I are ultimately in charge of our own happiness.

My wife, Harriet, and I love riding our bicycles. It is wonderful to get out and enjoy the beauties of nature. We have certain routes we like to bike, but we don’t pay too much attention to how far we go or how fast we travel in comparison with other riders.

However, occasionally I think we should be a bit more competitive. I even think we could get a better time or ride at a higher speed if only we pushed ourselves a little more. And then sometimes I even make the big mistake of mentioning this idea to my wonderful wife.

Her typical reaction to my suggestions of this nature is always very kind, very clear, and very direct. She smiles and says, “Dieter, it’s

not a race; it's a journey. Enjoy the moment."

How right she is!

Sometimes in life we become so focused on the finish line that we fail to find joy in the journey. I don't go cycling with my wife because I'm excited about finishing. I go because the experience of being with her is sweet and enjoyable.

Doesn't it seem foolish to spoil sweet and joyful experiences because we are constantly anticipating the moment when they will end?

Do we listen to beautiful music waiting for the final note to fade before we allow ourselves to truly enjoy it? No. We listen and connect to the variations of melody, rhythm, and harmony throughout the composition.

Do we say our prayers with only the "amen" or the end in mind? Of course not. We pray to be close to our Heavenly Father, to receive His Spirit and feel His love.

We shouldn't wait to be happy until we reach some future point, only to discover that happiness was already available—all the time! Life is not meant to be appreciated only in retrospect. "This is the day which the Lord hath made ...," the Psalmist wrote. "Rejoice and be glad in it."⁶

Brothers and sisters, no matter our circumstances, no matter our challenges or trials, there is something in each day to embrace and cherish. There is something in each day that can bring gratitude and joy if only we will see and appreciate it.

Perhaps we should be looking less with our eyes and more with our hearts. I love the quote: "One sees clearly only with the heart. Anything essential is invisible to the eyes."⁷

We are commanded "to give thanks in all things."⁸ So isn't it better to see with our eyes and hearts even

the small things we *can* be thankful for, rather than magnifying the negative in our current condition?

The Lord has promised, "He who receiveth all things with thankfulness shall be made glorious; and the things of this earth shall be added unto him, even an hundred fold."⁹

Brothers and sisters, with the bountiful blessings of our Heavenly Father, His generous plan of salvation, the supernal truths of the restored gospel, and the many beauties of this mortal journey, "have we not reason to rejoice?"¹⁰

Let us resolve to be happy, regardless of our circumstances.

Of Resolutions

One day we will take that unavoidable step and cross from this mortal sphere into the next estate. One day we will look back at our lives and wonder if we could have been better, made better decisions, or used our time more wisely.

To avoid some of the deepest regrets of life, it would be wise to make some resolutions today. Therefore, let us:

- Resolve to spend more time with those we love.
- Resolve to strive more earnestly to become the person God wants us to be.
- Resolve to find happiness, regardless of our circumstances.

It is my testimony that many of the deepest regrets of tomorrow can be prevented by following the Savior today. If we have sinned or made mistakes—if we have made choices that we now regret—there is the precious gift of Christ's Atonement, through which we can be forgiven. We cannot go back in time and change the past, but we can repent. The Savior can

wipe away our tears of regret¹¹ and remove the burden of our sins.¹² His Atonement allows us to leave the past behind and move forward with clean hands, a pure heart,¹³ and a determination to do better and especially to become better.

Yes, this life is passing swiftly; our days seem to fade quickly; and death appears frightening at times. Nevertheless, our spirit will continue to live and will one day be united with our resurrected body to receive immortal glory. I bear solemn witness that because of the merciful Christ, we will all live again and forever. Because of our Savior and Redeemer, one day we will truly understand and rejoice in the meaning of the words "the sting of death is swallowed up in Christ."¹⁴

The path toward fulfilling our divine destiny as sons and daughters of God is an eternal one. My dear brothers and sisters, dear friends, we must begin to walk that eternal path *today*; we cannot take for granted one single day. I pray that we will not wait until we are ready to die before we truly learn to live. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Alma 40:11.
2. See Susie Steiner, "Top Five Regrets of the Dying," *Guardian*, Feb. 1, 2012, www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2012/feb/01/top-five-regrets-of-the-dying.
3. Bronnie Ware, in Steiner, "Top Five Regrets of the Dying."
4. "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood," *The Complete Poetical Works of William Wordsworth* (1924), 359.
5. Matthew 6:20.
6. Psalm 118:24.
7. Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*, trans. Richard Howard (2000), 63.
8. Mosiah 26:39; see also Doctrine and Covenants 59:7.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 78:19.
10. Alma 26:35.
11. See Revelation 7:17.
12. See Matthew 11:28–30.
13. See Psalm 24:4.
14. Mosiah 16:8; see also 1 Corinthians 15:54.