

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS • NOVEMBER 2014

# Liahona



## General Conference Addresses

**Elders Gavarret, Godoy,  
Martinez, and Wong  
Deliver Talks in Their  
Native Languages**



Christ among the Lepers, by J. Kirk Richards

*Through Jesus Christ, "the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them" (Matthew 11:5).*

# Contents November 2014

Volume 38 • Number 11

## SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

- 4 Welcome to Conference  
*President Thomas S. Monson*
- 6 The Reason for Our Hope  
*President Boyd K. Packer*
- 9 Which Way Do You Face?  
*Elder Lynn G. Robbins*
- 12 The Sacrament—a Renewal for the Soul  
*Cheryl A. Esplin*
- 14 Rescue in Unity  
*Elder Chi Hong (Sam) Wong*
- 16 Free Forever, to Act for Themselves  
*Elder D. Todd Christofferson*
- 20 Receiving a Testimony of Light and Truth  
*President Dieter F. Uchtdorf*

## SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

- 24 The Sustaining of Church Officers  
*President Henry B. Eyring*
- 25 Loving Others and Living with Differences  
*Elder Dallin H. Oaks*
- 28 Joseph Smith  
*Elder Neil L. Andersen*
- 32 Parents: The Prime Gospel Teachers of Their Children  
*Tad R. Callister*
- 34 Approaching the Throne of God with Confidence  
*Elder Jörg Klebingat*
- 37 Yes, Lord, I Will Follow Thee  
*Elder Eduardo Gavarret*
- 40 Are We Not All Beggars?  
*Elder Jeffrey R. Holland*
- 43 Finding Lasting Peace and Building Eternal Families  
*Elder L. Tom Perry*

## PRIESTHOOD SESSION

- 46 Choose Wisely  
*Elder Quentin L. Cook*
- 50 I Know These Things of Myself  
*Elder Craig C. Christensen*
- 53 The Law of the Fast: A Personal Responsibility to Care for the Poor and Needy  
*Bishop Dean M. Davies*
- 56 “Lord, Is It I?”  
*President Dieter F. Uchtdorf*

- 59 The Preparatory Priesthood  
*President Henry B. Eyring*
- 67 Guided Safely Home  
*President Thomas S. Monson*

## SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

- 70 Continuing Revelation  
*President Henry B. Eyring*
- 74 Sustaining the Prophets  
*Elder Russell M. Nelson*
- 77 Live according to the Words of the Prophets  
*Carol F. McConkie*
- 80 Eternal Life—to Know Our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ  
*Elder Robert D. Hales*
- 83 The Sacrament and the Atonement  
*Elder James J. Hamula*
- 86 Ponder the Path of Thy Feet  
*President Thomas S. Monson*

## SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

- 89 Stay in the Boat and Hold On!  
*Elder M. Russell Ballard*
- 92 Make the Exercise of Faith Your First Priority  
*Elder Richard G. Scott*
- 96 The Lord Has a Plan for Us!  
*Elder Carlos A. Godoy*
- 99 The Book  
*Elder Allan F. Packer*
- 102 Our Personal Ministries  
*Elder Hugo E. Martinez*
- 104 Trifle Not with Sacred Things  
*Elder Larry S. Kacher*
- 107 Come and See  
*Elder David A. Bednar*
- 110 Until We Meet Again  
*President Thomas S. Monson*

## GENERAL WOMEN'S SESSION

- 111 Prepared in a Manner That Never Had Been Known  
*Linda K. Burton*
- 114 Covenant Daughters of God  
*Jean A. Stevens*
- 117 Sharing Your Light  
*Neill F. Marriott*
- 120 Living the Gospel Joyful  
*President Dieter F. Uchtdorf*
  
- 64 General Authorities and General Officers of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
- 124 Conference Story Index
- 125 News of the Church



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# Summary for the 184th Semiannual General Conference

## **SATURDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 4, 2014, GENERAL SESSION**

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.  
Conducting: President Henry B. Eyring.  
Invocation: Bonnie L. Oscarson.  
Benediction: Elder Bradley D. Foster.  
Music by the Tabernacle Choir; Mack Wilberg and Ryan Murphy, directors; Richard Elliott and Andrew Unsworth, organists: “The Morning Breaks,” *Hymns*, no. 1; “High on the Mountain Top,” *Hymns*, no. 5, arr. Wilberg, unpublished; “Beautiful Zion, Built Above,” *Hymns*, no. 44, arr. Wilberg, unpublished; “Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah,” *Hymns*, no. 83; “If I Listen with My Heart,” DeFord, arr. Murphy, unpublished; “From All That Dwell below the Skies,” *Hymns*, no. 90, arr. Wilberg, unpublished.

## **SATURDAY AFTERNOON, OCTOBER 4, 2014, GENERAL SESSION**

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.  
Conducting: President Dieter F. Uchtdorf.  
Invocation: Elder Wilford W. Andersen.  
Benediction: Elder Edward Dube.  
Music by a combined choir from stakes in Tooele, Grantsville, and Stansbury Park, Utah; Hollie Bevan, director; Linda Margetts, organist: “Arise, O God, and Shine,” *Hymns*, no. 265, arr. Wilberg, pub. by Oxford; “I Know That My Redeemer Lives,” *Hymns*, no. 136, arr. Huff, unpublished; “Redeemer of Israel,” *Hymns*, no. 6; “Abide with Me; ’Tis Eventide,” *Hymns*, no. 165, arr. Gates, pub. by Jackman.

## **SATURDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 4, 2014, PRIESTHOOD SESSION**

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.  
Conducting: President Henry B. Eyring.  
Invocation: Elder Bruce A. Carlson.  
Benediction: Elder James B. Martino.  
Music by a priesthood choir from the Provo Missionary Training Center; Ryan Eggett and Elmo Keck, directors; Clay Christiansen, organist: “Rise Up, O Men of God,” *Hymns*, no. 324, arr. Wilberg, unpublished; Missionary Medley: “I Hope They Call Me on a Mission,” *Children’s Songbook*, 169; “I Will Be Valiant,” *Children’s Songbook*, 162; “We’ll Bring the World His Truth,” *Children’s Songbook*, 172; “Called to Serve,” *Children’s Songbook*, 174, arr. Evans and Eggett, unpublished; “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet,” *Hymns*,

no. 19; “Ye Elders of Israel,” *Hymns*, no. 319, arr. Spiel, unpublished.

## **SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 5, 2014, GENERAL SESSION**

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.  
Conducting: President Dieter F. Uchtdorf.  
Invocation: Elder Don R. Clarke.  
Benediction: Rosemary M. Wixom.  
Music by the Tabernacle Choir; Mack Wilberg, director; Andrew Unsworth and Clay Christiansen, organists: “Sing Praise to Him,” *Hymns*, no. 70; “Praise the Lord with Heart and Voice,” *Hymns*, no. 73; “Praise to the Man,” *Hymns*, no. 27, arr. Wilberg, unpublished; “Come, Ye Children of the Lord,” *Hymns*, no. 58; “Softly and Tenderly,” Thompson, arr. Wilberg, unpublished; “How Firm a Foundation,” *Hymns*, no. 85, arr. Wilberg, unpublished.

## **SUNDAY AFTERNOON, OCTOBER 5, 2014, GENERAL SESSION**

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.  
Conducting: President Henry B. Eyring.  
Invocation: Elder David F. Evans.  
Benediction: John S. Tanner.  
Music by the Tabernacle Choir; Mack Wilberg and Ryan Murphy, directors; Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts, organists: “Lo, the Mighty God Appearing!” *Hymns*, no. 55, arr. Murphy, unpublished; “Count Your Blessings,” *Hymns*, no. 241; “I Am a Child of God,” *Hymns*, no. 301, arr. Murphy, unpublished; “We Ever Pray for Thee,” *Hymns*, no. 23, arr. Wilberg, unpublished.

## **SATURDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 27, 2014, GENERAL WOMEN’S SESSION**

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.  
Conducting: Rosemary M. Wixom.  
Invocation: Dorah Mkhabela.  
Benediction: Amy Caroline White.  
Music by a combined Primary, Young Women, and Relief Society choir from stakes in Magna, Hunter, and Taylorsville, Utah; Erin Pike Tall, director; Linda Margetts, organist: “On This Day of Joy and Gladness,” *Hymns*, no. 64, arr. Tall and Margetts, unpublished; “I Love to See the Temple,” *Children’s Songbook*, 95, performed by a children’s choir from Seoul, Korea, arr. Zabriskie, unpublished; Medley: “I Know

That My Savior Loves Me,” Bell and Creamer; “I Know That My Redeemer Lives,” *Hymns*, no. 136, arr. Tall and Margetts, unpublished; “I Am a Child of God,” *Children’s Songbook*, 2, arr. Zabriskie, unpublished; “Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise,” *Hymns*, no. 41, arr. Ward, unpublished.

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**SPEAKER INDEX**

Andersen, Neil L., 28  
Ballard, M. Russell, 89  
Bednar, David A., 107  
Burton, Linda K., 111  
Callister, Tad R., 32  
Christensen, Craig C., 50  
Christofferson, D. Todd, 16  
Cook, Quentin L., 46  
Davies, Dean M., 53  
Eyring, Cheryl A., 12  
Eyring, Henry B., 24, 59, 70  
Gavarret, Eduardo, 37  
Godoy, Carlos A., 96  
Hales, Robert D., 80  
Hamula, James J., 83  
Holland, Jeffrey R., 40  
Kacher, Larry S., 104  
Klebingat, Jörg, 34  
Marriott, Neill F., 117  
Martinez, Hugo E., 102  
McConkie, Carol F., 77  
Monson, Thomas S., 4, 67, 86, 110  
Nelson, Russell M., 74  
Oaks, Dallin H., 25  
Packer, Allan F., 99  
Packer, Boyd K., 6  
Perry, L. Tom, 43  
Robbins, Lynn G., 9  
Scott, Richard G., 92  
Stevens, Jean A., 114  
Uchtdorf, Dieter F., 20, 56, 120  
Wong, Chi Hong (Sam), 14

**TOPIC INDEX**

Aaronic Priesthood, 53, 59  
Accountability, 16  
Activation, 14  
Adversity, 89, 110  
Agency, 16, 46, 86, 92, 96, 104  
Apostasy, 9, 89  
Atonement, 6, 12, 16, 34, 83, 92, 107, 117  
Baptism, 114  
Change, 34, 56  
Church organization, 74  
Commandments, 120  
Contention, 25  
Conversion, 37, 56, 104  
Councils, 14  
Courage, 9  
Covenants, 114  
Discipleship, 40, 46, 56, 86, 102, 110  
Doubt, 104  
Example, 32, 67, 86, 104  
Faith, 14, 50, 77, 92  
Family, 32, 43, 92, 99, 117  
Family history, 99  
Family home evening, 92  
Fasting, 40, 53  
Fatherhood, 43  
Forgiveness, 6, 12, 34  
General conference, 4, 110  
Goals, 46  
God the Father, 20, 34, 80, 120  
Holy Ghost, 70, 80, 104  
Hope, 6  
Humility, 56  
Jesus Christ, 6, 9, 12, 14, 16, 20, 25, 37, 43, 46, 67, 77, 80, 83, 86, 92, 102, 107, 117  
Joseph Smith, 6, 9, 28, 50, 53, 70, 80, 96  
Justice, 16  
Kindness, 25, 110  
Leadership, 74  
Light, 20, 117  
Love, 25, 80, 102, 120  
Marriage, 46, 114  
Mercy, 6, 16  
Missionary work, 4, 37, 107  
Motherhood, 43  
Obedience, 34, 37, 86, 111  
Patriarchal blessings, 96  
Peer pressure, 9  
Perspective, 56, 96  
Physical fitness, 34  
Plan of salvation, 16, 86, 96  
Prayer, 20, 32, 40, 92  
Preparation, 59, 111  
Pride, 56  
Priesthood, 67  
Prophets, 9, 70, 74, 77, 89  
Repentance, 16, 34  
Respect, 25  
Restoration, 28  
Revelation, 70, 77, 111  
Righteousness, 46, 67  
Sacrament, 12, 83  
Scripture study, 20, 50, 89, 92  
Self-reliance, 53  
Service, 53, 59, 102, 110, 120  
Spirituality, 34  
Teaching, 32  
Temples, 4, 111, 114, 117  
Temple work, 92, 99  
Temptation, 67, 86  
Testimony, 6, 20, 28, 50, 80, 104  
Truth, 20, 25, 107  
Unity, 14, 80  
Welfare, 40, 53  
Wisdom, 46  
Worthiness, 67



By President Thomas S. Monson

# Welcome to Conference

*As we listen, may our hearts be touched and our faith increased.*

My brothers and sisters, how pleased I am to welcome you to this great world conference. We are gathered together in locations around the world to listen to and learn from the brethren and sisters whom we have sustained as General Authorities and general officers of the Church. They have sought heaven's help concerning the messages which they will present, and they have felt inspiration regarding what will be said.

This conference marks the 90-year anniversary of radio broadcasts of general conference. During the October conference of 1924, the sessions were broadcast on the radio for the first time through Church-owned KSL. This conference also marks the 65-year anniversary of television broadcasts of conference. At the general conference held in October 1949, the sessions were first televised throughout the Salt Lake area over KSL television.

We acknowledge the blessings of modern media in allowing millions of members of the Church to watch or listen to general conference. The sessions of this weekend are being

broadcast via television, radio, cable, satellite transmission, and the Internet, including on mobile devices.

During the past six months since we last met, one new temple has been dedicated and one rededicated. In May, President Dieter F. Uchtdorf dedicated the Fort Lauderdale Florida Temple. A wonderful youth cultural celebration was presented the day prior to the dedication. The following day, on Sunday, May 4, the temple was dedicated in three sessions.

Just two weeks ago it was my privilege to rededicate the Ogden Utah Temple, originally dedicated in 1972 by President Joseph Fielding Smith. A grand cultural celebration took place the day before the rededication, with so many youth participating that two separate performances were presented, with a different cast for each. In all, 16,000 youth participated. The rededication services took place the following day, with many of the Brethren participating, along with the auxiliary leaders and the temple president, his counselors, and their wives.

Our temple building continues in earnest. Next month the new Phoenix



Arizona Temple will be dedicated, and next year, in 2015, we anticipate dedicating or rededicating at least five temples, with more possible, depending on completion.

As I mentioned in April, when all the previously announced temples are constructed and dedicated, we will have 170 operating temples throughout the world. Because we are concentrating our efforts on completing temples which were previously



announced, we are not at the present time announcing any new temples. However, in the future, as we identify needs and locate properties, announcements of additional temples will be made.

The Church continues to grow. We are now more than 15 million strong and increasing in numbers. Our missionary efforts are going forward unhindered. We have over 88,000 missionaries serving, sharing the gospel

message the world over. We reaffirm that missionary work is a priesthood duty, and we encourage all worthy and able young men to serve. We are very grateful for the young women who also serve. They make a significant contribution, although they are not under the same mandate to serve as are the young men.

Now I invite you to give your attention to the brethren and sisters who will participate today and tomorrow

in our conference sessions. All who have been asked to speak feel a great responsibility in doing so. As we listen, may our hearts be touched and our faith increased, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

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**By President Boyd K. Packer**  
President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# The Reason for Our Hope

*A testimony of the hope of redemption is something which cannot be measured or counted. Jesus Christ is the source of that hope.*

Several years ago, Sister Packer and I went to Oxford University. We were looking for the records of my seventh great-grandfather. The head of Christ's College at Oxford, Dr. Poppelwell, was kind enough to have the college archivist bring the records. There in the year 1583 we found my ancestor's name, John Packer.

The following year we returned to Oxford to present a beautifully bound set of the standard works for the library at Christ's College. It seemed a bit awkward for Dr. Poppelwell. Perhaps he thought we were not really Christians. So he called for the college chaplain to receive the books.

Before handing the scriptures to the chaplain, I opened the Topical Guide and showed him one subject: 18 pages, very fine print, single-spaced, listing references to the subject of "Jesus Christ." It is one of the most comprehensive compilations of scriptural references on the subject of the Savior that has ever been assembled in the history of the world—a testimony from the Old and New Testaments, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price.

"However you follow these references," I told him, "side to side, up and down, book to book, subject after subject—you will find that they are a consistent, harmonious witness to the divinity of the mission of the Lord Jesus Christ—His birth, His life, His teachings, His Crucifixion, His Resurrection, and His Atonement."

After I shared with the chaplain some of the teachings of the Savior, the atmosphere changed, and he gave us a tour of the facility, including a recent excavation revealing murals which dated to Roman days.

Among the references listed in the Topical Guide is this one from the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ: "We preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins" (2 Nephi 25:26).

In His own words, the Savior has declared, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

And from the Book of Mormon, He declares: "Behold, I am he who was

prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. Behold, I am Jesus Christ. . . . In me shall all mankind have life, and that eternally, even they who shall believe on my name; and they shall become my sons and my daughters" (Ether 3:14).

There are many, many other references throughout the standard works which proclaim the divine role of Jesus Christ as the Redeemer of all who have ever been or ever will be born into mortality.

Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ we are all redeemed from the Fall of man, which occurred when Adam and Eve partook of the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden, as stated in 1 Corinthians: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22).

The Book of Mormon teaches, "For it is expedient that an atonement should be made . . . , or else all mankind must unavoidably perish; yea, all are hardened; yea, all are fallen and are lost, and must perish except it be through the atonement . . . an infinite and eternal sacrifice" (Alma 34:9–10).

We may not live perfect lives, and there are penalties for our mistakes, but before we came to earth, we agreed to be subject to His laws and to accept the punishment for violating those laws.

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:23–24).

The Savior wrought the Atonement, which provides a way for us to become clean. Jesus Christ is the resurrected Christ. We worship and recognize Him for the pain He suffered for us collectively and for the pain He endured for each of us individually, both in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross. He bore all with great humility



and with an eternal understanding of His divine role and purpose.

Those who will repent and forsake sin will find that His merciful arm is outstretched still. Those who listen to and heed His words and the words of His chosen servants will find peace and understanding even in the midst of great heartache and sorrow. The result of His sacrifice is to free us from the effects of sin, that all may have guilt erased and feel hope.

Had He not accomplished the Atonement, there would be no redemption. It would be a difficult world to live in if we could never be forgiven for our mistakes, if we could never purify ourselves and move on.

The mercy and grace of Jesus Christ are not limited to those who commit sins either of commission or omission, but they encompass the promise of everlasting peace to all who will accept and follow Him and His teachings. His mercy is the mighty healer, even to the wounded innocent.

I recently received a letter from a woman who reported having endured great suffering in her life. A terrible wrong, which she did not identify but alluded to, had been committed against her. She admitted that she struggled with feelings of great bitterness. In her anger, she mentally cried out, "Someone must pay for this terrible wrong." In this extreme moment of

sorrow and questioning, she wrote that there came into her heart an immediate reply: "Someone already has paid."

If we are not aware of what the Savior's sacrifice can do for us, we may go through life carrying regrets that we have done something that was not right or offended someone. The guilt that accompanies mistakes can be washed away. If we seek to understand His Atonement, we will come to a deep reverence for the Lord Jesus Christ, His earthly ministry, and His divine mission as our Savior.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was restored to move throughout the world the knowledge of the life and teachings of the Savior.





**Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands**

This great conference is being broadcast in 94 languages by satellite to 102 countries but is also available on the Internet to every nation where the Church is present. We have over 3,000 stakes. Our full-time missionary force exceeds 88,000, and total Church membership has passed 15 million. These numbers serve as evidence that the “stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands” continues to roll forth and will eventually fill “the whole earth” (D&C 65:2).

But no matter how large the organization of the Church becomes or how many millions of members join our ranks, no matter how many continents and countries our missionaries enter or how many different languages we speak, the true success of the gospel of Jesus Christ will be measured by the spiritual strength of its individual members. We need the strength of conviction that is found in the heart of every loyal disciple of Christ.

A testimony of the hope of redemption is something which cannot be measured or counted. Jesus Christ is the source of that hope.

We seek to strengthen the testimonies of the young and old, the

married and single. We need to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ to men, women, and children, those of every race and nationality, the rich and the poor. We need the recent convert and those among our numbers descended from the pioneers. We need to seek out those who have strayed and assist them to return to the fold. We need everyone’s wisdom and insight and spiritual strength. Each member of this Church as an individual is a critical element of the body of the Church.

“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body. . . .

“For the body is not one member, but many” (1 Corinthians 12:12–14).

Each member serves as a testimony of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. We are at war with the forces of the adversary, and we need each and every one of us if we are going to succeed in the work the Savior has for us to do.

You might think, “What can I do? I am only one person.”

Certainly Joseph Smith felt very alone at times. He rose to greatness, but he

started as a 14-year-old boy who had a question: “Which of all the churches should I join?” (see Joseph Smith—History 1:10). Joseph’s faith and testimony of the Savior grew as ours must grow, “line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little” (2 Nephi 28:30; see also D&C 128:21). Joseph knelt to pray, and what marvelous things have come about as a result of that prayer and the First Vision.

As one of the Twelve Apostles, I bear witness of the Lord Jesus Christ. He lives. He is our Redeemer and our Savior. “Through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved” (Articles of Faith 1:3). He presides over this Church. He is no stranger to His servants. As we move into the future with quiet confidence, His Spirit will be with us. There is no end to His power to bless and direct the lives of those who seek truth and righteousness. I bear witness of Him in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

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By Elder Lynn G. Robbins  
Of the Presidency of the Seventy

## Which Way Do You Face?

*Trying to please others before pleasing God is inverting the first and second great commandments.*

“Which way do you face?” President Boyd K. Packer surprised me with this puzzling question while we were traveling together on my very first assignment as a new Seventy. Without an explanation to put the question in context, I was baffled. “A Seventy,” he continued, “does not represent the people to the prophet but the prophet to the people. Never forget which way you face!” It was a powerful lesson.

Trying to please others before pleasing God is inverting the *first and second great commandments* (see Matthew 22:37–39). It is forgetting which way we face. And yet, we have all made that mistake because of the fear of men. In Isaiah the Lord warns us, “Fear ye not the reproach of men” (Isaiah 51:7; see also 2 Nephi 8:7). In Lehi’s dream, this fear was triggered by the *finger of scorn* pointed from the great and spacious building, causing many to forget which way they faced and to leave the tree “ashamed” (see 1 Nephi 8:25–28).

This peer *pressure* tries to change a person’s attitudes, if not behavior, by making one feel guilty for giving offense. We seek respectful

coexistence with those who point fingers, but when this fear of men tempts us to condone sin, it becomes a “snare” according to the book of Proverbs (see Proverbs 29:25). The snare may be cleverly baited to appeal to our compassionate side to tolerate or even approve of something that has been condemned by God. For the weak of faith, it can be a major stumbling block. For example, some young missionaries carry this fear of men into

the mission field and fail to report the flagrant disobedience of a companion to their mission president because they don’t want to offend their wayward companion. Decisions of character are made by remembering the right order of the first and second great commandments (see Matthew 22:37–39). When these confused missionaries realize they are accountable to God and not to their companion, it should give them courage to do an *about-face*.

At the youthful age of 22, even Joseph Smith forgot which way he faced when he repeatedly importuned the Lord to allow Martin Harris to borrow the 116 manuscript pages. Perhaps Joseph wanted to show gratitude to Martin for his support. We know that Joseph was extremely anxious for other eyewitnesses to stand with him against the distressing falsehoods and lies being spread about him.

Whatever Joseph’s reasons were, or as justified as they may appear, the Lord did not excuse them and sharply rebuked him: “How oft you have transgressed . . . and have gone on in the persuasions of men. For, behold,



you should not have *feared* man more than God” (D&C 3:6–7; emphasis added). This poignant experience helped Joseph remember, forever after, which way he faced.

When people try to *save face* with men, they can unwittingly *lose face* with God. Thinking one can please God and at the same time condone the disobedience of men isn’t neutrality but duplicity, or being *two-faced* or trying to “serve two masters” (Matthew 6:24; 3 Nephi 13:24).

While it certainly takes courage to face perils, the true badge of courage is overcoming the fear of men. For example, Daniel’s prayers helped him face lions, but what made him lion-hearted was defying King Darius (see Daniel 6). That kind of courage is a gift of the Spirit to the *God-fearing* who have said their prayers. Queen Esther’s prayers also gave her that same courage to confront her husband, King Ahasuerus, knowing that she risked her life in doing so (see Esther 4:8–16).

Courage is not just one of the cardinal virtues, but as C. S. Lewis observed: “Courage is . . . the form of every virtue at the testing point. . . . Pilate was merciful till it became risky.”<sup>1</sup> King Herod was sorrowful at the request to behead John the Baptist but wanted to please “them which sat with him at meat” (Matthew 14:9). King Noah was ready to free Abinadi until peer pressure from his wicked priests caused him to waver (see Mosiah 17:11–12). King Saul disobeyed the word of the Lord by keeping the spoils of war because he “feared the people, and obeyed their voice” (1 Samuel 15:24). To appease rebellious Israel at the foot of Mount Sinai, Aaron crafted a golden calf, forgetting which way he faced (see Exodus 32). Many of the New Testament chief rulers “believed

on [the Lord]; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God” (John 12:42–43). The scriptures are full of such examples.

Now listen to some inspiring examples:

- First, Mormon: “Behold, I speak with boldness, having authority from God; and I *fear not* what man can do; for perfect love casteth out all fear” (Moroni 8:16; emphasis added).
- Nephi: “Wherefore, the things which are pleasing unto the world I do not write, but the things which are pleasing unto God and unto those who are not of the world” (1 Nephi 6:5).
- Captain Moroni: “Behold, I am Moroni, your chief captain. I seek not for power, but to pull it down. I seek not for honor of the world, but for the glory of my God, and the freedom and welfare of my country” (Alma 60:36).

Moroni had such great courage in remembering which way he faced that it was said of him, “If all men

had been, and were, and ever would be, like unto Moroni, behold, the very powers of hell would have been shaken forever; yea, the devil would never have power over the hearts of the children of men” (Alma 48:17).

Prophets through the ages have always come under attack by the finger of scorn. Why? According to the scriptures, it is because “the guilty taketh the truth to be hard, for it cutteth them to the very center” (1 Nephi 16:2), or as President Harold B. Lee observed, “The hit bird flutters!”<sup>2</sup> Their scornful reaction is, in reality, guilt trying to reassure itself, just as with Korihor, who finally admitted, “I always knew that there was a God” (Alma 30:52). Korihor was so convincing in his deception that he came to believe his own lie (see Alma 30:53).

The scornful often accuse prophets of not living in the 21st century or of being bigoted. They attempt to persuade or even pressure the Church into lowering God’s standards to the level of their own inappropriate behavior, which in the words of Elder Neal A. Maxwell, will “develop self-contentment instead of seeking self-improvement”<sup>3</sup> and repentance. Lowering the Lord’s standards to the level of a society’s inappropriate behavior is—apostasy. Many of the churches among the Nephites two centuries after the Savior’s visit to them began to “dumb down” the doctrine, borrowing a phrase from Elder Holland.<sup>4</sup>

As you listen to this passage from 4 Nephi, look for parallels in our day: “And it came to pass that when two hundred and ten years had passed away there were many churches in the land; yea, there were many churches which professed to know the Christ, and yet they did deny the more parts of his gospel, insomuch that they did receive all manner of wickedness,





and did administer that which was sacred unto him to whom it had been forbidden because of unworthiness” (4 Nephi 1:27).

Déjà vu in the latter days! Some members don’t realize they are falling into the same snare when they lobby for acceptance of local or ethnic “tradition[s] of their fathers” (D&C 93:39) that are not in harmony with the gospel culture. Still others, self-deceived and in self-denial, plead or demand that bishops lower the standard on temple recommends, school endorsements, or missionary applications. It isn’t easy being a bishop under that kind of pressure. However, like the Savior who cleansed the temple to defend its sanctity (see John 2:15–16), bishops today are called upon to boldly defend the temple standard. It was the Savior who said, “I will manifest myself to my people in mercy . . . if my people will keep my commandments, and do not pollute this holy house” (D&C 110:7–8).

The Savior, our great Exemplar, always faced His Father. He loved and served His fellowmen but said, “I receive not honour from men” (John 5:41). He wanted those He taught to follow Him, but He did not court their favor. When He performed an act of

charity, such as healing the sick, the gift often came with the request to “tell no man” (Matthew 8:4; Mark 7:36; Luke 5:14; 8:56). In part, this was to avoid the very fame which followed Him in spite of His efforts to eschew it (see Matthew 4:24). He condemned the Pharisees for doing good works only to be seen of men (see Matthew 6:5).

The Savior, the only perfect being who ever lived, was the most fearless. In His life, He was confronted by scores of accusers but never yielded to their finger of scorn. He is the only person who never once forgot which way He faced: “I do *always* those things that please [the Father]” (John 8:29; emphasis added), and “I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me” (John 5:30).

Between 3 Nephi chapter 11 and 3 Nephi chapter 28, the Savior used the title *Father* at least 150 times, making it very clear to the Nephites that He was there representing His Father. And from John chapters 14 through 17, the Savior refers to the Father at least 50 times. In every way possible, He was His Father’s perfect disciple. He was so perfect in representing His Father that to know the Savior was also to know the Father. To see the Son was to see the Father

(see John 14:9). To hear the Son was to hear the Father (see John 5:36). He had, in essence, become indistinguishable from His Father. His Father and He were one (see John 17:21–22). He flawlessly knew which way He faced.

May His inspiring example strengthen us against the pitfalls of flattery from without or of conceit from within. May it give us courage to never cower or fawn at the feet of intimidation. May it inspire us to go about doing good as anonymously as possible and not “aspire to the honors of men” (D&C 121:35). And may His incomparable example help us always remember *which* is “the first and great commandment” (Matthew 22:38). When others demand approval in defiance of God’s commandments, may we always remember whose disciples we are, and which way we face, is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, rev. ed. (1982), 137–38.
2. Harold B. Lee, in *Mine Errand from the Lord: Selections from the Sermons and Writings of Boyd K. Packer* (2008), 356.
3. Neal A. Maxwell, “Repentance,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 32.
4. Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Call to Be Christlike,” *Ensign*, June 2014, 33; *Liahona*, June 2014, 35.



**By Cheryl A. Esplin**  
Second Counselor in the Primary General Presidency

# The Sacrament— a Renewal for the Soul

*The Spirit heals and renews our souls. The promised blessing of the sacrament is that we will “always have his Spirit to be with [us].”*

A group of young women once asked me, “What do you wish you had known when you were our age?” If I were to answer that question now, I would include this thought: “I wish when I was your age I had understood the significance of the sacrament better than I did. I wish I had understood the sacrament in the way that Elder Jeffrey R. Holland described. He said, ‘One of the invitations inherent in the sacramental ordinance is that it be a truly spiritual experience, a holy communion, a renewal for the soul.’<sup>1</sup>”

How can the sacrament “be a truly spiritual experience, a holy communion,

a renewal for the soul” each week?

The sacrament becomes a spiritually strengthening experience when we listen to the sacrament prayers and recommit to our covenants. To do this, we must be willing to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup> Speaking of this promise, President Henry B. Eyring taught: “That means we must see ourselves as His. We will put Him first in our lives. We will want what He wants rather than what we want or what the world teaches us to want.”<sup>3</sup>

When we take the sacrament, we also covenant to “always remember”<sup>4</sup> Jesus Christ. On the night before He was crucified, Christ gathered His

Apostles around Him and instituted the sacrament. He broke bread, blessed it, and said, “Take, eat; this is in remembrance of my body which I give a ransom for you.”<sup>5</sup> Next He took a cup of wine, gave thanks, gave it to His Apostles to drink, and said, “This is in remembrance of my blood . . . , which is shed for as many as shall believe on my name.”<sup>6</sup>

Among the Nephites and again at the Restoration of His Church in the latter days, He repeated that we are to take the sacrament in remembrance of Him.<sup>7</sup>

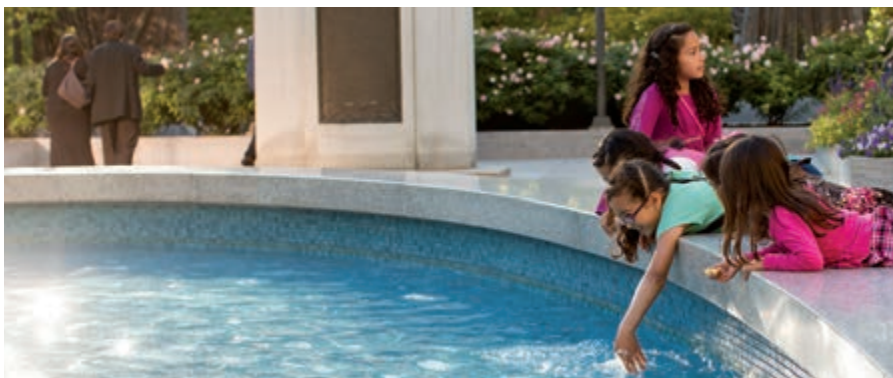
As we partake of the sacrament, we witness to God that we will remember His Son always, not just during the brief sacrament ordinance. This means that we will constantly look to the Savior’s example and teachings to guide our thoughts, our choices, and our acts.<sup>8</sup>

The sacrament prayer also reminds us that we must “keep his commandments.”<sup>9</sup>

Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments.”<sup>10</sup> The sacrament gives us an opportunity for introspection and an opportunity to turn our heart and will to God. Obedience to the commandments brings the power of the gospel into our lives and greater peace and spirituality.

The sacrament provides a time for a truly spiritual experience as we reflect upon the Savior’s redeeming and enabling power through His Atonement. A Young Women leader recently learned about the strength we receive as we strive to thoughtfully partake of the sacrament. Working to complete a requirement in Personal Progress, she set a goal to focus on the words in the sacrament hymns and prayers.

Each week, she conducted a self-evaluation during the sacrament. She



recalled mistakes she had made, and she committed to be better the next week. She was grateful to be able to make things right and be made clean. Looking back on the experience, she said, “I was acting on the repentance part of the Atonement.”

One Sunday after her self-evaluation, she began to feel gloomy and pessimistic. She could see that she was making the same errors over and over again, week to week. But then she had a distinct impression that she was neglecting a big part of the Atonement—Christ’s enabling power. She was forgetting all the times the Savior helped her be who she needed to be and serve beyond her own capacity.

With this in mind, she reflected again on the previous week. She said: “A feeling of joy broke through my melancholy as I noted that He had given me many opportunities and abilities. I noted with gratitude the ability I had to recognize my child’s need when it wasn’t obvious. I noted that on a day when I felt I could not pack in one more thing to do, I was able to offer strengthening words to a friend. I had shown patience in a circumstance that usually elicited the opposite from me.”

She concluded: “As I thanked God for the Savior’s enabling power in my life, I felt so much more optimistic toward the repentance process I was working through and I looked to the next week with renewed hope.”

Elder Melvin J. Ballard taught how the sacrament can be a healing and cleansing experience. He said:

“Who is there among us that does not wound his spirit by word, thought, or deed, from Sabbath to Sabbath? We do things for which we are sorry and desire to be forgiven. . . . The method to obtain forgiveness is . . . to repent



of our sins, to go to those against whom we have sinned or transgressed and obtain their forgiveness and then repair to the sacrament table where, if we have sincerely repented and put ourselves in proper condition, we shall be forgiven, and spiritual healing will come to our souls. . . .

“I am a witness,” Elder Ballard said, “that there is a spirit attending the administration of the sacrament that warms the soul from head to foot; you feel the wounds of the spirit being healed, and the load being lifted. Comfort and happiness come to the soul that is worthy and truly desirous of partaking of this spiritual food.”<sup>11</sup>

Our wounded souls can be healed and renewed not only because the bread and water remind us of the Savior’s sacrifice of His flesh and blood but because the emblems also remind us that He will always be our “bread of life”<sup>12</sup> and “living water.”<sup>13</sup>

After administering the sacrament to the Nephites, Jesus said:

“He that eateth this bread eateth of my body to his soul; and he that drinketh of this wine drinketh of my blood to his soul; and his soul shall never hunger nor thirst, but shall be filled.

“Now, when the multitude had all eaten and drunk, behold, they were filled with the Spirit.”<sup>14</sup>

With these words, Christ teaches us that the Spirit heals and renews our souls. The promised blessing of the sacrament is that we will “always have his Spirit to be with [us].”<sup>15</sup>

When I partake of the sacrament, I sometimes picture in my mind a painting that depicts the resurrected Savior with His arms outstretched, as if He is ready to receive us into His loving embrace. I love this painting. When I think about it during the administration of the sacrament, my soul is lifted as I can almost hear the Savior’s words: “Behold, mine arm of mercy is extended towards you, and whosoever will come, him will I receive; and blessed are those who come unto me.”<sup>16</sup>

Aaronic Priesthood holders represent the Savior when they prepare, bless, and pass the sacrament. As a priesthood holder extends his arm to offer us the sacred emblems, it is as if the Savior Himself were extending His arm of mercy, inviting each one of us to partake of the precious gifts of love made available through His atoning sacrifice—gifts of repentance, forgiveness, comfort, and hope.<sup>17</sup>

The more we ponder the significance of the sacrament, the more sacred and meaningful it becomes to us. This was what a 96-year-old father expressed when his son asked, “Dad, why do you go to church? You can’t see, you can’t hear, it’s hard for you to get around. Why do you go to church?” The father replied, “It’s the sacrament. I go to partake of the sacrament.”

May each of us come to sacrament meeting prepared to have “a truly spiritual experience, a holy communion, a renewal for [our] soul.”<sup>18</sup>

I know that our Heavenly Father and our Savior live. I am grateful for the opportunity the sacrament provides to feel of Their love and to partake of the Spirit. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant: The Messianic Message of the Book of Mormon* (1997), 283.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:77.
3. Henry B. Eyring, “That We May Be One,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 67.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 20:77, 79.
5. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 26:22 (in Matthew 26:26, footnote c, and in the Bible appendix).
6. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 26:24 (in the Bible appendix); see also Matthew 26:26–28; Mark 14:22–24; Luke 22:15–20.
7. See 3 Nephi 18:7, 11; Doctrine and Covenants 20:75.
8. See “How Do I Keep My Covenant to Always Remember the Savior?” *Come, Follow Me* Sunday School curriculum; lds.org/youth/learn/ss/ordinances-covenants/remember; *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* (2004), 147–48.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 20:77.
10. John 14:15.
11. Melvin J. Ballard, in Melvin R. Ballard, *Melvin J. Ballard: Crusader for Righteousness* (1966), 132–33.
12. John 6:48.
13. John 4:10.
14. 3 Nephi 20:8–9.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 20:77.
16. 3 Nephi 9:14.
17. I’m grateful to Ann Madsen for her insight on this principle.
18. Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant*, 283.



By Elder Chi Hong (Sam) Wong  
Of the Seventy

## Rescue in Unity

*In order to assist the Savior, we have to work together in unity and in harmony. Everyone, every position, and every calling is important.*

We often hear President Thomas S. Monson say, “Reach out to rescue.”<sup>1</sup> An account in the New Testament comes to my mind. It is a perfect illustration of how members and missionaries can work together in unity through ward councils to reach out and rescue. The story is found in Mark 2:1–5. I find that the experiences Jesus used to teach us certain doctrines or principles are always most inspiring and easy to understand.

One of the characters in this account is a man with palsy, someone who was not able to move without assistance. This man could only stay home, waiting for rescue.

In our day, it might happen like this. Four people were fulfilling an assignment from their bishop to visit, at his

home, a man who was sick with palsy. I can visualize one of them coming from the Relief Society, one from the elders quorum, one from the Aaronic Priesthood, and, last but not least, one full-time missionary. In the most recent ward council, after counseling together about the needs in the ward, the bishop had given out “rescuing” assignments. These four were assigned to help this man suffering with palsy. They could not wait for him to come to church by himself. They had to go to his home and visit him. They had to seek him out, and so they went. The man was being brought to Jesus.

“And they [came] unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four” (Mark 2:3).

However, the room was too crowded. They could not get in







through the door. I am sure they tried everything they could think of, but they just could not get through. Things did not happen as smoothly as planned. There were obstacles along their way of “rescue.” But they did not give up. They did not leave the man with palsy by the door. They counseled together on what to do next—how they could bring the man unto Jesus Christ for healing. The work to assist Jesus Christ in saving souls, at least for them, was never too demanding. They came up with a plan—not an easy one, but they acted on it.

“And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay” (Mark 2:4).

They brought him up to the roof. Assuming there was no outside staircase for them to climb, it would have taken them quite some time to get everyone onto the roof. I think it might have happened this way: the young man from his ward would have climbed up to the roof first. As he was young and full of energy, it would not have

been too difficult for him. His home teaching companion from the elders quorum and the tall and strong full-time missionary would have pushed really hard from below. The Relief Society sister would have reminded them to be careful and given them words of encouragement. The men would then uncover the roof while the sister continued to comfort the man as he waited to be healed—to be able to move by himself and to be free.

This rescue assignment needed everyone working together. At the crucial moment, it would take careful coordination to lower the man with palsy from the roof. The four people would have to work in unity and in harmony. There could not be any discord among the four. They would have to lower the man with palsy at the same pace. If someone released the rope faster than the other three, the man would fall out of his bed. He could not hold on by himself due to his weakened condition.

In order to assist the Savior, we have to work together in unity and in harmony. Everyone, every position, and every calling is important. We have to be united in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Finally, the sick, palsied man was laid before Jesus. “When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee” (Mark 2:5). Jesus showed mercy on him and healed him—not only physically but also spiritually: “Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.” Isn’t that wonderful? Wouldn’t we like that to happen to all of us too? Certainly I would.

Do we know anyone in our life who is afflicted with spiritual palsy, someone who just cannot come back to the Church by himself or herself? He or she could be one of our children, one of our parents, a spouse, or a friend.

With so many more full-time missionaries now available in each Church unit, it will be wise for bishops and branch presidents to make better use of their ward and branch councils. The bishop can invite each member of the ward council to come with a list of names of those who may need assistance. Members of the ward council will counsel together carefully on how they might best help. Bishops will listen attentively to the ideas and make assignments.

Full-time missionaries are great resources to the wards in these rescue

efforts. They are young and full of energy. They love to have a list of specific names of people to work with. They enjoy working together with ward members. They know these are great finding opportunities for them. They are devoted to establishing the Lord's kingdom. They have a strong testimony that they will become more Christlike as they participate in these rescuing efforts.

In conclusion, may I share with you one more hidden treasure found in this scripture account. It is in verse 5: "When Jesus saw *their* faith" (emphasis added). I had not noticed this in the past—*their* faith. Our combined faith will also affect the well-being of others.

Who were those people that Jesus mentioned? They could well include the four who carried the man with palsy, the man himself, the people who had prayed for him, and all those who were there listening to the preaching of Jesus and cheering quietly in their hearts for the soon-to-come miracle. They could also include a spouse, a parent, a son or a daughter, a missionary, a quorum president, a Relief Society president, a bishop, and a faraway friend. We can all help one another. We should always be anxiously engaged in seeking to rescue those in need.

I testify that Jesus Christ is a God of miracles. Jesus Christ loves us all and has the power to save and heal, both physically and spiritually. When we assist Him in His mission of saving souls, we too will be rescued in the process. I so testify in His holy name, even Jesus Christ, amen. ■

*This address was delivered in Cantonese.*

#### NOTE

1. See, for example, Thomas S. Monson, "Our Responsibility to Rescue," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Oct. 2013, 5.



**By Elder D. Todd Christofferson**  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

## Free Forever, to Act for Themselves

*It is God's will that we be free men and women enabled to rise to our full potential both temporally and spiritually.*

William Shakespeare's play *The Life of King Henry V* includes a nighttime scene in the camp of English soldiers at Agincourt just before their battle with the French army. In the dim light and partially disguised, King Henry wanders unrecognized among his soldiers. He talks with them, trying to gauge the morale of his badly outnumbered troops, and because they do not realize who he is, they are candid in their comments. In one exchange they philosophize about who bears responsibility for what happens to men in battle—the king or each individual soldier.

At one point King Henry declares, "Methinks I could not die any where so contented as in the king's company; his cause being just."

Michael Williams retorts, "That's more than we know."

His companion agrees, "Ay, or more than we should seek after; for we know enough, if we know we are the king's subjects: if his cause be wrong, our obedience to the king wipes the crime of it out of us."

Williams adds, "If the cause be not good, the king himself hath a heavy reckoning to make."

Not surprisingly, King Henry disagrees. "Every subject's duty is the king's; but every subject's soul is his own."<sup>1</sup>

Shakespeare does not attempt to resolve this debate in the play, and in one form or another it is a debate that continues down to our own time—who bears responsibility for what happens in our lives?

When things turn bad, there is a tendency to blame others or even God. Sometimes a sense of entitlement arises, and individuals or groups try to shift responsibility for their welfare to other people or to governments. In spiritual matters some suppose that men and women need not strive for personal righteousness—because God loves and saves us "just as we are."

But God intends that His children should act according to the moral agency He has given them, "that every man may be accountable for his own sins in the day of judgment."<sup>2</sup> It is His plan and His will that we have the principal decision-making role in our own life's drama. God will not live our lives for us nor control us as if we were His puppets, as Lucifer once proposed to do. Nor will His

prophets accept the role of “puppet master” in God’s place. Brigham Young stated: “I do not wish any Latter Day Saint in this world, nor in heaven, to be satisfied with anything I do, unless the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ,—the spirit of revelation, makes them satisfied. I wish them to know for themselves and understand for themselves.”<sup>3</sup>

So God does not save us “just as we are,” first, because “just as we are” we are unclean, and “no unclean thing can dwell . . . in his presence; for, in the language of Adam, Man of Holiness is his name, and the name of his Only Begotten is the Son of Man [of Holiness].”<sup>4</sup> And second, God will not act to make us something we do not choose by our actions to become. Truly He loves us, and because He loves us, He neither compels nor abandons us. Rather He helps and guides us. Indeed, the real manifestation of God’s love is His commandments.

We should (and we do) rejoice in the God-ordained plan that permits us to make choices to act for ourselves and experience the consequences, or as the scriptures express it, to “taste the bitter, that [we] may know to prize the good.”<sup>5</sup> We are forever grateful that the Savior’s Atonement overcame original sin so that we can be born into this world yet not be punished for Adam’s transgression.<sup>6</sup> Having been thus redeemed from the Fall, we begin life innocent before God and “become free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for [ourselves] and not to be acted upon.”<sup>7</sup> We can choose to become the kind of person that we will, and with God’s help, that can be even as He is.<sup>8</sup>

The gospel of Jesus Christ opens the path to what we may become. Through the Atonement of Jesus



Christ and His grace, our failures to live the celestial law perfectly and consistently in mortality can be erased and we are enabled to develop a Christlike character. Justice demands, however, that none of this happen without our willing agreement and participation. It has ever been so. Our very presence on earth as physical beings is the consequence of a choice each of us made to participate in our Father’s plan.<sup>9</sup> Thus, salvation is certainly not the result of divine whim, but neither does it happen by divine will alone.<sup>10</sup>

Justice is an essential attribute of God. We can have faith in God because He is perfectly trustworthy. The scriptures teach us that “God doth not walk in crooked paths, neither doth he turn to the right hand nor to the left, neither doth he vary from that which he hath said, therefore his paths are straight, and his course is one eternal round”<sup>11</sup> and that “God is no respecter of persons.”<sup>12</sup> We rely on the divine quality of justice for faith, confidence, and hope.

But as a consequence of being perfectly just, there are some things God cannot do. He cannot be arbitrary in saving some and banishing others. He “cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance.”<sup>13</sup> He cannot allow mercy to rob justice.<sup>14</sup>

It is compelling evidence of His justice that God has forged the companion principle of mercy. It is because He is just that He devised the means for mercy to play its indispensable role in our eternal destiny. So now, “justice exerciseth all his demands, and also mercy claimeth all which is her own.”<sup>15</sup>

We know that it is “the sufferings and death of him who did no sin, in whom [the Father] wast well pleased; . . . the blood of [His] Son which was shed”<sup>16</sup> that satisfies the demands of justice, extends mercy, and redeems us.<sup>17</sup> Even so, “*according to justice*, the plan of redemption could not be brought about, *only on conditions of repentance*.”<sup>18</sup> It is the requirement of and the opportunity for repentance that permits mercy to



perform its labor without trampling justice.

Christ died not to save indiscriminately but to offer repentance. We rely “wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save”<sup>19</sup> in the process of repentance, but acting to repent is a self-willed change. So by making repentance a condition for receiving the gift of grace, God enables us to retain responsibility for ourselves. Repentance respects and sustains our moral agency: “And thus mercy can satisfy the demands of justice, and encircles them in the arms of safety, while he that exercises no faith unto repentance is exposed to the whole law of the demands of justice; therefore only unto him that has faith unto repentance is brought about the great and eternal plan of redemption.”<sup>20</sup>

Misunderstanding God’s justice and mercy is one thing; denying God’s existence or supremacy is another, but either will result in our achieving less—sometimes far less—than our full, divine potential. A God who makes no demands is the functional equivalent of a God who does not exist. A world without God, the living God who establishes moral laws to govern and perfect His children, is also a world without ultimate truth

or justice. It is a world where moral relativism reigns supreme.

Relativism means each person is his or her own highest authority. Of course, it is not just those who deny God that subscribe to this philosophy. Some who believe in God still believe that they themselves, individually, decide what is right and wrong. One young adult expressed it this way: “I don’t think I could say that Hinduism is wrong or Catholicism is wrong or being Episcopalian is wrong—I think it just depends on what you believe. . . . I don’t think that there’s a right and wrong.”<sup>21</sup> Another, asked about the basis for his religious beliefs, replied, “Myself—it really comes down to that. I mean, how could there be authority to what you believe?”<sup>22</sup>

To those who believe anything or everything could be true, the declaration of objective, fixed, and universal truth feels like coercion—“I shouldn’t be forced to believe something is true that I don’t like.” But that does not change reality. Resenting the law of gravity won’t keep a person from falling if he steps off a cliff. The same is true for eternal law and justice. Freedom comes not from resisting it but from applying it. That is fundamental to God’s own power. If it were not for the reality of fixed

and immutable truths, the gift of agency would be meaningless since we would never be able to foresee and intend the consequences of our actions. As Lehi expressed it: “If ye shall say there is no law, ye shall also say there is no sin. If ye shall say there is no sin, ye shall also say there is no righteousness. And if there be no righteousness there be no happiness. And if there be no righteousness nor happiness there be no punishment nor misery. And if these things are not there is no God. And if there is no God we are not, neither the earth; for there could have been no creation of things, neither to act nor to be acted upon; wherefore, all things must have vanished away.”<sup>23</sup>

In matters both temporal and spiritual, the opportunity to assume personal responsibility is a God-given gift without which we cannot realize our full potential as daughters and sons of God. Personal accountability becomes both a right and a duty that we must constantly defend; it has been under assault since before the Creation. We must defend accountability against persons and programs that would (sometimes with the best of intentions) make us dependent. And we must defend it against our own inclinations to avoid the work that is

required to cultivate talents, abilities, and Christlike character.

The story is told of a man who simply would not work. He wanted to be taken care of in every need. To his way of thinking, the Church or the government, or both, owed him a living because he had paid his taxes and his tithing. He had nothing to eat but refused to work to care for himself. Out of desperation and disgust, those who had tried to help him decided that since he would not lift a finger to sustain himself, they might as well just take him to the cemetery and let him pass on. On the way to the cemetery, one man said, “We can’t do this. I have some corn I will give him.”

So they explained this to the man, and he asked, “Have the husks been removed?”

They responded, “No.”

“Well, then,” he said, “drive on.”

It is God’s will that we be free men

and women enabled to rise to our full potential both temporally and spiritually, that we be free from the humiliating limitations of poverty and the bondage of sin, that we enjoy self-respect and independence, that we be prepared in all things to join Him in His celestial kingdom.

I am under no illusion that this can be achieved by our own efforts alone without His very substantial and constant help. “We know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do.”<sup>24</sup> And we do not need to achieve some minimum level of capacity or goodness before God will help—divine aid can be ours every hour of every day, no matter where we are in the path of obedience. But I know that beyond desiring His help, we must exert ourselves, repent, and choose God for Him to be able to act in our lives consistent with justice and moral agency. My plea is simply

to take responsibility and go to work so that there is something for God to help us with.

I bear witness that God the Father lives, that His Son, Jesus Christ, is our Redeemer, and that the Holy Spirit is present with us. Their desire to help us is undoubted, and Their capacity to do so is infinite. Let us “awake, and arise from the dust, . . . that the covenants of the Eternal Father which he hath made unto [us] may be fulfilled.”<sup>25</sup> In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. William Shakespeare, *The Life of King Henry V*, act 4, scene 1, lines 127–29, 131–37, 183–85.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 101:78.
3. Brigham Young, “Sermon,” *Deseret News*, Oct. 31, 1855, 267; quoted in Terry Givens and Fiona Givens, *The Crucible of Doubt: Reflections on the Quest for Faith* (2014), 63.
4. Moses 6:57.
5. Moses 6:55.
6. See Articles of Faith 1:2; see also 2 Nephi 2:25; Moses 6:53–56.
7. 2 Nephi 2:26; see also Doctrine and Covenants 93:38.
8. See 3 Nephi 12:48; 27:27; see also Romans 8:16–17; Doctrine and Covenants 84:37–38.
9. See Revelation 12:7–9; Doctrine and Covenants 29:36–38; Moses 4:3–4.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:29–31.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 3:2.
12. Acts 10:34.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 1:31.
14. See Alma 42:25.
15. Alma 42:24.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 45:4.
17. See Mosiah 15:9.
18. Alma 42:13; emphasis added.
19. 2 Nephi 31:19.
20. Alma 34:16.
21. In Christian Smith, *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* (2009), 156.
22. In Smith, *Souls in Transition*, 156.
23. 2 Nephi 2:13.
24. 2 Nephi 25:23.
25. Moroni 10:31.

#### Bariloche, Argentina



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

# Receiving a Testimony of Light and Truth

*Your personal testimony of light and truth will not only bless you and your posterity here in mortality, but it will also accompany you throughout all eternity.*

As an airline pilot, I flew numerous hours across continents and oceans during the darkness of night. Watching the night sky out of my cockpit window, especially the Milky Way, often made me marvel at the vastness and depth of God's creations—what the scriptures describe as “worlds without number.”<sup>1</sup>

It was less than a century ago that most astronomers assumed that our Milky Way galaxy was the only galaxy in the universe.<sup>2</sup> They supposed all

that lay beyond our galaxy was an immense nothingness, an infinite void—empty, cold, and devoid of stars, light, and life.

As telescopes became more sophisticated—including telescopes that could be launched into space—astronomers began to grasp a spectacular, almost incomprehensible truth: the universe is mind-bogglingly bigger than anyone had previously believed, and the heavens are filled with numberless galaxies, unimaginably far away from us, each containing hundreds of billions of stars.<sup>3</sup>

In a very short period of time, our understanding of the universe changed forever.

Today we can see some of these distant galaxies.<sup>4</sup>

We know that they are there.

They have been there for a very long time.

But before mankind had instruments powerful enough to gather celestial light and bring these galaxies into visibility, we did not believe such a thing was possible.

The immensity of the universe didn't suddenly change, but our ability to see

and understand this truth changed dramatically. And with that greater light, mankind was introduced to glorious vistas we had never before imagined.

## **It Is Hard for Us to Believe What We Cannot See**

Suppose you were able to travel back in time and have a conversation with people who lived a thousand or even a hundred years ago. Imagine trying to describe to them some of the modern technologies that you and I take for granted today. For example, what might these people think of us if we told them stories of jumbo jets, microwave ovens, handheld devices that contain vast digital libraries, and videos of our grandchildren that we instantly share with millions of people around the world?

Some might believe us. Most would ridicule, oppose, or perhaps even seek to silence or harm us. Some might attempt to apply logic, reason, and facts as they know them to show that we are misguided, foolish, or even dangerous. They might condemn us for attempting to mislead others.

But of course, these people would be completely mistaken. They might be well-meaning and sincere. They might feel absolutely positive of their opinion. But they simply would not be able to see clearly because they had not yet received the more complete light of truth.

## **The Promise of Light**

It seems to be a trait of humanity to assume that we are right even when we are wrong. And if that is the case, what hope is there for any of us? Are we destined to drift aimlessly on an ocean of conflicting information, stranded on a raft we have poorly pieced together from our own biases?

Is it possible to find truth?



**Watching the night sky often made me marvel at the vastness and depth of God's creations.**



The purpose of my remarks is to proclaim the joyful message that God Himself—the Lord of Hosts who knows all truth—has given His children the promise that they can know truth for themselves.

Please consider the magnitude of this promise:

The Everlasting and Almighty God, the Creator of this vast universe, will speak to those who approach Him with a sincere heart and real intent.

He will speak to them in dreams, visions, thoughts, and feelings.

He will speak in a way that is unmistakable and that transcends human experience. He will give them divine direction and answers for their personal lives.

Of course, there will be those who scoff and say such a thing is impossible, that if there were a God, He would have better things to do than hear and answer a single person's prayer.

But I tell you this: God cares about you. He will listen, and He will answer your personal questions. The answers to your prayers will come in His own

way and in His own time, and therefore, you need to learn to listen to His voice. God wants you to find your way back to Him, and the Savior is the way.<sup>5</sup> God wants you to learn of His Son, Jesus Christ, and experience the profound peace and joy that come from following the path of divine discipleship.

My dear friends, here is a fairly straightforward experiment, with a guarantee from God, found in a book of ancient scripture available to every man, woman, and child willing to put it to the test:

*First*, you must search the word of God. That means reading the scriptures and studying the words of the ancient as well as modern prophets regarding the restored gospel of Jesus Christ—not with an intent to doubt or criticize but with a sincere desire to discover truth. Ponder upon the things you will feel, and prepare your minds to receive the truth.<sup>6</sup> “Even if ye can no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you . . . that ye can give place for [the word of God].”<sup>7</sup>

*Second*, you must consider, ponder, fearlessly strive to believe,<sup>8</sup> and be grateful for how merciful the Lord has been to His children from the time of Adam to our day by providing prophets, seers, and revelators to lead His Church and help us find the way back to Him.

*Third*, you must ask your Heavenly Father, in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, to manifest the truth of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints unto you. Ask with a sincere heart and with real intent, having faith in Christ.<sup>9</sup>

There is also a *fourth* step, given to us by the Savior: “If any man will do [God's] will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.”<sup>10</sup> In other words, when you are trying to verify the truth of gospel principles, you must first live them. Put gospel doctrine and Church teachings to the test in your own life. Do it with real intent and enduring faith in God.

If you will do these things, you have a promise from God—who is

bound by His word<sup>11</sup>—that He will manifest the truth to you by the power of the Holy Ghost. He will grant you greater light that will allow you to look through the darkness and witness unimaginably glorious vistas incomprehensible to mortal sight.

Some may say that the steps are too hard or that they are not worth the effort. But I suggest that this personal testimony of the gospel and the Church is the most important thing you can earn in this life. It will not only bless and guide you during this life, but it will also have a direct bearing on your life throughout eternity.

#### **The Things of the Spirit Can Be Understood Only by the Spirit**

Scientists were struggling to understand the breadth of the universe until instruments became sophisticated enough to gather in greater light so they could understand a more complete truth.

The Apostle Paul taught a parallel principle regarding spiritual knowledge. “The natural man receiveth not

the things of the Spirit of God,” he wrote to the Corinthians, “for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”<sup>12</sup>

In other words, if you want to recognize spiritual truth, you have to use the right instruments. You can’t come to an understanding of spiritual truth with instruments that are unable to detect it.

The Savior has told us in our day, “That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day.”<sup>13</sup>

The more we incline our hearts and minds toward God, the more heavenly light distills upon our souls. And each time we willingly and earnestly seek that light, we indicate to God our readiness to receive more light. Gradually, things that before seemed hazy, dark, and remote become clear, bright, and familiar to us.

By the same token, if we remove ourselves from the light of the gospel,

our own light begins to dim—not in a day or a week but gradually over time—until we look back and can’t quite understand why we had ever believed the gospel was true. Our previous knowledge might even seem foolish to us because what once was so clear has again become blurred, hazy, and distant.

This is why Paul was so insistent that the message of the gospel is foolishness to those who are perishing, “but unto [those who] are saved it is the power of God.”<sup>14</sup>

#### **There Is No Litmus Test**

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is a place for people with all kinds of testimonies. There are some members of the Church whose testimony is sure and burns brightly within them. Others are still striving to know for themselves. The Church is a home for all to come together, regardless of the depth or the height of our testimony. I know of no sign on the doors of our meetinghouses that says, “Your testimony must be this tall to enter.”

The Church is not just for perfect people, but it is for all to “come unto Christ, and be perfected in him.”<sup>15</sup> The Church is for people like you and me. The Church is a place of welcoming and nurturing, not of separating or criticizing. It is a place where we reach out to encourage, uplift, and sustain one another as we pursue our individual search for divine truth.

In the end, we are all pilgrims seeking God’s light as we journey on the path of discipleship. We do not condemn others for the amount of light they may or may not have; rather, we nourish and encourage all light until it grows clear, bright, and true.





## A Promise to All

Let us acknowledge that most often gaining a testimony is not a task of a minute, an hour, or a day. It is not once and done. The process of gathering spiritual light is the quest of a lifetime.

Your testimony of the living Son of God and His restored Church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, may not come as quickly as you desire, but I promise you this: if you do your part, it will come.

And it will be glorious.

I offer you my personal witness that spiritual truth will fill your heart and bring light to your spirit. It will reveal to you pure intelligence with wonderful joy and heavenly peace. I have experienced this for myself by the power of the Holy Ghost.

As the ancient scriptures promise, the unspeakable presence of the Spirit of God will cause you to sing the song of redeeming love,<sup>16</sup> lift your eyes to heaven, and raise your voice in praise to the Most High God, your Refuge, your Hope, your Protector, your Father. The Savior promised that if you seek, you will find.<sup>17</sup>

I testify that this is true. If you seek God's truth, that which now may appear dim, out of focus, and distant will gradually be revealed and clarified and become close to your heart by the light of God's grace. Glorious spiritual vistas, unimaginable to the human eye, will be revealed to you.

It is my testimony that this spiritual light is within the reach of every child of God. It will enlighten your mind and bring healing to your heart and joy to your days. My dear friends, please do not delay the moment to seek and strengthen your own personal testimony of God's divine work, even the work of light and truth.

Your personal testimony of light and truth will not only bless you and



your posterity here in mortality, but it will also accompany you throughout all eternity, among worlds without end. Of this I testify and leave you my blessing in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

### NOTES

1. Moses 1:33.
2. See Marcia Bartusiak, *The Day We Found the Universe* (2009), xii. It is always surprising to me that we can be so confident of our conclusions. Sometimes our confidence is so great that we assume we have all the truth there is. Case in point: "Simon Newcomb, the dean of American astronomy in the late nineteenth century, remarked at an observatory dedication in 1887 that 'so far as astronomy is concerned . . . we do appear to be fast approaching the limits of our knowledge. . . . The result is that the work which really occupies the attention of the astronomer is less the discovery of new things than the elaboration of those already known'" (Bartusiak, xv).
3. It is interesting to consider Moses 1:33, 35 in light of this "recent" discovery. The book of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price was

revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith in June 1830, nearly a century before Edwin Hubble announced his discovery of distant galaxies.

4. See, for example, the Hubble Heritage Image Gallery at [heritage.stsci.edu/gallery/gallery.html](http://heritage.stsci.edu/gallery/gallery.html).
5. See John 14:6.
6. See 3 Nephi 17:3.
7. Alma 32:27.
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 67:3.
9. See Moroni 10:3–5.
10. John 7:17; see also Psalm 25:14; John 3:21.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 82:10.
12. 1 Corinthians 2:14.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 50:24.
14. 1 Corinthians 1:18.
15. Moroni 10:32; see also Doctrine and Covenants 20:59.
16. See Alma 5:26.
17. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:63.



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**Presented by President Henry B. Eyring**  
First Counselor in the First Presidency

# The Sustaining of Church Officers

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Henry Bennion Eyring as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and Dieter Friedrich Uchtdorf as Second Counselor in the First Presidency.

Those in favor may manifest it.

Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Boyd Kenneth Packer as President of the

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, David A. Bednar, Quentin L. Cook, D. Todd Christofferson, and Neil L. Andersen.

Those in favor, please manifest it.

Any opposed may so indicate.

It is proposed that we sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as

prophets, seers, and revelators.

All in favor, please manifest it.

Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we release with appreciation for their distinguished service Elders Carlos H. Amado and William R. Walker as members of the First Quorum of the Seventy and designate them as emeritus General Authorities.

Those who wish to join with us in expressing gratitude for their devoted service, please manifest it.

Elders Arayik V. Minasyan and Gvido Senkans have been released as Area Seventies. It is proposed that we extend to them a vote of appreciation for their service.

All in favor, please signify.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted.

Those in favor, please manifest it.

Any opposed may manifest it.

Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your faith and prayers in our behalf. ■





By **Elder Dallin H. Oaks**  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# Loving Others and Living with Differences

*As followers of Christ we should live peacefully with others who do not share our values or accept the teachings upon which they are based.*

## I.

In the concluding days of His mortal ministry, Jesus gave His disciples what He called “a new commandment” (John 13:34). Repeated three times, that commandment was simple but difficult: “Love one another, as I have loved you” (John 15:12; see also verse 17). The teaching to love one another had been a central teaching of the Savior’s ministry. The second great commandment was “love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matthew 22:39). Jesus even taught, “Love your enemies” (Matthew 5:44). But the commandment to *love others as He had loved His flock* was to His disciples—and is to us—a challenge that was unique. “Actually,” President Thomas S. Monson taught us last April, “love is the very essence of the gospel, and Jesus Christ is our Exemplar. His life was a legacy of love.”<sup>1</sup>

Why is it so difficult to have Christlike love for one another? It is difficult because we must live among those who do not share our beliefs and values and covenant obligations. In His great Intercessory Prayer, offered just before His Crucifixion,

Jesus prayed for His followers: “I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:14). Then, to the Father He pleaded, “I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil” (verse 15).

We are to live *in* the world but not be *of* the world. We must live in the world because, as Jesus taught in a parable, His kingdom is “like leaven,” whose function is to raise the whole mass by its influence (see Luke 13:21; Matthew 13:33; see also 1 Corinthians

5:6–8). His followers cannot do that if they associate only with those who share their beliefs and practices. But the Savior also taught that if we love Him, we will keep His commandments (see John 14:15).

## II.

The gospel has many teachings about keeping the commandments while living among people with different beliefs and practices. The teachings about contention are central. When the resurrected Christ found the Nephites disputing over the manner of baptism, He gave clear directions on how this ordinance should be performed. Then He taught this great principle:

“There shall be no disputations among you, as there have hitherto been; neither shall there be disputations among you concerning the points of my doctrine, as there have hitherto been.

“For verily, verily I say unto you, *he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another.*

“Behold, this is . . . my doctrine, that such things should be done away” (3 Nephi 11:28–30; emphasis added).





The Savior did not limit His warning against contention to those who were not keeping the commandment about baptism. He forbade contention by anyone. Even those who keep the commandments must not stir up the hearts of men to contend with anger. The “father of contention” is the devil; the Savior is the Prince of Peace.

Similarly, the Bible teaches that “wise men turn away wrath” (Proverbs 29:8). The early Apostles taught that we should “follow after the things [that] make for peace” (Romans 14:19) and “[speak] the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15), “for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God” (James 1:20). In modern revelation the Lord commanded that the glad tidings of the restored gospel should be declared “every man to his neighbor, in mildness and in meekness” (D&C 38:41), “with all humility, . . . reviling not against revilers” (D&C 19:30).

### III.

Even as we seek to be meek and to avoid contention, we must not compromise or dilute our commitment to the truths we understand. We must not surrender our positions or our values. The gospel of Jesus Christ and the covenants we have made inevitably

cast us as combatants in the eternal contest between truth and error. There is no middle ground in that contest.

The Savior showed the way when His adversaries confronted Him with the woman who had been “taken in adultery, in the very act” (John 8:4). When shamed with their own hypocrisy, the accusers withdrew and left Jesus alone with the woman. He treated her with kindness by declining to condemn her at that time. But He also firmly directed her to “sin no more” (John 8:11). Loving-kindness is required, but a follower of Christ—just like the Master—will be firm in the truth.

### IV.

Like the Savior, His followers are sometimes confronted by sinful behavior, and today when they hold out for right and wrong as they understand it, they are sometimes called “bigots” or “fanatics.” Many worldly values and practices pose such challenges to Latter-day Saints. Prominent among these today is the strong tide that is legalizing same-sex marriage in many states and provinces in the United States and Canada and many other countries in the world. We also live among some who don’t believe

in marriage at all. Some don’t believe in having children. Some oppose any restrictions on pornography or dangerous drugs. Another example—familiar to most believers—is the challenge of living with a nonbelieving spouse or family member or associating with nonbelieving fellow workers.

In dedicated spaces, like temples, houses of worship, and our own homes, we should teach the truth and the commandments plainly and thoroughly as we understand them from the plan of salvation revealed in the restored gospel. Our right to do so is protected by constitutional guarantees of freedom of speech and religion, as well as by the privacy that is honored even in countries without formal constitutional guarantees.

In public, what religious persons say and do involves other considerations. The free exercise of religion covers most public actions, but it is subject to qualifications necessary to accommodate the beliefs and practices of others. Laws can prohibit behavior that is generally recognized as wrong or unacceptable, like sexual exploitation, violence, or terrorist behavior, even when done by extremists in the name of religion. Less grievous behaviors, even though unacceptable

to some believers, may simply need to be endured if legalized by what a Book of Mormon prophet called “the voice of the people” (Mosiah 29:26).

On the subject of public discourse, we should all follow the gospel teachings to love our neighbor and avoid contention. Followers of Christ should be examples of civility. We should love all people, be good listeners, and show concern for their sincere beliefs. Though we may disagree, we should not be disagreeable. Our stands and communications on controversial topics should not be contentious. We should be wise in explaining and pursuing our positions and in exercising our influence. In doing so, we ask that others not be offended by our sincere religious beliefs and the free exercise of our religion. We encourage all of us to practice the Savior’s Golden Rule: “Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them” (Matthew 7:12).

When our positions do not prevail, we should accept unfavorable results graciously and practice civility with our adversaries. In any event, we should be persons of goodwill toward all, rejecting persecution of any kind,

including persecution based on race, ethnicity, religious belief or nonbelief, and differences in sexual orientation.

**V.**

I have spoken of general principles. Now I will speak of how those principles should apply in a variety of familiar circumstances in which the Savior’s teachings should be followed more faithfully.

I begin with what our young children learn in their play activities. Too often non-Mormons here in Utah have been offended and alienated by some of our members who will not allow their children to be friends with children of other faiths. Surely we can teach our children values and standards of behavior without having them distance themselves or show disrespect to any who are different.

Many teachers in church and school have grieved at the way some teenagers, including LDS youth, treat one another. The commandment to love one another surely includes love and respect across religious lines and also across racial, cultural, and economic lines. We challenge all youth to avoid bullying, insults, or language

and practices that deliberately inflict pain on others. All of these violate the Savior’s command to love one another.

The Savior taught that contention is a tool of the devil. That surely teaches against some of the current language and practices of politics. Living with policy differences is essential to politics, but policy differences need not involve personal attacks that poison the process of government and punish participants. All of us should banish hateful communications and practice civility for differences of opinion.

The most important setting to forgo contention and practice respect for differences is in our homes and family relationships. Differences are inevitable—some minor and some major. As to major differences, suppose a family member is in a cohabitation relationship. That brings two important values into conflict—our love for the family member and our commitment to the commandments. Following the Savior’s example, we can show loving-kindness and still be firm in the truth by forgoing actions that facilitate or seem to condone what we know to be wrong.

I close with another example of a family relationship. At a stake conference in the Midwest about 10 years ago, I met a sister who told me that her nonmember husband had been accompanying her to church for 12 years but had never joined the Church. What should she do? she asked. I counseled her to keep doing all the right things and to be patient and kind with her husband.

About a month later she wrote me as follows: “Well, I thought that the 12 years was a good show of patience, but I didn’t know if I was being very kind about it. So, I practiced real hard for over a month, and he got baptized.”



Kindness is powerful, especially in a family setting. Her letter continued, “I am even trying to be kinder now because we are working on a temple sealing this year!”

Six years later she wrote me another letter: “My husband was [just] called and set apart as the bishop [of our ward].”<sup>2</sup>

## VI.

In so many relationships and circumstances in life, we must live with differences. Where vital, our side of these differences should not be denied or abandoned, but as followers of Christ we should live peacefully with others who do not share our values or accept the teachings upon which they are based. The Father’s plan of salvation, which we know by prophetic revelation, places us in a mortal circumstance where we are to keep His commandments. That includes loving our neighbors of different cultures and beliefs as He has loved us. As a Book of Mormon prophet taught, we must press forward, having “a love of God and of all men” (2 Nephi 31:20).

As difficult as it is to live in the turmoil surrounding us, our Savior’s command to love one another as He loves us is probably our greatest challenge. I pray that we may understand this and seek to live it in all of our relationships and activities, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

## NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, “Love—the Essence of the Gospel,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 91.
2. Letters to Dallin H. Oaks, Jan. 23, 2006, and Oct. 30, 2012.

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By Elder Neil L. Andersen

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# Joseph Smith

*Jesus Christ chose a holy man, a righteous man, to lead the Restoration of the fulness of His gospel. He chose Joseph Smith.*

On his first visit to the Prophet Joseph Smith at age 17, an angel called Joseph by name and told him that he, Moroni, was a messenger sent from the presence of God and that God had a work for him to do. Imagine what Joseph must have thought when the angel then told him that his name would “be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues.”<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the shock in Joseph’s eyes caused Moroni to repeat again that both good and evil would be spoken of him among all people.<sup>2</sup>

The good spoken of Joseph Smith came slowly; the evil speaking began immediately. Joseph wrote, “How very strange it was that an obscure boy . . . should be thought . . . of sufficient importance to attract . . . the most bitter persecution.”<sup>3</sup>

While love for Joseph grew, so also did hostility. At the age of 38, he was murdered by a mob of 150 men with painted faces.<sup>4</sup> While the Prophet’s life abruptly ended, the good and evil spoken of Joseph was just beginning.

Should we be surprised with the evil spoken against him? The Apostle Paul was called mad and deranged.<sup>5</sup> Our Beloved Savior, the Son of God, was labeled gluttonous, a winebibber, and possessed of a devil.<sup>6</sup>

The Lord told Joseph of his destiny: “The ends of the earth shall inquire after thy name, and fools shall have thee in derision, and hell shall rage against thee;

“While the pure in heart, . . . the wise, . . . and the virtuous, shall seek . . . blessings constantly from under thy hand.”<sup>7</sup>

Why does the Lord allow the evil speaking to chase after the good? One reason is that opposition against the things of God sends seekers of truth to their knees for answers.<sup>8</sup>

Joseph Smith is the prophet of the Restoration. His spiritual work began with the appearance of the Father and the Son, followed by numerous heavenly visitations. He was the instrument in God’s hands in bringing forth sacred scripture, lost doctrine, and the restoration of the priesthood. The importance of Joseph’s work requires more than intellectual consideration; it requires that we, like Joseph, “ask of God.”<sup>9</sup> Spiritual questions deserve spiritual answers from God.

Many of those who dismiss the work of the Restoration simply do not believe that heavenly beings speak to men on earth. Impossible, they say, that golden plates were delivered by an angel and translated by the power of God. From that disbelief, they quickly reject



Joseph's testimony, and a few unfortunately sink to discrediting the Prophet's life and slandering his character.

We are especially saddened when someone who once revered Joseph retreats from his or her conviction and then maligns the Prophet.<sup>10</sup>

"Studying the Church . . . through the eyes of its defectors," Elder Neal A. Maxwell once said, is "like interviewing Judas to understand Jesus. Defectors always tell us more about themselves than about that from which they have departed."<sup>11</sup>

Jesus said, "Bless them that curse you, . . . and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you."<sup>12</sup> Let us offer kindness to those who criticize Joseph Smith, knowing in our own hearts that he was a prophet of God and taking comfort that all this was long ago foretold by Moroni.

How should we respond to a sincere inquirer who is concerned about negative comments he or she has heard or read about the Prophet Joseph Smith? Of course, we always welcome honest and genuine questions.

To questions about Joseph's character, we might share the words of thousands who knew him personally and who gave their lives for the work he helped establish. John Taylor, who was shot four times by the mob that killed Joseph, would later declare: "I

testify before God, angels, and men, that [Joseph] was a good, honorable, [and] virtuous man— . . . [and] that his private and public character was unimpeachable—and that he lived and died as a man of God."<sup>13</sup>

We might remind the sincere inquirer that Internet information does not have a "truth" filter. Some information, no matter how convincing, is simply not true.

Years ago I read a *Time* magazine article that reported the discovery of a letter, supposedly written by Martin Harris, that conflicted with Joseph Smith's account of finding the Book of Mormon plates.<sup>14</sup>

A few members left the Church because of the document.<sup>15</sup>

Sadly, they left too quickly. Months later experts discovered (and the forger confessed) that the letter was a complete deception.<sup>16</sup> You may understandably question what you hear on the news, but you need never doubt the testimony of God's prophets.

We might remind the inquirer that some information about Joseph, while true, may be presented completely out of context to his own day and situation.

Elder Russell M. Nelson illustrated this point. He said: "I was serving as a consultant to the United States government at its National Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia. Once

while awaiting a taxi to take me to the airport after our meetings were over, I stretched out on the lawn to soak in a few welcome rays of sunshine before returning to the winter weather of Utah. . . . Later I received a photograph in the mail taken by a photographer with a telephoto lens, capturing my moment of relaxation on the lawn. Under it was a caption, 'Governmental consultant at the National Center.' The picture was true, the caption was true, but the truth was used to promote a false impression."<sup>17</sup> We do not discard something we know to be true because of something we do not yet understand.

We might remind the inquirer that Joseph was not alone in the visit of angels.

The Book of Mormon witnesses wrote, "We declare with words of soberness, that an angel of God came down from heaven, and . . . we beheld and saw the plates."<sup>18</sup> We could quote many others as well.<sup>19</sup>

A sincere inquirer should see the spreading of the restored gospel as the fruit of the Lord's work through the Prophet.

There are now more than 29,000 congregations and 88,000 missionaries teaching the gospel across the world. Millions of Latter-day Saints are seeking to follow Jesus Christ, live honorable lives, care for the poor, and give of their time and talents in helping others.

Jesus said:

"A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. . . .

". . . By their fruits ye shall know them."<sup>20</sup>

These explanations are convincing, but the sincere inquirer should not rely on them exclusively to settle his or her search for truth.

Each believer needs a spiritual confirmation of the divine mission and



**Adjust your own spiritual oxygen mask so that you are prepared to help others who are seeking the truth.**

character of the Prophet Joseph Smith. This is true for every generation. Spiritual questions deserve spiritual answers from God.

Recently while I was on the East Coast of the United States, a returned missionary spoke to me about a friend who had become disillusioned with information he had received about the Prophet Joseph Smith. They had spoken several times, and the returned missionary seemed to have some doubts himself as a result of the discussions.

Although I hoped he could strengthen his friend, I felt concerned for his own testimony. Brothers and sisters, let me give you a caution: you won't be of much help to others if your own faith is not securely in place.

A few weeks ago I boarded a plane for South America. The flight attendant directed our attention to a safety video. "It is unlikely," we were warned, "but if cabin pressure changes, the panels above your seat will open, revealing oxygen masks. If this happens, reach up and pull a mask toward you. Place the mask over your nose and mouth. Slip the elastic strap over your head and adjust the mask if necessary." Then this caution: "Be sure to adjust your own mask before helping others."

The negative commentary about the Prophet Joseph Smith will increase as we move toward the Second Coming of the Savior. The half-truths and subtle deceptions will not diminish. There will

be family members and friends who will need your help. Now is the time to adjust your own spiritual oxygen mask so that you are prepared to help others who are seeking the truth.<sup>21</sup>

A testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith can come differently to each of us. It may come as you kneel in prayer, asking God to confirm that he was a true prophet. It may come as you read the Prophet's account of the First Vision. A testimony may distill upon your soul as you read the Book of Mormon again and again. It may come as you bear your own testimony of the Prophet or as you stand in the temple and realize that through Joseph Smith the holy sealing power was restored to the earth.<sup>22</sup> With faith and real intent, your testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith will strengthen. The constant water balloon volleys from the sidelines may occasionally get you wet, but they need never, never extinguish your burning fire of faith.

To the youth listening today or reading these words in the days ahead, I give a specific challenge: Gain a personal witness of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Let your voice

help fulfill Moroni's prophetic words to speak good of the Prophet. Here are two ideas: First, find scriptures in the Book of Mormon that you feel and know are absolutely true. Then share them with family and friends in family home evening, seminary, and your Young Men and Young Women classes, acknowledging that Joseph was an instrument in God's hands. Next, read the testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith in the Pearl of Great Price or in this pamphlet, now in 158 languages. You can find it online at LDS.org or with the missionaries. This is Joseph's own testimony of what actually occurred. Read it often. Consider recording the testimony of Joseph Smith in your own voice, listening to it regularly, and sharing it with friends. Listening to the Prophet's testimony in your own voice will help bring the witness you seek.

There are great and wonderful days ahead. President Thomas S. Monson has said: "This great cause . . . will continue to go forth, changing and blessing lives. . . . No force in the entire world can stop the work of God. Despite what comes, this great cause will go forward."<sup>23</sup>

**The Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith is now in 158 languages.**





I give you my witness that Jesus is the Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. He chose a holy man, a righteous man, to lead the Restoration of the fulness of His gospel. He chose Joseph Smith.

I testify that Joseph Smith was an honest and virtuous man, a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, did appear to him. He did translate the Book of Mormon by the gift and power of God.

In our society beyond the veil of death, we will clearly understand the sacred calling and divine mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith. In that not-too-distant day, you and I and “millions [more] shall know ‘Brother Joseph’ again.”<sup>24</sup> In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Joseph Smith—History 1:33.
2. See Joseph Smith—History 1:29–46.
3. Joseph Smith—History 1:23.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 135:1.
5. See Acts 26:24.
6. See Matthew 11:19; John 10:20.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 122:1–2.
8. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf said: “First doubt your doubts before you doubt your faith. We must never allow doubt to hold us prisoner and keep us from the divine love, peace, and gifts that come through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ” (“Come, Join with Us,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 23). Elder Jeffrey R. Holland said: “This is a divine work in process, with the manifestations and blessings of it abounding in every direction, so please don’t hyperventilate if from time to time issues arise that need to be examined, understood, and resolved. They do and they will. *In this Church, what we know will always trump what we do not know*” (“Lord, I Believe,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2013, 94).
9. James 1:5; see also Joseph Smith—History 1:11–13.
10. Daniel Tyler recalled: “Brother Isaac Behunin and myself [visited the Prophet] at his residence. His persecutions were the topic of conversation. He repeated many false, inconsistent and contradictory statements made by apostates. . . . He also told how most of the officials who would . . . have [willingly] taken his life, when



he was arrested, turned in his favor on [knowing him better]. . . .

“ . . . Brother Behunin remarked: ‘If I should leave this Church I would not do as those men have done: I would go to some remote place where Mormonism had never been heard of, settle down, and no one would ever learn that I knew anything about it.’

“[Joseph] immediately replied: ‘Brother Behunin, you don’t know what you would do. No doubt these men once thought as you do. Before you joined this Church you stood on neutral ground. . . . When you joined this Church you enlisted to serve God. When you did that you left the neutral ground, and you never can get back on to it. Should you forsake the Master you enlisted to serve, it will be by the instigation of the evil one, and you will follow his dictation and be his servant’” (in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 324).

11. Neal A. Maxwell, “All Hell Is Moved” (Brigham Young University devotional, Nov. 8, 1977), 3; speeches.byu.edu.
12. Matthew 5:44.
13. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: John Taylor* (2001), 83; see also Doctrine and Covenants 135:3.
14. See Richard N. Ostling, “Challenging Mormonism’s Roots,” *Time*, May 20, 1985, 44.
15. See Ostling, “Challenging Mormonism’s Roots,” 44; see also Gordon B. Hinckley, “Lord, Increase Our Faith,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 52; Neil L. Andersen, “Trial of Your Faith,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2012, 41.
16. See Richard E. Turley Jr., *Victims: The LDS Church and the Mark Hofmann Case* (1992).
17. Russell M. Nelson, “Truth—and More,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1986, 71.
18. “The Testimony of Three Witnesses,” Book of Mormon.
19. See Joseph Smith—History 1:71, note; see also Doctrine and Covenants 76:23.
20. Matthew 7:18, 20.

21. President Henry B. Eyring, in speaking about those with doubts, said: “In your love for them you may decide to try to give them what they ask. You may be tempted to go with them through their doubts, with the hope that you can find proof or reasoning to dispel their doubts. Persons with doubts often want to talk about what they think are the facts or the arguments that have caused their doubts, and about how much it hurts. . . .

“You and I can do better if we do not stay long with what our students see as the source of their doubts. . . . Their problem does not lie in what they think they see; it lies in what they cannot yet see. . . . We do best if we turn the conversation soon to the things of the heart, those changes of the heart that open spiritual eyes” (“And Thus We See”: Helping a Student in a Moment of Doubt” [address to Church Educational System religious educators, Feb. 5, 1993], 3, 4; si.lds.org).

22. President Gordon B. Hinckley said: “Many years ago when at the age of twelve I was ordained a deacon, my father, who was president of our stake, took me to my first stake priesthood meeting. . . . [The opening hymn was “Praise to the Man.”] They were singing of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and as they did so there came into my heart a great surge of love for and belief in the mighty Prophet of this dispensation. . . . I knew then, by the power of the Holy Ghost, that Joseph Smith was indeed a prophet of God” (“Praise to the Man,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1983, 2; *Tambuli*, Jan. 1984, 1, 2).
23. Thomas S. Monson, “As We Gather Once Again,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2012, 4.
24. “Praise to the Man,” *Hymns*, no. 27.

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**By Tad R. Callister**  
Sunday School General President

# Parents: The Prime Gospel Teachers of Their Children

*When all is said and done, the home is the ideal forum for teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Ben Carson said of himself, “I was the worst student in my whole fifth-grade class.” One day Ben took a math test with 30 problems. The student behind him corrected it and handed it back. The teacher, Mrs. Williamson, started calling each student’s name for the score. Finally, she got to Ben. Out of embarrassment, he mumbled the answer. Mrs. Williamson, thinking he had said “9,” replied that for Ben to score 9 out of 30 was a wonderful improvement. The student behind Ben then yelled out, “Not nine! . . . He got none . . . right.” Ben said he wanted to drop through the floor.

At the same time, Ben’s mother, Sonya, faced obstacles of her own. She was one of 24 children, had only a third-grade education, and could not read. She was married at age 13, was divorced, had two sons, and was raising them in the ghettos of Detroit. Nonetheless, she was fiercely self-reliant and had a firm belief that God would help her and her sons if they did their part.

One day a turning point came in her life and that of her sons. It dawned on her that successful people for whom she cleaned homes had libraries—they read. After work she went home and turned off the television that Ben and his brother were watching. She said in essence: You boys are watching too much television. From now on you can watch three programs a week. In your free time you will go to the library—read two books a week and give me a report.

The boys were shocked. Ben said he had never read a book in his entire

life except when required to do so at school. They protested, they complained, they argued, but it was to no avail. Then Ben reflected, “She laid down the law. I didn’t like the rule, but her determination to see us improve changed the course of my life.”

And what a change it made. By the seventh grade he was at the top of his class. He went on to attend Yale University on a scholarship, then Johns Hopkins medical school, where at age 33 he became its chief of pediatric neurosurgery and a world-renowned surgeon. How was that possible? Largely because of a mother who, without many of the advantages of life, magnified her calling as a parent.<sup>1</sup>

The scriptures speak of the role of parents—that it is their duty to teach their children “the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost” (D&C 68:25).

As parents, we are to be the prime gospel teachers and examples for our children—not the bishop, the Sunday School, the Young Women or Young Men, but the parents. As their prime gospel teachers, we can teach them the power and reality of the Atonement—of their identity and divine destiny—and in so doing give them a rock foundation upon which to build. When all is said and done,



the home is the ideal forum for teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.

About a year ago I was on assignment in Beirut, Lebanon. While there, I learned about a 12-year-old girl, Sarah. Her parents and two older siblings had converted to the Church in Romania but were then required to return to their homeland when Sarah was just 7 years of age. In their homeland there was no Church presence, no organized units, no Sunday School or Young Women program. After five years this family learned of a branch in Beirut and, just before I arrived, sent their 12-year-old daughter, Sarah, accompanied by older siblings, to be baptized. While there, I gave a devotional on the plan of salvation. With some frequency Sarah raised her hand and answered the questions.

After the meeting, and knowing of her almost nonexistent Church exposure, I approached her and asked, “Sarah, how did you know the answers to those questions?” She immediately replied, “My mother taught me.” They did not have the Church in their community, but they did have the gospel in their home. Her mother was her prime gospel teacher.

It was Enos who said, “The words which I had often heard my father speak concerning eternal life, and the joy of the saints, sunk deep into my heart” (Enos 1:3). There is no question who Enos’s prime gospel teacher was.

I remember my father stretched out by the fireplace, reading the scriptures and other good books, and I would stretch out by his side. I remember the cards he would keep in his shirt pocket with quotes of the scriptures and Shakespeare and new words that he would memorize and learn. I remember the gospel questions and discussions at the dinner table. I remember the many times my father



took me to visit the elderly—how we would stop by to pick up ice cream for one or a chicken dinner for another or his final handshake with some money enclosed. I remember the good feeling and the desire to be like him.

I remember my mother, age 90 or so, cooking in her condominium kitchen and then exiting with a tray of food. I asked her where she was going. She replied, “Oh, I am taking some food to the elderly.” I thought to myself, “Mother, you are the elderly.” I can never express enough gratitude for my parents, who were my prime gospel teachers.

One of the most meaningful things we can do as parents is teach our children the power of prayer, not just the routine of prayer. When I was about 17 years of age, I was kneeling by my bed, saying my evening prayers. Unbeknown to me, my mother was standing in the doorway. When I finished, she said, “Tad, are you asking the Lord to help you find a good wife?”

Her question caught me totally off guard. That was the furthest thing from my mind. I was thinking about basketball and school. And so, I replied, “No,” to which she responded, “Well, you should, Son; it will be the

most important decision you will ever make.” Those words sunk deep into my heart, and so for the next six years, I prayed that God would help me find a good wife. And, oh, how He answered that prayer.

As parents, we can teach our children to pray for things of eternal consequence—to pray for the strength to be morally clean in a very challenging world, to be obedient, and to have the courage to stand for the right.

No doubt most of our youth have their evening prayers, but perhaps many of them struggle with the habit of personal morning prayer. As parents, as their prime gospel teachers, we can correct this. Which parent in Book of Mormon times would have let their sons march out to the front of battle without a breastplate and shield and sword to protect them against the potentially mortal blows of the enemy? But how many of us let our children march out the front door each morning to the most dangerous of all battlefields, to face Satan and his myriad of temptations, without their spiritual breastplate and shield and sword that come from the protective power of prayer? The Lord said, “Pray always, . . . that you may conquer Satan” (D&C 10:5). As parents, we can

help instill within our children the habit and power of morning prayer.

We can also teach our children to use their time wisely. On occasion, like Sonya Carson, we will need to put our foot lovingly but firmly down to restrict our children's time with television and other electronic devices that in many cases are monopolizing their lives. Instead we may need to redirect their time into more productive gospel-oriented efforts. There may be some initial resistance, some complaining, but like Sonya Carson, we need to have the vision and the will to stick with it. One day our children will understand and appreciate what we have done. If we do not do this, who will?

We might all ask ourselves: do our children receive our best spiritual, intellectual, and creative efforts, or do they receive our leftover time and talents, after we have given our all to our Church calling or professional pursuits? In the life to come, I do not know if titles such as bishop or Relief Society president will survive, but I do know that the titles of husband and wife, father and mother, will continue and be revered, worlds without end. That is one reason it is so important to honor our responsibilities as parents here on earth so we can prepare for those even greater, but similar, responsibilities in the life to come.

As parents, we can proceed with the assurance God will never leave us alone. God never gives us a responsibility without offering divine aid—of that I can testify. May we in our divine role as parents, and in partnership with God, become the prime gospel teachers and examples for our children, I so pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTE

1. See Ben Carson, *Gifted Hands: The Ben Carson Story* (1990).



By Elder Jörg Klebingat  
Of the Seventy

## Approaching the Throne of God with Confidence

*By applying the Atonement of Jesus Christ, you can begin increasing your spiritual confidence today if you are willing to listen and act.*

On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your spiritual confidence before God? Do you have a personal witness that your current offering as a Latter-day Saint is sufficient to inherit eternal life? Can you say within yourself that Heavenly Father is pleased with you? What thoughts come to mind if you had a personal interview with your Savior one minute from now? Would sins, regrets, and shortcomings dominate your self-image, or would you simply experience joyful anticipation? Would you meet or avoid His gaze? Would you linger by the door or confidently walk up to Him?

Whenever the adversary cannot persuade imperfect yet striving Saints such as you to abandon your belief in a personal and loving God, he employs a vicious campaign to put as much distance as possible between you and God. The adversary knows that faith in Christ—the kind of faith that produces a steady stream

of tender mercies and even mighty miracles—goes hand in hand with a personal confidence that you are striving to choose the right. For that reason he will seek access to your heart to tell you lies—lies that Heavenly Father is disappointed in you, that the Atonement is beyond your reach, that there is no point in even trying, that everyone else is better than you, that you are unworthy, and a thousand variations of that same evil theme.

As long as you allow these voices to chisel away at your soul, you can't approach the throne of God with real confidence. Whatever you do, whatever you pray for, whatever hopes for a miracle you may have, there will always be just enough self-doubt chipping away at your faith—not only your faith in God but also your confidence in yourself. Living the gospel in this manner is no fun, nor is it very healthy. Above all, it is completely unnecessary! The decision to change is yours—and yours alone.



I would like to share six practical suggestions that, if heeded, will dissipate these evil voices and restore to you the kind of peaceful assurance and spiritual confidence that is yours to have if you only want it. Regardless of the rating you gave yourself on that 1-to-10 scale, by applying the Atonement of Jesus Christ, you can begin increasing your spiritual confidence today if you are willing to listen and act. I will speak boldly, hoping to edify and not to offend.

1. *Take responsibility for your own spiritual well-being.* Stop blaming others or your circumstances, stop justifying, and stop making excuses for why you may not be fully striving to be obedient. Accept that you are “free according to the flesh” and “free to choose liberty and eternal life” (2 Nephi 2:27). The Lord knows your circumstances perfectly, but He also knows perfectly well whether you simply choose not to fully live the gospel. If that is the case, be honest enough to admit it, and strive to be perfect within your own sphere of circumstances. *Spiritual confidence increases when you take responsibility*

*for your own spiritual well-being by applying the Atonement of Jesus Christ daily.*

2. *Take responsibility for your own physical well-being.* Your soul consists of your body and spirit (see D&C 88:15). Feeding the spirit while neglecting the body, which is a temple, usually leads to spiritual dissonance and lowered self-esteem. If you are out of shape, if you are uncomfortable in your own body and can do something about it, then do it! Elder Russell M. Nelson has taught that we should “regard our body as a temple of our very own” and that we should “control our diet and exercise for physical fitness” (“We Are Children of God,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 87; *Liahona*, Jan. 1999, 103).

President Boyd K. Packer has taught “that our spirit and our body are combined in such a way that our body becomes an instrument of our mind and the foundation of our character” (“The Instrument of Your Mind and the Foundation of Your Character” [Church Educational System fireside, Feb. 2, 2003], 2; [speeches.byu.edu](http://speeches.byu.edu)). Therefore, please use good judgment in what

and especially how much you eat, and regularly give your body the exercise it needs and deserves. If you are physically able, decide today to be the master of your own house and begin a regular, long-term exercise program, suited to your abilities, combined with a healthier diet. *Spiritual confidence increases when your spirit, with the help of the Savior, is truly in charge of your natural man or woman.*

3. *Embrace voluntary, whole-hearted obedience as part of your life.* Acknowledge that you cannot love God without also loving His commandments. The Savior’s standard is clear and simple: “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). Selective obedience brings selective blessings, and choosing something bad over something worse is still choosing wrong. You can’t watch a bad movie and expect to feel virtuous because you did not watch a *very* bad one. Faithful observance of some commandments doesn’t justify neglecting others. Abraham Lincoln rightly said, “When I do good I feel good, when I do bad I feel bad” (in William H. Herndon and Jesse William Weik, *Herndon’s Lincoln:*



consequences follow. *Spiritual confidence increases when you voluntarily and joyfully repent of sins, both small and great, in real time by applying the Atonement of Jesus Christ.*

5. *Become really, really good at forgiving.* “I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men” (D&C 64:10). Forgive everyone, everything, all the time, or at least strive to do so, thus allowing forgiveness into your own life. Don’t hold grudges, don’t be easily offended, forgive and forget quickly, and don’t ever think that you are exempt from this commandment. *Spiritual confidence increases when you know that the Lord knows that you bear no ill feelings toward another soul.*

6. *Accept trials, setbacks, and “surprises” as part of your mortal experience.* Remember that you are here to be proved and tested, “to see if [you] will do all things whatsoever the Lord [your] God shall command [you]” (Abraham 3:25)—and may I just add, “under all circumstances.” Millions of your brothers and sisters have been or are being thus tested, so why would you be exempt? Some trials come through your own disobedience or negligence. Other trials come because of the negligence of others or simply because this is a fallen world. When these trials come, the adversary’s minions begin broadcasting that you did something wrong, that this is a punishment, a sign that Heavenly Father does not love you. Ignore that! Instead, try to force a smile, gaze heavenward, and say, “I understand, Lord. I know what this is. A time to prove myself, isn’t it?” Then partner with Him to endure well to the end. Spiritual confidence increases when you accept that “often trials and tribulations are allowed to come into [your life] because of what [you] are

*The True Story of a Great Life*, 3 vols. [1889], 3:439).

Also, do the right things for the right reasons. The Lord, who “requireth the heart and a willing mind” (D&C 64:34) and who “is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (D&C 33:1), knows why you go to church—whether you are present in body only or truly worshipping. You can’t sing on Sunday, “O Babylon, O Babylon, [I] bid thee farewell” and then seek or tolerate its company again moments later (“Ye Elders of Israel,” *Hymns*, no. 319). Remember that casualness in spiritual matters never was happiness. Make the Church and the restored gospel your whole life, not just a part of your outward or social life. Choosing this day whom you will serve is lip service only—until you actually

live accordingly (see Joshua 24:15). *Spiritual confidence increases when you are truly striving, for the right reasons, to live a consecrated life in spite of your imperfections!*

4. *Become really, really good at repenting thoroughly and quickly.* Because the Atonement of Jesus Christ is very practical, you should apply it generously 24/7, for it never runs out. Embrace the Atonement of Jesus Christ and repentance as things that are to be welcomed and applied daily according to the Great Physician’s orders. Establish an attitude of ongoing, happy, joyful repentance by making it your lifestyle of choice. In doing so, beware of the temptation to procrastinate, and don’t expect the world to cheer you on. Keeping your eyes on the Savior, care more about what He thinks of you, and let the

doing right” (Glenn L. Pace, “Crying with the Saints” [Brigham Young University devotional, Dec. 13, 1987], 2; speeches.byu.edu).

While presiding over the Ukraine Kyiv Mission, I once asked one of my most faithful sisters why she was always so hard on herself, why she was always beating herself up over the smallest things. Her answer was a classic example of someone listening to the wrong voice as she replied, “So no one can beat me to it.”

Brothers and sisters, my counsel to this sister missionary is my counsel to you: acknowledge and face your weaknesses, but don’t be immobilized by them, because some of them will be your companions until you depart this earth life. No matter what your current status, the very moment you voluntarily choose honest, joyful, daily repentance by striving to simply do and be your very best, the Savior’s Atonement envelops and follows you, as it were, wherever you go. Living in this manner, you can truly “always retain a remission of your sins” (Mosiah 4:12) every hour of every day, every second of every minute, and thus be fully clean and acceptable before God *all the time*.

Yours is the privilege, if you want it, to come to know for yourself, today or soon, that you are pleasing God in spite of your shortcomings. I testify of a loving Savior who expects us to live the commandments. I testify of a loving Savior who is so very anxious to bestow His grace and mercy. I testify of a loving Savior who rejoices when we apply His Atonement daily with the calm and happy assurance that we are facing in the right direction. I testify of a loving Savior who is anxious for your “confidence [to] wax strong in the presence of God” (D&C 121:45). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



By Elder Eduardo Gavarret  
Of the Seventy

## Yes, Lord, I Will Follow Thee

*The Lord invites us using various verbs: “Come unto me,” “Follow me,” “Walk with me.” In each case it is an invitation to act.*

**F**or behold, the Lord doth grant unto all nations, of their own nation and tongue, to teach his word.”<sup>1</sup> Today this scripture is fulfilled once more as I have been given the opportunity to express my feelings in my native tongue.

It was the year 1975, and I was serving in the Uruguay-Paraguay Mission as a young missionary. During my first month in the mission, the zone leaders held an activity to demonstrate a gospel principle. Each missionary in the zone was blindfolded, and we were told that we were to follow a path leading to the cultural hall. We were to follow the voice of one particular leader, a voice we heard before starting to walk. However, we were warned that during the journey, we would hear several voices that would try to confuse us and get us to stray from the path.

After some minutes of hearing noises, talking, and—in the midst of it all—a voice that said, “Follow me,” I felt confident I was following the right voice. When we arrived at the cultural hall of the chapel, we were asked to take off our blindfolds. When I did so, I realized that there were two groups and that I was

in the group that had followed the wrong voice. “It sounded so much like the right one,” I said to myself.

That experience of 39 years ago had a lasting effect on me. I told myself, “Never, ever again follow the wrong voice.” Then I told myself, “Yes, Lord, I will follow Thee.”

I want to relate this experience with the Savior’s tender invitation to us:

“I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep. . . .

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.”<sup>2</sup>

The invitation to “follow Him” is the most simple, direct, and powerful invitation we can receive. It comes from a clear voice that cannot be confused.

The Lord invites us using various verbs: “Come unto me,” “Follow me,” “Walk with me.” In each case it is not a passive invitation; it is an invitation to act. It is addressed to all mankind by the one who is the Prophet of prophets, the Teacher of teachers, the Son of God, the Messiah.

### The Invitation to “Come unto Me”

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”<sup>3</sup>



“Come, . . . follow me.”<sup>8</sup> However, even though the invitation was simple, it was not without sacrifice. It required effort—coupled with decision and action.

The prophet Nephi invited self-reflection when he questioned: “And [Jesus] said unto the children of men: Follow thou me. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, can we follow Jesus save we shall be willing to keep the commandments of the Father?”<sup>9</sup>

The invitation to “come unto me,” to listen to His voice, and to follow it has been the message of missionaries from the beginning, helping many to change their lives for good.

Fifty years ago the missionaries entered my father’s watchmaker shop to leave a watch to be repaired. As good missionaries do, they took advantage of the opportunity to speak with my father and mother about the gospel. My father accepted the missionaries, and my mother accepted the message and invitation to follow Christ. From that day to this, she has remained active in the Church. She said, “Yes, Lord, I will follow Thee!”

As you strive to come to Him, you will gain the power to relieve life’s burdens, whether physical or spiritual, *and experience a positive inner change that will help you be happier.*

#### **The Invitation to “Walk with Me”**

Enoch was called to preach the gospel to a difficult, hard-hearted people. He did not feel qualified. He had doubts about whether he could do it. The Lord calmed his doubts and strengthened his faith through the invitation “Walk with me”—an invitation that, like a blind man’s cane or a friend’s arm, can guide the footsteps of one whose step is not sure. By taking the Savior’s arm and walking

You who are not yet members of the Church will receive this invitation through the voice of the missionaries with the words, “Will you read the Book of Mormon? Will you pray? Will you attend church? Will you follow the example of Jesus Christ and be baptized by those who have authority?”<sup>4</sup> How will you answer this invitation today?<sup>5</sup>

I invite you to listen to and accept the message by saying, “Yes, Lord, I will follow Thee!”

Carlos Badiola and his family, of Minas, Uruguay, were meeting with the missionaries. Since the elders asked a lot of questions during the lessons, they decided to invite a nonmember neighbor—a beautiful 14-year-old girl named Norma—to help them answer. Norma was a dedicated high school student who was studying the Bible at school that year, so when the missionaries asked a question, Norma answered. She was a “golden investigator.” The lesson taught that day was about the Word of Wisdom.

When she returned home after the lesson with the missionaries, Norma knew what she had to do. She said to her mother, “Mom, from now on,

no more coffee with milk for me. Just milk.” That response was the visible manifestation of her desire to accept the invitation to follow Christ, as extended by the missionaries.

Both Carlos Badiola and Norma were baptized. Later on, following Norma’s example, her mother, father, and siblings were also baptized. Norma and I grew up together in that little but powerful branch. Later on, when I returned from serving a mission, we were married. I always knew that it would be easier to follow the Savior with her by my side.

One who is a member of the Church and has accepted this invitation renews the commitment each week by partaking of the sacrament.<sup>6</sup> Part of that commitment includes keeping the commandments; by doing so you are saying, “Yes, Lord, I will follow Thee!”<sup>7</sup>

#### **The Invitation to “Follow Me”**

“Follow me” was the Lord’s invitation to the rich young ruler. The rich man had kept the commandments throughout his life. When he asked what more he could do, he received an answer with a clear invitation:



with Him, Enoch found that his step became firm and he became a great missionary and a prophet.<sup>10</sup>

The decision to “come unto me” and “follow me” is personal. When we accept this invitation, our level of commitment is raised, and it is then that we can “walk with Him.” This level establishes a closer relationship with the Savior—the fruit of our accepting the first invitation.

Norma and I individually accepted the invitation to “come unto me” and to “follow me.” Then, together, supporting each other, we have learned to walk with Him.

The effort and the determination to seek Him and to follow Him will be rewarded with the blessings we need.

Such was the case of the woman who, with great effort, managed to touch the Savior’s garment<sup>11</sup> or of Bartimaeus the blind man, whose determination was a key factor in the miracle that happened in his life.<sup>12</sup> In both cases a healing of body and spirit was granted.

Reach out your hand, touch His garment, accept His invitation, say,

“Yes, Lord, I will follow Thee!”—and walk with Him.

“Come unto me,” “Follow me,” and “Walk with me” are invitations containing inherent power—for those who accept them—to transform your life and generate a *change within you* that will lead you to say, “[I] have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually.”<sup>13</sup>

As an outward manifestation of that change, you will feel the strong desire to “succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees.”<sup>14</sup>

What steps can we take today to “walk with Him”?

1. *Feed the desire* to be a better follower of Christ.<sup>15</sup>
2. *Pray* for this desire that your faith in Him may grow.<sup>16</sup>
3. *Obtain knowledge* from the scriptures, lighting the way and strengthening your desire to change.<sup>17</sup>
4. *Make the decision today* to act and say, “Yes, Lord, I will follow Thee!” Simply knowing the truth will not change your world unless you turn knowledge into *action*.<sup>18</sup>

5. *Persevere* in the decision you have made by exercising these principles daily.<sup>19</sup>

May the words of our beloved prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, motivate us to action in our desire to accept the Savior’s invitation. President Monson said: “Who is the King of glory, this Lord of hosts? He is our Master. He is our Savior. He is the Son of God. He is the Author of our Salvation. He beckons, ‘Follow me.’ He instructs, ‘Go, and do thou likewise.’ He pleads, ‘Keep my commandments.’”<sup>20</sup>

May we make the decision today to increase our level of worship and commitment to God, and may our response to His invitation be heard loud and clear: “Yes, Lord, I will follow Thee!”<sup>21</sup> In the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen. ■

*This address was delivered in Spanish.*

#### NOTES

1. Alma 29:8.
2. John 10:14, 27.
3. Matthew 11:28; see also Isaiah 55:3.
4. See *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2004), 31, 195–202.
5. See Acts 2:37–38.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:37, 77–79.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 42:29.
8. Mark 10:21.
9. 2 Nephi 31:10.
10. See Moses 6:33–35.
11. See Luke 8:43–48.
12. See Mark 10:46–52.
13. Mosiah 5:2.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 81:5; see also Isaiah 35:3.
15. See Alma 22:15–16; Dallin H. Oaks, “Desire,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2011, 42–45.
16. See Alma 34:17–27; 37:37.
17. See Psalm 119:105; Helaman 3:29.
18. See Mosiah 5:5.
19. Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “That which we persist in doing becomes easier to do, not that the nature of the thing has changed but that our power to do has increased” (in Heber J. Grant, *Gospel Standards*, comp. G. Homer Durham [1941], 355).
20. Thomas S. Monson, “Finding Joy in the Journey,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 88.
21. See “Lord, I Would Follow Thee,” *Hymns*, no. 220.



**Bariloche, Argentina**



By **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland**  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# Are We Not All Beggars?

*Rich or poor, we are to “do what we can” when others are in need.*

What a wonderful new element introduced into our general conference format. Bien hecho, Eduardo.

In what would be the most startling moment of His early ministry, Jesus stood up in His home synagogue in Nazareth and read these words prophesied by Isaiah and recorded in the Gospel of Luke: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and . . . set at liberty them that are bruised.”<sup>1</sup>

Thus the Savior made the first public announcement of His messianic ministry. But this verse also made clear that on the way to His ultimate atoning sacrifice and Resurrection, Jesus’s first and foremost messianic duty would be to bless the poor, including the poor in spirit.

From the beginning of His ministry, Jesus loved the impoverished and the disadvantaged in an extraordinary way. He was born into the home of two of them and grew up among many more of them. We don’t know all the details of His temporal life, but He once said,

“Foxes have holes, and . . . birds . . . have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.”<sup>2</sup> Apparently the Creator of heaven and earth “and all things that in them are”<sup>3</sup> was, at least in His adult life, homeless.

Down through history, poverty has been one of humankind’s greatest and most widespread challenges. Its obvious toll is usually physical, but the spiritual and emotional damage it can bring may be even more debilitating. In any case, the great Redeemer has issued no more persistent call than for us to join Him in lifting this burden from the people. As Jehovah, He said He would judge the house of Israel harshly because “the spoil of the [needy] is in your houses.”

“What mean ye,” He cried, “that ye beat my people to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor?”<sup>4</sup>

The writer of Proverbs would make the matter piercingly clear: “He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker,” and “whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor . . . shall [also] cry himself, but shall not be heard.”<sup>5</sup>

In our day, the restored Church of Jesus Christ had not yet seen its first anniversary when the Lord

commanded the members to “look to the poor and . . . needy, and administer to their relief that they shall not suffer.”<sup>6</sup> Note the imperative tone of that passage—“they *shall* not suffer.” That is language God uses when He means business.

Given the monumental challenge of addressing inequity in the world, what can one man or woman do? The Master Himself offered an answer. When, prior to His betrayal and Crucifixion, Mary anointed Jesus’s head with an expensive burial ointment, Judas Iscariot protested this extravagance and “murmured against her.”<sup>7</sup>

Jesus said:

“Why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work. . . .

*“She hath done what she could.”*<sup>8</sup>

“She hath done what she could!”

What a succinct formula! A journalist once questioned Mother Teresa of Calcutta about her hopeless task of rescuing the destitute in that city. He said that, statistically speaking, she was accomplishing absolutely nothing. This remarkable little woman shot back that her work was about love, not statistics. Notwithstanding the staggering number *beyond* her reach, she said she could keep the commandment to love God and her neighbor by serving those *within* her reach with whatever resources she had. “What we do is nothing but a drop in the ocean,” she would say on another occasion. “But if we didn’t do it, the ocean would be one drop less [than it is].”<sup>9</sup> Soberly, the journalist concluded that Christianity is obviously *not* a statistical endeavor. He reasoned that if there would be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over the ninety and nine who need no repentance, then apparently God is not overly preoccupied with percentages.<sup>10</sup>



So how might we “do what we can”?

For one thing, we can, as King Benjamin taught, cease withholding our means because we see the poor as having brought their misery upon themselves. Perhaps some *have* created their own difficulties, but don’t the rest of us do exactly the same thing? Isn’t that why this compassionate ruler asks, “Are we not all beggars?”<sup>11</sup> Don’t we all cry out for help and hope and answers to prayers? Don’t we all beg for forgiveness for mistakes we have made and troubles we have caused? Don’t we all implore that grace will compensate for our weaknesses, that mercy will triumph over justice at least in our case? Little wonder that King Benjamin says we *obtain* a remission of our sins by pleading to God, who compassionately responds, but we *retain* a remission of our sins by compassionately responding to the poor who plead to us.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to taking merciful action in their behalf, we should also pray for those in need. A group of Zoramites, considered by their fellow congregants to be “filthiness” and “dross”—those are scriptural words—were turned out of

their houses of prayer “because of the coarseness of their [wearing] apparel.” They were, Mormon says, “poor as to things of the world; and also . . . poor in heart”<sup>13</sup>—two conditions that almost always go together. Missionary companions Alma and Amulek counter that reprehensible rejection of the shabbily dressed by telling them that whatever privileges others may deny them, they can always pray—in their fields and in their houses, in their families and in their hearts.<sup>14</sup>

But then, to this very group who had themselves been turned away, Amulek says, “After [you] have [prayed], if [you] turn away the needy, and the naked, and visit not the sick and afflicted, and impart of your substance, if [you] have [it], to those who stand in need—I say unto you, . . . your prayer is vain, and availeth you nothing, and [you] are as hypocrites who do deny the faith.”<sup>15</sup> What a stunning reminder that rich *or* poor, we are to “do what we can” when others are in need.

Now, lest I be accused of proposing quixotic global social programs or of endorsing panhandling as a growth industry, I reassure you that my reverence for principles of industry,

thrift, self-reliance, and ambition is as strong as that of any man or woman alive. We are always expected to help ourselves before we seek help from others. Furthermore, I don’t know exactly how each of you should fulfill your obligation to those who do not or cannot always help themselves. But I know that God knows, and He will help you and guide you in compassionate acts of discipleship if you are conscientiously wanting and praying and looking for ways to keep a commandment He has given us again and again.

You will recognize that I speak here of difficult societal needs that go well beyond members of the Church. Fortunately the Lord’s way of assisting our own is easier: all who are physically able are to observe the law of the fast. Isaiah wrote:

“Is not this the fast that I have chosen? . . .

“Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him . . . ? [that thou] undo the heavy burdens, and . . . let the oppressed go free . . . ?”<sup>16</sup>



good tidings, that publisheth peace.”<sup>20</sup> More than any man I know, President Monson has “done all he could” for the widow and the fatherless, the poor and the oppressed.

In an 1831 revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord said the poor would one day see the kingdom of God coming to deliver them “in power and great glory.”<sup>21</sup> May we help fulfill that prophecy by coming in the power and glory of our membership in the true Church of Jesus Christ to do what we can to deliver any we can from the poverty that holds them captive and destroys so many of their dreams, I pray in the merciful name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Luke 4:18.
2. Matthew 8:20.
3. 2 Nephi 2:14; 3 Nephi 9:15.
4. Isaiah 3:14–15.
5. Proverbs 14:31; 21:13.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 38:35.
7. See Mark 14:3–5; see also Matthew 26:6–9; John 12:3–5.
8. Mark 14:6, 8; emphasis added.
9. Mother Teresa of Calcutta, *My Life for the Poor*, ed. José Luis González-Balado and Janet N. Playfoot (1985), 20.
10. See Malcolm Muggeridge, *Something Beautiful for God* (1986), 28–29, 118–19; see also Luke 15:7.
11. Mosiah 4:19.
12. See Mosiah 4:11–12, 20, 26.
13. Alma 32:2–3.
14. See Alma 34:17–27.
15. Alma 34:28; emphasis added.
16. Isaiah 58:6–7.
17. Isaiah 58:9.
18. Attributed to John Bradford; see *The Writings of John Bradford*, ed. Aubrey Townsend (1853), xliii.
19. “Because I Have Been Given Much,” *Hymns*, no. 219. © Harper San Francisco.
20. Isaiah 52:7.
21. Doctrine and Covenants 56:18; see also verse 19.

I bear witness of the miracles, both spiritual and temporal, that come to those who live the law of the fast. I bear witness of the miracles that have come to me. Truly, as Isaiah recorded, I have cried out in the fast more than once, and truly God has responded, “Here I am.”<sup>17</sup> Cherish that sacred privilege at least monthly, and be as generous as circumstances permit in your fast offering and other humanitarian, educational, and missionary contributions. I promise that God will be generous to you, and those who find relief at your hand will call your name blessed forever. More than three-quarters of a million members of the Church were helped last year through fast offerings administered by devoted bishops and Relief Society presidents. That is a lot of grateful Latter-day Saints.

Brothers and sisters, such a sermon demands that I openly acknowledge the unearned, undeserved, unending blessings in my life, both temporal and spiritual. Like you, I have had to worry about finances on

occasion, but I have never been poor, nor do I even know how the poor feel. Furthermore, I do not know all the reasons why the circumstances of birth, health, education, and economic opportunities vary so widely here in mortality, but when I see the want among so many, I do know that “there but for the grace of God go I.”<sup>18</sup> I also know that although I may not be my brother’s keeper, I am my brother’s brother, and “because I have been given much, I too must give.”<sup>19</sup>

In that regard, I pay a personal tribute to President Thomas Spencer Monson. I have been blessed by an association with this man for 47 years now, and the image of him I will cherish until I die is of him flying home from then—economically devastated East Germany in his house slippers because he had given away not only his second suit and his extra shirts but the very shoes from off his feet. “How beautiful upon the mountains [and shuffling through an airline terminal] are the feet of him that bringeth

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**By Elder L. Tom Perry**  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# Finding Lasting Peace and Building Eternal Families

*It is the gospel of Jesus Christ that provides the foundation upon which we can find lasting peace and build eternal family units.*

Our journey through life has periods of both good times and bad. Each presents different challenges. How we learn to adjust to the changes which come along depends on the foundation on which we build. The gospel of our Lord and Savior provides a sure and solid foundation. It is constructed piece by piece as we gain knowledge of the Lord's eternal plan for His children. The Savior is the Master Teacher. We follow Him.

The scriptures testify of Him and provide an example of perfect righteousness for us to follow. I have shared with the body of the Church at a previous conference that I have a number of notebooks in which my mother had recorded material she was using to prepare her Relief Society lessons. The notes are as timely today as they were then. One of these was a quote written in 1908 by Charles Edward Jefferson on the character of Jesus Christ. It reads:

“To be a Christian is to admire Jesus so sincerely and so fervently that the whole life goes out to him in an aspiration to be like him.

“... We may come to know him through the words he spoke, through the deeds he did, and also through his silences. We may know him also by the impression which he made first upon his friends and secondly upon his foes, and thirdly upon the general body of his contemporaries. . . .

“One of the notes of twentieth century life is discontent [and trouble]. . . .

“... The world is crying out for something, it scarce knows what. Wealth has come, . . . [and] the world is filled with . . . inventions of human skill and genius, but . . . we are [still] restless, unsatisfied, [and] bewildered. . . . [If we open] the New Testament [we are greeted by these words], ‘Come unto me and I will give you rest, I am the bread of life, I am the Light of the world, If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink,

My peace I give unto you, You shall receive power, You shall rejoice’” (*The Character of Jesus* [1908], 7, 11, 15–16).

Men and women are shaped partly by those among whom they choose to live. Those to whom they look up and try to emulate also shape them. Jesus is the great Exemplar. The only way to find lasting peace is to look to Him and live.

What about Jesus is worthy of our study?

“The New Testament writers . . . cared nothing for [Jesus's] stature, the clothes he wore or the houses he lived in. . . . He was born in a stable, worked in a carpenter's shop, taught for three years, and then died on a cross. . . . The New Testament was written by men who were determined that we . . . fix our eyes on [Him]” (*The Character of Jesus*, 21–22) with an assurance that He truly was and is the Son of God, the Savior and Redeemer of the world.

One of the Savior's parables, I believe, especially applies to our current day.

It is contained in Matthew chapter 13, where we read:

“But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.

“But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.

“So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?

“He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?

“But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.

“Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn” (verses 25–30).

That old enemy of all mankind has found as many devices as he can think of to scatter tares far and wide. He has found ways to have them penetrate even the sanctity of our own homes. The wicked and worldly ways have become so widespread there seems to be no real way of weeding them out. They come by wire and through the air into the very devices we have developed to educate and entertain us. The wheat and the tares have grown close together. A steward managing the field must, with all his or her power, nourish that which is good and make it so strong and beautiful the tares will have no appeal either to the eye or the ear. How blessed are we as members of the Lord’s Church to have the precious gospel of our Lord and Savior as a foundation on which we can build our lives.

From the Book of Mormon in 2 Nephi we read: “For behold, again I

say unto you that if ye will enter in by the way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do” (2 Nephi 32:5).

We must never let the noise of the world overpower and overwhelm that still, small voice.

We certainly have been warned of events that we will be facing in our day. Our challenge will be how we prepare for the events the Lord has said are surely still to come.

Many in our worried society understand that the disintegration of the family will bring only sorrow and hopelessness into a troubled world. As members of the Church, we have the responsibility to preserve and protect the family as the basic unit of society and eternity. The prophets have warned and forewarned about the inevitable and destructive consequence of a deterioration of family values.

As the world continues to watch us, let us be certain that our example will sustain and support the plan the Lord has designed for His children here in mortality. The greatest teaching of all must be done by righteous example.

Our homes must be holy places in order to stand against the pressures of the world. Remember that the greatest of all the blessings of the Lord come through and are given to righteous families.

We must carefully continue to evaluate our performance as parents. The most powerful teaching a child will ever receive will come from concerned and righteous fathers and mothers. Let us first look at the role of the mother. Listen to this quote from President Gordon B. Hinckley:

“Women who make a house a home make a far greater contribution to society than those who command large armies or stand at the head of impressive corporations. Who can put a price tag on the influence a mother has on her children, a grandmother on her posterity, or aunts and sisters on their extended family?”

“We cannot begin to measure or calculate the influence of women who, in their own ways, build stable family life and nurture for everlasting good the generations of the future. The decisions made by the women of this generation will be eternal in their consequences. May I suggest that the mothers of today have no greater opportunity and no more serious challenge than to do all they can to strengthen the [home]” (*Standing for Something: 10 Neglected Virtues That Will Heal Our Hearts and Homes* [2000], 152).

Now let’s look at the role a father plays in our lives:

Fathers give blessings and perform sacred ordinances for their children. These will become spiritual highlights in their lives.

Fathers are personally involved in leading family prayers, daily scripture reading, and weekly family home evenings.



Fathers build family traditions by being involved in helping plan vacation trips and outings that will involve all of the family members. Memories of these special times together will never be forgotten by their children.

Fathers hold one-on-one visits with their children and teach them gospel principles.

Fathers teach sons and daughters the value of work and help them establish worthy goals in their own lives.

Fathers set an example of faithful gospel service.

Please remember, brethren, your sacred calling as a father in Israel—your most important calling in time and eternity—a calling from which you are never released.

Many years ago at stake conferences, we would show a film clip to illustrate the theme of the message we were presenting. During the course of a year, as we traveled around the Church on our assigned stake conference visits, we became very familiar with the content of the film. We could almost quote it by heart. The message has remained in my mind over all these years. The film was narrated by President Harold B. Lee and gave an account of an occurrence in the home of his daughter. It goes something like this:

One evening the mother of the home was frantically trying to finish bottling some fruit. Finally the children were ready for bed and were settled down. It was now time to get to the fruit. As she began to peel and pit the fruit, two little boys appeared in the kitchen and announced that they were ready for their bedtime prayers.

Not wanting to be interrupted, the mother said very quickly to the boys, “Why don’t you just say your prayers alone tonight, and Mother will just keep working on the fruit?”



The older of the two sons firmly planted his feet and asked, “Which is the most important, prayers or fruit?” (See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Harold B. Lee* [2000], 143–44.)

Sometimes we find ourselves in situations when we have the opportunity to teach children a lesson which will have a lasting effect on their young lives. Of course, prayers are more important than fruit. A successful parent should never be too busy to capture a moment in a child’s life when an important lesson can be taught.

It is my firm conviction that there has never been a period in my many years of life when our Father in Heaven’s children have needed the guiding hand of faithful, devoted parents more. We have a great and noble heritage of parents giving up almost everything they possess to find a place where they could rear their families with faith and courage so the next generation would have greater opportunities than had been theirs. We must find within ourselves that same determined spirit and overcome the challenges we face with the same spirit of sacrifice.

We must instill in future generations an ever stronger reliance on the teachings of our Lord and Savior.

“And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall” (Helaman 5:12).

It is the gospel of Jesus Christ that provides this foundation upon which we can find lasting peace and build eternal family units. Of this I testify in the name of our Lord and Savior, even Jesus Christ, amen. ■



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**By Elder Quentin L. Cook**  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# Choose Wisely

*“Refuse the evil, and choose the good” (Isaiah 7:15).*

**M**y beloved brethren, my desire this evening is to share some counsel about decisions and choices.

When I was a young lawyer in the San Francisco Bay Area, our firm did some legal work for the company that produced the Charlie Brown holiday TV specials.<sup>1</sup> I became a fan of Charles Schulz and his creation—*Peanuts*, with Charlie Brown, Lucy, Snoopy, and other wonderful characters.

One of my favorite comic strips involved Lucy. As I remember it, Charlie Brown’s baseball team was in an important game—Lucy was playing right field, and a high fly ball was hit to her. The bases were loaded, and it was the last of the ninth inning. If Lucy caught the ball, her team would win. If Lucy dropped the ball, the other team would win.

As could happen only in a comic strip, the entire team surrounded Lucy as the ball came down. Lucy was thinking, “If I catch the ball, I will be the hero; if I don’t, I will be the goat.”

The ball came down, and as her teammates eagerly looked on, Lucy dropped the ball. Charlie Brown threw his glove to the ground in disgust. Lucy then looked at her teammates, put her hands on her hips, and said,

“How do you expect me to catch the ball when I am worried about our country’s foreign policy?”

This was one of many fly balls Lucy dropped through the years, and she had a new excuse each time.<sup>2</sup> While always humorous, Lucy’s excuses were rationalizations; they were untrue reasons for her failure to catch the ball.

During the ministry of President Thomas S. Monson, he has often taught that decisions determine destiny.<sup>3</sup> In that spirit my counsel tonight is to rise above any rationalizations that prevent us from making righteous decisions, especially with respect to serving Jesus Christ. In Isaiah we are taught we must “refuse the evil, and choose the good.”<sup>4</sup>

I believe it is of particular importance in our day, when Satan is raging in the hearts of men in so many new and subtle ways, that our choices and decisions be made carefully, consistent with the goals and objectives by which we profess to live. We need unequivocal commitment to the commandments and strict adherence to sacred covenants. When we allow rationalizations to prevent us from temple endowments, worthy missions, and temple marriage, they are particularly harmful. It is heartbreaking when we profess belief in these goals yet







neglect the everyday conduct required to achieve them.<sup>5</sup>

Some young people profess their goal is to be married in the temple but do not date temple-worthy individuals. To be honest, some don't even date, period! You single men, the longer you remain single after an appropriate age and maturity, the more comfortable you can become. But the more *uncomfortable* you *ought* to become! Please get "anxiously engaged"<sup>6</sup> in spiritual and social activities compatible with your goal of a temple marriage.

Some postpone marriage until education is complete and a job obtained. While widely accepted in the world, this reasoning does not demonstrate faith, does not comply with counsel of modern prophets, and is not compatible with sound doctrine.

I recently met a fine teenage young man. His goals were to go on a mission, obtain an education, marry in the temple, and have a faithful happy family. I was very pleased with his goals. But during further conversation, it became evident that his conduct and the choices he was making were not consistent with his goals. I felt he genuinely wanted to go on a mission and was avoiding serious transgressions that would prohibit a mission, but his day-to-day conduct was not preparing him for the physical, emotional, social, intellectual, and spiritual challenges he would face.<sup>7</sup> He had not learned to work hard. He was not serious about school or seminary. He attended church, but he had not read the Book of Mormon. He was spending a large amount of time on video games and social media. He seemed to think that showing up for his mission would be sufficient. Young men, please recommit to worthy conduct and serious preparation to be emissaries of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

My concern is not only about the big tipping-point decisions but also the middle ground—the workaday world and seemingly ordinary decisions where we spend most of our time. In these areas, we need to emphasize moderation, balance, and especially wisdom. It is important to rise above rationalizations and make the best choices.

A wonderful example of the need for moderation, balance, and wisdom is the use of the Internet. It can be used to do missionary outreach, to assist with priesthood responsibilities, to find precious ancestors for sacred temple ordinances, and much more. The potential for good is enormous. We also know that it can transmit much that is evil, including pornography, digital cruelty,<sup>8</sup> and anonymous yakking. It can also perpetuate foolishness. As Brother Randall L. Ridd poignantly taught at the last general conference, speaking of the Internet, "You can get caught up in endless loops of triviality that waste your time and degrade your potential."<sup>9</sup>

Distractions and opposition to righteousness are not just on the Internet; they are everywhere. They affect not just the youth but all of us. We live in a world that is literally in commotion.<sup>10</sup> We are surrounded by obsessive portrayals of "fun and games" and immoral and dysfunctional lives. These are presented as normal conduct in much of the media.

Elder David A. Bednar recently cautioned members to be authentic in the use of social media.<sup>11</sup> A prominent thought leader, Arthur C. Brooks, has emphasized this point. He observes that when using social media, we tend to broadcast the smiling details of our lives but not the hard times at school or work. We portray an incomplete life—sometimes in a self-aggrandizing



or fake way. We share this life, and then we consume the “almost exclusively . . . fake lives of [our] social media ‘friends.’” Brooks asserts, “How could it not make you feel worse to spend part of your time pretending to be happier than you are, and the other part of your time seeing how much happier others seem to be than you?”<sup>12</sup>

Sometimes it feels like we are drowning in frivolous foolishness, nonsensical noise, and continuous contention. When we turn down the volume and examine the substance, there is very little that will assist us in our eternal quest toward righteous goals. One father wisely responds to his children with their numerous requests to participate in these distractions. He simply asks them, “Will this make you a better person?”

When we rationalize wrong choices, big or small, which are inconsistent with the restored gospel, we lose the blessings and protections we need and often become ensnared in sin or simply lose our way.

I am particularly concerned with foolishness<sup>13</sup> and being obsessed with “every new thing.” In the Church we encourage and celebrate truth and knowledge of every kind. But when culture, knowledge, and social mores are separated from God’s plan of happiness and the essential role of Jesus Christ, there is an inevitable disintegration of society.<sup>14</sup> In our day, despite unprecedented gains in many areas, especially science and communication, essential basic values have

eroded and overall happiness and well-being have diminished.

When the Apostle Paul was invited to speak on Mars Hill in Athens, he found some of the same intellectual pretension and absence of true wisdom that exist today.<sup>15</sup> In Acts we read this account:

“For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.”<sup>16</sup> Paul’s emphasis was the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. When the crowd realized the religious nature of his message, some mocked him; others essentially dismissed him, saying, “We will hear thee again of this matter.”<sup>17</sup> Paul left Athens *without any success*. Dean Frederic Farrar wrote of this visit: “At Athens he founded no church, to Athens he wrote no epistle, and in Athens, often as he passed its neighbourhood, he never set foot again.”<sup>18</sup>

I believe Elder Dallin H. Oaks’s inspired message distinguishing between “good, better, best” provides an effective way to evaluate choices and priorities.<sup>19</sup> Many choices are not inherently evil, but if they absorb all of our time and keep us from the best choices, then they become insidious.

Even worthwhile endeavors need evaluation in order to determine if they have become distractions from the best goals. I had a memorable discussion with my father when I was a teenager. He did not believe enough young people were focused on or preparing for long-term important goals—like employment and providing for families.

Meaningful study and preparatory work experience were always at the top of my father’s recommended priorities. He appreciated that extracurricular activities like debate and student government might have a direct connection with some of my important goals. He was less certain about the extensive time I spent participating in football, basketball, baseball, and track. He acknowledged that athletics could build strength, endurance, and teamwork but asserted that perhaps concentrating on one sport for a shorter time would be better. In his view, sports were good but not the best *for me*. He was concerned that some sports were about building local celebrity or fame at the expense of more important long-term goals.

Given this history, one of the reasons I like the account of Lucy playing baseball is that, in my father’s view, I should have been studying foreign policy and not worrying about whether I was going to catch a ball. I should make it clear that my mother loved sports. It would have taken a hospitalization for her to miss one of my games.

I had decided to follow my dad’s advice and not play intercollegiate sports in college. Then our high school football coach informed me that the Stanford football coach wanted to have lunch with Merlin Olsen and me. Those of you who are younger may not know Merlin. He was an incredible all-American tackle on the Logan High School football team where I played quarterback

and safety and returned kickoffs and punts. In high school Merlin was recruited by most football powers across the nation. In college he won the Outland Trophy as the nation's best interior lineman. Merlin was ultimately the third overall pick in the National Football League draft and played in an amazing 14 consecutive Pro Bowls. He was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1982.<sup>20</sup>

The lunch with the Stanford coach was at the Bluebird restaurant in Logan, Utah. After we shook hands, he never once made eye contact with me. He talked directly to Merlin but ignored



me. At the end of the lunch, for the first time, he turned toward me, but he could not remember my name. He then informed Merlin, "If you choose Stanford and want to bring your friend with you, he has good enough grades and it could probably be arranged." This experience confirmed for me that I should follow my dad's wise counsel.

My intent is not to discourage participation in sports or the use of the Internet or other worthwhile activities young people enjoy. They are the kind of activities that require moderation, balance, and wisdom. When used wisely, they enrich our lives.

However, I encourage everyone, young and old, to review goals and objectives and strive to exercise greater discipline. Our daily conduct and choices should be consistent with our goals. We need to rise above rationalizations and distractions. It is especially important to make choices consistent with our covenants to serve Jesus Christ in righteousness.<sup>21</sup> We must not take our eyes off or drop that ball for any reason.

This life is the time to prepare to meet God.<sup>22</sup> We are a happy, joyous people. We appreciate a good sense of humor and treasure unstructured time with friends and family. But we need to recognize that there is a seriousness of purpose that must undergird our approach to life and all our choices. Distractions and rationalizations that limit progress are harmful enough, but when they diminish faith in Jesus Christ and His Church, they are tragic.

My prayer is that as a body of priesthood holders, we will make our conduct consistent with the noble purposes required of those who are in the service of the Master. In all things we should remember that being "valiant in the testimony of Jesus" is the great dividing test between the celestial and terrestrial kingdoms.<sup>23</sup> We want to be found on the celestial side of that divide. As one of His Apostles, I bear fervent testimony of the reality of the Atonement and the divinity of Jesus Christ, our Savior. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Lee Mendelson-Bill Melendez Production TV Specials.
2. From the moons of Saturn distracting her to worrying about possible toxic substances in her glove, Lucy always rationalized why she dropped the ball.
3. See "Decisions Determine Destiny," chapter 8 in *Pathways to Perfection: Discourses of Thomas S. Monson* (1973), 57–65.

4. Isaiah 7:15.

5. "If to do were as easy as to know what were good to do, chapels had been churches and poor men's cottages princes' palaces" (William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, act 1, scene 2, lines 12–14).

6. Doctrine and Covenants 58:27.

7. See *Adjusting to Missionary Life* (booklet, 2013), 23–49.

8. See Stephanie Rosenbloom, "Dealing with Digital Cruelty," *New York Times*, Aug. 24, 2014, SR1.

9. Randall L. Ridd, "The Choice Generation," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 56.

10. See Doctrine and Covenants 45:26.

11. See David A. Bednar, "To Sweep the Earth as with a Flood" (speech delivered at BYU Campus Education Week, Aug. 19, 2014); [lds.org/prophets-and-apostles/unto-all-the-world/to-sweep-the-earth-as-with-a-flood](http://lds.org/prophets-and-apostles/unto-all-the-world/to-sweep-the-earth-as-with-a-flood).

12. Arthur C. Brooks, "Love People, Not Pleasure," *New York Times*, July 20, 2014, SR1.

13. Unfortunately, one diversion that has increased in our day is pure foolishness. When the Savior enumerated some of the things that can defile man, He included foolishness (see Mark 7:22).

14. This happened in ancient Greece and Rome, as well as with the Book of Mormon civilizations.

15. See Frederic W. Farrar, *The Life and Work of St. Paul* (1898), 302. There were philosophers of all kinds, including Epicureans and Stoics, rival groups who some described as the Pharisees and the Sadducees of the pagan world. See also Quentin L. Cook, "Looking beyond the Mark," *Ensign*, Mar. 2003, 41–44; *Liahona*, Mar. 2003, 21–24.

16. Acts 17:21.

17. Acts 17:32.

18. Farrar, *The Life and Work of St. Paul*, 312.

19. See Dallin H. Oaks, "Good, Better, Best," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2007, 104–8.

20. Merlin Olsen was a hall of fame football player, actor, and NFL commentator for NBC. He won the Outland Trophy playing football for Utah State University. He played pro football for the Los Angeles Rams. On TV he played Jonathan Garvey opposite Michael Landon on *Little House on the Prairie* and had his own TV program, *Father Murphy*. Merlin is now deceased (Mar. 11, 2010), and we miss him very much.

21. See Doctrine and Covenants 76:5.

22. See Alma 34:32.

23. Doctrine and Covenants 76:79.

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**By Elder Craig C. Christensen**  
Of the Presidency of the Seventy

# I Know These Things of Myself

*Learning for ourselves that the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is true can be one of the greatest and most joyful experiences in life.*

**M**y dear brethren, we are continually inspired by the personal example and priesthood service of President Thomas S. Monson. Recently, several deacons were asked, “What do you admire most about President Monson?” One deacon recalled how President Monson, as a child, gave his toys to needy friends. Another mentioned how President Monson cared for the many widows in his ward. A third noted that he was called as an Apostle at a very young age and has blessed people all around the world. Then one young man said, “The thing I admire most about President Monson is his strong testimony.”

Indeed, we have all felt our prophet’s special witness of the Savior Jesus Christ and his commitment to always follow the promptings of the Spirit. With each experience he shares, President Monson invites us to live the gospel more fully and to seek for and strengthen our own personal testimonies. Remember what he said from this pulpit just a few conferences ago: “In order for us to be strong and

to withstand all the forces pulling us in the wrong direction . . . , we must have our own testimony. Whether you are 12 or 112—or anywhere in between—you can know for yourself that the gospel of Jesus Christ is true.”<sup>1</sup>

Although my message tonight is directed to those who are closer to 12 than 112, the principles I share apply to everyone. In response to President Monson’s statement, I would ask: Does each of us know for ourselves that the gospel is true? Can we say with confidence that our testimonies



are truly our own? To quote President Monson again: “I maintain that a strong testimony of our Savior and of His gospel will . . . protect you from the sin and evil around you. . . . If you do not already have a testimony of these things, do that which is necessary to obtain one. It is essential for you to have your own testimony, for the testimonies of others will carry you only so far.”<sup>2</sup>

## **I Know These Things of Myself**

Learning for ourselves that the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is true can be one of the greatest and most joyful experiences in life. We may have to begin by relying on the testimonies of others—saying, as the stripling warriors did, “We do not doubt our mothers knew it.”<sup>3</sup> This is a good place to start, but we must build from there. To be strong in living the gospel, there is nothing more important than receiving and strengthening our own testimony. We must be able to declare, as Alma did, “I . . . know these things of myself.”<sup>4</sup>

“And how do ye suppose that I know of their surety?” Alma continued. “Behold, I say unto you they are made known unto me by the Holy Spirit of God. Behold, I have fasted and prayed many days that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true.”<sup>5</sup>

## **I Desire to Behold the Things Which My Father Saw**

Like Alma, Nephi also came to know the truth for himself. After listening to his father speak of his many spiritual experiences, Nephi wanted to know what his father knew. This was more than simple curiosity—it was something he hungered and thirsted after. Even though he was “exceedingly young,” he had “great desires to



know of the mysteries of God.”<sup>6</sup> He yearned to “see, and hear, and know of these things, by the power of the Holy Ghost.”<sup>7</sup>

As Nephi “sat pondering in [his] heart,” he was carried “away in the Spirit . . . into an exceedingly high mountain,” where he was asked, “What desirest thou?” His response was simple: “I desire to behold the things which my father saw.”<sup>8</sup> Because of his believing heart and his diligent efforts, Nephi was blessed with a marvelous experience. He received a witness of the forthcoming birth, life, and Crucifixion of the Savior Jesus Christ; he saw the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and the Restoration of the gospel in the last days—all as a result of his sincere desire to know for himself.<sup>9</sup>

These personal experiences with the Lord prepared Nephi for the adversity and challenges he would soon face. They enabled him to stand strong even when others in his family were struggling. He could do this because he had *learned* for himself and he *knew* for himself. He had been blessed with his own testimony.

#### Let Him Ask of God

Similar to Nephi, the Prophet Joseph Smith was also “exceedingly

young” when his “mind was called up to serious reflection” about spiritual truths. For Joseph, it was a time of “great uneasiness,” being surrounded by conflicting and confusing messages about religion. He wanted to know which church was right.<sup>10</sup> Inspired by these words in the Bible, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God,”<sup>11</sup> he acted for himself to find an answer. On a beautiful morning in the spring of 1820, he entered a grove of trees and knelt in prayer. Because of his faith and because God had a special work for him to do, Joseph received a glorious vision of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, and learned for himself what he was to do.

Do you see in Joseph’s experience a pattern you could apply in gaining or strengthening your own testimony? Joseph allowed the scriptures to penetrate his heart. He pondered them deeply and applied them to his own situation. He then acted on what he had learned. The result was the glorious First Vision—and everything that came after it. This Church quite literally was founded on the principle that anyone—including a 14-year-old farm boy—can “ask of God” and receive an answer to his prayers.

#### So What Is a Testimony?

We often hear members of the Church say that their testimony of the gospel is their most prized possession. It is a sacred gift from God that comes to us by the power of the Holy Ghost. It is the calm, unwavering certainty we receive as we study, pray, and live the gospel. It is the feeling of the Holy Ghost bearing witness to our souls that what we are learning and doing is right.

Some people speak of a testimony as if it were a light switch—it’s either on or off; you either have a testimony, or you do not. In reality, a testimony is more like a tree that passes through various stages of growth and development. Some of the tallest trees on earth are found in Redwood National Park in the western United States. When you stand at the base of these massive trees, it is amazing to think that each one grew from a tiny seed. So it is with our testimonies. Although they may begin with a single spiritual experience, they grow and develop over time through constant nourishment and frequent spiritual encounters.

It’s not surprising, then, that when the prophet Alma explained how we develop a testimony, he spoke of a seed growing into a tree. “If ye give



**Cape Town, South Africa**

place,” he said, “that a seed may be planted in your heart, behold, if it be a true seed, or a good seed, if ye do not cast it out by your unbelief, . . . it will begin to swell within your breasts; and when you feel these swelling motions, ye will begin to say within yourselves—It must needs be that this is a good seed, or that the word is good, for it beginneth to enlarge my soul; yea, it beginneth to enlighten my understanding, yea, it beginneth to be delicious to me.”<sup>12</sup>

This is often how a testimony begins: with sacred, enlightening, assuring feelings that demonstrate to us that the word of God is true. However, as wonderful as these feelings are, they are only the beginning. Your work to grow your testimony is not done—any more than the work of growing a redwood tree is done when the first tiny sprout pokes out of the ground. If we ignore or neglect these early spiritual promptings, if we do not nurture them by continuing to study the scriptures and pray and by seeking more experiences with the Spirit, our feelings will fade and our testimonies will diminish.

As Alma put it: “If ye neglect the tree, and take no thought for its nourishment, behold it will not get any root; and when the heat of the sun cometh and scorcheth it, because

it hath no root it withers away, and ye pluck it up and cast it out.”<sup>13</sup>

In most cases, our testimonies will grow the same way a tree grows: gradually, almost imperceptibly, as a result of our constant care and diligent efforts. “But if ye will nourish the word,” Alma promised, “yea, nourish the tree as it beginneth to grow, by your faith with great diligence, and with patience, looking forward to the fruit thereof, it shall take root; and behold it shall be a tree springing up unto everlasting life.”<sup>14</sup>

#### **Now Is the Time; Today Is the Day**

My own testimony began as I studied and pondered the teachings found in the Book of Mormon. As I knelt down to ask God in humble prayer, the Holy Ghost testified to my soul that what I was reading was true. This early witness became the catalyst for my testimony of many other gospel truths, for, as President Monson taught: “When we know the Book of Mormon is true, then it follows that Joseph Smith was indeed a prophet and that he saw God the Eternal Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. It also follows that the gospel was restored in these latter days through Joseph Smith—including the restoration of both the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods.”<sup>15</sup> Since that

day, I have had many sacred experiences with the Holy Ghost that have reaffirmed to me that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world and that His restored gospel is true. With Alma, I can say with certainty that I know these things of myself.

My young friends, now is the time and today is the day to learn or reaffirm for ourselves that the gospel is true. Each of us has an important work to do. To accomplish that work, and to be protected from worldly influences that seem to be constantly looming, we must have the faith of Alma, Nephi, and young Joseph Smith to obtain and develop our own testimony.

Like the young deacon I spoke of earlier, I admire President Monson for his testimony. It is like a towering redwood, yet even President Monson’s testimony had to grow and develop over time. We can come to know for ourselves, just as President Monson has, that Jesus Christ is our Savior and the Redeemer of the world, that Joseph Smith is the prophet of the Restoration, including the restoration of the priesthood of God. We bear that holy priesthood. May we learn these things and know them for ourselves is my humble prayer in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### **NOTES**

1. Thomas S. Monson, “Dare to Stand Alone,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 62.
2. Thomas S. Monson, “Priesthood Power,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2011, 66.
3. Alma 56:48.
4. Alma 5:46.
5. Alma 5:45–46.
6. 1 Nephi 2:16.
7. 1 Nephi 10:17.
8. 1 Nephi 11:1–3.
9. See 1 Nephi 11–14.
10. See Joseph Smith—History 1:8–10.
11. James 1:5.
12. Alma 32:28.
13. Alma 32:38.
14. Alma 32:41.
15. Thomas S. Monson, *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 67.



**By Bishop Dean M. Davies**  
Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric

# The Law of the Fast: A Personal Responsibility to Care for the Poor and Needy

*As followers of the Savior, we have a personal responsibility to care for the poor and needy.*

**M**y dear brethren, I love the priesthood, and I love being with you. I am so deeply grateful that we can serve together in this great cause.

We live in remarkable times. Miraculous advances in medicine, science, and technology have improved the quality of life for many. Yet there is also evidence of great human suffering and distress. In addition to wars and rumors of wars, an increase in natural disasters—including floods, fires, earthquakes, and disease—is impacting the lives of millions worldwide.

Church leadership is aware of and vigilant regarding the well-being of God's children everywhere. When and where possible, Church emergency resources are provided to respond to those in need. For example, last November, Typhoon Haiyan hit the island nation of the Philippines.

A Category 5 super typhoon,

Haiyan left in its wake extensive destruction and suffering. Complete cities were destroyed; many lives were lost; millions of homes were severely damaged or destroyed; and basic services such as water, sewer, and electricity ceased functioning.



**When and where possible, Church emergency resources are provided to respond to those in need.**

Church resources were made available in the very early hours following this disaster. Church members living in the Philippines rallied to the rescue of their brothers and sisters by providing food, water, clothing, and hygiene kits to members and non-members alike.

Church meetinghouses became places of refuge to thousands of the homeless. Under the leadership of the Area Presidency and local priesthood leaders, many of whom had lost everything they had, assessments were made as to the condition and safety of all members. Inspired plans began to take shape to help restore members to acceptable living conditions and self-reliance.

Modest resources were provided to help Church members rebuild their wood-frame shelters and homes. This was not just a free handout. Members received training and performed the needed labor for themselves and then for others.

One resulting blessing was that as members developed carpentry, plumbing, and other construction skills, they were able to secure meaningful work opportunities as nearby cities and communities began rebuilding.

*Caring for the poor and needy is a fundamental gospel doctrine and an essential element in the eternal plan of salvation.*

Prior to His mortal ministry, Jehovah declared through His prophet: "For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land."<sup>1</sup>

In our day, caring for the poor and needy is one of four divinely appointed Church responsibilities that help individuals and families qualify for exaltation.<sup>2</sup>

Caring for the poor and needy contemplates both temporal and spiritual salvation. It includes the service of individual Church members as they personally care for the poor and needy, as well as formal Church welfare, which is administered through priesthood authority.

Central to the Lord's plan for caring for the poor and needy is the *law of the fast*. "The Lord has established the law of the fast and fast offerings to bless His people and to provide a way for them to serve those in need."<sup>3</sup>

As followers of the Savior, we have a personal responsibility to care for the poor and needy. Faithful Church members everywhere assist by fasting each month—abstaining from food and water for 24 hours—and then giving to the Church a financial fast

offering equal to at least the value of the food they would have eaten.

Isaiah's words should be prayerfully considered and taught in every home:

"Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?"<sup>4</sup>

"Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?"<sup>4</sup>

Isaiah then went on to list the wonderful blessings promised by the Lord to those who obey the law of the fast. He says:

"Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rearward.

"Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. . . .

"And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday:

"And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought."<sup>5</sup>

Regarding this scripture, President Harold B. Lee had this to say: "The tremendous blessings that come [from fasting] have been spelled out in every dispensation, and here the Lord is telling us through this great prophet why there is fasting, and the blessings that come from fasting. . . . If you analyze . . . the 58th chapter of the book of Isaiah you will find unraveled why the Lord wants us to pay fast offerings, why he wants us to fast. It's because by qualifying thus we can call and the

Lord can answer. We can cry and the Lord will say, 'Here I am.'"

President Lee adds: "Do we ever want to be in a condition where we can call and he won't answer? We will cry in our distress and he won't be with us? I think it is time we are thinking about these fundamentals because these are the days that lie ahead, when we are going to need more and more the blessings of the Lord, when the judgments are poured out without mixture upon the whole earth."<sup>6</sup>

Our beloved prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, has shared his testimony of these principles—a testimony borne of personal experience. He said: "No member of the Church who has helped provide for those in need ever forgets or regrets the experience. Industry, thrift, self-reliance, and sharing with others are not new to us."<sup>7</sup>

Brethren, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are a covenant-making, commandment-keeping people. I cannot think of any law, any commandment, which, if kept faithfully, is easier to keep and which provides greater blessings than the law of the fast. When we fast and give an honest fast offering, we contribute to the Lord's storehouse what would have been expended on the cost of the meals. It does not require monetary sacrifice in excess of what would be expended normally. At the same time, we are promised the extraordinary blessings, as previously noted.

The law of the fast applies to all Church members. Even young children can be taught to fast, beginning with one meal and then two, as they are able to understand and physically keep the law of the fast. Husbands and wives, single members, youth, and children should begin the fast with prayer, giving gratitude for







blessings in their lives while seeking the Lord's blessings and strength through the fast period. Complete fulfillment of the law of the fast occurs when the fast offering is made to the Lord's agent, the bishop.

Bishops, you direct welfare in the ward. You have a divine mandate to seek out and care for the poor. With the support of the Relief Society president and Melchizedek Priesthood quorum leaders, your goal is to help members help themselves and become self-reliant. You minister to the temporal and spiritual needs of members by carefully using fast offerings as a temporary support and as a supplement to extended family and community resources. As you prayerfully exercise priesthood keys and discernment in helping the poor and needy, you will come to know that the correct use of fast offerings is intended to support life, not lifestyle.

Aaronic Priesthood quorum presidents, you hold keys and have the power to administer in outward ordinances. You work with the bishop and instruct quorum members regarding their duties in the priesthood and in seeking out Church members to give them the opportunity to contribute to the fast. As you Aaronic Priesthood

holders magnify your priesthood responsibilities and extend this opportunity to all Church members, you frequently facilitate the promised blessings of the fast to those who may need them the most. You will witness that the spirit of caring for the poor and needy has the power to soften otherwise hardened hearts and blesses the lives of those who may infrequently attend Church.

President Monson has said, "Those bishops who organize their Aaronic Priesthood quorums to participate in the collection of fast offerings will find increased success in this sacred responsibility."<sup>8</sup>

Bishops, remember that circumstances vary widely from one area to another and from country to country. Door-to-door contacting by Aaronic Priesthood quorum members may not be practical in the region where you live. However, we invite you to prayerfully consider the prophet's counsel and seek inspiration on appropriate ways in which the Aaronic Priesthood holders in your wards can magnify their priesthood by participating in the collection of fast offerings.

In chapter 27 of 3 Nephi, the risen Lord asked, "What manner of men

ought ye to be?" He responded, "Even as I am."<sup>9</sup> As we take upon ourselves the name of Christ and strive to follow Him, we will receive His image in our countenance and become more like Him. Caring for the poor and needy is inherent in the ministry of the Savior. It is in everything He does. He reaches out to all and lifts us. His yoke is easy, and His burden is light. I invite each of us to become more like the Savior by caring for the poor and needy, by faithfully keeping the law of the fast, and by contributing a generous fast offering. I humbly testify that faithfully caring for the poor and needy is a reflection of spiritual maturity and will bless both the giver and the receiver. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Deuteronomy 15:11.
2. See *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 2.2.
3. *Handbook 2*, 6.1.2.
4. Isaiah 58:6-7.
5. Isaiah 58:8-11.
6. Harold B. Lee, "Listen, and Obey" (Welfare Agricultural Meeting, Apr. 3, 1971), copy of typescript, 14, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.
7. Thomas S. Monson, "Are We Prepared?" *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Sept. 2014, 4.
8. Thomas S. Monson, in a meeting with the Presiding Bishopric, Feb. 28, 2014.
9. 3 Nephi 27:27.



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

## “Lord, Is It I?”

*We must put aside our pride, see beyond our vanity, and in humility ask, “Lord, is it I?”*

It was our beloved Savior’s final night in mortality, the evening before He would offer Himself a ransom for all mankind. As He broke bread with His disciples, He said something that must have filled their hearts with great alarm and deep sadness. “One of you shall betray me,” He told them.

The disciples didn’t question the truth of what He said. Nor did they look around, point to someone else, and ask, “Is it him?”

Instead, “they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, *Lord, is it I?*”<sup>1</sup>

I wonder what each of us would do if we were asked that question by the Savior. Would we look at those around us and say in our hearts, “He’s probably talking about Brother Johnson. I’ve always wondered about him,” or “I’m glad Brother Brown is here. He really needs to hear this message”? Or would we, like those disciples of old, look inward and ask that penetrating question: “Is it I?”

In these simple words, “*Lord, is it I?*” lies the beginning of wisdom and the pathway to personal conversion and lasting change.

### **A Parable of Dandelions**

Once there was a man who enjoyed taking evening walks around

his neighborhood. He particularly looked forward to walking past his neighbor’s house. This neighbor kept his lawn perfectly manicured, flowers always in bloom, the trees healthy and shady. It was obvious that the neighbor made every effort to have a beautiful lawn.

But one day as the man was walking past his neighbor’s house, he noticed in the middle of this beautiful lawn a single, enormous, yellow dandelion weed.

It looked so out of place that it surprised him. Why didn’t his neighbor pull it out? Couldn’t he see it? Didn’t he know that the dandelion could cast seeds that could give root to dozens of additional weeds?



This solitary dandelion bothered him beyond description, and he wanted to do something about it. Should he just pluck it out? Or spray it with weed killer? Perhaps if he went under cover of night, he could remove it secretly.

These thoughts totally occupied his mind as he walked toward his own home. He entered his house without even glancing at his own front yard—which was blanketed with hundreds of yellow dandelions.

### **Beams and Motes**

Does this story remind us of the words of the Savior?

“Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? . . .

“ . . . First cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye.”<sup>2</sup>

This business of beams and motes seems to be closely related to our inability to see ourselves clearly. I’m not sure why we are able to diagnose and recommend remedies for other people’s ills so well, while we often have difficulty seeing our own.

Some years ago there was a news story about a man who believed that if he rubbed lemon juice on his face, it would make him invisible to cameras. So he put lemon juice all over his face, went out, and robbed two banks. Not much later he was arrested when his image was broadcast over the evening news. When police showed the man the videos of himself from the security cameras, he couldn’t believe his eyes. “But I had lemon juice on my face!” he protested.<sup>3</sup>

When a scientist at Cornell University heard about this story, he was intrigued that a man could be so

painfully unaware of his own incompetence. To determine whether this was a general problem, two researchers invited college students to participate in a series of tests on various life skills and then asked them to rate how they did. The students who performed poorly were the least accurate at evaluating their own performance—some of them estimating their scores to be five times higher than they actually were.<sup>4</sup>

This study has been replicated in numerous ways, confirming over and over again the same conclusion: many of us have a difficult time seeing ourselves as we truly are, and even successful people overestimate their own contribution and underestimate the contributions that others make.<sup>5</sup>

It might not be so significant to overestimate how well we drive a car or how far we can drive a golf ball. But when we start believing that our contributions at home, at work, and at church are greater than they actually are, we blind ourselves to blessings and opportunities to improve ourselves in significant and profound ways.

### Spiritual Blind Spots

An acquaintance of mine used to live in a ward with some of the highest statistics in the Church—attendance was high, home teaching numbers were high, Primary children were always well behaved, ward dinners included fantastic food that members rarely spilled on the meetinghouse floor, and I think there were never any arguments at Church ball.

My friend and his wife were subsequently called on a mission. When they returned three years later, this couple was astonished to learn that during the time they were away serving, 11 marriages had ended in divorce.

Although the ward had every outward indication of faithfulness and



strength, something unfortunate was happening in the hearts and lives of the members. And the troubling thing is that this situation is not unique. Such terrible and often unnecessary things happen when members of the Church become disengaged from gospel principles. They may appear on the outside to be disciples of Jesus Christ, but on the inside their hearts have separated from their Savior and His teachings. They have gradually turned away from the things of the Spirit and moved toward the things of the world.

Once-worthy priesthood holders start to tell themselves that the Church is a good thing for women and children but not for them. Or some are convinced that their busy schedules or unique circumstances make them exempt from the daily acts of devotion and service that would keep them close to the Spirit. In this age of self-justification and narcissism, it is easy to become quite creative at coming up with excuses for not regularly approaching God in prayer, procrastinating the study of the scriptures, avoiding Church

meetings and family home evenings, or not paying an honest tithe and offerings.

My dear brethren, will you please look inside your hearts and ask the simple question: *“Lord, is it I?”*

Have you disengaged—even slightly—from “the . . . gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to [your] trust”?<sup>6</sup> Have you allowed “the god of this world” to darken your minds to “the light of the glorious gospel of Christ”?<sup>7</sup>

My beloved friends, my dear brethren, ask yourselves, “Where is my treasure?”

Is your heart set on the convenient things of this world, or is it focused on the teachings of the diligent Jesus Christ? “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”<sup>8</sup>

Does the Spirit of God dwell in your hearts? Are you “rooted and grounded” in the love of God and of your fellowmen? Do you devote sufficient time and creativity to bringing happiness to your marriage and family? Do you give your energies to the sublime goal of comprehending and living “the breadth, and length, and



depth, and height”<sup>9</sup> of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ?

Brethren, if it is your great desire to cultivate Christlike attributes of “faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, godliness, charity, humility, [and service],”<sup>10</sup> Heavenly Father will make you an instrument in His hands unto the salvation of many souls.<sup>11</sup>

### The Examined Life

Brethren, none of us likes to admit when we are drifting off the right course. Often we try to avoid looking deeply into our souls and confronting our weaknesses, limitations, and fears. Consequently, when we do examine our lives, we look through the filter of biases, excuses, and stories we tell ourselves in order to justify unworthy thoughts and actions.

But being able to see ourselves clearly is essential to our spiritual growth and well-being. If our weaknesses and shortcomings remain obscured in the shadows, then the redeeming power of the Savior cannot heal them and make them strengths.<sup>12</sup> Ironically, our blindness toward our human weaknesses will also make us blind to the divine potential that our Father yearns to nurture within each of us.

So how can we shine the pure light of God’s truth into our souls and see ourselves as He sees us?

May I suggest that the holy scriptures and the talks given at general conference are an effective mirror we can hold up for self-examination.

As you hear or read the words of the ancient and modern prophets, refrain from thinking about how the words apply to someone else and ask the simple question: “*Lord, is it I?*”

We must approach our Eternal Father with broken hearts and teachable minds. We must be willing to learn and to change. And, oh, how much we gain by committing to live the life our Heavenly Father intends for us.

Those who do *not* wish to learn and change probably *will not* and most likely will begin to wonder whether the Church has anything to offer them.

But those who want to improve and progress, those who learn of the Savior and desire to be like Him, those who humble themselves as a little child and seek to bring their thoughts and actions into harmony with our Father in Heaven—they will experience the miracle of the Savior’s Atonement. They will surely feel God’s resplendent Spirit. They will taste the indescribable joy that is the fruit of a meek and humble heart. They will be blessed with the desire and discipline to become true disciples of Jesus Christ.

### The Power of Good

Over the course of my life, I have had the opportunity to rub shoulders

with some of the most competent and intelligent men and women this world has to offer. When I was younger, I was impressed by those who were educated, accomplished, successful, and applauded by the world. But over the years, I have come to the realization that I am far more impressed by those wonderful and blessed souls who are truly good and without guile.

And isn’t that what the gospel is all about and does for us? It is the good news, and it helps us to become good.

The words of the Apostle James apply to us today:

“God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. . . .

“Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.”<sup>13</sup>

Brethren, we must put aside our pride, see beyond our vanity, and in humility ask, “*Lord, is it I?*”

And if the Lord’s answer happens to be “Yes, my son, there are things you must improve, things I can help you to overcome,” I pray that we will accept this answer, humbly acknowledge our sins and shortcomings, and then change our ways by becoming better husbands, better fathers, better sons. May we from this time forward seek with all our might to walk steadfastly in the Savior’s blessed way—for seeing ourselves clearly is the beginning of wisdom.

As we do so, our bountiful God will lead us by the hand; we will “be made strong, and blessed from on high.”<sup>14</sup>

My beloved friends, a first step on this wondrous and fulfilling path of true discipleship starts with our asking the simple question:

*“Lord, is it I?”*

Of this I testify and leave you my blessing in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Matthew 26:21–22; emphasis added.
2. Matthew 7:3, 5.
3. See Errol Morris, “The Anosognosic’s Dilemma: Something’s Wrong but You’ll Never Know What It Is,” *New York Times*, June 20, 2010; opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/06/20/the-anosognosic-dilemma-1.
4. See Justin Kruger and David Dunning, “Unskilled and Unaware of It: How Difficulties in Recognizing One’s Own Incompetence Lead to Inflated Self-Assessments,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Dec. 1999, 1121–34. “Across 4 studies, the authors found that participants scoring in the bottom quartile on tests of humor, grammar, and logic grossly overestimated their test performance and ability. Although their test scores put them in the 12th percentile, they estimated themselves to be in the 62nd” (from the abstract at [psycnet.apa.org/?&fa=main.doiLanding&doi=10.1037/0022-3514.77.6.1121](http://psycnet.apa.org/?&fa=main.doiLanding&doi=10.1037/0022-3514.77.6.1121)).
5. See Marshall Goldsmith, *What Got You Here Won’t Get You There* (2007), chapter 3. The researcher asked three partners to rate their own contributions to the success of the company. Their self-assessed contributions added up to 150 percent.
6. 1 Timothy 1:11.
7. 2 Corinthians 4:4.
8. Luke 12:34.
9. Ephesians 3:18.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 4:6.
11. See Alma 17:11.
12. See Ether 12:27.
13. James 4:6, 10.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 1:28.



By President Henry B. Eyring  
First Counselor in the First Presidency

# The Preparatory Priesthood

*In priesthood preparation, “show me” counts more than “tell me.”*

I am grateful to be gathered with the priesthood of God, which stretches across the world. I appreciate your faith, your service, and your prayers.

My message tonight is about the Aaronic Priesthood. It is also to all of us who help in the realization of the Lord’s promises for those who hold what is described in scripture as the “lesser priesthood.”<sup>1</sup> It is also called the preparatory priesthood. It is that glorious preparation about which I will speak tonight.

The Lord’s plan for His work is filled with preparation. He prepared the earth for us to experience the tests and the opportunities of mortality. While we are here, we are in what the scriptures call a “preparatory state.”<sup>2</sup>

The prophet Alma described the crucial importance of that preparation for eternal life, where we may live forever in families with God the Father and Jesus Christ.

He explained the need for preparation this way: “And we see that death comes upon mankind, yea, the death which has been spoken of by Amulek, which is the temporal death; nevertheless there was a space granted unto man in which he might repent;

therefore this life became a probationary state; a time to prepare to meet God; a time to prepare for that endless state which has been spoken of by us, which is after the resurrection of the dead.”<sup>3</sup>

Just as the time we have been given to live in mortality is to prepare to meet God, the time we are given to serve in the Aaronic Priesthood is an



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opportunity to prepare us to learn how to give crucial help to others. Just as the Lord gives the help we require to pass the tests of mortal life, He also sends us help in our priesthood preparation.

My message is to those whom the Lord sends to help prepare Aaronic Priesthood holders as much as it is to those who hold the Aaronic Priesthood. I speak to fathers. I speak to bishops. And I speak to those of the Melchizedek Priesthood who are trusted to be companions and teachers of young men who are in priesthood preparation.

I speak in praise and in gratitude for many of you across the world and across time.

I would be remiss if I did not speak of a branch president and a bishop of my youth. I became a deacon at the age of 12 in a little branch in the eastern part of the United States. The branch was so tiny that my older brother and I were its only Aaronic Priesthood holders until my father, who was the branch president, invited a middle-aged man to join the Church.

The new convert received the Aaronic Priesthood and, with it, a call to watch over the Aaronic Priesthood. I still remember as if it were yesterday. I can recall the beautiful fall leaves as that new convert accompanied my brother and me to do something for

a widow. I don't remember what the project was, but I do remember feeling that the priesthood power joined in doing what I later learned the Lord had said we must all do to have our sins forgiven and so be prepared to see Him.

As I look back now, I feel gratitude for a branch president who called a new convert to help the Lord prepare two boys who would in turn someday be bishops, charged to care for the poor and the needy and also to preside over the preparatory priesthood.

I was still a deacon when our family moved to a large ward in Utah. It was the first time I had felt the power of a full quorum in the Aaronic Priesthood. In fact, it was the first time I saw one. And later it was the first time I felt the power and the blessing of a bishop presiding in a priests quorum.

The bishop called me to be his first assistant in the priests quorum. I remember that he taught the quorum himself—busy as he was, with other gifted men whom he could have called to teach us. He had the chairs in the classroom arranged in a circle. He had me sit in the chair next to him, to his right.

I could look over his shoulder as he taught. He looked down occasionally at the carefully typed notes in

the little leather binder on one knee and at the well-worn and marked scriptures he had open on the other knee. I can remember the thrill as he recounted the stories of bravery from the book of Daniel and his testimony of the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

I will always remember how the Lord calls companions carefully chosen for his priesthood holders in preparation.

My bishop had powerful counselors, and for reasons I did not understand then, more than once he called me on the phone at home and said, "Hal, I need you to go with me as a companion to make some visits." Once, it was to take me with him to the home of a widow living alone and without any food in the house. On the way home he stopped his car, opened his scriptures, and told me why he had treated that widow as if she had the power not only to care for herself but would, at some time in the future, be able to help others.

Another visit was to a man long absent from the Church. My bishop invited him back to be with the Saints. I felt my bishop's love for someone who seemed to me an unlovable and rebellious enemy.

On yet another occasion we visited a home where two little girls were sent to meet us at the door by their

alcoholic parents. The little girls said through the screen door that their mother and father were asleep. The bishop kept talking to them, smiling and praising their goodness and their bravery, for what seemed to me 10 minutes or more. As I walked away at his side, he said quietly, "That was a good visit. Those little girls will never forget that we came."

Two of the blessings that a senior priesthood companion can give are trust and an example of caring. I saw that when my son was given a home teaching companion who had vastly more priesthood experience than he did. His senior companion had been a mission president twice and had served in other leadership positions.

Before they were to visit one of their assigned families, that seasoned priesthood leader asked to visit my son in our home beforehand. They allowed me to listen. The senior companion opened with prayer, asking for help. Then he said something like this to my son: "I think we should teach a lesson that will sound to this family like a call to repentance. I think they won't take it very well from me. I think they would take the message better from you. How do you feel about that?"

I remember the terror in my son's eyes. I can still feel the happiness of that moment when my son accepted the trust.

It was not by accident that the bishop put that companionship together. It was by careful preparation that the senior companion had learned about the feelings of that family they were about to teach. It was by inspiration that he felt to step back, to trust an inexperienced youth to call older children of God to repentance and to safety.

I don't know the outcome of their visit, but I do know that a bishop, a

Melchizedek Priesthood holder, and the Lord were preparing a boy to be a priesthood man and someday a bishop.

Now, such stories of success in priesthood preparation are familiar to you from what you have seen and what you have experienced in your own lives. You have known and have been such bishops, companions, and parents. You have seen the hand of the Lord in your preparation for the priesthood duties which He knew would lie ahead of you.

All of us in the priesthood have an obligation to help the Lord prepare others. There are some things we can do that could matter most. Even more powerful than using words in our teaching the doctrine will be our examples of living the doctrine.

Paramount in our priesthood service is inviting people to come unto Christ by faith, repentance, baptism, and receiving the Holy Ghost. President Thomas S. Monson, for instance, has given sermons to stir the heart on all those doctrines. But what I

know of what he did with people and missionaries and friends of the Church when presiding over the mission in Toronto motivates me to action.

In priesthood preparation, "show me" counts more than "tell me."

That is why the scriptures are so important to prepare us in the priesthood. They are filled with examples. I feel as if I can see Alma following the angel's command and then hurrying back to teach the wicked people in Ammonihah who had rejected him.<sup>4</sup> I can feel the cold in the jail cell when the Prophet Joseph was told by God to take courage and that he was watched over.<sup>5</sup> With those scripture pictures in mind, we can be prepared to endure in our service when it seems hard.

A father or a bishop or a senior home teaching companion who shows that he trusts a young priesthood holder can change his life. My father was once asked by a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles to write a short paper on science and religion. My father was a famous scientist





Church presides over the preparatory priesthood as well. His messages over the years of going to the rescue fit perfectly the mandate to take the gospel of repentance and baptism into the lives of others.

Quorums of deacons, teachers, and priests counsel regularly to draw every member of the quorum to the Lord. Presidencies assign members to reach out in faith and love. Deacons pass the sacrament with reverence and with faith that members will feel the effect of the Atonement and resolve to keep commandments as they partake of those sacred emblems.

Teachers and priests pray with their companions to fulfill the charge to watch over the Church, person by person. And those companionships pray together as they learn the needs and the hopes of heads of families. As they do, they are being prepared for the great day when they will preside as a father, in faith, in a family of their own.

I testify that all who serve together in the priesthood are preparing a people for the coming of the Lord to His Church. God the Father lives. I know—I know—that Jesus is the Christ and that He loves us. President Thomas S. Monson is the Lord’s living prophet. I so testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

**NOTES**

1. Doctrine and Covenants 84:26, 30; 107:14.
2. Alma 42:10, 13.
3. Alma 12:24.
4. See Alma 8:14–18.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 122:9.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 121:43.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 13:1.
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 107:14.

and a faithful priesthood holder. But I can still remember the moment he handed me the paper he had written and said, “Here, before I send this to the Twelve, I want you to read it. You will know if it is right.” He was 32 years older than me and immeasurably more wise and intelligent.

I still am strengthened by that trust from a great father and priesthood man. I knew that his trust was not in me but that God could and would tell me what was true. You seasoned companions can bless a young priesthood holder in preparation whenever you can show him that kind of trust. It will help him trust the gentle feeling of inspiration for himself when it comes as he someday places his hands to seal the blessing to heal a child the doctors say will die. That trust has helped me more than once.

Our success in preparing others in the priesthood will come in proportion to how much we love them. That will be especially true when we must correct them. Think of the moment when an Aaronic Priesthood holder, perhaps at the sacrament table, makes a mistake in performing an ordinance. That is a serious matter. Sometimes the error requires public correction with a possibility of resentment, a feeling of humiliation or even of being rejected.


You will remember the Lord’s counsel: “Reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the

Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reproved, lest he esteem thee to be his enemy.”<sup>6</sup>

The word *increase* has special meaning in preparing priesthood holders when they need correction. The word suggests an increase of a love that was already there. The “showing forth” is about the increase. Those of you who are preparing priesthood holders will certainly see them make mistakes. Before they receive your correction, they must have felt of your love early and steadily. They must have felt your genuine praise before they will accept your correction.

The Lord Himself held those of the lesser priesthood with a regard that honors their potential and their value to Him. Listen to these words, spoken by John the Baptist when the Aaronic Priesthood was restored: “Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth, until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness.”<sup>7</sup>

The Aaronic Priesthood is an appendage to the greater Melchizedek Priesthood.<sup>8</sup> As the president of all the priesthood, the President of the

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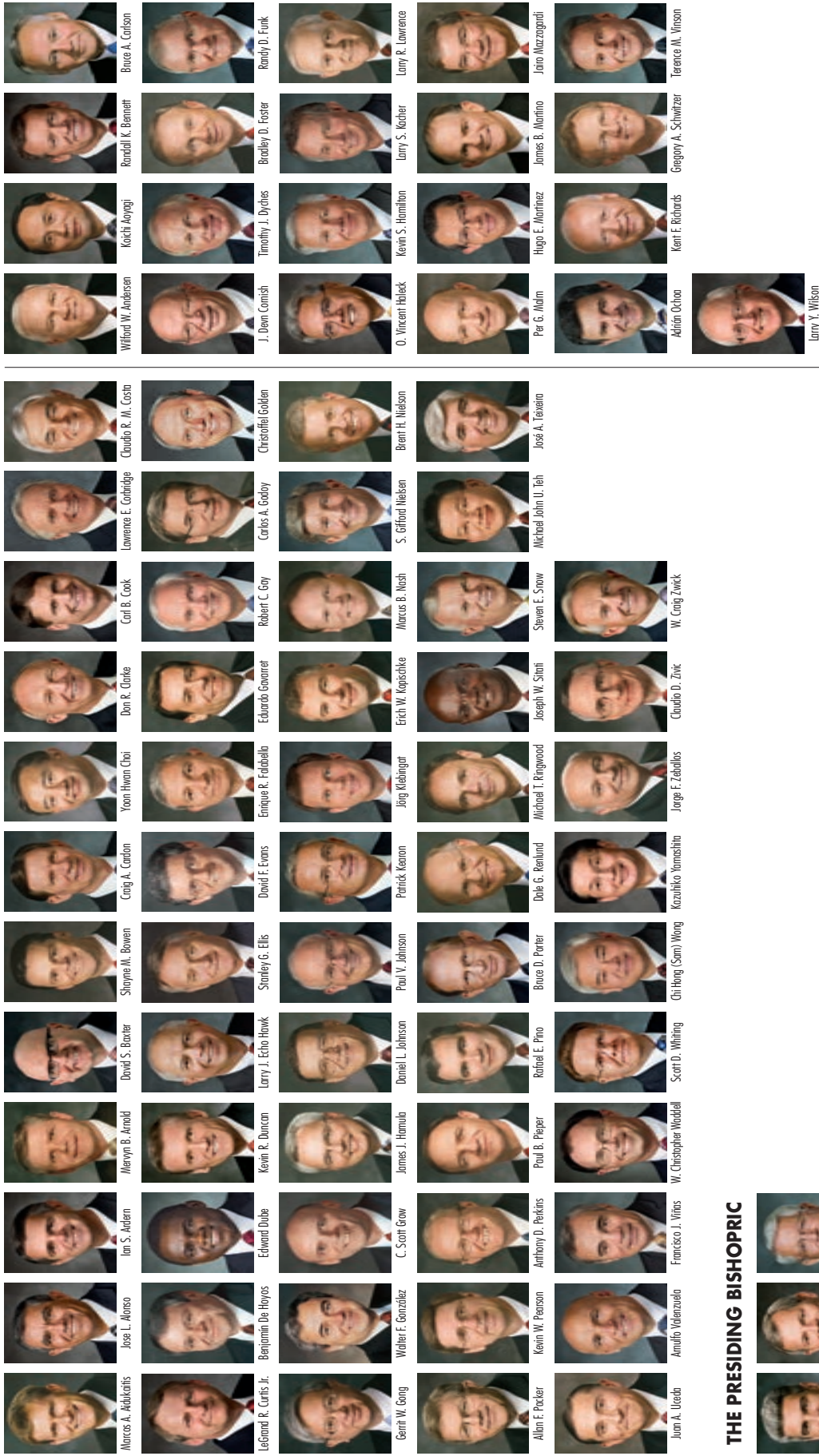
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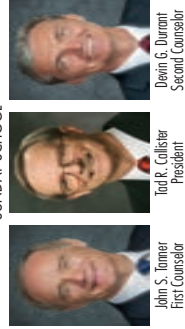
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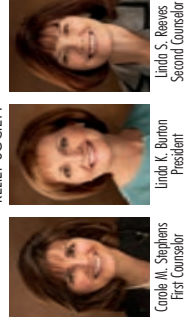
### SUNDAY SCHOOL



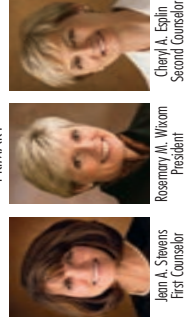
### YOUNG WOMEN



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### PRIMARY



### YOUNG MEN





***Pictured clockwise from top left are Church members and missionaries in Alexandria, Virginia, USA; Johannesburg, South Africa; Cuauhtémoc, Mexico; Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands; Peachtree Corners, Georgia, USA; Canoas, Brazil; San Lorenzo, Paraguay; Verona, Wisconsin, USA; and Waterford, Ireland.***





By President Thomas S. Monson

# Guided Safely Home

*We look heavenward for that unfailing sense of direction, that we might chart and follow a wise and proper course.*

**B**rethren, we are assembled as a mighty body of the priesthood, both here in the Conference Center and in locations throughout the world. I am honored yet humbled by the responsibility which is mine to address a few remarks to you. I pray for the Spirit of the Lord to attend me as I do so.

Seventy-five years ago, on February 14, 1939, in Hamburg, Germany, a public holiday was celebrated. Amid fervent speeches, cheering throngs, and the playing of patriotic anthems, the new battleship *Bismarck* was put to sea via the River Elbe. This, the most powerful vessel afloat, was a breathtaking spectacle of armor and machinery. Construction required more than 57,000 blueprints for the 380-millimeter, radar-controlled, double-gun turrets. The vessel featured 28,000 miles (45,000 km) of electrical circuits. It weighed over 35,000 tons, and armor plate provided maximum safety. Majestic in appearance, gigantic in size, awesome in firepower, the mighty colossus was considered unsinkable.

The *Bismarck's* appointment with destiny came more than two years later, when on May 24, 1941, the two most powerful warships in the British Navy, the *Prince of Wales* and the

*Hood*, engaged in battle the *Bismarck* and the German cruiser *Prinz Eugen*. Within five minutes the *Bismarck* had sent to the depths of the Atlantic the *Hood* and all but three men of a crew of over 1,400. The other British battleship, the *Prince of Wales*, had suffered heavy damage and turned away.

Over the next three days the *Bismarck* was engaged again and again by British warships and aircraft. In all, the British concentrated the strength of five battleships, two aircraft carriers, 11 cruisers, and 21 destroyers

in an effort to find and to sink the mighty *Bismarck*.

During these battles, shell after shell inflicted only superficial damage on the *Bismarck*. Was it unsinkable after all? Then a torpedo scored a lucky hit, which jammed the *Bismarck's* rudder. Repair efforts proved fruitless. With guns primed and the crews at ready, the *Bismarck* could only steer a slow circle. Just beyond reach was the powerful German air force. The *Bismarck* could not reach the safety of home port. Neither could provide the needed haven, for the *Bismarck* had lost the ability to steer a charted course. No rudder, no help, no port. The end drew near. British guns blazed as the German crew scuttled and sank the once seemingly indestructible vessel. The hungry waves of the Atlantic first lapped at the sides and then swallowed the pride of the German navy. The *Bismarck* was no more.<sup>1</sup>

Like the *Bismarck*, each of us is a miracle of engineering. Our creation, however, was not limited by human genius. Man can devise the



most complex machines but cannot give them life or bestow upon them the powers of reason and judgment. These are divine gifts, bestowed only by God.

Like the vital rudder of a ship, brethren, we have been provided a way to determine the direction we travel. The lighthouse of the Lord beckons to all as we sail the seas of life. Our purpose is to steer an undeviating course toward our desired goal—even the celestial kingdom of God. A man without a purpose is like a ship without a rudder, never likely to reach home port. To us comes the signal: chart your course, set your sail, position your rudder, and proceed.



As with the mighty *Bismarck*, so it is with man. The thrust of the turbines and the power of the propellers are useless without that sense of direction, that harnessing of the energy, that directing of the power provided by the rudder, hidden from view, relatively small in size but absolutely essential in function.

Our Father provided the sun, the moon, and the stars—heavenly galaxies to guide mariners who sail the lanes of the sea. To us, as we walk the pathway of life, He provides a clear map and points the way toward our desired destination. He cautions: beware the detours, the pitfalls, the traps. We cannot be deceived by those who would lead us astray, those clever pied pipers of sin beckoning here or there. Instead, we pause to pray; we listen to that still, small voice which speaks to the depths of our souls the Master's gentle invitation, "Come, follow me."<sup>2</sup>

Yet there are those who do not hear, who will not obey, who prefer to walk a path of their own making. Too often they succumb to the temptations which surround all of us and which can appear so enticing.

As bearers of the priesthood, we have been placed on earth in troubled times. We live in a complex world with currents of conflict everywhere to be found. Political schemes ruin the stability of nations, despots grasp for power, and segments of society seem forever downtrodden, deprived of opportunity and left with a feeling of failure. The sophistries of men ring in our ears, and sin surrounds us.

Ours is the responsibility to be worthy of all the glorious blessings our Father in Heaven has in store for us. Wherever we go, our priesthood goes with us. Are we standing in holy places? Please, before you put yourself and your priesthood in jeopardy by

venturing into places or participating in activities which are not worthy of you or of that priesthood, pause to consider the consequences.

We who have been ordained to the priesthood of God can make a difference. When we maintain our personal purity and honor our priesthood, we become righteous examples for others to follow. The Apostle Paul admonished, "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."<sup>3</sup> He also wrote that the followers of Christ should be "as lights in the world."<sup>4</sup> Providing an example of righteousness can help to illuminate an increasingly dark world.

Many of you will remember President N. Eldon Tanner, who served as a counselor to four Presidents of the Church. He provided an undeviating example of righteousness throughout his career in industry, during service in the government in Canada, and as an Apostle of Jesus Christ. He gave us this inspired counsel: "Nothing will bring greater joy and success than to live according to the teachings of the gospel. Be an example; be an influence for good."

He continued: "Every one of us has been foreordained for some work as [God's] chosen servant on whom he has seen fit to confer the priesthood and power to act in his name. Always remember that people are looking to you for leadership and you are influencing the lives of individuals either for good or for bad, which influence will be felt for generations to come."<sup>5</sup>

We are strengthened by the truth that the greatest force in the world today is the power of God as it works through man. To sail safely the seas of mortality, we need the guidance of that Eternal Mariner—even the great



Jehovah. We reach out, we reach up to obtain heavenly help.

A well-known example of one who did not reach upward is that of Cain, son of Adam and Eve. Powerful in potential but weak of will, Cain permitted greed, envy, disobedience, and even murder to jam that personal rudder which would have guided him to safety and exaltation. The downward gaze replaced the upward look; Cain fell.

In another time and by a wicked king, a servant of God was tested. Aided by the inspiration of heaven, Daniel interpreted for the king the writing on the wall. Concerning the proffered rewards—even a royal robe, a necklace of gold, and political power—Daniel said, “Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another.”<sup>6</sup> Great riches and power had been offered to Daniel, rewards representing the things of the world and not of God. Daniel resisted and remained faithful.

Later, when Daniel worshipped God despite a decree declaring such to be forbidden, he was thrown into a den of lions. The biblical account tells us that the following morning, “Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no

manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in . . . God.”<sup>7</sup> In a time of critical need, Daniel’s determination to steer a steady course yielded divine protection and provided a sanctuary of safety. Such protection and safety can be ours as we also steer that steady course toward our eternal home.

The clock of history, like the sands of the hourglass, marks the passage of time. A new cast occupies the stage of life. The problems of our day loom ominously before us. Throughout the history of the world, Satan has worked tirelessly for the destruction of the followers of the Savior. If we succumb to his enticings, we—like the mighty *Bismarck*—will lose that rudder which can guide us to safety. Instead, surrounded by the sophistication of modern living, we look heavenward for that unfailing sense of direction, that we might chart and follow a wise and proper course. Our Heavenly Father will not leave our sincere petition unanswered. As we seek heavenly help, our rudder, unlike that of the *Bismarck*, will not fail.

As we venture forth on our individual voyages, may we sail safely the seas of life. May we have the courage of a

Daniel, that we might remain true and faithful despite the sin and temptation which surround us. May our testimonies be as deep and as strong as that of Jacob, the brother of Nephi, who, when confronted by one who sought in every way possible to destroy his faith, declared, “I could not be shaken.”<sup>8</sup>

With the rudder of faith guiding our passage, brethren, we too will find our way safely home—home to God, to dwell with Him eternally. That such may be so for each of us, I pray in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See Ludovic Kennedy, *Pursuit: The Chase and Sinking of the Bismarck* (1974).
2. Luke 18:22.
3. 1 Timothy 4:12.
4. Philippians 2:15.
5. N. Eldon Tanner, “For They Loved the Praise of Men More Than the Praise of God,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1975, 74.
6. Daniel 5:17.
7. Daniel 6:23.
8. Jacob 7:5.

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**By President Henry B. Eyring**  
First Counselor in the First Presidency

## Continuing Revelation

*Human judgment and logical thinking will not be enough to get answers to the questions that matter most in life. We need revelation from God.*

My hope for us today is that we may all feel love and light from God. There are many listening today who feel a pressing need for that blessing of personal revelation from our loving Heavenly Father.

For mission presidents, it may be a pleading prayer to know how to encourage a struggling missionary. For a father or a mother in a war-ravaged place in the world, it will be a desperate need to know whether to move their family to safety or whether to stay where they are. Hundreds of stake presidents and bishops are praying today to know how to help the Lord rescue a lost sheep. And for a prophet, it will be to know what the Lord would have him speak to the Church and to a world in turmoil.

We all know that human judgment and logical thinking will not be enough to get answers to the questions that matter most in life. We need revelation from God. And we will need not just one revelation in a time of stress, but we need a constantly renewed stream. We need not just one flash of light and comfort, but we need the continuing blessing of communication with God.

The very existence of the Church stems from a young boy knowing that was true. Young Joseph Smith knew that he could not of himself know which church to join. So he asked of God, as the book of James told him he could. God the Father and His Beloved Son appeared in a grove of trees. They answered the question that was beyond Joseph's power to resolve.

Not only was he then called of God to establish the true Church of Jesus Christ, but with it was restored the power to invoke the Holy Ghost so that revelation from God could be continuous.

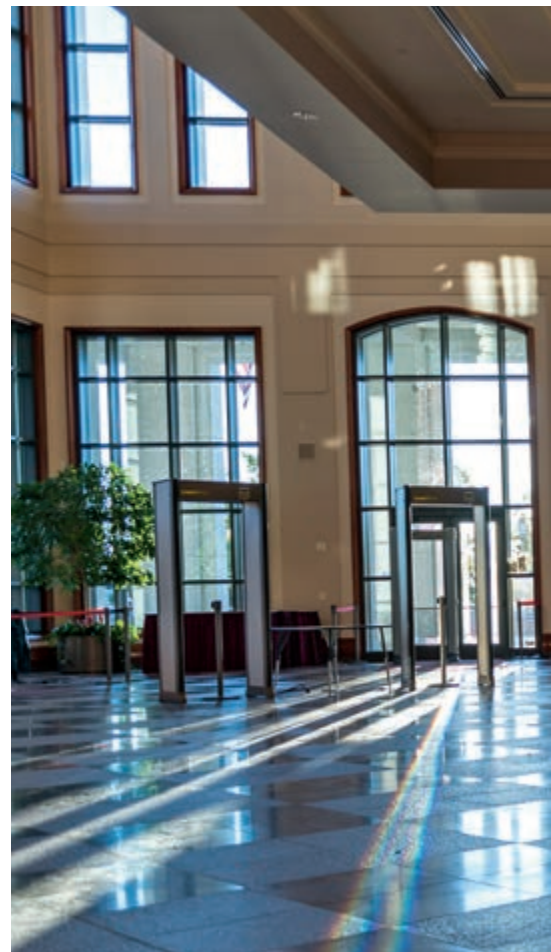
President Boyd K. Packer described that identifying mark of the true Church this way: "Revelation continues in the Church: the prophet receiving it for the Church; the president for his stake, his mission, or his quorum; the bishop for his ward; the father for his family; the individual for himself."<sup>1</sup>

That wonderful process of revelation begins, ends, and continues as we receive personal revelation. Let's take the great Nephi, son of Lehi, as our example. His father had a dream. Others in Nephi's family viewed Lehi's dream as evidence of mental

confusion. The dream included a command from God for Lehi's sons to run the terrible risk of returning to Jerusalem for the plates which contained the word of God so that they could take them on their journey to the promised land.

We often quote Nephi's brave declaration when his father asked them to go back to Jerusalem. You know the words: "I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded."<sup>2</sup>

When Lehi heard Nephi speak those words, the scripture says that "he was exceedingly glad."<sup>3</sup> He was glad because he knew that Nephi had been blessed with confirming





revelation that his father's dream was a true communication from God. Nephi did not say, "I will go and do what my father told me to do." Rather he said, "I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded."

From your experience in your own families, you also know why Lehi was "exceedingly glad." His joy came from knowing that Nephi had received confirming revelation.

Many parents have set family rules for when a teenage child is to return home at night. But think of the joy when the parent learns, as one did just a few weeks ago, that a child who had recently left home not only set a

curfew for herself but also kept the Sabbath just as she had been taught at home. The revelation of a parent has its lasting effect in the personal revelation that continues in the child.

My mother must have understood that principle of revelation. As a young man, I would close the back door very quietly when I came home late in the evening. I had to pass my mother's bedroom on the way to mine. However quietly I tiptoed, just as I got to her half-opened door, I would hear my name, ever so quietly, "Hal, come in for a moment."

I would go in and sit on the edge of her bed. The room would be dark.

If you had listened, you would have thought it was only friendly talk about life. But to this day, what she said comes back to my mind with the same power I feel when I read the transcript of my patriarchal blessing.

I don't know what she was asking for in prayer as she waited for me those nights. I suppose it would have been in part for my safety. But I am sure that she prayed as a patriarch does before he gives a blessing. He prays that his words will come to the recipient as the words of God, not his. My mother's prayers for that blessing were answered on my head. She is in the spirit world and has been for more



than 40 years. I am sure she has been exceedingly glad that I was blessed, as she asked, to hear in her counsel the commands of God. And I have tried to go and do as she hoped I would.

I have seen that same miracle of continuing revelation in stake presidents and bishops in the Church. And, as is true in the revelation to family leaders, the value of the revelation depends on those who are being led receiving confirming revelation.

I saw that miracle of revelation in the aftermath of the breaking of the Teton Dam in Idaho in 1976. Many of you know the story of what happened. But the example of continuing revelation that was passed through a stake president could bless all of us in the days ahead.

Thousands of people were evacuated as their homes were destroyed. Directing the relief efforts fell to a local stake president, a farmer. I was in a classroom at Ricks College just a few days after the disaster. A leader from the federal disaster agency had arrived. He and his chief assistants came to the large room where the stake president had assembled bishops and even some ministers of other local religions. I was there because many of the survivors were being cared for and housed on the campus of the college where I was the president.

As the meeting began, the representative from the federal disaster agency stood and began to say with the voice of authority what needed to be done. After he listed each of the five or six tasks he said were essential, the stake president responded quietly, "We've already done that."

After a few minutes, the man from the federal disaster agency said, "I think that I will just sit down and watch for a while." He and his deputies then listened as bishops and

elders quorum presidents reported what they had done. They described what direction they had received and followed from their leaders. They talked as well about what they had been inspired to do as they carried out the instructions to find families and to help them. It was late that day. They were all too tired to show much emotion except their love of the people.

The stake president gave a few final directions to the bishops, and then he announced a time for the next report meeting, early the following morning.

The next morning the leader of the federal team arrived 20 minutes before the report and assignment meeting was scheduled to begin. I stood nearby. I heard him say quietly to the stake president, "President, what would you like me and the members of my team to do?"

What that man saw I have seen in times of distress and testing all over the world. President Packer was right. Continuing revelation comes to stake presidents to lift them above their own wisdom and capacities. And, beyond that, the Lord gives to those whom the president leads a confirming witness that his commands come from God through the Holy Ghost to an imperfect human being.

I have been blessed to be called to follow inspired leaders much of my

life. As a very young man I was called to be counselor to an elders quorum president. I have in turn been counselor to two district presidents and to a Presiding Bishop of the Church, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and a counselor to two Presidents of the Church. I have seen the revelation given to them and then confirmed to their followers.

That personal revelation of acceptance, for which we all long, does not come easily, nor does it come simply for the asking. The Lord gave this standard for the capacity to receive such witnesses from God. It is a guide for anyone seeking personal revelation, as we all must.

"Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven.

"The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion."<sup>4</sup>

From that I draw counsel for us all. Don't take lightly the feeling you get of love for the prophet of God. Wherever I go in the Church, whoever the prophet is at the time, members will ask, "When you get back to Church headquarters, will you please tell the prophet how much we love him?"

That is far more than hero worship or the feelings we sometimes have of admiring heroic figures. It is a gift from God. With it you will receive more easily the gift of confirming revelation when he speaks in his office as the Lord's prophet. The love you feel is the love the Lord has for whoever is His spokesman.

That is not easy to feel continually because the Lord often asks His prophets to give counsel that is hard





for people to accept. The enemy of our souls will try to lead us to take offense and to doubt the prophet's calling from God.

I have seen how the Holy Ghost can touch a softened heart to protect a humble disciple of Jesus Christ with confirming revelation.

The prophet sent me to confer the sacred sealing power on a man in a small city far away. Only the prophet of God has the keys to decide who is to receive the sacred power which was given by the Lord to Peter, the senior Apostle. I had received that same sealing power, but only by direction of the President of the Church could I confer it on another.

So, in a room in a chapel far from Salt Lake, I laid my hands on the head of a man chosen by the prophet to receive the sealing power. His hands showed the signs of a lifetime of tilling the soil for a meager living. His tiny wife sat near him. She also showed signs of years of hard labor alongside her husband.

I spoke the words given by the prophet: "Under delegation of authority and responsibility from," and then the name of the prophet, "who holds all the keys of the priesthood on earth at this time, I confer the sealing power on," and I gave the name of the man and then the name of the temple where he would serve as a sealer.

Tears flowed down his cheeks. I saw that his wife was also weeping. I waited for them to compose themselves. She stood up and stepped toward me. She looked up and then said timidly that she was happy but also sad. She said that she had so loved going to the temple with her husband but that now she felt that she should not go with him because God had chosen him for so glorious and sacred a trust. Then she said that her feeling of being inadequate to be his temple companion came because she could neither read nor write.

I assured her that her husband would be honored by her company in the temple because of her great spiritual power. As well as I could with my small grasp of her language, I told her that God had revealed things to her beyond all earthly education.

She knew by the gift of the Spirit that God had given, through His prophet, a supernal trust to the husband she loved. She knew for herself that the keys to give that sealing power were held by a man she had never seen and yet knew for herself was the living prophet of God. She knew, without having to be told by any living witness, that the prophet had prayed over the name of her husband. She knew for herself that God had made the call.

She also knew that the ordinances her husband would perform would

bind people for eternity in the celestial kingdom. She had confirmed to her mind and heart that the promise the Lord made to Peter still continued in the Church: "Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven."<sup>5</sup> She knew that for herself, by revelation, from God.

Let us go back to our starting point. "Revelation continues in the Church: the prophet receiving it for the Church; the president for his stake, his mission, or his quorum; the bishop for his ward; the father for his family; the individual for himself."<sup>6</sup>

I bear you my witness that is true. Heavenly Father hears your prayers. He loves you. He knows your name. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and our Redeemer. He loves you beyond your ability to comprehend.

God pours out revelation, through the Holy Ghost, on His children. He speaks to His prophet on the earth, who today is Thomas S. Monson. I witness that he holds and exercises all the keys of the priesthood on earth.

As you listen in this conference to the words of those God has called to speak for Him, I pray that you will receive the confirming revelation you need to find your way on the journey home again, to dwell with Him in a sealed family forever. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

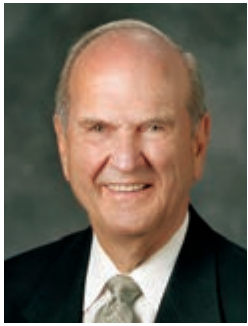
#### NOTES

1. Boyd K. Packer, "We Believe All That God Has Revealed," *Ensign*, May 1974, 95.
2. 1 Nephi 3:7.
3. 1 Nephi 3:8.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 121:45–46.
5. Matthew 16:19.
6. Boyd K. Packer, *Ensign*, May 1974, 95.



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**By Elder Russell M. Nelson**  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

## Sustaining the Prophets

*Our sustaining of prophets is a personal commitment that we will do our utmost to uphold their prophetic priorities.*

President Eyring, we thank you for your instructive and inspiring message. My dear brothers and sisters, we thank you for your faith and devotion. Yesterday, we were each invited to sustain Thomas S. Monson as the prophet of the Lord and President of the Lord's Church. And often we sing, "We thank thee, O God, for a prophet."<sup>1</sup> Do you and I really understand what that means? Imagine the privilege the Lord has given us of sustaining His prophet, whose counsel will be untainted, unvarnished, unmotivated by any personal aspiration, and utterly true!

How do we really sustain a prophet? Long before he became President of the Church, President Joseph F. Smith explained, "It is an important duty resting upon the Saints who . . . sustain the authorities of the Church, to do so not only by the lifting of the hand, the mere form, but in *deed* and in truth."<sup>2</sup>

Well do I remember my most unique "deed" to sustain a prophet. As a medical doctor and cardiac surgeon, I had the responsibility of performing open-heart surgery on President Spencer W. Kimball in 1972, when he was Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He needed a very complex operation. But I had no

experience doing such a procedure on a 77-year-old patient in heart failure. I did not recommend the operation and so informed President Kimball and the First Presidency. But, in faith, President Kimball chose to have the operation, only because it was advised by the First Presidency. That shows how he sustained his leaders! And his decision made me tremble!

Thanks to the Lord, the operation was a success. When President Kimball's heart resumed beating, it did so with great power! At that very moment, I had a clear witness of the Spirit that this man would one day become President of the Church!<sup>3</sup>

You know the outcome. Only 20 months later, President Kimball became President of the Church. And he provided bold and courageous leadership for many years.

Since then we have sustained Presidents Ezra Taft Benson, Howard W. Hunter, Gordon B. Hinckley, and now Thomas S. Monson as Presidents of the Church—prophets in every sense of the word!

My dear brothers and sisters, if the Restoration did anything, it shattered the age-old myth that God had stopped talking to His children. Nothing could be further from the truth. A prophet has stood at the

head of God's Church in all dispensations, from Adam to the present day.<sup>4</sup> Prophets testify of Jesus Christ—of His divinity and of His earthly mission and ministry.<sup>5</sup> We honor the Prophet Joseph Smith as the prophet of this last dispensation. And we honor each man who has succeeded him as President of the Church.

When we sustain prophets and other leaders,<sup>6</sup> we invoke the law of common consent, for the Lord said, "It shall not be given to any one to go forth to preach my gospel, or to build up my church, except he be ordained by some one who has authority, and it is known to the church that he has authority and has been regularly ordained by the heads of the church."<sup>7</sup>

This gives us, as members of the Lord's Church, confidence and faith as we strive to keep the scriptural injunction to heed the Lord's voice<sup>8</sup> as it comes through the voice of His servants the prophets.<sup>9</sup> All leaders in the Lord's Church are called by proper authority. No prophet or any other leader in this Church, for that matter,





has ever called himself or herself. No prophet has ever been elected. The Lord made that clear when He said, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you.”<sup>10</sup> You and I do not “vote” on Church leaders at any level. We do, though, have the privilege of sustaining them.

The ways of the Lord are different from the ways of man. Man’s ways remove people from office or business when they grow old or become disabled. But man’s ways are not and never will be the Lord’s ways. Our sustaining of prophets is a personal commitment that we will do our utmost to uphold their prophetic priorities. Our sustaining is an oath-like indication that we recognize their calling as a prophet to be legitimate and binding upon us.

Twenty-six years before he became President of the Church, then-Elder George Albert Smith said: “The obligation that we make when we raise our hands . . . is a most sacred one. It does *not* mean that we will go quietly on our way and be willing that the prophet of the Lord shall direct this work, but it means . . . that we will stand behind him; we will pray for him; we will defend his good name, and we will strive to carry out his instructions as the Lord shall direct.”<sup>11</sup>

The living Lord leads His living Church!<sup>12</sup> The Lord reveals His will for the Church to His prophet. Yesterday, after we were invited to sustain Thomas S. Monson as President of the Church, we also had the privilege to sustain him, the counselors in the First Presidency, and members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. Think of that! We sustain 15 men as prophets of God! They hold all the priesthood keys that have ever been conferred upon man in this dispensation.

The calling of 15 men to the holy apostleship provides great protection for us as members of the Church. Why? Because decisions of these leaders must be unanimous.<sup>13</sup> Can you imagine how the Spirit needs to move upon 15 men to bring about unanimity? These 15 men have varied educational and professional backgrounds, with differing opinions about many things. Trust me! These 15 men—prophets, seers, and revelators—know what the will of the Lord is when unanimity is reached! They are committed to see that the Lord’s will truly will be done. The Lord’s Prayer provides the pattern for each of these 15 men when they pray: “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”<sup>14</sup>

The Apostle with the longest seniority in the office of Apostle presides.<sup>15</sup> That system of seniority will usually bring older men to the office of President of the Church.<sup>16</sup> It provides continuity, seasoned maturity, experience, and extensive preparation, as guided by the Lord.

The Church today has been organized by the Lord Himself. He has put in place a remarkable system of governance that provides redundancy and backup. That system provides for prophetic leadership even when the inevitable illnesses and incapacities may come with advancing age.<sup>17</sup> Counterbalances and safeguards abound so that no one can ever lead the Church astray. Senior leaders are constantly being tutored such that one day they are ready to sit in the highest councils. They learn how to hear the voice of the Lord through the whisperings of the Spirit.

While serving as First Counselor to President Ezra Taft Benson, who was then nearing the end of his mortal life, President Gordon B. Hinckley explained:

“The principles and procedures which the Lord has put in place for the governance of His church make provision for any . . . circumstance. It is



First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve [Apostles] assures [us] that it will always be in good hands and that, come what may, there is no need to worry or to fear. Our Savior, Jesus Christ, whom we follow, whom we worship, and whom we serve, is ever at the helm.”<sup>19</sup>

President Monson, we thank you for those truths! And we thank you for your lifetime of exemplary and dedicated service. May I presume to speak for the members of the Church throughout the world in our united and sincere expression of gratitude for you. We honor you! We love you! We sustain you, not only with uplifted hands but with all our hearts and consecrated efforts. Humbly and fervently, “we ever pray for thee, our prophet dear!”<sup>20</sup> In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet,” *Hymns*, no. 19.
2. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* (1998), 211; emphasis added. This statement was made in 1898, when President Smith was Second Counselor in the First Presidency.
3. For further details, see Spencer J. Condie, *Russell M. Nelson: Father, Surgeon, Apostle* (2003), 153–56.
4. See Bible Dictionary, “Dispensations.”
5. A number of prophets foretold the coming of the Lord, including Lehi (see 1 Nephi 1:19), Nephi (see 1 Nephi 11:31–33; 19:7–8), Jacob (see Jacob 4:4–6), Benjamin (see Mosiah 3:5–11, 15), Abinadi (see Mosiah 15:1–9), Alma (see Alma 40:2), and Samuel the Lamanite (see Helaman 14:12). Before the Savior was born in Bethlehem, they foresaw His atoning sacrifice and His subsequent Resurrection.
6. The principle of sustaining leaders is fundamental throughout the Lord’s Church. A person is sustained before being set apart to a calling or being ordained to an office in the priesthood.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 42:11. The practice of sustaining our leaders was implemented on April 6, 1830, when the Church was organized, and in March 1836, when members of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles were

important . . . that there be no doubts or concerns about the governance of the Church and the exercise of the prophetic gifts, including the right to inspiration and revelation in administering the affairs and programs of the Church, when the President may be ill or is not able to function fully.

“The First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles, called and ordained to hold the keys of the priesthood, have the authority and responsibility to govern the Church, to administer its ordinances, to expound its doctrine, and to establish and maintain its practices.”

President Hinckley continued:

“When the President is ill or not able to function fully in all of the duties of his office, his two Counselors together comprise a Quorum of the First Presidency. They carry on with the day-to-day work of the Presidency. . . .

“ . . . But any major questions of policy, procedures, programs, or

doctrine are considered deliberately and prayerfully by the First Presidency and the Twelve together.”<sup>18</sup>

Last year, when President Monson reached the milestone of 5 years of service as President of the Church, he reflected on his 50 years of apostolic service and made this statement: “Age eventually takes its toll on all of us. However, we join our voices with King Benjamin, who said, . . . ‘I am like as yourselves, subject to all manner of infirmities in body and mind; yet I have been chosen . . . and consecrated by my father, . . . and have been kept and preserved by his matchless power, to serve you with all the might, mind and strength which the Lord hath granted unto me’ (Mosiah 2:11).”

President Monson continued: “Despite any health challenges that may come to us, despite any weakness in body or mind, we serve to the best of our ability. I assure you that the Church is in good hands. The system set up for the Council of the

sustained as prophets, seers, and revelators (see *History of the Church*, 1:74–77; 2:417).

8. The Book of Mormon warns of danger if we disregard prophetic teachings. From it we read that “the great and spacious building was the pride of the world; and it fell, and the fall thereof was exceedingly great. And the angel of the Lord spake . . . , saying: Thus shall be the destruction of all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, that shall fight against the twelve apostles of the Lamb” (1 Nephi 11:36).
9. See Daniel 9:10; Amos 3:7; Doctrine and Covenants 21:1, 4–5; 124:45–46.
10. John 15:16. The fifth article of faith clarifies: “We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.”
11. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: George Albert Smith* (2011), 64; emphasis added. This quotation came from a conference address by Elder George Albert Smith in 1919. He became President of the Church in 1945.
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 1:30, 38.
13. See Doctrine and Covenants 107:27.
14. 3 Nephi 13:10; see also Matthew 6:10; Luke 11:2.
15. When a President of the Church dies, the First Presidency is dissolved and the counselors take their places in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The Quorum of the Twelve then presides over the Church until the First Presidency is reorganized. That period of time is known as an apostolic interregnum. Historically, that interval has varied in length from four days to three and a half years.
16. Of course, that pattern of succession did not apply to the calling of Joseph Smith, who was foreordained to be the prophet of the Restoration and the first President of the Church (see 2 Nephi 3:6–22; see also Abraham 3:22–23).
17. We know that the Lord Himself can call any of us home anytime He chooses.
18. Gordon B. Hinckley, “God Is at the Helm,” *Ensign*, May 1994, 54; see also Gordon B. Hinckley, “He Slumbers Not, nor Sleeps,” *Ensign*, May 1983, 6.
19. “Message from President Thomas S. Monson,” *Church News*, Feb. 3, 2013, 9.
20. “We Ever Pray for Thee,” *Hymns*, no. 23.



**By Carol F. McConkie**

First Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency

# Live according to the Words of the Prophets

*To be in harmony with heaven's divine purposes, we sustain the prophet and choose to live according to his words.*

Our Father in Heaven loves all of His children and desires that they know and understand His plan of happiness. Therefore, He calls prophets, those who have been ordained with power and authority to act in God's name for the salvation of His children. They are messengers of righteousness, witnesses of Jesus Christ and the infinite power of His Atonement. They hold the keys of the kingdom of God on earth and authorize the performance of saving ordinances.

In the Lord's true Church, “there is never but one on the earth at a time on whom this power and the keys of this priesthood are conferred.”<sup>1</sup> We sustain President Thomas S. Monson as our prophet, seer, and revelator. He reveals the word of the Lord to guide and direct our *entire* Church. As President J. Reuben Clark Jr. explained, “The President of the Church . . . alone has the right to receive revelations for the Church.”<sup>2</sup>

Concerning the living prophet, the Lord commands the people of His Church:

“Thou shalt give heed unto *all* his words and commandments

which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me;

“For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith.

“For by doing these things the gates of hell shall not prevail against you.”<sup>3</sup>

To be in harmony with heaven's divine purposes, we sustain the prophet and choose to live according to his words.

We also sustain President Monson's counselors and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. “They have the right, the power, and authority to declare the mind and will of [the Lord] . . . , subject to . . . the President of the Church.”<sup>4</sup> They speak in the name of Christ. They prophesy in the name of Christ. They do all things in the name of Jesus Christ. In their words we hear the voice of the Lord and we feel the Savior's love. “And whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be scripture . . . and the power of God unto salvation.”<sup>5</sup> The Lord Himself has spoken: “Whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same.”<sup>6</sup>



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We are grateful for a church “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.”<sup>7</sup> The Lord’s house is a house of order, and we need never be deceived about where to look for answers to our questions or uncertain about which voice to follow. We need not be “tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine.”<sup>8</sup> God reveals His word through His ordained servants, “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God.”<sup>9</sup> When we choose to live according to the words of the prophets, we are on the covenant path that leads to eternal perfection.

From a single mother struggling to survive a season of famine, we learn what it means to sustain a prophet.

The Lord instructed the prophet Elijah to go to Zarephath, where he would find a widow woman whom God had commanded to sustain him. As Elijah approached the city, he saw her gathering sticks. He called to her, “Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.”<sup>10</sup>

“And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her [again], and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand.

“And she said, As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.”

Elijah responded, “Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake *first*, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son.”<sup>11</sup>

Imagine for a moment the difficulty of what the prophet was asking a starving mother to do. Certainly, God Himself could have provided food for His faithful servant. But, acting in the name of the Lord, Elijah did as directed, which was to ask a beloved daughter of God to sacrifice that which she had in order to sustain the prophet.

But Elijah also promised a blessing for obedience: “For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail.”<sup>12</sup> The Lord gave the widow the opportunity to choose to believe and obey the words of the prophet.

In a world threatened by a famine of righteousness and spiritual starvation, we have been commanded to sustain the prophet. As we give heed to, uphold, and affirm prophetic word, we witness that we have the faith to humbly submit to the will, the wisdom, *and* the timing of the Lord.

We heed prophetic word even when it may seem unreasonable, inconvenient, and uncomfortable. According to the world’s standards, following the prophet may be unpopular, politically incorrect, or socially unacceptable. But following the prophet is always right. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”<sup>13</sup> “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.”<sup>14</sup>

The Lord honors and favors those who will heed prophetic direction. For the widow of Zarephath, obedience to Elijah saved her life and ultimately the life of her son. As the prophet had promised, “she, and he, and her house, did eat many days . . . according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah.”<sup>15</sup>





The Lord “will feed those who trust Him.”<sup>16</sup> The words of the prophets are like manna to our souls. When we partake, we are blessed, protected, and preserved both temporally and spiritually. When we feast upon their words, we learn how to come unto Christ and live.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote that through the prophets “the Lord reveals the truths of salvation, . . . the salvation that is in Christ; and he charts . . . the course leading to eternal life. . . . In every age the Lord gives his people the direction they need at the moment of their peril and danger. And surely in the days ahead there will be times when nothing but the wisdom of God, descending from heaven and flowing forth from prophetic lips, will be able to save his people.”<sup>17</sup>

For me, the words of prophets taught by my Laurel teacher gave me a vision of what a covenant marriage relationship should look like. The words of the prophets gave me the faith and hope that I could prepare for and obtain a happy home. Consistently studying the teachings of the prophets, both ancient and modern, sustained me during the strenuous and often exhausting years of bearing, teaching, and nurturing seven children. The words of the prophets in the scriptures and taught from this pulpit are words of comfort, love, strength, and good cheer that embrace us all.

When we heed the words of the prophets, we build our homes and our lives upon an eternally sure foundation, “the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, . . . that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon



you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to . . . misery and endless wo.”<sup>18</sup>

We have a choice. We may choose to ignore, trifle with, trample upon, or rebel against the words of Christ spoken by His ordained servants. But the Savior taught that those who do so will be cut off from His covenant people.<sup>19</sup>

As we prayerfully read and study sacred prophetic word with faith in Christ, with real intent, the Holy Ghost will speak truth to our minds and hearts. May we open our ears to hear, our hearts to understand, and our minds that the mysteries of God may be unfolded to our view.<sup>20</sup>

I bear my witness that Joseph Smith was and is the prophet called of God to restore the gospel of Jesus Christ and His priesthood to the earth. And I testify that in President Monson we are led by a true prophet of God today. May we choose to stand with the prophets and live according to their words until we become unified in faith, purified in Christ, and filled with the knowledge of the Son of God. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 132:7; see also *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 2.1.1: “Jesus Christ holds all the keys of the priesthood pertaining to His Church. He has conferred upon each of His Apostles all the keys that pertain to the kingdom of God on earth. The senior living Apostle, the President of the Church, is the only person on earth authorized to exercise all priesthood keys.”
2. J. Reuben Clark Jr., “When Are the Writings and Sermons of Church Leaders Entitled to the Claim of Scripture?” (address to seminary and institute personnel, Brigham Young University, July 7, 1954).
3. Doctrine and Covenants 21:4–6; emphasis added.
4. J. Reuben Clark Jr., “When Are the Writings and Sermons of Church Leaders Entitled to the Claim of Scripture?”
5. Doctrine and Covenants 68:4.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 1:38.
7. Ephesians 2:20.
8. Ephesians 4:14.
9. Ephesians 4:12–13.
10. 1 Kings 17:10.
11. 1 Kings 17:11–13; emphasis added.
12. 1 Kings 17:14.
13. Isaiah 55:9.
14. Proverbs 3:5.
15. 1 Kings 17:15–16.
16. Roger Hoffman, “Consider the Lilies.”
17. Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* (Deseret Book Company, 1985), 478; punctuation modified; used by permission.
18. Helaman 5:12.
19. See 3 Nephi 20:23.
20. See Mosiah 2:9.



**By Elder Robert D. Hales**  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# Eternal Life—to Know Our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ

*God and Christ are literally a Father and a Son—separate, distinct, individual beings who are wholly unified in Their purpose.*

Many years ago I took the opportunity to study the final testimonies of the prophets in each dispensation. Each bore a powerful witness of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

As I have read these testimonies—and many others like them over the years—it has always touched my heart to sense how deeply Heavenly Father loves His eldest Son and how Jesus shows His love by His obedience to His Father’s will. I testify that when we do what is necessary to know Them and know Their love for one another, we will obtain “the greatest of all the gifts of God”—even eternal life.<sup>1</sup> For “this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”<sup>2</sup>

How can this gift be ours? It comes through a matter of personal revelation, which has been spoken of and taught this morning.

Do you remember the first time you knew there was a God and could

feel His love? As a boy, I used to gaze into the starry sky and ponder and feel His presence. I thrilled to explore the magnificent beauties of God’s creations—from tiny insects to towering trees. As I recognized the beauty of this earth, I knew that Heavenly Father loved me. I knew that I was a literal spiritual offspring, that we are all sons and daughters of God.

How did I know this? you might ask. The scriptures teach, “To some it is given by the Holy Ghost to know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and . . . to others it is given to believe on their words, that they also might have eternal life if they continue faithful.”<sup>3</sup> From my perspective, this does not mean that some people will forever be dependent upon the testimonies of others.

My own testimony grew as I learned about Heavenly Father and the Savior from the teachings and testimony of my parents, teachers, the scriptures—which I read diligently—and especially

the Holy Ghost. As I exercised faith and obeyed the commandments, the Holy Ghost testified that what I was learning was true. This is how I came to know for myself.

In this process, seeking for personal revelation is a key. Nephi invites each of us to “feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do.”<sup>4</sup>

Before my eighth birthday, I sought to know more about baptism. I read the scriptures and prayed. I learned that I would receive the gift of the Holy Ghost when I was confirmed. I also began to understand that God and Christ are literally a Father and a Son—separate, distinct, individual beings who are wholly unified in Their purpose. “We love [Them], because [They] first loved us.”<sup>5</sup> And over and over again I observed how They love one another and work together for our good. Listen to a few of the many scriptures that teach this truth:

Teaching about our premortal life, Heavenly Father referred to Jesus Christ as “my Beloved Son, which was



my Beloved and Chosen from the beginning.”<sup>6</sup> When the Father created the earth, He did so “by [His] Only Begotten” Son.<sup>7</sup>

Jesus’s mother, Mary, was told she would bring forth “the Son of the Highest.”<sup>8</sup> And when Jesus was a young man, He told His mother that He “must be about [His] Father’s business.”<sup>9</sup> Years later, when the Savior was baptized, Heavenly Father spoke from the heavens, saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”<sup>10</sup>

To teach His disciples to pray, Jesus spoke these words:

“Our Father which art in heaven,  
Hallowed be thy name.

“Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”<sup>11</sup>

He taught Nicodemus, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.”<sup>12</sup> And He explained His miracles by saying, “The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever [the Father] doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.”<sup>13</sup>

As the hour of the Atonement drew near, Jesus prayed, saying: “Father, the hour is come. . . . I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.”<sup>14</sup> Then, as the weight of our sins befell Him, He pled, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.”<sup>15</sup> In His last moments on the cross, Jesus prayed, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” and then cried out, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.”<sup>16</sup>

He then visited the spirits of those who had died, in the spirit world, to give “them power to come forth, after his resurrection from the dead, to enter into his Father’s kingdom.”<sup>17</sup> After the Savior’s Resurrection, He



appeared to Mary Magdalene, saying, “I ascend unto my Father, and [to] your Father.”<sup>18</sup>

When He came to the people on the American continent, His Father introduced Him, saying, “Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name.”<sup>19</sup> When Jesus descended among the people at the temple, He introduced Himself, saying: “Behold, I am Jesus Christ. . . . I have . . . glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world.”<sup>20</sup> When He taught His doctrine, He explained:

“It is the doctrine which the Father hath given unto me; and I bear record of the Father, and the Father beareth record of me.”<sup>21</sup>

“Verily . . . the Father and I are one.”<sup>22</sup>

Can we see a pattern in these scriptures that testifies of the Father and the Son as distinct individuals and beings? How, then, are They *one*? Not because They are the same person but because They are unified in purpose, equally dedicated to “bring[ing] to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”<sup>23</sup>

Jesus is a God, yet He continually distinguishes Himself as a separate, individual being by praying to His Father and by saying that He is doing His Father’s will. During His ministry among the Nephites, He pled, “Father, I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me out of the world, . . . that I may be in



them as thou, Father, art in me, that we may be one, that I may be glorified in them.”<sup>24</sup>

With this in mind, we are not surprised that the Restoration of the gospel began with the appearance of not one but two glorified beings. Of his First Vision, the Prophet Joseph Smith testified: “One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*”<sup>25</sup>

The young prophet, who went into the grove to find out which church he should join, went with faith unwavering and came out with the knowledge and a witness of the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom God had sent. Joseph, like the prophets before him, was then to be an instrument for restoring to the world the knowledge that leads to eternal life.

You too can seek our Heavenly Father and “this Jesus of whom the prophets and apostles have [testified]”<sup>26</sup> in the scriptures and in this general conference. As you seek a personal witness—your personal revelation—you will discover that Heavenly Father has provided a special way for you to know the truth for yourself: through the third member of the Godhead, a personage of spirit we know as the Holy Ghost.

“And when ye shall receive these things”—including what I have shared today—“I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

“And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know [with a surety] the truth of all things.”<sup>27</sup>

Brothers and sisters, I testify that our Heavenly Father wants us to seek this knowledge now. The words of the prophet Helaman cry from the dust: “Remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation . . . , a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall.”<sup>28</sup> Indeed, we will not fail.

That sure foundation is Jesus Christ. He is “the Rock of Heaven.”<sup>29</sup> When we build our house upon Him, the rains of the latter days may descend, the floods may come, and the winds may blow, but we will not fall. We will not fail, for our home and our family will be founded upon Christ.<sup>30</sup>

I testify that such a home is “a house of glory.”<sup>31</sup> There we gather together to pray to our Heavenly

Father in the name of Jesus Christ, His Beloved Son. There we glorify and give gratitude to Them. There we receive the Holy Ghost and “the promise which [He gives] unto [us] of eternal life, even the glory of the celestial kingdom.”<sup>32</sup>

I bear my special witness that our Savior is Jesus Christ, that He lives, that our Eternal Heavenly Father loves us and watches over us, that we have a prophet in this dispensation—even President Thomas S. Monson—to lead and to guide us. The Holy Spirit testifies that this is true to each who goes and seeks the knowledge. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
2. John 17:3.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 46:13–14.
4. 2 Nephi 32:3.
5. 1 John 4:19.
6. Moses 4:2.
7. Moses 2:1.
8. Luke 1:32.
9. Luke 2:49.
10. Matthew 3:17.
11. Matthew 6:9–10.
12. John 3:16.
13. John 5:19; see also verse 17.
14. John 17:1, 4.
15. Matthew 26:39.
16. Luke 23:34, 46.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 138:51.
18. John 20:17.
19. 3 Nephi 11:7.
20. 3 Nephi 11:10–11.
21. 3 Nephi 11:32.
22. 3 Nephi 11:27.
23. Moses 1:39.
24. 3 Nephi 19:29.
25. Joseph Smith—History 1:17.
26. Ether 12:41.
27. Moroni 10:4–5.
28. Helaman 5:12.
29. Moses 7:53.
30. See 3 Nephi 14:24–25.
31. Doctrine and Covenants 88:119; 109:8, 16.
32. Doctrine and Covenants 88:4.

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By **Elder James J. Hamula**  
Of the Seventy

# The Sacrament and the Atonement

*The ordinance of the sacrament needs to become more holy and sacred to each of us.*

On the eve of Gethsemane and Calvary, Jesus gathered His Apostles together one last time to worship. The place was the upper room of a disciple's home in Jerusalem, and the season was Passover.<sup>1</sup>

Before them was the traditional Passover meal, consisting of the sacrificial lamb, wine, and unleavened bread, emblems of Israel's past salvation from slavery and death<sup>2</sup> and of a future redemption yet to be realized.<sup>3</sup> As the meal drew to a conclusion, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it,<sup>4</sup> and gave it to His Apostles, saying, "Take, eat."<sup>5</sup> "This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me."<sup>6</sup> In a similar manner, He took the cup of wine, offered a blessing on it, and passed it to those around Him, saying: "This cup is the new testament in my blood,"<sup>7</sup> "which is shed . . . for the remission of sins."<sup>8</sup> "This do in remembrance of me."<sup>9</sup>

In this simple yet profound manner, Jesus instituted a new ordinance for God's covenant people. No longer would animal blood be spilled or animal flesh be consumed in anticipation of a redeeming sacrifice of

a Christ who was yet to come.<sup>10</sup> Instead, emblems of the broken flesh and spilled blood of the Christ who had already come would be taken and eaten in remembrance of His redeeming sacrifice.<sup>11</sup> Participation in this new ordinance would signify to all a solemn acceptance of Jesus as the promised Christ and wholehearted willingness to follow Him and keep His commandments. To those who would so signify and conduct their life, spiritual death would "pass



over" them, and eternal life would be assured.

In the hours and days that followed, Jesus entered into Gethsemane, was taken to Calvary, and triumphantly departed the Arimathean's tomb. After His departure from them, Jesus's faithful disciples in and about Jerusalem came together on the first day of the week to "break bread,"<sup>12</sup> and they did so "steadfastly."<sup>13</sup> Surely, they did so not only to remember their departed Lord but also to express gratitude for and faith in His marvelous Redemption of them.

Significantly, when Jesus visited His disciples in the Americas, He also instituted the sacrament among them.<sup>14</sup> In doing so, He said: "This shall ye always observe to do,"<sup>15</sup> and "it shall be a testimony unto the Father that ye do always remember me."<sup>16</sup> Again, at the outset of the Restoration, the Lord instituted the ordinance of the sacrament, giving instructions to us similar to those He gave His earlier disciples.<sup>17</sup>

The ordinance of the sacrament has been called "one of the most holy and sacred ordinances in the Church."<sup>18</sup> It needs to become more holy and sacred to each of us. Jesus Christ Himself instituted the ordinance to remind us what He did to redeem us and to teach us how we may avail ourselves of His Redemption and thereby live with God again.

With torn and broken bread, we signify that we remember the physical body of Jesus Christ—a body that was buffeted with pains, afflictions, and temptations of every kind,<sup>19</sup> a body that bore a burden of anguish sufficient to bleed at every pore,<sup>20</sup> a body whose flesh was torn and whose heart was broken in crucifixion.<sup>21</sup> We signify our belief that while that same body was laid to rest in death, it was

raised again to life from the grave, never again to know disease, decay, or death.<sup>22</sup> And in taking the bread to ourselves, we acknowledge that, like Christ's mortal body, our bodies will be released from the bonds of death, rise triumphantly from the grave, and be restored to our eternal spirits.<sup>23</sup>

With a small cup of water, we signify that we remember the blood Jesus spilled and the spiritual suffering He endured for all mankind. We remember the agony that caused great drops of blood to fall in Gethsemane.<sup>24</sup> We remember the bruising and scourging He endured at the hands of His captors.<sup>25</sup> We remember the blood He spilled from His hands, feet, and side while at Calvary.<sup>26</sup> And we remember His personal reflection on His suffering: "How sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not."<sup>27</sup> In taking the water to ourselves, we acknowledge that His blood and suffering atoned for our sins and that He will remit our sins as we embrace and accept the principles and ordinances of His gospel.

Thus, with bread and water, we are reminded of Christ's Redemption of us from death and sin. The sequence of bread first and water second is not inconsequential. In partaking of the bread, we are reminded of our own inevitable personal resurrection, which consists of more than just the restoration of body and spirit. By the power of the Resurrection, all of us will be restored to the presence of God.<sup>28</sup> That reality presents to us the fundamental question of our lives. The fundamental question facing all of us is not whether we will live but with whom we will live after we die. While every one of us will return to the presence of God, not every one of us will remain with Him.

Through mortality, every one of us becomes soiled with sin and transgression.<sup>29</sup> We will have had thoughts, words, and works that will have been less than virtuous.<sup>30</sup> In short, we will be unclean. And the consequence of uncleanness in the presence of God, Jesus made perfectly clear: "No unclean thing can dwell . . . in his presence."<sup>31</sup> That reality was brought home to Alma the Younger, who, when confronted by a holy angel, was so racked, harrowed, and tormented by his uncleanness that he desired to become "extinct both soul and body, that [he] might not be brought to stand in the presence of . . . God."<sup>32</sup>

In partaking of the sacramental water, we are taught how we may be made clean from sin and transgression and thus stand in the presence of God. By the shedding of His innocent blood, Jesus Christ satisfied the demands of justice for every sin and transgression. He then offers to make us clean if we will have faith in Him sufficient to repent; accept all the ordinances and covenants of salvation, beginning with baptism; and receive the Holy Ghost. Upon our receipt of the Holy Ghost,

we are cleansed and purified. Jesus made this doctrine very clear:

"No unclean thing can enter into [God's] kingdom; . . . nothing entereth into his rest save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood. . . .

"Now this is the commandment: Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day."<sup>33</sup>

This is the doctrine of Christ.<sup>34</sup> When we receive this doctrine and conduct our lives accordingly, we are in effect washed in the blood of Christ and made clean.<sup>35</sup>

Through the sacramental prayers, we express our acceptance of this doctrine of Christ and our commitment to live according to it. In our petition to God, our Eternal Father, we declare that we will "always remember" His precious Son. First, we witness our "willingness" to remember. Then we witness that we "do" remember. In so doing, we are making solemn commitments to exercise faith





11. See John 6:51–57; 1 Corinthians 11:24–26; Doctrine and Covenants 20:40.

12. Acts 20:7.

13. Acts 2:42.

14. See 3 Nephi 9:19–20; 18:1–11; 20:3–9; 26:13.

15. 3 Nephi 18:6.

16. 3 Nephi 18:7.

17. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:75; 27:2; 59:9–12.

18. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Fielding Smith* (2013), 96. “In my judgment the sacrament meeting is the most sacred, the most holy, of all the meetings of the Church” (*Teachings: Joseph Fielding Smith*, 95).

19. See Alma 7:11.

20. See Luke 22:44; Mosiah 3:7; Doctrine and Covenants 19:18.

21. See Psalm 22:16; John 19:33–34; 20:25–27; 3 Nephi 11:14; Doctrine and Covenants 6:37; James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 3rd. ed. (1916), 669.

22. See Matthew 28:6; Luke 24:6, 39; John 20:20; Doctrine and Covenants 76:22–24.

23. See John 6:51–59; Alma 11:42–44; 40:23; 3 Nephi 27:13–15.

24. See Luke 22:44; Mosiah 3:7; Doctrine and Covenants 19:18.

25. See Isaiah 53:5; Matthew 26:67; 27:26, 29–30; Mark 14:65; 15:15, 19; Luke 22:63–65; John 19:1; Mosiah 15:5.

26. See Matthew 27:35; Mark 15:15; Luke 23:33; John 19:16, 33–34.

27. Doctrine and Covenants 19:15.

28. See Alma 11:42–45; 3 Nephi 27:13–15.

29. See Moses 6:55.

30. See Matthew 5:27–28; 12:36; James 3:1–13; Mosiah 4:29–30; Alma 12:14.

31. Moses 6:57; see also 1 Corinthians 6:9; Ephesians 5:5; 1 Nephi 10:21; 15:33–34; Alma 7:21; 11:37; 40:26; 3 Nephi 27:19; Doctrine and Covenants 1:31–32.

32. Alma 36:15; see also verse 14; Revelation 6:15–17; Alma 12:14.

33. 3 Nephi 27:19–20.

34. See 2 Nephi 31:2–21; 3 Nephi 11:31–41; 27:13–22; Doctrine and Covenants 76:40–42, 50–54, 69–70.

35. See 3 Nephi 27:19; see also Revelation 1:5–6; 7:14–15; Alma 5:21; 13:11–12; Ether 13:10–11; Moses 6:59–60.

36. Doctrine and Covenants 20:77; Moroni 4:3.

37. See Dallin H. Oaks, *His Holy Name* (1998); Dallin H. Oaks, “Taking upon Us the Name of Jesus Christ,” *Ensign*, May 1985, 80–83.

38. Doctrine and Covenants 20:77, 79; Moroni 4:3; 5:2.

39. See Romans 15:16; 1 Corinthians 6:11; 2 Nephi 31:17; Alma 5:54; 13:12; 3 Nephi 27:20; Moroni 6:4.

40. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:6–20.

41. Doctrine and Covenants 84:22.

in Jesus Christ and in His Redemption of us from death and sin.

We further declare that we will “keep his commandments.” That is a solemn commitment to repent. If our thoughts, words, or actions have been less than what they should have been in days past, we recommit ourselves to more closely align our lives with His in days to come.

Next, we declare that we “are willing to take upon [us] the name of [the] Son.”<sup>36</sup> That is a solemn commitment to submit ourselves to His authority and to do His work, which includes receiving for ourselves every saving ordinance and covenant.<sup>37</sup>

When we commit ourselves to these principles, we are promised in the sacramental prayers that we will “have his Spirit to be with [us].”<sup>38</sup> Receiving anew the Spirit is a consummate blessing because the Spirit is the agent who cleanses and purifies us from sin and transgression.<sup>39</sup>

Brothers and sisters, the most important event in time and eternity is the Atonement of Jesus Christ. He who accomplished the Atonement has given us the ordinance of the sacrament to help us not only remember but also claim the blessings of this supreme act of grace. Regular and earnest participation in this sacred ordinance helps us continue to embrace and live the doctrine of Christ after

baptism and thereby pursue and complete the process of sanctification. Indeed, the ordinance of the sacrament helps us faithfully endure to the end and receive the fulness of the Father in the same way Jesus did, grace for grace.<sup>40</sup>

I bear witness of the power of Jesus Christ to redeem us all from death and sin and of the power of the ordinances of His priesthood, including the sacrament, to prepare us to “see the face of God, even the Father, and live.”<sup>41</sup> May we receive the sacrament next week, and each week thereafter, with deeper desire and more earnest purpose, I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See Matthew 26:17–20; Mark 14:12–17; Luke 22:7–18.
2. See Exodus 12; Numbers 28:16–25; Bible Dictionary, “Feasts.”
3. See Exodus 13:12–13; Mosiah 2:3–4; Moses 5:5–8.
4. See Matthew 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:24. By contrast, when Jesus institutes the sacrament among the Nephites after His Resurrection, He breaks the bread, then blesses it (see 3 Nephi 18:3).
5. Matthew 26:26; Mark 14:22; 1 Corinthians 11:24.
6. Luke 22:19; see also 1 Corinthians 11:24.
7. Luke 22:20; see also Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; 1 Corinthians 11:25.
8. Matthew 26:28.
9. Luke 22:19; see also 3 Nephi 18:11.
10. See 2 Nephi 11:4; 25:24–25; Jacob 4:5; Alma 34:14; 3 Nephi 9:17, 19–20; Moses 5:5–8.



By President Thomas S. Monson

# Ponder the Path of Thy Feet

*As we look to Jesus as our Exemplar and as we follow in His footsteps, we can return safely to our Heavenly Father.*

**M**y beloved brothers and sisters, I am humbled as I stand before you this morning. I ask for your faith and prayers in my behalf as I share with you my message.

All of us commenced a wonderful and essential journey when we left the spirit world and entered this often-challenging stage called mortality. The primary purposes of our existence upon the earth are to obtain a body of flesh and bones, to gain experience that could come only through separation from our heavenly parents, and to see if we would keep the commandments. In the book of Abraham chapter 3 we read: “And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them.”<sup>1</sup>

When we came to the earth, we brought with us that great gift from God—even our agency. In thousands of ways we are privileged to choose for ourselves. Here we learn from the hard taskmaster of experience. We discern between good and evil. We differentiate as to the bitter and the sweet. We learn that decisions determine destiny.

I am certain we left our Father with an overwhelming desire to return to

Him, that we might gain the exaltation He planned for us and which we ourselves so much wanted. Although we are left to find and follow that path which will lead us back to our Father in Heaven, He did not send us here without direction and guidance. Rather, He has given us the tools we need, and He will assist us as we seek His help and strive to do all in our power to endure to the end and gain eternal life.

To help guide us we have the words of God and of His Son found in our holy scriptures. We have the counsel and teachings of God’s prophets. Of paramount importance, we have been provided with a perfect example to follow—even the example of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ—and we have been instructed to follow that example. Said the Savior Himself: “Come, follow me.”<sup>2</sup> “The works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do.”<sup>3</sup> He posed the question, “What manner of men ought ye to be?” And then He answered, “Verily I say unto you, even as I am.”<sup>4</sup> “He marked the path and led the way.”<sup>5</sup>

As we look to Jesus as our Exemplar and as we follow in His footsteps, we can return safely to our

Heavenly Father to live with Him forever. Said the prophet Nephi, “Unless a man shall endure to the end, in following the example of the Son of the living God, he cannot be saved.”<sup>6</sup>

One woman, each time she related experiences she had during a visit to the Holy Land, would exclaim, “I walked where Jesus walked!”

She had been in the vicinity where Jesus lived and taught. Perhaps she stood on a rock on which He had once stood or looked at a mountain range He had once gazed upon. The experiences, in and of themselves, were thrilling to her; but physically walking *where* Jesus walked is less important than walking *as* He walked. Emulating His actions and following His example are far more important than trying to retrace the remnants of the trails He traversed in mortality.

When Jesus extended to a certain rich man the invitation, “Come, follow me,”<sup>7</sup> He did not intend merely that the rich man follow Him up and down the hills and valleys of the countryside.

We need not walk by the shores of Galilee or among the Judean hills to walk where Jesus walked. All of us can walk the path He walked when, with His words ringing in our ears, His Spirit filling our hearts, and His teachings guiding our lives, we choose to follow Him as we journey through mortality. His example lights the way. Said He, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.”<sup>8</sup>

As we examine the path Jesus walked, we will see that it took Him through many of the same challenges we ourselves will face in life.

For example, Jesus walked the path of disappointment. Although He experienced many disappointments, one of the most poignant was depicted in His lament over Jerusalem as He closed





His public ministry. The children of Israel had rejected the safety of the protecting wing which He had offered them. As He looked out over the city soon to be abandoned to destruction, He was overcome by emotions of deep sorrow. In anguish He cried out, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!"<sup>9</sup>

Jesus walked the path of temptation. Lucifer, that evil one, amassing his greatest strength, his most inviting sophistry, tempted Him who had fasted for 40 days and 40 nights. Jesus did not succumb; rather, He resisted each temptation. His parting words: "Get thee hence, Satan."<sup>10</sup>

Jesus walked the path of pain. Consider Gethsemane, where He was "in an agony . . . and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."<sup>11</sup> And none can forget His suffering on the cruel cross.

Each of us will walk the path of disappointment, perhaps because of an opportunity lost, a power misused,

a loved one's choices, or a choice we ourselves make. The path of temptation too will be the path of each. We read in the 29th section of the Doctrine and Covenants: "And it must needs be that the devil should tempt the children of men, or they could not be agents unto themselves."<sup>12</sup>

Likewise shall we walk the path of pain. We, as servants, can expect no more than the Master, who left mortality only after great pain and suffering.

While we will find on our path bitter sorrow, we can also find great happiness.

We, with Jesus, can walk the path of obedience. It will not always be easy, but let our watchword be the heritage bequeathed us by Samuel: "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."<sup>13</sup> Let us remember that the end result of disobedience is captivity and death, while the reward for obedience is liberty and eternal life.

We, like Jesus, can walk the path of service. As a glowing searchlight of goodness is the life of Jesus as He ministered among men. He brought strength to the limbs of the cripple,

sight to the eyes of the blind, hearing to the ears of the deaf.

Jesus walked the path of prayer. He taught us how to pray by giving us the beautiful prayer we know as the Lord's Prayer. And who can forget His prayer in Gethsemane, "Not my will, but thine, be done?"<sup>14</sup>

Other instructions given to us by the Savior are at our fingertips, found in the holy scriptures. In His Sermon on the Mount, He tells us to be merciful, to be humble, to be righteous, to be pure in heart, to be peacemakers. He instructs us to stand up bravely for our beliefs, even when we are ridiculed and persecuted. He asks us to let our lights shine so that others may see them and may desire to glorify our Father in Heaven. He teaches us to be morally clean in both our thoughts and our actions. He tells us it is far more important to lay up treasures in heaven than on earth.<sup>15</sup>

His parables teach with power and authority. With the account of the good Samaritan, He teaches us to love and to serve our neighbors.<sup>16</sup> In His parable of the talents, He teaches us to improve ourselves and to strive for



or a television, nor did they do any of the things to which the world usually pays attention. Yet the faithful beat a path to their door in order to partake of the spirit that was there. Their home was a heaven on earth, and the spirit they radiated was of pure peace and goodness.

We too can have that spirit and can share it with the world as we walk the path of our Savior and follow His perfect example.

We read in Proverbs the admonition, “Ponder the path of thy feet.”<sup>19</sup> As we do, we will have the faith, even the desire, to walk the path which Jesus walked. We will have no doubt that we are on a path which our Father would have us follow. The Savior’s example provides a framework for everything that we do, and His words provide an unfailing guide. His path will take us safely home. May this be our blessing, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, whom I love, whom I serve, and of whom I testify, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Abraham 3:25.
2. Luke 18:22.
3. 3 Nephi 27:21.
4. 3 Nephi 27:27.
5. Eliza R. Snow, “How Great the Wisdom and the Love,” *Hymns*, no. 195.
6. 2 Nephi 31:16.
7. Luke 18:22.
8. John 14:6.
9. Luke 13:34.
10. Matthew 4:10.
11. Luke 22:44.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 29:39.
13. 1 Samuel 15:22.
14. Luke 22:42.
15. See Matthew 5; 6.
16. See Luke 10:30–37.
17. See Matthew 25:14–30.
18. See Luke 15:4–7.
19. Proverbs 4:26.

perfection.<sup>17</sup> With the parable of the lost sheep, He instructs us to go to the rescue of those who have left the path and have lost their way.<sup>18</sup>

As we strive to place Christ at the center of our lives by learning His words, by following His teachings, and by walking in His path, He has promised to share with us the eternal life that He died to gain. There is no higher end than this, that we should choose to accept His discipline and become His disciples and do His work throughout our lives. Nothing else, no other choice we make, can make of us what He can.

As I think of those who have truly tried to follow the example of the Savior and who have walked in His path, there comes readily to my mind the names of Gustav and Margarete

Wacker—two of the most Christlike individuals I have ever known. They were native Germans who had immigrated to eastern Canada, and I met them when I served as a mission president there. Brother Wacker earned his living as a barber. Though their means were limited, they shared all they had. They were not blessed with children, but they nurtured all who entered their home. Men and women of learning and sophistication sought out these humble, unlettered servants of God and counted themselves fortunate if they could spend an hour in their presence.

Their appearance was ordinary, their English halting and somewhat difficult to understand, their home unpretentious. They didn’t own a car

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**By Elder M. Russell Ballard**  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

## Stay in the Boat and Hold On!

*If we keep our focus on the Lord, we are promised a blessing beyond comparison.*

Recently, a friend of mine took his son on a trip down the Colorado River through Cataract Canyon, located in southeastern Utah. The canyon is famous for its 14 miles (23 km) of white-water rapids that can be particularly hazardous.

In preparation for their adventure, they had carefully reviewed the National Park Service website, which contains important information about personal preparedness and common, hidden hazards.

At the beginning of the trip, one of the experienced river guides reviewed important safety instructions, emphasizing three rules that would ensure the group's safe travel through the rapids. "Rule number one: stay in the boat! Rule number two: always wear a life jacket! Rule number three: always hold on with both hands!" He then said again, with even more emphasis, "Above all, remember rule number one: stay in the boat!"

This adventure reminds me of our mortal journey. Most of us experience periods in our lives where the tranquil waters of life are appreciated. At other

times, we encounter white-water rapids that are metaphorically comparable to those found in the 14-mile stretch through Cataract Canyon—challenges that may include physical and mental health issues, the death of a loved one, dashed dreams and hopes, and—for some—even a crisis of faith when faced with life's problems, questions, and doubts.

The Lord in His goodness has provided help, including a boat, essential supplies such as life jackets, and experienced river guides who give guidance and safety instructions to help us make our way down the river of life to our final destination.

Let's think about rule number one: stay in the boat!

President Brigham Young commonly employed "the Old Ship Zion" as a metaphor for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

He said on one occasion: "We are in the midst of the ocean. A storm comes on, and, as sailors say, she labors very hard. 'I am not going to stay here,' says one; 'I don't believe this is the "Ship Zion."' 'But we are in





the midst of the ocean.’ I don’t care, I am not going to stay here.’ Off goes the coat, and he jumps overboard. Will he not be drowned? Yes. So with those who leave this Church. It is the ‘Old Ship Zion,’ let us stay in it.”<sup>1</sup>

On another occasion, President Young said that he also worried about people losing their way when they were being blessed—when life was good: “It is in calm weather, when the old ship of Zion is sailing with a gentle breeze, [and] when all is quiet on deck, that some of the brethren want to go out in the whaling boats to have . . . a swim, and some get drowned, others drifted away, and others again get back to the ship. Let us stick to the old ship and she will carry us [safely] into the harbor; you need not be concerned.”<sup>2</sup>

And finally, President Young reminded the Saints: “We are on the old ship Zion. . . . [God] is at the helm and will stay there. . . . All is right, sing Hallelujah, for the Lord is here. He dictates, guides and directs. If the people will have implicit confidence in their God, never forsake their covenants nor their God, He will guide us right.”<sup>3</sup>

Given the challenges we all face today, how do we stay on the Old Ship Zion?

Here is how. We need to experience a continuing conversion by increasing our faith in Jesus Christ and our faithfulness to His gospel throughout our lives—not just once

but regularly. Alma asked, “And now behold, I say unto you, my brethren [and sisters], if ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, can ye feel so now?”<sup>4</sup>

The experienced river guides today can be likened to the Church’s apostles and prophets and inspired local priesthood and auxiliary leaders. They help us arrive safely to our final destination.

Recently, I spoke at the new mission presidents’ seminar and counseled these leaders:

“Keep the eyes of the mission on the leaders of the Church. . . . We will not and . . . cannot lead [you] astray.

“And as you teach your missionaries to focus their eyes on us, teach them to never follow those who think they know more about how to administer the affairs of the Church than . . . Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ do” through the priesthood leaders who have the keys to preside.

“I have discovered in my ministry that those who have become lost [and] confused are typically those who have most often . . . forgotten that when the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve speak with a united voice, it is the voice of the Lord for that time. The Lord reminds us, ‘Whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same’ [D&C 1:38].”<sup>5</sup>

In other words, they leave the Old Ship Zion—they fall away; they

apostatize. Tragically, they often experience short-term and eventually long-term unintended consequences, not only for themselves but also for their families.

Our local Church leaders, like seasoned river guides, have been tutored by life’s experiences; have been trained and mentored by apostles and prophets and other officers of the Church; and, most important, have been tutored by the Lord Himself.

On another occasion this year, I spoke to the young adults of the Church in the May CES devotional broadcast. I said:

“I have heard that some people think the Church leaders live in a ‘bubble.’ What they forget is that we are men and women of experience, and we have lived our lives in so many places and worked with many people from different backgrounds. Our current assignments literally take us around the globe, where we meet the political, religious, business, and humanitarian leaders of the world. Although we have visited [leaders in] the White House in Washington, D.C., and leaders of nations [and religions] throughout the world, we have also visited the most humble [families and people] on earth. . . .

“When you thoughtfully consider our lives and ministry, you will most likely agree that we see and experience the world in ways few others do. You will realize that we live less in a ‘bubble’ than most people. . . .

“. . . There is something about the individual and combined wisdom of the [Church leaders] that should provide some comfort. We have experienced it all, including the consequences of different public laws and policies, disappointments, tragedies, and deaths in our own families. We are not out of touch with your lives.”<sup>6</sup>

Along with rule number one as I've applied it, remember rules two and three: always wear a life jacket, and hold on with both hands. The words of the Lord are found in the scriptures and the teachings of the apostles and prophets. They provide us counsel and direction that, when followed, will act like a spiritual life jacket and will help us know how to hold on with both hands.

We need to become like the sons of Mosiah, who "waxed strong in the knowledge of the truth." We can become men and women "of a sound understanding." This can be accomplished only by our "search[ing] the scriptures diligently, that [we] might know the word of God."<sup>7</sup>

In searching the scriptures and the words of past and current apostles and prophets, we should focus on studying, living, and loving the doctrine of Christ.

In addition to developing the habit of personal scripture reading, we need to be like the sons of Mosiah and give ourselves "to much prayer, and fasting."<sup>8</sup>

It seems that these things which are not easily measured are of great importance. Stay focused on these simple things, and avoid becoming distracted.

As I have known people who have not stayed in the boat and have not held on with both hands during times of trials and troubles or who have not stayed in the boat during times of relative calm, I have observed that many of them have lost their focus on the central truths of the gospel—the reasons why they joined the Church in the first place; the reasons they remained fully committed and active in living gospel standards and blessing others through dedicated, consecrated service; and the ways in which the Church has been in their lives "a place of spiritual nourishment and growth."<sup>9</sup>

Joseph Smith taught this central truth: "The fundamental principles of our religion [are] the testimony of the apostles and prophets concerning Jesus Christ, . . . 'that he died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended up into heaven;' and all

other things are only appendages to these, which pertain to our religion."<sup>10</sup>

If we keep our focus on the Lord, we are promised a blessing beyond comparison: "Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life."<sup>11</sup>

Sometimes faithful Latter-day Saints and sincere investigators begin to focus on the "appendages" instead of on the fundamental principles. That is, Satan tempts us to become distracted from the simple and clear message of the restored gospel. Those so distracted often give up partaking of the sacrament because they have become focused, even preoccupied, with less important practices or teachings.

Others may focus on the questions and doubts they experience. Of course, having questions and experiencing doubts are not incongruent with dedicated discipleship. Recently, the Council of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles stated: "We understand that from time to time Church members will have questions about Church doctrine, history, or practice. Members are always free to ask such questions and earnestly seek greater understanding."<sup>12</sup>

Remember, Joseph Smith himself had questions that began the Restoration. He was a seeker and, like Abraham, found the answers to life's most important questions.

The important questions focus on what matters most—Heavenly Father's plan and the Savior's Atonement. Our search should lead us to become kind, gentle, loving, forgiving, patient, and dedicated disciples. We must be



willing, as Paul taught, to “bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”<sup>13</sup>

To bear another’s burdens includes helping, supporting, and understanding everyone, including the sick, the infirm, the poor in spirit and body, the seeker and the troubled, and also other member-disciples—including Church leaders who have been called by the Lord to serve for a season.

Brothers and sisters, stay in the boat, use your life jackets, and hold on with both hands. Avoid distractions! And if any one of you have fallen out of the boat, we will seek you, find you, minister to you, and pull you safely back onto the Old Ship Zion, where God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ are at the helm and will guide us right, to which I humbly testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (1997), 82–83.
2. Brigham Young, “Discourse,” *Deseret News*, Jan. 27, 1858, 373.
3. Brigham Young, “Remarks,” *Deseret News*, Nov. 18, 1857, 291.
4. Alma 5:26.
5. M. Russell Ballard, “Mission Leadership” (address given at the seminar for new mission presidents, June 25, 2014), 8.
6. M. Russell Ballard, “Be Still, and Know That I Am God” (Church Educational System devotional, May 4, 2014); lds.org/broadcasts.
7. Alma 17:2.
8. Alma 17:3.
9. First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles letter, June 28, 2014.
10. Joseph Smith, *Elders’ Journal*, July 1838, 44.
11. 2 Nephi 31:20.
12. First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles letter, June 28, 2014.
13. Galatians 6:2.



**By Elder Richard G. Scott**  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# Make the Exercise of Faith Your First Priority

*Despite all of the negative challenges we have in life, we must take time to actively exercise our faith.*

When Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden, all that they needed for daily sustenance was abundantly given to them. They had no difficulties, challenges, or pain. Because they had never experienced hard times, they did not know they could be happy. They had never felt turmoil, so they could not feel peace.

Eventually Adam and Eve transgressed the command to not eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. By so doing they were no longer in a state of innocence. They began to experience principles of opposition. They began to encounter sickness that weakened their health. They began to feel sadness as well as joy.

Through Adam and Eve’s partaking of the forbidden fruit, knowledge of good and evil was introduced into the world. Their choice made it possible for each of us to come to this earth to be tried and tested.<sup>1</sup> We are blessed with agency, which is our ability to make decisions and to become accountable for those decisions. The Fall made possible in our lives feelings of both happiness and sadness. We are

able to understand peace because we feel turmoil.<sup>2</sup>

Our Father in Heaven knew this would happen to us. It is all part of His perfect plan of happiness. He prepared a way through the life of His perfectly obedient Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior, for His Atonement to overcome every difficulty that we may experience in mortality.

We live in trying times. I need not list all of the sources of evil in the world. It is not necessary to describe all of the possible challenges and heartaches that are a part of mortality. Each of us is intimately aware of our own struggles with temptation, pain, and sadness.

We were taught in the premortal world that our purpose in coming here is to be tested, tried, and stretched.<sup>3</sup> We knew we would face the evils of the adversary. Sometimes we may feel more aware of the negative things of mortality than we are of the positive. The prophet Lehi taught, “For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things.”<sup>4</sup> Despite all of the negative challenges we have in life, we must take time to actively exercise our faith. Such exercise



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invites the positive, faith-filled power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ into our lives.

Our Father in Heaven has given us tools to help us come unto Christ and exercise faith in His Atonement. When these tools become fundamental habits, they provide the easiest way to find peace in the challenges of mortality. Today I have chosen to discuss four of these tools. As I speak, consider evaluating your personal use of each tool; then seek the guidance of the Lord to determine how you could make better use of each one of them.

### Prayer

The first tool is prayer. Choose to converse with your Father in Heaven often. Make time every day to share your thoughts and feelings with Him. Tell Him everything that concerns you. He is interested in the most important as well as the most mundane facets of your life. Share with Him your full range of feelings and experiences.

Because He respects your agency, Father in Heaven will never force you to pray to Him. But as you exercise that agency and include Him in every aspect of your daily life, your heart will begin to fill with peace, buoyant peace. That peace will focus an eternal light on your struggles. It will help you to manage those challenges from an eternal perspective.

Parents, help safeguard your children by arming them morning and night with the power of family prayer. Children are bombarded every day with the evils of lust, greed, pride, and a host of other sinful behaviors. Protect your children from daily worldly influences by fortifying them with the powerful blessings that result from family prayer. Family prayer should be a nonnegotiable priority in your daily life.



### Scripture Study

The second tool is to study the word of God in the scriptures and the words of the living prophets. We talk to God through prayer. He most often communicates back to us through His written word. To know what the voice of the Divine sounds and feels like, read His words, study the scriptures, and ponder them.<sup>5</sup> Make them an integral part of everyday life. If you want your children to recognize, understand, and act on the promptings of the Spirit, you must study the scriptures with them.

Don't yield to Satan's lie that you don't have time to study the scriptures. Choose to take time to study them. Feasting on the word of God each day is more important than sleep, school, work, television shows, video games, or social media. You may need to reorganize your priorities to provide time for the study of the word of God. If so, do it!

There are many prophetic promises of the blessings of daily studying the scriptures.<sup>6</sup>

I add my voice with this promise: as you dedicate time every day, personally and with your family, to the study of God's word, peace will prevail in your life. That peace won't come from the outside world. It will come from within your home, from within your family, from within your own heart. It will be a gift of the Spirit. It will radiate out from you to influence others in the world around you. You will be doing something very significant to add to the cumulative peace in the world.

I do not declare that your life will cease to have challenges. Remember when Adam and Eve were in the garden, they were free from challenges, yet they were unable to experience happiness, joy, and peace.<sup>7</sup> Challenges are an important part of mortality. Through daily, consistent scripture

study, you will find peace in the turmoil around you and strength to resist temptations. You will develop strong faith in the grace of God and know that through the Atonement of Jesus Christ all will be made right according to God's timing.

### Family Home Evening

While you are working to strengthen your family and cultivate peace, remember this third tool: weekly family home evening. Be cautious not to make your family home evening just an afterthought of a busy day. Decide that on Monday night your family will be together at home for the evening. Do not let employment demands, sports, extracurricular activities, homework, or anything else become more important than that time you spend together at home with your family.

The structure of your evening is not as important as the time invested. The gospel should be taught both formally and informally. Make it a meaningful experience for each member of the family. Family home evening is a precious time to bear testimony in a safe environment; to learn teaching, planning, and organizational skills; to strengthen family bonds; to develop

family traditions; to talk to each other; and more important, to have a marvelous time together!

At last April's conference, Sister Linda S. Reeves boldly declared: "I must testify of the blessings of daily scripture study and prayer and weekly family home evening. These are the very practices that help take away stress, give direction to our lives, and add protection to our homes."<sup>8</sup> Sister Reeves is a very wise woman. I strongly urge you to earn your own testimony of these three crucial habits.

### Temple Attendance

The fourth tool is to go to the temple. We all know there is no more peaceful place on this earth than in the temples of God. If you don't have a temple recommend, qualify to get one. When you have a recommend, use it often.<sup>9</sup> Schedule a regular time to be in the temple. Don't let anyone or anything prevent you from being there.

While you are in the temple, listen to the words of the ordinances, ponder them, pray about them, and seek to understand their meaning. The temple is one of the best places to come to understand the power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Seek

*Him* there. Remember that many more blessings come from providing your own family names in the temple.

These four tools are fundamental habits for securing your life in the power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Remember our Savior is the Prince of Peace. Peace in this mortal life comes from His atoning sacrifice. When we are consistently praying morning and night, studying our scriptures daily, having weekly family home evening, and attending the temple regularly, we are actively responding to His invitation to "come unto Him." The more we develop these habits, the more anxious is Satan to harm us but the less is his ability to do so. Through the use of these tools, we exercise our agency to accept the full gifts of His atoning sacrifice.

I am not suggesting that all of life's struggles will disappear as you do these things. We came to mortal life precisely to grow from trials and testing. Challenges help us become more like our Father in Heaven, and the Atonement of Jesus Christ makes it possible to endure those challenges.<sup>10</sup> I testify that as we actively come unto Him, we can endure every temptation, every heartache, every challenge we face, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

### NOTES

1. See Moses 5:11.
2. See Moses 4–5.
3. See Abraham 3:25.
4. 2 Nephi 2:11.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 18:36; see also verses 34–35.
6. Some examples include:  
President Thomas S. Monson said: "As we read and ponder the scriptures, we will experience the sweet whisperings of the Spirit to our souls. We can find answers to our questions. We learn of the blessings which come through keeping God's commandments. We gain a sure testimony of our Heavenly Father and our Savior, Jesus Christ, and of Their love for us. When



Cuahtémoc, Mexico





scripture study is combined with our prayers, we can of a certainty know that the gospel of Jesus Christ is true. . . . As we remember prayer and take time to turn to the scriptures, our lives will be infinitely more blessed and our burdens will be made lighter” (“We Never Walk Alone,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 122).

President Gordon B. Hinckley said: “Without reservation I promise you that if each of you will observe this simple program, regardless of how many times you previously may have read the Book of Mormon, there will come into your lives and into your homes an added measure of the Spirit of the Lord, a strengthened resolution to walk in obedience to His commandments, and a stronger testimony of the living reality of the Son of God” (“A Testimony Vibrant and True,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Aug. 2005, 6).

President Howard W. Hunter said: “Families are greatly blessed when wise fathers and mothers bring their children about them, read from the pages of the scriptural library together, and then discuss freely the beautiful stories and thoughts according to the understanding of all. Often youth and little ones have amazing insight into and appreciation for the basic literature of religion” (“Reading the Scriptures,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, 64).

President Ezra Taft Benson said: “Often we spend great effort in trying to increase the activity levels in our stakes. We work diligently to raise the percentages of those attending sacrament meetings. We labor to get a higher percentage of our young men on missions. We strive to improve the numbers of those marrying in the temple. All of these are commendable efforts and important to the growth of the kingdom. But when individual members and families immerse themselves in the scriptures regularly and consistently, these other

areas of activity will automatically come. Testimonies will increase. Commitment will be strengthened. Families will be fortified. Personal revelation will flow” (“The Power of the Word,” *Ensign*, May 1986, 81).

President Spencer W. Kimball declared: “I find that when I get casual in my relationships with divinity and when it seems that no divine ear is listening and no divine voice is speaking, that I am far, far away. If I immerse myself in the scriptures the distance narrows and the spirituality returns. I find myself loving more intensely those whom I must love with all my heart and mind and strength, and loving them more, I find it easier to abide their counsel” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* [2006], 67).

President Marion G. Romney said: “I feel certain that if, in our homes, parents will read from the Book of Mormon prayerfully and regularly, both by themselves and with their children, the spirit of that great book will come to permeate our homes and all who dwell therein. The spirit of reverence will increase; mutual respect and consideration for each other will grow. The spirit of contention will depart. Parents will counsel their children in greater love and wisdom. Children will be more responsive and submissive to the counsel of their parents. Righteousness will increase. Faith, hope, and charity—the pure love of Christ—will abound in our homes and lives, bringing in their wake peace, joy, and happiness” (“The Book of Mormon,” *Ensign*, May 1980, 67).

President Boyd K. Packer said: “True doctrine, understood, changes attitudes and behavior. The study of the doctrines of the gospel will improve behavior quicker than a study of behavior will improve behavior” (“Do Not Fear,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2004, 79).

Elder David A. Bednar said: “Each family prayer, each episode of family scripture study, and each family home evening is

a brushstroke on the canvas of our souls. No one event may appear to be very impressive or memorable. But just as the yellow and gold and brown strokes of paint complement each other and produce an impressive masterpiece, so our consistency in doing seemingly small things can lead to significant spiritual results” (“More Diligent and Concerned at Home,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2009, 19–20).

7. See 2 Nephi 2:13.

8. Linda S. Reeves, “Protection from Pornography—a Christ-Focused Home,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 16–17.

9. President Howard W. Hunter said: “In that spirit I invite the Latter-day Saints to look to the temple of the Lord as the great symbol of your membership. It is the deepest desire of my heart to have every member of the Church worthy to enter the temple. It would please the Lord if every adult member would be worthy of—and carry—a current temple recommend. The things that we must do and not do to be worthy of a temple recommend are the very things that ensure we will be happy as individuals and as families. Let us be a temple-attending people. Attend the temple as frequently as personal circumstances allow. Keep a picture of a temple in your home that your children may see it. Teach them about the purposes of the house of the Lord. Have them plan from their earliest years to go there and to remain worthy of that blessing” (“Exceeding Great and Precious Promises,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 8).

10. See 2 Nephi 2:2.

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By Elder Carlos A. Godoy  
Of the Seventy

# The Lord Has a Plan for Us!

*If we continue to live as we are living, will the promised blessings be fulfilled?*

What a privilege to be a part of this historic moment when general conference speakers have the option of speaking in their native language. The last time I spoke at this pulpit, I was worried about my accent in English. Now, I am worried about the speed of my Portuguese. I do not want to speak more quickly than the subtitles.

All of us have experienced or will yet experience moments of great decision in our lives. Should I pursue this career or that one? Should I serve a mission? Is this the right person for me to marry?

These are situations in different areas of our lives in which a small change in direction can have significant future consequences. In the words of President Dieter F. Uchtdorf: “Through years of serving the Lord . . . , I have learned that the difference between happiness and misery in individuals, in marriages, and families often comes down to an error of only a few degrees” (“A Matter of a Few Degrees,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2008, 58).

How can we avoid these small errors in calculation?

I will use a personal experience to illustrate my message.

At the end of the 1980s, our young family was made up of my wife, Mônica, two of our four children, and me. We lived in São Paulo, Brazil, I worked for a good company, I had finished my university studies, and I had recently been released as bishop of the ward where we had lived. Life was good, and everything seemed to be as it should be—until one day an old friend came to visit us.



At the conclusion of his visit, he made a comment and asked a question that unsettled my convictions. He said, “Carlos, everything seems to be going well for you, your family, your career, and your service in the Church, but—” and then came the question, “if you continue to live as you are living, will the blessings promised in your patriarchal blessing be fulfilled?”

I had never thought about my patriarchal blessing in this way. I read it from time to time but never with the intent of looking toward the blessings promised in the future and evaluating how I was living in the present.

After his visit, I turned my attention to my patriarchal blessing, wondering, “If we continue to live as we are living, will the promised blessings be fulfilled?” After some pondering, I had the feeling that some changes were necessary, particularly in relation to my education and profession.

It was not a decision between what was right and wrong but between what was good and what was better, as Elder Dallin H. Oaks taught us when he said: “As we consider various choices, we should remember that it is not enough that something is good. Other choices are better, and still others are best” (“Good, Better, Best,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2007, 104–5).

How then can we ensure that we are making the best decision?

Here are some principles that I have learned.

## **Principle Number One: We Need to Consider Our Options with the End in Mind**

Making decisions that can impact our lives and those we love without having the broader vision of their consequences can bring some risks. However, if we project the possible consequences of these decisions into



the future, we can see with greater clarity the best path to take in the present.

Understanding who we are, why we are here, and what the Lord expects from us in this life will help give us the broader vision we need.

We can find examples in the scriptures in which having a broader vision gave clarity regarding which path to take.

Moses spoke with the Lord face-to-face, learned about the plan of salvation, and thereby better understood his role as the prophet of the gathering of Israel.

“And God spake unto Moses, saying: Behold, I am the Lord God Almighty. . . .

“ . . . And I will show thee the workmanship of mine hands. . . .

“And I have a work for thee, Moses, my son” (Moses 1:3–4, 6).

With this understanding, Moses was able to endure many years of

tribulation in the desert and lead Israel back to its home.

Lehi, the great prophet of the Book of Mormon, dreamed a dream, and in his visions he learned of his mission to lead his family to a promised land.

“And it came to pass that the Lord commanded my father, even in a dream, that he should take his family and depart into the wilderness.

“ . . . And he left his house, and the land of his inheritance, and his gold, and his silver, and his precious things” (1 Nephi 2:2, 4).

Lehi remained faithful to this vision in spite of the difficulties of travel and having to leave behind a comfortable life in Jerusalem.

The Prophet Joseph Smith is another great example. Through many revelations, beginning with the First Vision, he was able to complete his mission of restoring all things (see Joseph Smith—History 1:1–26).

And what about us? What does the Lord expect from each of us?

We do not need to see an angel to obtain understanding. We have the scriptures, the temple, living prophets, our patriarchal blessings, inspired leaders, and, above all, the right to receive personal revelation to guide our decisions.

**Principle Number Two: We Need to Be Prepared for the Challenges That Will Come**

The best paths in life are rarely the easiest. Often, it is exactly the opposite. We can look to the examples of the prophets I have just mentioned.

Moses, Lehi, and Joseph Smith did not have easy journeys in spite of the fact that their decisions were correct.

Are we willing to pay the price for our decisions? Are we prepared to leave our comfort zones to reach a better place?



Returning to the experience with my patriarchal blessing, I came to the conclusion at that time that I should seek additional education and apply for a scholarship from an American university. If I were selected, I would have to leave my job, sell everything we had, and come to live in the United States as a scholarship student for two years.

Tests such as the TOEFL and GMAT became the first challenges to be overcome. It took three long years of preparation, many “nos,” and some “maybes” before I was accepted at a university. I still remember the telephone call I received at the end of the third year from the person responsible for scholarships.

He said, “Carlos, I have some good news and some bad news for you. The good news is that you are among the three finalists this year.” There was only one opening at that time. “The bad news is that one of the other candidates is the son of someone important, the other is the son of someone else important, and then there is you.”

I quickly responded, “And I . . . I am a son of God.”

Happily, earthly parentage was not a deciding factor, and I was accepted that year, in 1992.

We are children of Almighty God. He is our Father, He loves us, and He has a plan for us. We are not here in this life just to waste our time, grow old, and die. God wants us to grow and achieve our potential.

In the words of President Thomas S. Monson: “Each of you, single or married, regardless of age, has the opportunity to learn and to grow. Expand your knowledge, both intellectual and spiritual, to the full stature of your divine potential” (“The Mighty Strength of the Relief Society,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 95).

**Principle Number Three: We Need to Share This Vision with the People We Love**

Lehi made more than a few attempts to help Laman and Lemuel understand the importance of the change they were making. The fact that they did not share their father’s vision caused them to murmur during the journey. Nephi, on the other hand, sought the Lord in order to see what his father had seen.

“And it came to pass after I, Nephi, having heard all the words of my father, concerning the things which he saw in a vision, . . . I . . . was desirous also that I might see, and hear, and know of these things, by the power of the Holy Ghost” (1 Nephi 10:17).

With this vision, Nephi was able not only to overcome the challenges of the journey but also to lead his family when it became necessary.

It is very likely that when we decide to take a certain path, the people we love will be affected, and some will even share with us the results of this choice. Ideally, they should be able to see what we see and share our same convictions. This is not always possible, but when it occurs, the journey is much easier.

In the personal experience I have used as an illustration, I undoubtedly needed the support of my wife. The children were still young and did not have much of a say, but my wife’s support was essential. I remember that, at first, Mônica and I needed to carefully discuss the change in plans until she felt comfortable and also became committed. This shared vision caused her not only to support the change but also to become an essential part in its success.

I know that the Lord has a plan for us in this life. He knows us. He knows what is best for us. Just because things are going well does not mean that we should not from time to time consider whether there might be something better. If we continue to live as we are living, will the promised blessings be fulfilled?

God lives. He is our Father. The Savior Jesus Christ lives, and I know that through His atoning sacrifice we can find the strength to overcome our daily challenges. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

*This address was delivered in Portuguese.*



By **Elder Allan F. Packer**  
Of the Seventy

# The Book

*Family history and temple work should be a regular part of our personal worship.*

As a young 12-year-old Scout, I received a gift of a much-desired addition to my Scouting equipment. It was a hatchet with a heavy leather cover! On the next overnight hike, we arrived in camp after dark, wet and cold from the heavy snow on the trail. All I could think about was building a big roaring fire. I immediately went to work chopping a fallen tree with my new hatchet. As I chopped, I was frustrated because it didn't seem to be cutting very well. In my frustration, I worked harder. Disappointed, I returned to camp with only a few pieces of wood. By the light of someone else's fire, I discovered the problem. I hadn't taken

the cover off the hatchet. I can report, however, the cover was chopped to shreds. The lesson: I became distracted with other things.

As we work toward exaltation, we must work on all of the requirements and not become distracted by focusing on one or two requirements or other unrelated things. Seeking the kingdom of God leads to joy and happiness.<sup>1</sup> If needed, we must be willing to *change*. Frequent small corrections are less painful and disruptive than large course corrections.

Not long ago, Sister Packer and I traveled to several foreign countries. We prepared our passports and other documents. We obtained the shots,

medical exams, visas, and stamps. As we arrived, our documents were inspected, and when all the requirements were met, we were allowed to enter.

Qualifying for exaltation is like entering another country. We must each obtain our spiritual passport. We do not *set* the requirements, but, individually, we must meet all of them. The plan of salvation contains all of the doctrines, laws, commandments, and ordinances needed for *all* to qualify for exaltation.<sup>2</sup> Then, "through the Atonement of [Jesus] Christ, all mankind may be saved."<sup>3</sup> The Church helps but cannot do it for us. Qualifying for exaltation becomes a quest of a lifetime.

Christ organized His Church to help us. He has called 15 men we sustain as prophets, seers, and revelators to guide the Church and to teach the people. The First Presidency<sup>4</sup> and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles<sup>5</sup> are of equal power and authority,<sup>6</sup> with the senior Apostle designated as the President of the Church. The Seventy are called to assist.<sup>7</sup> The leaders did not set the requirements for exaltation. God did! These leaders are called to teach, expound, exhort, and even *warn* so that we stay on course.<sup>8</sup>

As explained in the Church handbook: "In fulfilling its purpose to help individuals and families qualify for exaltation, the Church focuses on divinely appointed responsibilities. These include helping members live the gospel of Jesus Christ, gathering Israel through missionary work, caring for the poor and needy, and enabling the salvation of the dead by building temples and performing vicarious ordinances."<sup>9</sup> These four focuses and all other laws, commandments, and ordinances are required and not optional. Through the Atonement





of Jesus Christ and by doing each of these, we are adding required stamps to our spiritual passports.

During this conference we are being taught about changes that will help us all be better prepared.

The family is the center of the plan of salvation and perhaps why it is also called the “great plan of happiness.”<sup>10</sup> President Boyd K. Packer has said, “The ultimate end of all activity in the Church is that a man and his wife and their children can be happy at home.”<sup>11</sup>

President Spencer W. Kimball said, “Our success, individually and as a Church, will largely be determined by how faithfully we focus on living the gospel in the home.”<sup>12</sup> Temple and family history work is part of living the gospel at home. It should be a family activity far more than a Church activity.

There has been a renewed emphasis on family history and temple work from the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve.<sup>13</sup> Your response to this emphasis will increase your individual and family joy and happiness.

From the Doctrine and Covenants we read: “The great day of the Lord is at hand. . . . Let us, therefore, as a church and a people, and as Latter-day Saints, offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness; and let us present in his holy temple, . . . a book containing the records of our dead, which shall be worthy of all acceptance.”<sup>14</sup>

This “book” will be prepared using the records of names and ordinances in the Church’s FamilyTree database.

I am checking and adding records to this database because I want the names of all those I love to be in the book. Don’t you?

Doctrine and Covenants section 128 says, “For we without [our ancestors] cannot be made perfect; neither can they without us be made perfect.”<sup>15</sup>

Family history is more than genealogy, rules, names, dates, and places. It is more than a focus on the past. Family history also includes the present as we create our own history. It includes the future as we shape future history through our descendants. A young mother, for example, sharing her family stories and pictures with her children is doing family history work.

Like partaking of the sacrament, attending meetings, reading the scriptures, and saying personal prayers, doing family history and temple work should be a regular part of our personal worship. The response of our youth and others to prophetic invitations has been inspiring and proves this work *can and should* be done by *all* members at *any* age.

As Elder Quentin L. Cook explained, “We [now] have the doctrine, the temples, and the technology.”<sup>16</sup> Doing the work now is much easier and limited only by the number of members who make this a priority. The work still takes time and sacrifice, but *all* can do it, and with relative ease compared to just a few years ago.

To assist members, the Church has gathered records and provided tools so that much of the work can be done in our own homes or in the ward buildings and the temple. Most obstacles have been removed. *Whatever* your past perception, it is different now!

However, there is one obstacle the Church cannot remove. It is an individual’s hesitation to do the work. All it requires is a decision and a

little effort. It does not require a large block of time. Just a little time on a consistent basis will yield the joy of the work. Make the decision to take a step, to learn and ask others to help you. They will! The names you find and take to the temple will become the records for “the book.”<sup>17</sup>

Even with the dramatic increase in member participation, we find that relatively few members of the Church are regularly involved in finding and doing temple ordinances for their family.<sup>18</sup> *This calls for a change in our priorities.* Don’t fight the change, embrace it! Change is part of the great plan of happiness.

This work needs to be done, not for the benefit of the Church but for our dead and for ourselves. We and our deceased ancestors need the stamps in our spiritual passports.

The “welding together”<sup>19</sup> of our families across generations can occur only in the temples through the sealing ordinances. The steps are simple: *just find a name and take it to the temple.* Over time you will be able to help others do it also.

With few exceptions, everyone—*everyone*—can do this!

There are tangible blessings which attend this work. Many parents and leaders are concerned about current world conditions and the impact on families and youth.

Elder David A. Bednar has promised: “I invite the young people of the Church to learn about and experience the Spirit of Elijah. . . . I promise [that] you will be protected against the intensifying influence of the adversary. As you participate in and love this holy work, you will be safeguarded in your youth and throughout your lives.”<sup>20</sup>

Brothers and sisters, it’s time to take the cover off our hatchets and go to work. We must not sacrifice our

exaltation or that of our families for less important interests.

This is the work of God, to be done by members and nonmembers alike, young and old, male and female.

I close quoting the first verse of hymn 324, changing one word:

*Rise up, O [Saints] of God!  
Have done with lesser things.  
Give heart and soul and mind and  
strength  
To serve the King of Kings.*<sup>21</sup>

Jesus Christ is the King! I testify of Him in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See 2 Nephi 2:22–25; 9:18; Mosiah 2:41.
2. See Guide to the Scriptures, “Plan of Redemption”; scriptures.lds.org.
3. Articles of Faith 1:3.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 107:22.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 107:23.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 107:24.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 107:25–26.
8. See Guide to the Scriptures, “First Presidency,” “Apostle,” “Seventy”; scriptures.lds.org.
9. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 2.2.
10. Alma 42:8.
11. Boyd K. Packer, “The Witness,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2014, 95.
12. Spencer W. Kimball, “Living the Gospel in

the Home,” *Ensign*, May 1978, 101.

13. See Thomas S. Monson, “Hastening the Work,” *Ensign or Liahona*, June 2014, 4–5; Henry B. Eyring, “The Promise of Hearts Turning,” *Ensign or Liahona*, July 2014, 4–5; Russell M. Nelson, “It All Starts with Love” (video), [lds.org/prophets-and-apostles/unto-all-the-world/it-all-starts-with-love](https://www.lds.org/prophets-and-apostles/unto-all-the-world/it-all-starts-with-love); Russell M. Nelson, “Adding ‘Family’ to Family History Work” (video), [lds.org/prophets-and-apostles/unto-all-the-world/adding-family-to-family-history-work](https://www.lds.org/prophets-and-apostles/unto-all-the-world/adding-family-to-family-history-work); Russell M. Nelson, “Generations Linked in Love,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2010, 91–94; Richard G. Scott, “The Joy of Redeeming the Dead,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2012, 93–95; Quentin L. Cook, “Roots and Branches,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2014, 44–48; David A. Bednar, “The Hearts of the Children Shall Turn,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 24–27; Neil L. Andersen, “A Classroom of Faith, Hope, and Charity” (address to Church Educational System religious educators), [lds.org/broadcasts](https://www.lds.org/broadcasts); Neil L. Andersen, “Find Our Cousins!” (address at RootsTech Family History Conference, Feb. 8, 2014), [lds.org/prophets-and-apostles/unto-all-the-world/find-our-cousins](https://www.lds.org/prophets-and-apostles/unto-all-the-world/find-our-cousins).
14. Doctrine and Covenants 128:24.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 128:18.
16. Quentin L. Cook, *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2014, 47.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 128:24.
18. See Quentin L. Cook, *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2014, 47.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 128:18.
20. David A. Bednar, “The Hearts of the Children Shall Turn,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 26, 27.
21. “Rise Up, O Men of God,” *Hymns*, no. 324.





**By Elder Hugo E. Martinez**  
Of the Seventy

# Our Personal Ministries

*The love of Jesus Christ must be our guide if we are to become aware of the needs of those we can help in some way.*

In The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we are given the opportunity and personal blessing to serve. For as long as I have been a member, I have served in many ways. Like Brother Udine Falabella, father of Elder Enrique R. Falabella, used to say, “He who serves in some thing is good for something; he who serves in no thing is good for nothing.” These are words that we need to keep in our minds and in our hearts.

As I have sought guidance during my service, I have found comfort in remembering that the Savior focuses on the individual and the family. His love and tender attention to the individual have taught me that He recognizes the great worth of each of Heavenly Father’s children and that it is essential for us to ensure that each individual is ministered to and strengthened by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In the scriptures we read:

“Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God. . . .

“And if it so be that you should labor *all* your days . . . and bring, *save it be one* soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!”<sup>1</sup>

Every soul is of great worth to God, for we are His children and we have the potential to become as He is.<sup>2</sup>

The love of Jesus Christ must be our guide if we are to become aware of the needs of those we can help in some way. The teachings of our Lord, Jesus Christ, show us the way. And that is how our personal ministry begins: discovering needs, then tending to them. As Sister Linda K. Burton, Relief Society general president, said, “First observe, then serve.”<sup>3</sup>

President Thomas S. Monson is a great example of this principle. In January of 2005, he was presiding over a priesthood leadership conference in Puerto Rico when he demonstrated how the Savior and His servants render service through personal ministry. At the conclusion of that wonderful meeting, President Monson began to greet all the priesthood leaders in attendance. Suddenly, he noticed that one of them was watching everything from afar, off by himself.

President Monson walked away from the group, toward that brother, and spoke to him. With emotion, José R. Zayas told him it was a miracle that he had approached him and an answer to the prayers that he and his wife, Yolanda, had offered before the meeting. He told President Monson that his daughter was in very poor health and that he had with him a letter from his wife that she wanted







delivered to President Monson. Brother Zayas had told his wife that it would be impossible since President Monson would be too busy. President Monson listened to the story and asked for the letter, which he read silently. Then he put it in his suit pocket and told Brother Zayas that he would take care of their request.

In this way, that family was touched by our Lord, Jesus Christ, through His servant. I believe the words of the Savior in the parable of the good Samaritan apply to us: “Go, and do thou likewise.”<sup>4</sup>

On September 21, 1998, Hurricane Georges hit Puerto Rico, causing extensive damage. Sister Martinez, our five children, and I managed to survive that great storm and its hurricane-force winds by staying in our home. However, we went two weeks without running water and without power.

When our supply of water ran out, obtaining more was difficult. I will never forget the brethren who ministered to us by providing that precious liquid, nor will I forget the loving way the sisters also served us.

Germán Colón came to our house with a large plastic water container in a pickup truck. He told us he was doing it because, in his words, “I know you have little children who need water.” A couple of days later,

Brothers Noel Muñoz and Herminio Gómez loaded three large water tanks onto a flatbed truck. They showed up at our house unexpectedly and filled every available water bottle with drinking water, also inviting our neighbors to fill theirs.

Our prayers were answered by their personal ministries. The faces of those three brethren reflected the love that Jesus Christ has for us, and their service—in other words, their personal ministry—brought much more than drinking water into our lives. To every son or daughter of God, knowing that people are interested in and watching out for his or her welfare is essential.

I testify to you that Heavenly Father and our Lord, Jesus Christ, know us individually and personally. For that reason, They provide what we need so we will have the opportunity to reach our divine potential. Along the road, They place people who will help us. Then, as we become instruments in Their hands, we are able to serve and help those They show to us by revelation.

In this way, the Lord Jesus Christ will reach all of Heavenly Father’s children. The Good Shepherd will gather all His sheep. He will do so one by one as they make good use of their moral agency—after hearing the voice of His servants and receiving their

ministrations. Then they will recognize His voice, and they will follow Him. Such personal ministry is integral to keeping our baptismal covenants.

Likewise, being a good example of a disciple of Jesus Christ is our best letter of introduction to those with whom we can share His gospel. As we open our mouths and share the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, we become “His undershepherds, charged with nourishing the sheep of His pasture and the lambs of His fold”<sup>5</sup>; we become “the weak and the simple”<sup>6</sup> “fishers of men.”<sup>7</sup>

Our service and personal ministry are not limited to the living on this earth. We can also do work for the dead—for those who live in the spirit world and who, during their mortal life, did not have the opportunity to receive the saving ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We can also keep a journal and write our family histories to turn the hearts of the living toward the living—as well as the hearts of the living toward their ancestors. It is all about linking our family, generation by generation, in eternal bonds. As we do so, we become “saviours . . . on mount Zion.”<sup>8</sup>

We have the special opportunity to be instruments in His hands. We can be so in our marriages, in our families, with our friends, and with our

fellowman. That is our personal ministry as true disciples of Jesus Christ.

“And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:

“And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

“Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

“For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

“Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

“Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

“When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

“Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

“And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”<sup>9</sup>

That we may do so is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

*This address was delivered in Spanish.*

#### NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 18:10, 15; emphasis added.
2. See Guide to the Scriptures, “Soul”; scriptures.lds.org.
3. Linda K. Burton, “First Observe, Then Serve,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2012, 78.
4. Luke 10:37.
5. Alexander B. Morrison, “Nourish the Flock of Christ,” *Ensign*, May 1992, 13.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 1:23.
7. Matthew 4:19.
8. Obadiah 1:21.
9. Matthew 25:32–40.



By Elder Larry S. Kacher  
Of the Seventy

## Trifle Not with Sacred Things

*Examine your choices by asking yourself the question, “Are my decisions firmly planted in the rich soil of the gospel of Jesus Christ?”*

Brothers and sisters, the decisions we make in this life greatly affect the course of our eternal life. There are both seen and unseen forces that influence our choices. This point was brought home some five years ago in a way that almost cost me dearly.

We were traveling with family and friends in the south of Oman. We decided to relax on the beach along the coast of the Indian Ocean. Soon after our arrival, our 16-year-old daughter, Nellie, asked if she could swim out to what she thought was a sandbar. Noticing the choppy water, I told her that I would go first, thinking there might be dangerous currents.

After swimming a short while, I called to my wife, asking if I was close to the sandbar. Her response was, “You have gone way past it.” Unbeknownst to me I was trapped in a riptide<sup>1</sup> and was being pulled rapidly out to sea.

I was unsure what to do. The only thing I could think of was to turn around and swim back toward shore. That was exactly the wrong thing to do. I felt helpless. Forces beyond my

control were pulling me farther out to sea. What made matters worse was that my wife, trusting my decision, had followed me.

Brothers and sisters, I thought there was a high likelihood I would not survive and that I, because of my decision, would also cause my wife’s death. After great effort and what I believe was divine intervention, our feet somehow touched the sandy bottom and we were able to walk safely back to our friends and daughter.

There are many currents in this earthly life—some safe and others not. President Spencer W. Kimball taught that there are powerful forces in our own lives much like the unseen currents of the ocean.<sup>2</sup> These forces are real. We should never ignore them.

Let me tell you about another current, a divine current, that has become a great blessing in my life. I am a convert to the Church. Prior to my conversion, my life’s ambition was to ski and, accordingly, I moved to Europe after high school to fulfill that desire. After several months of what seemed an ideal life, I felt I should

leave. At the time I did not understand the source of that feeling, but I chose to follow it. I ended up in Provo, Utah, with a few good friends who, like me, were members of a different faith.

While in Provo I met people who were living a much different life than I was. I felt drawn to them, though I did not know why. Initially, I resisted these feelings, but I soon found a peace and comfort that I had never known. I began to embrace a different current—one that brought me to an understanding of a loving Heavenly Father and to His Son, Jesus Christ.

I was baptized with my friends in 1972. This new current I chose to follow, the gospel of Jesus Christ, provided direction and meaning to my life. However, it was not without its challenges. Everything was new to me. At times I felt lost and confused. Questions and challenges were posed by both friends and family.

I had a choice to make. Some of their questions created doubt and uncertainty. The choice was an important one. Where would I turn for answers? There were many who wanted to convince me of the error of my ways—“riptides” determined to pull me away from the peaceful current that had become a wonderful source of happiness. I learned very clearly the principle that there is “opposition in all things” and the importance of acting for myself and not forsaking my agency to others.<sup>3</sup>

I asked myself, “Why would I turn away from that which had brought me such great comfort?” As the Lord reminded Oliver Cowdery, “Did I not speak peace to your mind concerning the matter?”<sup>4</sup> My experience had been similar. Therefore, I turned, with yet more commitment, to a loving Heavenly Father, to the scriptures, and to trusted friends.



Still, there were many questions I could not answer. How would I address the uncertainty they created? Rather than allow them to destroy the peace and happiness that had come into my life, I chose to set them aside for a season, trusting that in the Lord’s time, He would reveal all things. I found solace in His statement to the Prophet Joseph: “Behold, ye are little children and ye cannot bear all things now; ye must grow in grace and in the knowledge of the truth.”<sup>5</sup> I chose not to forsake what I knew to be true by following an unknown and a questionable current—a potential “riptide.” As President N. Eldon Tanner taught, I learned “how much wiser and better it is for man to accept the simple truths of the gospel . . . and to accept by faith those things which he . . . cannot understand.”<sup>6</sup>

Does this mean there is no room for honest inquiry? Ask the young boy who sought refuge in a sacred grove wanting to know which of all

the churches he should join. Hold the Doctrine and Covenants in your hand, and know that much of what has been revealed in this inspired record has been the result of a humble search for truth. As Joseph found out, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, [who] giveth to all men liberally, . . . and it shall be given him.”<sup>7</sup> By asking sincere questions and by seeking divine answers, we learn “line upon line, precept upon precept,”<sup>8</sup> as we increase in knowledge and wisdom.

The question is not, “Is there room for honest, sincere inquiry?” but rather, “Where do I turn for truth when questions do arise?” “Will I be wise enough to hold fast to what I know to be true in spite of a few questions I might have?” I testify there is a divine source—One who knows all things, the end from the beginning. All things are present before Him.<sup>9</sup> The scriptures testify that He does “not walk in crooked paths, . . . neither doth he vary from that which he hath said.”<sup>10</sup>



On this mortal journey we must never think that our choices affect only us. Recently, a young man visited my home. He had a good spirit about him, but I sensed he was not fully participating in Church activity. He told me that he had been raised in a gospel-centered home until his father was unfaithful to his mother, resulting in their divorce and influencing all his siblings to question the Church and to fall away. My heart was heavy as I spoke with this young father who now, affected by his father's choices, was raising these precious spirits outside the blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Another man I know, a onetime faithful Church member, had questions regarding certain doctrine. Rather than ask Heavenly Father for answers, he chose to rely solely on secular sources for guidance. His heart turned in the wrong direction as he sought what seemed to be the honors of men. His pride may have been gratified, at least temporarily, but he was cut off from the powers of heaven.<sup>11</sup> Rather than find truth, he lost his testimony and brought with him many family members.

These two men became trapped in unseen riptides and brought many with them.

Conversely, I think of LaRue and

Louise Miller, my wife's parents, who despite never having much by way of worldly possessions, chose to teach the pure doctrine of the restored gospel to their children and to live it every day of their lives. By so doing they have blessed their posterity with the fruits of the gospel and the hope of eternal life.

In their home they established a pattern where the priesthood was respected, where love and harmony were abundant, and where the principles of the gospel directed their lives. Louise and LaRue, side by side, demonstrated what it meant to live lives patterned after Jesus Christ. Their children could clearly see which of life's currents would bring peace and happiness. And they chose accordingly. As President Kimball taught, "If we can create . . . a strong, steady current flowing toward our goal of righteous life, we and our children may be carried forward in spite of the contrary winds of hardship, disappointment, [and] temptations."<sup>12</sup>

Do our choices matter? Do they affect only us? Have we set our course firmly in the eternal current of the restored gospel?

From time to time I have an image that haunts me. What if that September day, while relaxing on the beach of the Indian Ocean, I had said

to my daughter Nellie, "Yes, go ahead. Swim out to the sandbar." Or if she too had followed my example and had been unable to swim back? What if I had to live life knowing that my example resulted in her being pulled by a riptide out to sea, never to return?

Are the currents we choose to follow important? Do our examples matter?

Heavenly Father has blessed us with the supernal gift of the Holy Ghost to guide our choices. He has promised us inspiration and revelation as we live worthy to receive such. I invite you to take advantage of this divine gift and examine your choices by asking yourself the question, "Are my decisions firmly planted in the rich soil of the gospel of Jesus Christ?" I invite you to make whatever adjustments are needed, whether small or large, to ensure the eternal blessings of Heavenly Father's plan for you and those you love.

I testify that Jesus Christ is our Savior and Redeemer. I testify that the covenants we make with Him are sacred and holy. We must never trifle with sacred things.<sup>13</sup> May we remain ever faithful, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Riptide: "a tide that opposes another or other tides, causing a violent disturbance in the sea" (Dictionary.com).
2. See Spencer W. Kimball, "Ocean Currents and Family Influences," *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, 110-13.
3. See 2 Nephi 2:11, 16.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 6:23.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 50:40.
6. N. Eldon Tanner, in Conference Report, Oct. 1968, 49.
7. James 1:5.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 98:12.
9. See Moses 1:6.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 3:2.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 121:35-37.
12. Spencer W. Kimball, *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, 110.
13. See Doctrine and Covenants 6:12.



**By Elder David A. Bednar**  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# Come and See

*The Church of Jesus Christ always has been and always will be a missionary church.*

**M**y message is directed specifically to individuals who are not members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I will address a fundamental question many of you may have: “Why are Latter-day Saints so eager to tell me about what they believe and to invite me to learn about their church?”

I pray the Spirit of the Lord will help me to communicate effectively, and you to understand clearly, my response to this important question.

## **A Divine Commission**

Devoted disciples of Jesus Christ always have been and always will be valiant missionaries. A missionary is a follower of Christ who testifies of Him as the Redeemer and proclaims the truths of His gospel.

The Church of Jesus Christ always has been and always will be a missionary church. The individual members of the Savior’s Church have accepted the solemn obligation to assist in fulfilling the divine commission given by the Lord to His Apostles, as recorded in the New Testament:

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matthew 28:19–20).

Latter-day Saints take seriously this responsibility to teach all people in all nations about the Lord Jesus Christ and His restored gospel. We believe the same Church founded by the Savior anciently has been reestablished on the earth by Him in the latter days. The doctrine, principles, priesthood authority, ordinances, and covenants of His gospel are found today in His Church.



When we invite you to attend church with us or to learn with the full-time missionaries, we are not trying to sell you a product. As members of the Church, we do not receive prizes or bonus points in a heavenly contest. We are not seeking simply to increase the numerical size of the Church. And most importantly, we are not attempting to coerce you to believe as we do. We are inviting you to hear the restored truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ so you can study, ponder, pray, and come to know for yourself if the things we are sharing with you are true.

Some of you may respond, “But I already believe in Jesus and follow His teachings,” or “I am not sure if God really exists.” Our invitations to you are not an attempt to diminish your religious tradition or life experience. Bring all that you know is true, good, and praiseworthy—and test our message. Just as Jesus beckoned two of His disciples to “come and see” (John 1:39), so we urge you to come and see if the restored gospel of Jesus Christ enlarges and enriches that which you already believe to be true.

Indeed, we feel a solemn responsibility to carry this message to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. And that is precisely what we are doing with a force today of more than 88,000 full-time missionaries laboring in over 150 sovereign states around the world. These remarkable men and women help the members of our Church fulfill the divinely appointed and individual responsibility each of us has to proclaim the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ (see D&C 68:1).

## **More Than a Spiritual Duty**

But our eagerness to declare this message is not merely the result of a sense of spiritual duty. Rather, our desire to share the restored gospel of



Jesus Christ with you is a reflection of how important these truths are to us. I believe I can best describe why we are so forthright in seeking to explain our beliefs to you through an experience my wife and I had many years ago with two of our sons.

One evening Susan and I stood near a window in our home and watched two of our little boys playing outside. During the course of their adventures, the younger of the two boys was injured slightly in a small accident. We quickly recognized that he was not seriously hurt, and we decided not to provide immediate assistance. We wanted to observe and see if any of our family discussions about brotherly kindness had sunk in. What happened next was both interesting and instructive.

The older brother consoled and carefully helped the younger brother back into the house. Susan and I had positioned ourselves near the kitchen so we could see what next took place, and we were prepared to intervene immediately if additional bodily harm seemed likely or a serious accident was imminent.

The older brother dragged a chair to the kitchen sink. He climbed up

on the chair, assisted his brother onto the chair, turned on the water, and proceeded to pour a large quantity of dishwashing soap onto the scratched arm of his little brother. He did his best to gently wash away the dirt. The reaction of the little brother to this procedure can only be described accurately using language from the holy scriptures: “And they shall have cause to howl, and weep, and wail, and gnash their teeth” (Mosiah 16:2). And did that little boy howl!

After the scrubbing was finished, the arm was carefully dried with a towel. Eventually the screaming stopped. The older brother next climbed up onto the kitchen counter, opened a cabinet, and found a new tube of medicated ointment. Though the scratches on his little brother were not large or extensive, the older brother applied almost all of the ointment in the tube to the entire injured arm. The screaming did not resume, as the little brother clearly liked the soothing effect of the ointment much more than he appreciated the cleansing effect of the dishwashing soap.

The older brother returned again to the cabinet in which he had found the ointment and located a new box of

sterile bandages. He then unwrapped and put bandages all up and down his brother’s arm—from the wrist to the elbow. With the emergency resolved, and with soap bubbles, ointment, and wrappers all over the kitchen, the two little boys hopped down from the chair with bright smiles and happy faces.

What happened next is most important. The injured brother gathered up the remaining bandages and the almost empty tube of ointment, and he went back outside. He quickly sought out his friends and began to put ointment and bandages on their arms. Susan and I both were struck by the sincerity, enthusiasm, and rapidity of his response.

Why did that little boy do what he did? Please note that he immediately and intuitively wanted to give to his friends the very thing that had helped him when he was hurt. That little boy did not have to be urged, challenged, prompted, or goaded to act. His desire to share was the natural consequence of a most helpful and beneficial personal experience.

Many of us as adults behave in precisely the same way when we find a treatment or medication that alleviates pain with which we have

long suffered, or we receive counsel that enables us to face challenges with courage and perplexities with patience. Sharing with other people things that are most meaningful to us or have helped us is not unusual at all.

This same pattern is especially evident in matters of great spiritual importance and consequence. For example, an account in a volume of scripture known as the Book of Mormon highlights a dream received by an ancient prophet-leader named Lehi. The central feature in Lehi's dream is the tree of life—which is a representation of “the love of God” that is “most desirable above all things” and “most joyous to the soul” (1 Nephi 11:22–23; see also 1 Nephi 8:12, 15).

Lehi explained:

“And it came to pass that I did go forth and partake of the fruit thereof; and I beheld that it was most sweet, above all that I ever before tasted. Yea, and I beheld that the fruit thereof was white, to exceed all the whiteness that I had ever seen.

*“And as I partook of the fruit thereof it filled my soul with exceedingly great joy; wherefore, I began to be desirous that my family should partake of it also”* (1 Nephi 8:11–12; emphasis added).

The greatest manifestation of God's love for His children is the mortal ministry, atoning sacrifice, and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The fruit on the tree can be considered a symbol for the blessings of the Savior's Atonement.

Lehi's instant response to partaking of the fruit of the tree and experiencing great joy was an increased desire to share with and serve his family. Thus, as he turned to Christ, he also turned outward in love and service.

Another important episode in the Book of Mormon describes what happened to a man named Enos after

his earnest and pleading prayer was heard and answered by God.

He said:

“And my soul hungered; and I kneeled down before my Maker, and I cried unto him in mighty prayer and supplication for mine own soul; and all the day long did I cry unto him; yea, and when the night came I did still raise my voice high that it reached the heavens.

“And there came a voice unto me, saying: Enos, thy sins are forgiven thee, and thou shalt be blessed.

“And I, Enos, knew that God could not lie; wherefore, my guilt was swept away.

“And I said: Lord, how is it done?

“And he said unto me: Because of thy faith in Christ, whom thou hast never before heard nor seen. . . . Wherefore, go to, thy faith hath made thee whole.

“Now, it came to pass that *when I had heard these words I began to feel a desire for the welfare of my brethren,*

*the Nephites; wherefore, I did pour out my whole soul unto God for them”* (Enos 1:4–9; emphasis added).

As Enos turned to the Lord “with full purpose of heart” (2 Nephi 31:13), his concern for the welfare of his family, friends, and associates increased simultaneously.

The enduring lesson we learn from these two episodes is the importance of experiencing in our personal lives the blessings of the Atonement of Jesus Christ as a prerequisite to heartfelt and authentic service that stretches far beyond merely “going through the motions.” Much like Lehi, Enos, and our little boy in the story I recounted, we as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have felt the anguish associated with spiritual uncertainty and sin. We also have experienced the cleansing, the peace of conscience, the spiritual healing and renewal, and the guidance that are obtained only by learning and living the principles of the Savior's gospel.



The Atonement of Jesus Christ provides the cleanser necessary to be made pure and clean, the soothing salve to heal spiritual wounds and remove guilt, and the protection that enables us to be faithful in times both good and bad.

### Absolute Truth Exists

To you family members and friends who are not members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I have attempted to explain fundamental reasons why we are missionaries.

Absolute truth exists in a world that increasingly disdains and dismisses absolutes. In a future day, “every knee [shall] bow” and “every tongue [shall] confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:10–11). Jesus the Christ absolutely is the Only Begotten Son of the Eternal Father. As members of His Church, we witness He lives and His Church has been restored in its fulness in these latter days.

The invitations we extend to you to learn about and test our message grow out of the positive effects the gospel of Jesus Christ has had in our lives. Sometimes we may be awkward or abrupt or even relentless in our attempts. Our simple desire is to share with you the truths that are of greatest worth to us.

As one of the Lord’s Apostles, and with all of the energy of my soul, I bear witness of His divinity and reality. And I invite you to “come and see” (John 1:39), in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen. ■



By President Thomas S. Monson

## Until We Meet Again

*May we all ponder the truths we have heard, and may they help us to become even more valiant disciples.*

My brothers and sisters, we have experienced two glorious days of inspired messages. Our hearts have been touched and our faith strengthened as we have partaken of the spirit which has been present during these conference sessions. As we conclude, we thank our Heavenly Father for His many blessings to us.

We have been lifted and inspired by the beautiful music that has been provided during the sessions. The prayers which have been given have drawn us nearer to heaven.

May I express the heartfelt thanks

of the entire Church to our Brethren who have been released at this conference. We will miss them. Their contributions to the work of the Lord have been enormous and will be felt throughout generations to come.

May we return to our homes with a resolve in our hearts to be a little better than we have been in the past. May we be a little kinder and more thoughtful. May we reach out in helpfulness, not only to our fellow members but also to those who are not of our faith. As we associate with them, may we show our respect for them.



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There are those who struggle every day with challenges. Let us extend to them our concern, as well as a helping hand. As we care for each other, we will be blessed.

May we remember the elderly and those who are homebound. As we take time to visit them, they will know that they are loved and valued. May we follow the mandate to “succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees.”<sup>1</sup>

May we be people of honesty and integrity, trying to do the right thing at all times and in all circumstances. May we be faithful followers of Christ, examples of righteousness, thus becoming “lights in the world.”<sup>2</sup>

My brothers and sisters, I thank you for your prayers in my behalf. They strengthen me and lift me as I strive with all my heart and strength to do God’s will and to serve Him and to serve you.

As we leave this conference, I invoke the blessings of heaven upon each of you. May you who are away from your homes return to them safely and find all in order. May we all ponder the truths we have heard, and may they help us to become even more valiant disciples than we were when this conference began.

Until we meet again in six months’ time, I ask the Lord’s blessings to be upon you and, indeed, upon all of us, and I do so in His holy name—even Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior—amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 81:5.
2. Philippians 2:15.



**By Linda K. Burton**  
Relief Society General President

## Prepared in a Manner That Never Had Been Known

*May we prepare to worthily receive saving ordinances drop by drop and keep the associated covenants wholeheartedly.*

When our youngest daughter returned home after her first day of school, I asked, “How did it go?”

She answered, “It was good.”

The next morning, however, when I woke her up for school, she folded her arms and firmly stated, “I already went to school!” Apparently I had not *prepared* her or explained that going to school was not a onetime event but that she was expected to go to school five days a week for many, many years.

As we consider the principle of being prepared, imagine with me the following scene. You are sitting in the celestial room of the temple and notice a number of brides and grooms being reverently ushered in and out as they wait to be married for time and all eternity. A bride enters the celestial room, hand in hand with her sweetheart. She is wearing a simple but beautiful temple dress and a calm, peaceful, warm smile on her face. She

is well groomed but not distracting. She takes her seat, glances about, and then is suddenly overcome with emotion. It seems that her tears come because of the awe and reverence she has for both the place she is in and the sacred ordinance awaiting her and the love of her life. Her demeanor seems to say, “How grateful I am to be in the Lord’s house today, ready to begin an eternal journey with a beloved eternal companion.” She seems *prepared* for much more than just an event.

Our cute teenage granddaughter recently left a note for me on my pillow that in part said: “One thing that strikes me as I enter the temple is the peaceful, loving spirit that dwells there. . . . People can go to the temple to receive inspiration.”<sup>1</sup> She is right. We can receive inspiration and revelation in the temple—and also power to cope with the adversities of life. What she is learning about the temple as she consistently participates in taking



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her own family names to do temple baptisms and confirmations will prepare her to receive additional temple ordinances, covenants, and blessings, both for herself and those on the other side of the veil.

Elder Russell M. Nelson taught, “As temples are prepared for the people, the people need to prepare themselves for the temple.”<sup>2</sup>

As I am again reading about Captain Moroni in the Book of Mormon, I am reminded that one of Moroni’s greatest accomplishments was his careful preparation of the Nephites to withstand the frightening Lamanite army. He prepared his people so well that we read, “Behold, to [the Lamanites’] uttermost astonishment, [the Nephites] *were prepared for them, in a manner which never had been known.*”<sup>3</sup>

That phrase, “prepared . . . in a manner which never had been known,” really caught my attention.

How can we better prepare for sacred temple blessings? The Lord taught, “And again, I will give unto you a pattern in all things.”<sup>4</sup> Let’s consider a scriptural pattern to help us prepare well. Moroni’s preparation for the enemy took consistent and faithful

diligence, and this pattern will require the same.

I never seem to tire of the beautiful parable the Savior told of the five wise and five foolish virgins. Though this parable refers to being prepared for the Second Coming of our Savior, we could also liken it to being prepared for temple blessings, which can be like a spiritual feast for those who are well prepared.

In Matthew 25 we read:

“Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

“And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. . . .

“[They that were] wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

“While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

“And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.

“Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.

“And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.

“But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and

you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

“And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.

“Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

“But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, Ye know me not.”<sup>5</sup>

I don’t think there is anyone, especially among those with tender hearts, who doesn’t feel sad for the foolish young women. And some of us just want to say to the others, “Can’t you just share so everyone can be happy?” But think about it. This is a story the Savior told, and He is the one who calls five of them “wise” and five of them “foolish.”

As we consider this parable as a pattern for temple preparation, consider the words of a latter-day prophet who taught that “the oil of spiritual preparedness cannot be shared.”<sup>6</sup> President Spencer W. Kimball helped clarify why the five “wise” young women could not share the oil in their lamps with those who were “foolish” when he said: “Attendance at sacrament meetings adds oil to our lamps, drop by drop over the years. Fasting,

family prayer, home teaching, control of bodily appetites, preaching the gospel, studying the scriptures—each act of dedication and obedience is a drop added to our store. Deeds of kindness, payment of offerings and tithes, chaste thoughts and actions . . . —these, too, contribute importantly to the oil with which we can at midnight refuel our exhausted lamps.”<sup>7</sup>

Can you see the pattern of preparedness—drop by drop—that can help us as we think how we might be more diligent in our preparation to receive sacred ordinances for ourselves and others? What other small and simple things might we do to add precious spiritual drops of oil to our lamps of preparation?

We learn from Elder Richard G. Scott that “personal worthiness is an essential requirement to enjoy the blessings of the temple. . . . Worthy character is best forged from a life of consistent, correct choices centered in the teachings of the Master.”<sup>8</sup> I love the word *consistent*. To be consistent is to be steady, constant, and dependable. What a great description of the principle of worthiness!

We are reminded in the Bible Dictionary: “Only the home can compare with the temple in sacredness.”<sup>9</sup> Do our homes or apartments fit that description? A darling young woman in our ward came to our home recently. Knowing her brother had just returned from his mission, I asked her what it was like to have him back home. She said it was great, but he would occasionally ask if the music could be turned down. She said, “And it wasn’t even *bad* music!” It may be worthwhile for us to check ourselves now and then to make sure our homes are places we are prepared to feel the Spirit. As we prepare our homes to be places where the Spirit is

welcome, we will be prepared to feel more “at home” when we enter the house of the Lord.

As we prepare ourselves to worthily enter the temple and are faithful to temple covenants, the Lord will bestow “a multiplicity of blessings”<sup>10</sup> upon us. My good friend Bonnie Oscarson recently turned a scripture inside out when she said, “Where much is required, much more will be given.”<sup>11</sup> I couldn’t agree more! Because we come to the temple to receive *eternal* blessings, it should not surprise us that a higher standard is required to qualify for those blessings. Again Elder Nelson taught: “Because the temple is the house of the Lord, standards for admission are set by Him. One enters as His guest. To hold a temple recommend is a priceless privilege and a tangible

sign of obedience to God and His prophets.”<sup>12</sup>

World-class athletes and university doctoral students spend hours and days and weeks and months and even years of preparation. Daily drops of preparation are required of them to come out on top. Likewise, those who wish to qualify for exaltation in the celestial kingdom are expected to live a higher standard of obedience that comes by practicing the virtue of obedience day by day and drop by drop.

As we consistently and diligently add oil, drop by drop, to our spiritual lamps, doing these small and simple things, we can have our lamps “trimmed and burning”<sup>13</sup> with astonishing preparation. My cute husband, who is a stake president, recently remarked that he can almost always tell when someone is prepared and



worthy to enter the temple, because “they light up the room” when they come seeking a temple recommend.

In the dedicatory prayer of the Kirtland Temple, the Prophet Joseph Smith asked the Lord “that all people who shall enter upon the threshold of the Lord’s house may feel thy power, . . . that they may grow up in thee, and receive a fulness of the Holy Ghost, . . . and be prepared to obtain every needful thing.”<sup>14</sup>

It is my prayer that for us, going to the temple will be much more than a onetime event. May we prepare to worthily receive saving ordinances drop by drop and keep the associated covenants wholeheartedly. As we do so, I know we will qualify to receive the promised blessings of a fulness of the Holy Ghost and the power of the Lord in our homes and individual lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Personal note from Aydia Kaylie Melo to Linda K. Burton, Aug. 31, 2014.
2. Russell M. Nelson, “Prepare for the Blessings of the Temple,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Oct. 2010, 41.
3. Alma 49:8; emphasis added; see also verses 6–7.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 52:14.
5. Matthew 25:1–2, 4–11; Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 25:12 (in Matthew 25:12, footnote a).
6. Marvin J. Ashton, “A Time of Urgency,” *Ensign*, May 1974, 36.
7. Spencer W. Kimball, *Faith Precedes the Miracle* (1972), 256.
8. Richard G. Scott, “Receive the Temple Blessings,” *Ensign*, May 1999, 25; *Liahona*, July 1999, 29.
9. Bible Dictionary, “Temple.”
10. Doctrine and Covenants 104:2.
11. Bonnie L. Oscarson, “Greater Expectations” (Seminaries and Institutes of Religion satellite broadcast, Aug. 5, 2014); [lds.org/broadcasts](http://lds.org/broadcasts); see also Luke 12:48; Doctrine and Covenants 82:3.
12. Russell M. Nelson, “Personal Preparation for Temple Blessings,” *Ensign*, May 2001, 33; *Liahona*, July 2001, 38.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 33:17.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 109:13, 15.



**By Jean A. Stevens**

First Counselor in the Primary General Presidency

## Covenant Daughters of God

*When daughters of God focus on the temple and on their sacred covenants, God is able to send blessings in personal and powerful ways.*

Dear sisters, I greet you with so much love. Right now, wherever you are in the world, I hope you feel the Lord’s love for you personally and the Spirit witnessing to your heart the message just sung by this beautiful choir. I add my voice of testimony to theirs: I know that my Redeemer lives and that He loves each one of us.

Tonight we gather as covenant daughters of God. Our ages, circumstances, and personalities cannot separate us, because above all we are His. We have made a covenant to remember His Son always.

The power of that individual covenant was impressed upon my heart three weeks ago as I attended a baptismal service. There before me were eight beautiful children sitting with reverent anticipation that finally their special day had arrived. But as I looked into their bright faces, I did not see just a group of children. Instead I saw them as I think the Lord would—individually. I saw Emma and Sophia and Ian and Logan and Aden and William and Sophie and Micah. Each baptismal covenant is made one by one. Each dressed in white, they were

there—ready and willing with all their eight-year-old hearts to make their first covenant with God.

Think back and picture your own baptismal day. Whether you can remember many details or just a few, try to feel now the significance of the covenant you individually made. Having been called by your own name, you were immersed in water and came forth as God’s daughter—a covenant daughter, one willing to be





called by the name of His Son and promising to follow Him and keep His commandments.

Covenants with God help us to know who we really are. They connect us to Him in a personal way through which we come to feel our value in His sight and our place in His kingdom. In a way we can't fully comprehend, we are known and loved individually by Him. Think of it—each of us holds such a place in His heart. His desire is that we will choose the path that will bring us home to Him.

As essential and significant as the covenant of baptism is, it is only the beginning—the gate that puts us on the path to eternal life. Ahead on our journey are temple covenants to be made and priesthood ordinances to receive. As Elder David A. Bednar reminds us, “As we stand in the waters of baptism, we look to the temple.”<sup>1</sup>

It is not only in making covenants but also in faithfully keeping these covenants that we are prepared to receive eternal life. That is our hope, our goal, and our joy.

I was an eyewitness to the power of covenants as I watched my righteous parents, who loved and lived the gospel. In my sweet mother I was privileged to see clearly the daily decisions of a covenant daughter of God. Even when she was a girl, her choices reflected her priorities and identified her as a true disciple of Jesus Christ. I have seen the peace, the power, and the protection that came into her life as she made and kept sacred covenants on her journey. Her life on this earth reflected her love for the Savior and her desire to follow Him. Oh, how I want to follow her example.

My parents' lives together began in an unusual way. It was 1936. They were dating seriously and were planning to marry, when my dad received a letter inviting him to serve as a full-time missionary in South Africa. The letter said that if he was worthy and willing to serve, he was to contact his bishop. You can quickly see that the process of being called as a missionary was very different in those days! Dad showed the letter

to his sweetheart, Helen, and they determined without question he would serve.

For two weeks before he left, Mom met Dad each day for a picnic lunch in Memory Grove near downtown Salt Lake City. During one of their lunches, having sought direction through fasting and prayer, Mother told her dear Claron that if he still wanted to, she would marry him before he left. In the early days of the Church, men were sometimes called to missionary service and left wives and families at home. So it was with my mother and dad. With the approval of his priesthood leaders, they decided to be married before he departed for his mission.

In the Salt Lake Temple, Mother received her endowment, and then they were married for time and all eternity by President David O. McKay. Theirs was a humble beginning. There were no photographs, no beautiful wedding dress, no flowers, and no reception to celebrate the occasion. Their clear focus was on the temple and their covenants. For



### **Las Piñas, Philippines**

them, the covenants were everything. After only six days of marriage and with a tearful good-bye, my dad left for South Africa.

But their marriage was more than just the deep love they had for each other. They also had a love of the Lord and a desire to serve Him. The sacred temple covenants they had made gave them strength and power to carry them through the two years of separation. They had an eternal perspective of life's purpose and of promised blessings that come to those who are faithful to their covenants. All these blessings transcended their short-term sacrifice and separation.

While it certainly wasn't an easy way to begin married life, it proved to be an ideal way to lay a foundation for an eternal family. As children came along, we knew what mattered most to our parents. It was their love for the Lord and their unwavering commitment to keeping the covenants they had made. Though my parents have both passed away, their pattern of righteousness is blessing our family still.

The example of their lives is reflected in the words of Sister Linda K. Burton: "The best way to strengthen a home, current or future, is to keep covenants."<sup>2</sup>

Their season of hardship and trial was not over. Three years after Dad returned from his mission, World War II was raging, and like so many

others, he enlisted in the military. He was away from home for another four years as he served in the navy aboard battleships in the Pacific.

It was a difficult time for my parents to be separated again. But for my mother, those days of loneliness, worry, and uncertainty were also marked by whisperings of the Spirit that spoke of eternal promises, of comfort and peace amid the storm.

Despite her challenges, my mother lived a rich life, full of happiness, joy, love, and service. Her love of the Savior was reflected in the way she lived her life. She had a remarkable connection to heaven and a gift and capacity to love and bless everyone around her. Her faith in God and hope in His promises are reflected in President Thomas S. Monson's words about the temple when he said, "No sacrifice is too great, no price too heavy, no struggle too difficult in order to receive those blessings."<sup>3</sup>

In all the seasons of her life, Mother was strengthened and blessed by her love of the Lord and by the covenants she faithfully made and kept.

There is no doubt the details of your story will be different than hers. But principles from her life apply to all of us. When daughters of God focus on the temple and on their sacred covenants, God is able to send blessings in personal and powerful ways. Like my mother's example to me, your

choice to believe and keep covenants will leave a rich legacy of faith for those who follow you. So, dear sisters, how can we access the power and blessings of temple covenants? What can we do now to prepare for those blessings?

As I have traveled, I have come to know there are sisters of all ages, in all circumstances, whose lives provide answers to these questions.

I met Mary shortly after her eighth birthday. Like so many others, she is excited about doing family history and has contributed over 1,000 names for temple work. Mary is preparing herself now for the blessing of entering the temple when she turns 12.

Brianna is 13 and loves doing family history and temple work. She has accepted Elder Neil L. Andersen's temple challenge.<sup>4</sup> She has prepared hundreds of names for temple work and, along with herself, has included her family and friends in performing the baptisms. In this sacred work, Brianna's heart is turning not only to her earthly fathers but to her Heavenly Father as well.

Although Anfissa is a busy young adult who is working and going to graduate school, she still makes time to attend the temple each week. She seeks revelation and finds



peace as she serves in the house of the Lord.

Katya, a dear sister in Ukraine, has a deep love for the temple. Before the temple in Kyiv was built, she and others in her branch sacrificed to travel 36 hours on a bus to attend the temple once a year in Germany. These devoted Saints prayed, studied scriptures, sang hymns, and discussed the gospel as they traveled. Katya told me, “When we finally arrived at the temple, we were prepared to receive what the Lord had to give us.”

If we are to receive all the blessings God so generously offers, our earthly path must lead to the temple. Temples are an expression of God’s love. He invites us all to come, learn of Him, feel His love, and receive the priesthood ordinances necessary for eternal life with Him. Each covenant is made one by one. Every mighty change of heart matters to the Lord. And yours will make all the difference to you. For as we go to His holy house, we can be “armed with [His] power, . . . [His] name . . . upon [us], . . . [His] glory . . . round about [us], and [His] angels have charge over [us].”<sup>5</sup>

I share with you my certain witness that our loving Father in Heaven lives. It is through His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, that every hope, every promise, and every blessing of the temple is fulfilled. May we have faith to trust in Him and His covenants, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. David A. Bednar, “Honorably Hold a Name and Standing,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2009, 98.
2. Linda K. Burton, “Wanted: Hands and Hearts to Hasten the Work,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2014, 123.
3. Thomas S. Monson, “The Holy Temple—A Beacon to the World,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2011, 92.
4. See [templechallenge.lds.org](http://templechallenge.lds.org).
5. Doctrine and Covenants 109:22.



**By Neill F. Marriott**

Second Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency

## Sharing Your Light

*We must stand firm in our faith and lift our voices to proclaim true doctrine.*

**T**onight I would like to consider two important responsibilities we carry: first, consistently adding gospel light and truth to our lives, and second, sharing that light and truth with others.

Do you know how important you are? Every one of you—right now—is valuable and essential in Heavenly Father’s plan of salvation. We have a work to do. We know the truth of the restored gospel. Are we ready to defend that truth? We need to live it; we need to share it. We must stand firm in our faith and lift our voices to proclaim true doctrine.

In the September 2014 *Ensign* and *Liahona*, Elder M. Russell Ballard writes: “We need more of the distinctive, influential voices and faith of

women. We need them to learn the doctrine and to understand what we believe so that they can bear their testimonies about the truth of all things.”<sup>1</sup>

Sisters, you strengthen my faith in Jesus Christ. I have watched your examples, heard your testimonies, and felt of your faith from Brazil to Botswana! You carry a circle of influence with you wherever you go. It is felt by the people around you—from your family to the contacts in your cell phone and from your friends on social media to those seated next to you tonight. I agree with Sister Harriet Uchtdorf, who wrote, “You . . . are vibrant and enthusiastic beacons in an ever-darkening world as you show, through the way you live your lives, that the gospel is a joyful message.”<sup>2</sup>





weaknesses, and I was shocked. In that spiritually instructive moment, I saw a prideful woman doing things her own way, not necessarily the Lord's way, and privately taking credit for any so-called accomplishment. I knew I was looking at myself. I cried out in my heart to Heavenly Father and said, "I don't want to be that woman, but how do I change?"

Through the pure spirit of revelation in the temple, I was taught of my utter need for a Redeemer. I turned immediately to the Savior Jesus Christ in my thoughts and felt my anguish melt away and a great hope spring up in my heart. He was my only hope, and I longed to cling only to Him. It was clear to me that a self-absorbed natural woman "is an enemy to God"<sup>7</sup> and to people in her sphere of influence. In the temple that day I learned it was only through the Atonement of Jesus Christ that my prideful nature could change and that I would be enabled to do good. I felt His love keenly, and I knew He would teach me by the Spirit and change me if I gave my heart to Him, holding back nothing.

I still fight my weaknesses, but I trust in the divine help of the Atonement. This pure instruction came because I entered the holy temple, seeking relief and answers. I entered the temple burdened, and I left knowing I had an all-powerful and all-loving Savior. I was lighter and joyful because I had received His light and accepted His plan for me.

Placed around the world, temples have their own unique look and design on the outside, but inside they all contain the same eternal light, purpose, and truth. In 1 Corinthians 3:16 we read, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" We too as daughters of God have been placed

President Thomas S. Monson pointed out, "If you want to give a light to others, you have to glow yourself."<sup>3</sup> How can we keep that light of truth glowing within us? Sometimes I feel like a dim lightbulb. How do we grow brighter?

The scriptures teach, "That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light."<sup>4</sup> We must continue in God, as the scripture says. We must go to the source of light—to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and the scriptures. We can also go to the temple, knowing that all things within its walls point to Christ and His great atoning sacrifice.

Think of the effect temples have on their surroundings. They beautify inner cities; they shine from prominent hills. Why do they beautify and shine? Because, as the scriptures say, "Truth shineth,"<sup>5</sup> and temples contain truth and eternal purpose; so do you.

In 1877, President George Q. Cannon said, "Every Temple . . . lessens the power of Satan on the earth."<sup>6</sup> I believe that wherever a temple is built on the earth, it pushes back the darkness. The temple's purpose is to serve mankind and give all of Heavenly Father's children the ability to return and live with Him. Isn't our purpose similar to these dedicated buildings, these houses of the Lord? To serve others and help them push back the darkness and return to Heavenly Father's light?

Sacred temple work will increase our faith in Christ, and then we can better influence the faith of others. By the nourishing spirit of the temple, we can learn the reality, the power, and the hope of the Savior's Atonement in our personal life.

Some years ago our family encountered a major challenge. I went to the temple and there prayed earnestly for help. I was given a moment of truth. I received a clear impression of my



all around the world, like temples, and we each have our own unique look and outward design, like temples. We also have a spiritual light within us, like temples. This spiritual light is a reflection of the Savior's light. Others will be attracted to this brightness.

We have our own roles on the earth—from daughter, mother, leader, and teacher to sister, wage earner, wife, and more. Each is influential. Each role will have moral power as we reflect gospel truths and temple covenants in our lives.

Elder D. Todd Christofferson said, "In all events, a mother can exert an influence unequalled by any other person in any other relationship."<sup>8</sup>

When our children were young, I felt like the cocaptain, with my husband, David, of a ship, and I pictured our 11 children as a flotilla of little boats bobbing around us in the harbor, preparing to set forth on the sea of the world. David and I felt a need to consult the compass of the Lord daily for the best direction to sail with our small fleet.

My days were full of forgettable things like folding laundry, reading children's books, and putting casseroles together for dinner. Sometimes in the harbor of our homes, we can't see that by the simple, consistent acts—including family prayer, scripture study, and family home evening—great things are brought to pass. But I testify that these very acts carry eternal significance. Great joy comes when those little boats—our children—grow into mighty seafaring vessels filled with gospel light and ready to "embark in the service of God."<sup>9</sup> Our small acts of faith and service are how most of us can continue in God and eventually bring eternal light and glory to our family, our friends, and our associates. You truly carry a circle of influence with you!

Think of the influence that the faith of a Primary-aged girl can have on her family. Our daughter's faith blessed our family when we lost our young son at an amusement park. The family rushed around frantically looking for him. Finally, our 10-year-old daughter tugged on my arm and said, "Mom, shouldn't we pray?" She was right! The family gathered in the middle of a crowd of onlookers and prayed to find our child. We found him. To all the Primary girls I say, "Please keep reminding your parents to pray!"

This summer I had the privilege of attending an encampment of 900 young women in Alaska. Their influence on me was profound. They came to the camp spiritually prepared, having read the Book of Mormon and having memorized "The Living Christ: The Testimony of the

Apostles." On the third night of camp, all 900 young women stood together and recited the entire document word for word.

The Spirit filled the vast hall, and I yearned to join in. But I couldn't. I hadn't paid the price of memorization.

I have now begun to learn the words of "The Living Christ" as these sisters did, and because of their influence I am more fully experiencing the sacramental covenant to always remember the Savior as I repeat over and over the Apostles' testimony of Christ. The sacrament is taking on a deeper meaning for me.

My hope is to offer the Savior a Christmas gift this year of having "The Living Christ" memorized and securely held in my heart by December 25th. I hope I can be an influence for good—as the sisters of Alaska were for me.



Can you find yourself in the following words of this document, “The Living Christ”? “He entreated all to follow His example. He walked the roads of Palestine, healing the sick, causing the blind to see, and raising the dead.”<sup>10</sup>

We, sisters of the Church, do not walk the roads of Palestine healing the sick, but we can pray for and apply the healing love of the Atonement to a sickened, strained relationship.

Though we will not cause the blind to see in the manner of the Savior, we can testify of the plan of salvation to the spiritually blind. We can open the eyes of their understanding to the necessity of priesthood power in eternal covenants.

We will not be raising the dead as did the Savior, but we can bless the dead by finding their names for temple work. Then we will indeed raise them from their spirit prison and offer them the path of eternal life.

I testify we have a living Savior, Jesus Christ, and with His power and light we will be enabled to push back the darkness of the world, give voice to the truth we know, and influence others to come unto Him. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. M. Russell Ballard, “Men and Women and Priesthood Power,” *Ensign*, Sept. 2014, 32; *Liahona*, Sept. 2014, 36.
2. Harriet R. Uchtdorf, *The Light We Share* (Deseret Book Company, 2014), 41; used by permission.
3. Thomas S. Monson, “For I Was Blind, but Now I See,” *Ensign*, May 1999, 56; *Liahona*, July 1999, 69.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 50:24.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 88:7.
6. George Q. Cannon, in *Preparing to Enter the Holy Temple* (booklet, 2002), 36.
7. Mosiah 3:19.
8. D. Todd Christofferson, “The Moral Force of Women,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 30.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 4:2.
10. “The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Apr. 2000, 2.



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

## Living the Gospel Joyful

*Trust in the saving power of Jesus Christ; keep His laws and commandments. In other words—live the gospel joyful.*

My beloved sisters, my dear friends and blessed disciples of Jesus Christ, I am honored to have this opportunity to be with you as we open another general conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In the coming week the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles will meet with all the General Authorities and general auxiliary leaders, and the remaining sessions of our worldwide general conference will follow on the coming Saturday and Sunday. I am most grateful to President Thomas S. Monson, the prophet of God for our days, for asking me to represent the First Presidency as I speak to the sisters of the Church.

As I contemplated what I might say, my thoughts went back to the women who have shaped my life and helped me through the challenges of mortality. I am grateful for my grandmother who decades ago decided to take her family to a Mormon sacrament meeting. I am grateful for Sister Ewig, an elderly single German lady, whose name translates into English as “Sister Eternal.” She was the one who extended this courageous and wonderful invitation to my grandmother. I am so very grateful for my mother, who led four children through the turmoil of World War II. I think also

of my daughter, granddaughters, and future generations of faithful women who will one day follow.

And, of course, I am eternally grateful to my wife, Harriet, who enchanted me as a teen, bore the heaviest burdens of our young family as a mother, stands with me as a wife, and loves and cherishes our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. She has been the strength in our home during both good times and bad. She brings sunshine into the lives of all who know her.

Finally, I am very grateful to all of you, the millions of faithful sisters worldwide of any age who do so much to build the kingdom of God. I am grateful to you for the countless ways you inspire, nurture, and bless those around you.

#### Daughters of God

I am pleased to be among so many daughters of God. When we sing the song “I Am a Child of God,” the lyrics penetrate our hearts. Pondering this truth—that we are children of heavenly parents<sup>1</sup>—fills us with a sense of origin, purpose, and destiny.

It is good to remember that you are always a child of God. This knowledge will carry you through the most difficult times in your life



and will inspire you to accomplish remarkable things. However, it is also important to remember that being a daughter of eternal parents is not a distinction you earned or you will ever lose. You will always and forever remain a daughter of God. Your Heavenly Father has high aspirations for you, but your divine origin *alone* does not guarantee you a divine inheritance. God sent you here to prepare for a future greater than anything you can imagine.

The promised blessings of God to the faithful are glorious and inspiring. Among them are “thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, all heights and depths.”<sup>2</sup> And it takes more than a spiritual birth certificate or a “Child of God Membership Card” to qualify for these incomprehensible blessings.

But how do we attain them?

The Savior has answered this question in our time:

“Except ye abide my law ye cannot attain to this glory.

“For strait is the gate, and narrow the way that leadeth unto the exaltation. . . .

“ . . . Receive ye, therefore, my law.”<sup>3</sup>

For this reason, we speak of walking the path of discipleship.

We speak of obedience to God’s commandments.

We speak of living the gospel joyfully, with all our heart, might, mind, and soul.

#### **God Knows Something We Don’t**

And yet for some of us, obedience to God’s commandments doesn’t always feel very joyful. Let’s face it: there may be some that seem harder or less appealing—commandments that we approach with the enthusiasm of a child sitting before a plate of healthy but hated vegetables. We grit our teeth and force ourselves to comply so that we can move on to more desirable activities.

Perhaps during times such as these, we might find ourselves asking, “Do we really need to obey *all* of God’s commandments?”

My response to this question is simple:

I think God knows something we don’t—things that are beyond our capacity to comprehend! Our Father in Heaven is an eternal being whose experience, wisdom, and intelligence are infinitely greater than ours.<sup>4</sup> Not only that, but He is also eternally loving, compassionate, and focused on one blessed goal:

to bring to pass our immortality and eternal life.<sup>5</sup>

In other words, He not only *knows* what is best for you; He also anxiously *wants you to choose* what is best for you.

If you believe this in your hearts—if you truly believe the great mission of our Heavenly Father is to exalt and glorify His children and that He knows best how to do it—doesn’t it make sense to embrace and follow His commandments, even the ones that appear difficult? Should we not cherish the light posts He has given that guide us through the darkness and the trials of mortality? They mark the way back to our heavenly home! By choosing Heavenly Father’s path, you lay a divine foundation for your personal progress as a daughter of God that will bless you throughout your life.

Part of our challenge is, I think, that we imagine that God has all of His blessings locked in a huge cloud up in heaven, refusing to give them to us unless we comply with some strict, paternalistic requirements He has set up. But the commandments aren’t like that at all. In reality, Heavenly Father is constantly raining blessings upon us. It is our fear, doubt, and sin that,

like an umbrella, block these blessings from reaching us.

His commandments are the loving instructions and the divine help for us to close the umbrella so we can receive the shower of heavenly blessings.

We need to accept that the commandments of God aren't just a long list of good ideas. They aren't "life hacks" from an Internet blog or motivational quotes from a Pinterest board. They are divine counsel, based on eternal truths, given to bring "peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come."<sup>6</sup>

So we have a choice. On the one hand, there is the opinion of the world with its ever-changing theories and questionable motives. On the other hand, there is God's word to His children—His eternal wisdom, His certain promises, and His loving instructions for returning to His presence in glory, love, and majesty.

The choice is yours!

The Creator of the seas, sands, and endless stars is reaching out to you this very day! He is offering the grand recipe for happiness, peace, and eternal life!

To qualify for these glorious blessings, you must humble yourself, exercise faith, take upon you the name of Christ, seek Him in word and deed, and resolutely "stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places."<sup>7</sup>

### The Why of Obedience

Once you understand the true nature of God and His commandments, you will also better understand yourselves and the divine purpose of your existence. With this, your motivation for following the commandments changes, and it becomes your heart's desire to live the gospel joyfully.

For example, those who see attendance at Church meetings as a



personal way to increase their love of God, find peace, uplift others, seek the Spirit, and renew their commitment to follow Jesus Christ will find a far richer experience than those who simply put in their time sitting in a pew. Sisters, it is *very important* that we attend our Sunday meetings, but I'm fairly certain our Heavenly Father is even more concerned about our faith and repentance than about attendance statistics.

Here is another example:

A single mother of two small children recently came down with chicken pox. Of course, it wasn't long before her children got sick as well. The task of caring for herself and her little ones alone was almost too much for the young mother. And, as a result, the normally spotless house became cluttered and messy. Dirty dishes piled up in the sink, and laundry piled up everywhere else.

While she was struggling with crying children—and wanting to cry herself—a knock came at the door. It was her visiting teachers. They could see the young mother's distress. They could see her house, her kitchen. They could hear the cries of the children.

Now, if these sisters had been concerned only with completing their assigned monthly visits, they might have handed the mother a plate of cookies, mentioned that they had missed her at Relief Society last week, and said something like, "Let us know

if there is anything we can do!" Then they would have cheerfully been on their way, thankful that they had 100 percent for another month.

Fortunately, these sisters were true disciples of Christ. They noticed their sister's needs and put their many talents and their experience to work. They cleared up the chaos, brought light and clarity into the home, and called a friend to bring over some much-needed groceries. When they at last finished their work and said their good-byes, they left that young mother in tears—tears of gratitude and love.

From that moment on, the young mother's opinion of visiting teaching changed. "I know," she said, "that I am not just a check mark on someone else's to-do list."

Yes, visiting teachers need to be faithful in making their monthly visits, all without missing the most important *why* behind this commandment: to love God and fellowmen.

When we treat God's commandments and our part in building His kingdom like something to check off on a to-do list, we miss the heart of discipleship. We miss the growth that comes from joyfully living the commandments of our Father in Heaven.

Walking in the path of discipleship does not need to be a bitter experience. It "is sweet above all that is sweet."<sup>8</sup> It is not a burden that weighs us down. Discipleship lifts our spirits

and lightens our hearts. It inspires us with faith, hope, and charity. It fills our spirits with light in times of darkness, and serenity during times of sorrow.

It gives us divine power and lasting joy.

### Living the Gospel Joyful

My dear sisters in the gospel, whether you are 8 or 108, there is one thing that I hope you truly understand and know:

You are loved.

You are dear to your heavenly parents.

The infinite and eternal Creator of light and life knows you! He is mindful of you.

Yes, God loves you this very day and always.

He is not waiting to love you until you have overcome your weaknesses and bad habits. He loves you today with a full understanding of your struggles. He is aware that you reach up to Him in heartfelt and hopeful prayer. He knows of the times you have held onto the fading light and believed—even in the midst of growing darkness. He knows of your sufferings. He knows of your remorse

for the times you have fallen short or failed. And still He loves you.

And God knows of your successes; though they may seem small to you, He acknowledges and cherishes each one of them. He loves you for extending yourself to others. He loves you for reaching out and helping others bear their heavy burdens—even when you are struggling with your own.

He knows everything about you. He sees you clearly—He knows you as you really are. And He loves you—today and always!

Do you suppose it matters to our Heavenly Father whether your makeup, clothes, hair, and nails are perfect? Do you think your value to Him changes based on how many followers you have on Instagram or Pinterest? Do you think He wants you to worry or get depressed if some un-friend or un-follow you on Facebook or Twitter? Do you think outward attractiveness, your dress size, or popularity make the slightest difference in your worth to the One who created the universe?

He loves you not only for who you are this very day but also for the person of glory and light you have the potential and the desire to become.

More than you could ever imagine, He wants you to achieve your destiny—to return to your heavenly home in honor.

I testify that the way to accomplish this is to place selfish desires and unworthy ambitions on the altar of sacrifice and service. Sisters, trust in the saving power of Jesus Christ; keep His laws and commandments. In other words—live the gospel joyful.

It is my prayer that you will experience a renewed and an expanded measure of the beautiful love of God in your lives; that you will find the faith, determination, and commitment to learn God's commandments, treasure them in your hearts, and live the gospel joyful.

I promise that as you do so, you will discover your best self—your *real* self. You will discover what it truly means to be a daughter of the everlasting God, the Lord of all righteousness. Of this I testify and leave you my blessing as an Apostle of the Lord, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

### NOTES

1. God is not only our Ruler and Creator; He is also our Heavenly Father. All men and women are literally the sons and daughters of God. President Joseph F. Smith taught that “man, as a spirit, was begotten and born of heavenly parents, and reared to maturity in the eternal mansions of the Father, prior to coming upon the earth in a temporal [physical] body” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* [1998], 335).
2. Doctrine and Covenants 132:19.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 132:21–22, 24.
4. See Isaiah 55:9.
5. See Moses 1:39.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 59:23.
7. Mosiah 18:9.
8. Alma 32:42.



Sobral, Brazil



### Shareable Video and Quote

Scan this QR code or visit [lds.org/go/Oct14Conf21](https://lds.org/go/Oct14Conf21) to watch this talk or to find a shareable video highlight and picture quote.

# Conference Story Index

The following list of selected experiences related during general conference can be used in personal study, family home evening, and other teaching. The number refers to the first page of the talk.

SPEAKER	STORY
Neil L. Andersen	(28) Neil L. Andersen counsels a returned missionary regarding his testimony of Joseph Smith.
M. Russell Ballard	(89) A river guide warns rafters to “stay in the boat” as they prepare for a trip through white-water rapids.
David A. Bednar	(107) After receiving treatment for a minor injury, David A. Bednar’s son offers similar treatment to his friends.
Linda K. Burton	(111) A full-time missionary finishes his mission with a refined spirit after giving his heart, might, mind, and strength to the Lord.
Tad R. Callister	(32) The mother of Ben Carson turns his life around. A Lebanese girl learns the gospel from her mother. Tad R. Callister’s parents teach him the gospel.
Craig C. Christensen	(50) Several deacons say why they admire President Monson. Craig C. Christensen gains a testimony by studying the Book of Mormon.
D. Todd Christofferson	(16) King Henry V tells his men that each is the master of his own soul. A man who refuses to care for himself consents to being taken to a cemetery.
Quentin L. Cook	(46) Lucy of the comic strip <i>Peanuts</i> makes excuses for dropping fly balls. A young man makes choices inconsistent with his goals of serving a mission and marrying in the temple. A visit with a college coach confirms Quentin L. Cook’s decision to follow his father’s advice.
Dean M. Davies	(53) The Church and its members in the Philippines rescue members and nonmembers following a devastating typhoon.
Cheryl A. Esplin	(12) A Young Women leader learns about the sacrament’s enabling power. A 96-year-old man attends church so he can partake of the sacrament.
Henry B. Eyring	(59) A new convert helps young Henry B. Eyring and his brother prepare for priesthood service. Henry B. Eyring’s father and bishop show confidence in him by asking for his help. A senior home teaching companion shows trust in Henry B. Eyring’s son. (70) The mother of Henry B. Eyring prays that he will hear the word of God in her counsel. Church leaders in Idaho, USA, receive revelation to help victims of a flood. The wife of a man who receives the sealing power knows by revelation that her husband is called by God.
Eduardo Gavarret	(37) As a full-time missionary, Eduardo Gavarret learns a lesson about following the Savior’s voice. Parents and siblings of a 14-year-girl in Uruguay follow her example and join the Church. The parents of Eduardo Gavarret accept the missionaries and their message.
Carlos A. Godoy	(96) To receive the blessings promised in his patriarchal blessing, Carlos A. Godoy, with his wife’s support, seeks additional education.
Robert D. Hales	(80) Young Robert D. Hales gains a testimony as he learns about Deity from his parents, teachers, the scriptures, and the Holy Ghost.
Jeffrey R. Holland	(40) Thomas S. Monson returns from Germany in his slippers after giving away his shoes and extra suit and shirts.
Larry S. Kacher	(104) Larry S. Kacher and his wife are caught in a riptide but make it to shore thanks to divine intervention. Two men make choices that lead their families away from the Church. The in-laws of Larry S. Kacher bless their posterity by living the gospel and teaching it to their children.
Jörg Klebingat	(34) Jörg Klebingat counsels a sister in the Ukraine Kyiv Mission not to be immobilized by her weaknesses.
Neill F. Marriott	(117) Neill F. Marriott leaves the temple knowing she can trust in the Savior. Neill F. Marriott’s daughter encourages her family to pray after the family’s young son is lost. Nine hundred young women in Alaska recite from memory “The Living Christ.”
Hugo E. Martinez	(102) President Monson ministers to a father whose daughter is ill. Brothers bring water to the Martinez family following a hurricane.
Thomas S. Monson	(67) A torpedo strikes the rudder of the battleship <i>Bismarck</i> , leaving it unable to steer a charted course. (86) Church members in Canada frequent the home of a German immigrant couple so they can partake of the peaceful spirit there.
Russell M. Nelson	(74) After operating on President Spencer W. Kimball, Russell M. Nelson receives a witness that President Kimball will become the prophet.
Dallin H. Oaks	(25) Because of his wife’s patience and kindness, a nonmember husband decides to get baptized.
Allan F. Packer	(99) While focusing on chopping wood, young Allan F. Packer forgets to take the cover off his hatchet.
Boyd K. Packer	(6) A woman realizes that the Savior has already paid for a terrible wrong committed against her.
L. Tom Perry	(43) A grandson of President Harold B. Lee reminds his mother of the importance of prayer at bedtime.
Lynn G. Robbins	(9) President Boyd K. Packer asks Lynn G. Robbins which way he faces, reminding him that he represents the prophet to the people.
Jean A. Stevens	(114) The parents of Jean A. Stevens hold fast to their covenants and their love for the Lord. Young women prepare for temple covenants.
Dieter F. Uchtdorf	(56) A man obsesses over a single dandelion in his neighbor’s yard. A bank robber rubs lemon juice on his face, believing it will make him invisible. In an ostensibly strong ward, 11 marriages end in divorce. (120) Visiting teachers come to the aid of a single mother struggling with two sick children.



**President Thomas S. Monson speaks during the Sunday afternoon session of general conference.**

## “Two Glorious Days of Inspired Messages”

“We have experienced two glorious days of inspired messages,” President Thomas S. Monson said at the conclusion of the 184th Semiannual General Conference on Sunday, October 5, 2014.

Those messages included the importance of developing a testimony that will enable you to endure all circumstances; following the path of the Savior and becoming a devoted disciple; following and sustaining the prophets; using agency wisely; and making the home a place of love, safety, example, and gospel learning.

In his opening remarks on Saturday, President Monson noted that the Church continues to grow. “We are now more than 15 million strong and increasing in numbers,” President Monson said. “Our missionary efforts are going forward unhindered. We have over 88,000 missionaries serving, sharing the gospel message the world over.”

At the Saturday afternoon session, Elder Carlos H. Amado and Elder William R. Walker of the First

Quorum of the Seventy were released and granted emeritus status. Elder Arayik V. Minasyan and Elder Gvido Senkans were released as Area Seventies.

For the first time in general conference, some speakers whose primary language is not English delivered their addresses in their native tongue. Elder Chi Hong (Sam) Wong spoke in Cantonese, Elder Eduardo Gavarret and Elder Hugo E. Martinez in Spanish, and Elder Carlos A. Godoy in Portuguese.

Crowds filled the 21,000-seat Conference Center and overflow areas on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA, for each of the conference sessions, which were translated into more than 90 languages and broadcast to more than 170 countries and territories. In addition, proceedings were available on television, radio, satellite transmission, and the Internet, including mobile devices. This conference marked the 90-year anniversary of radio broadcasts and the 65-year anniversary of television broadcasts of conference. ■

## Film about Joseph Smith Now on Hulu

Millions of people now have access to a Church-produced movie honoring the Prophet Joseph Smith. *Joseph Smith: The Prophet of the Restoration*, a film that depicts the life and legacy of the Prophet, is now available for viewing free of charge on Hulu, a website offering streaming video.

The movie is the first Church film to penetrate an exclusive, major distribution channel like Hulu, where some 4 million subscribers can watch on-demand, streaming video through Roku, Apple TV, Xbox, PlayStation, and smartphones and tablets that connect to the Internet. Having the film on Hulu not only makes it more accessible for Church members, but it also provides an opportunity for more people who are not LDS to watch and learn more about the Church.

Members who watch, leave comments, and rate the movie can make the movie easier for others to find. ■

## Progress on Temples Continues

“When all the previously announced temples are constructed and dedicated, we will have 170 operating temples throughout the world,” President Thomas S. Monson said during the October 2014 general conference. “Because we are concentrating our efforts on completing temples which were previously announced, we are not at the present time announcing any new temples. However, in the future, as we identify needs and locate properties, announcements of additional temples will be made.”

When President Monson rededicated the Ogden Utah Temple in September 2014, it brought to 143 the number of operating temples of the Church worldwide.

The Fort Lauderdale Florida Temple was dedicated in May 2014 by President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency.



**The Ogden Utah Temple was rededicated on September 21, 2014.**

The Phoenix Arizona Temple will be dedicated on November 16, 2014, and at least five other temples will be dedicated or rededicated in 2015. ■

## MINISTERING RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO COUNCILS

Stake and ward council members now have access to a new Church web page called Ministering Resources, available at [ministering.lds.org](http://ministering.lds.org), to help individuals and families with their temporal and spiritual needs, including difficult and sensitive issues. Access is available to those with current callings in stake and ward councils through their LDS account.

Resources previously available only to bishops and stake presidents have been updated and expanded with specific guidance about how to help victims of abuse, those who struggle with addictions, single expectant parents, pornography users, those who experience same-sex attraction, and those struggling with financial and employment issues.

Under the direction of the bishop, ward councils can use Ministering Resources to counsel together for the benefit of individuals and families within their ward boundaries. ■

PHOTOGRAPH BY SARAH JANE WEAVER, CHURCH NEWS

## Teachings for Our Time

From November 2014 through March 2015, Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society lessons on fourth Sundays should be prepared from one or more talks given in the October 2014 general conference. In April 2015, talks may be selected from either the October 2014 or the April 2015 conference. Stake and district presidents should

choose which talks will be used in their areas, or they may delegate this responsibility to bishops and branch presidents.

Those attending fourth-Sunday lessons are encouraged to study the selected talks beforehand. Conference talks are available in many languages at [conference.lds.org](http://conference.lds.org). ■





## HELP AVAILABLE FOR THOSE AFFECTED BY A LOVED ONE'S ADDICTION

Spouses and families affected by a loved one's addictive behaviors can turn to a new online guide to find help, hope, and healing.

The Spouse and Family Support Guide, located at [AddictionRecovery.Lds.org](http://AddictionRecovery.Lds.org), is intended to help spouses and family members heal from challenges they experience because of the addictive behaviors of loved ones involved with drugs, alcohol, pornography, or other harmful substances or practices. In addition to English, it will soon be available in Spanish, Portuguese, French, Italian, German, Russian, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean.

The guide is split into 12 sections focused on healing, increasing hope, and finding strength through Jesus Christ.

Many practical suggestions are provided, such as how to set limits and rules, how to discuss addiction and recovery with a loved one, and how to appropriately respond to a relapse.

The guide is used for discussion in confidential spouse and family support group meetings offered by LDS Family Services. It can also be used for personal study or used by Church leaders when interviewing and counseling. ■

PHOTOGRAPH BY SCOTT G WINTERTON, DESERET NEWS



**Young adults listen to a devotional address at the Marriott Center at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, USA.**

## Adjustments Begin in January for Young Adult Devotionals

The First Presidency and the Church Board of Education have announced adjustments to the frequency, location, and publication of devotionals for young adults, effective January 2015. Adjustments include:

**Name:** Worldwide Devotional for Young Adults: An Evening with (name of speaker).

**Frequency:** Three times a year, on the second Sunday in January, the first Sunday in May, and the second Sunday in September.

**Audience:** All young adults, both married and single, are invited to attend. Students finishing high school or the equivalent are also invited to attend.

**Locations:** January devotionals will be held at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah; at BYU–Idaho; or at BYU–Hawaii. May devotionals will be held in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City or at other sites at Church headquarters. September devotionals will be held at other locations in the United States.

**Publication:** Within a few days after each devotional, the talks in text, audio, and video formats will be available in English on LDS.org and the Gospel Library app, in a new Young Adult collection. Language versions will follow. Summaries of the talks will be included in the *Liahona* and *Ensign*, and a variety of text quotes, picture quotes (memes), and video highlights will also be published live and after the devotional through the Church's social media channels, including the speaker's specific social pages.

Speakers will continue to be chosen by the First Presidency from among the General Authorities and general officers of the Church.

Adjustments were announced to young adults during the CES devotional on November 2, 2014, and to priesthood leaders in an August 28, 2014, First Presidency letter that included the 2015 Broadcast Schedule. ■

## LDS Charities Provides Aid

Since the earliest days of the Restoration, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have been known for their determination to reach out and lift up those who are suffering.

In recent years, Church members and others have, through generous contributions, provided the means for Church Humanitarian Services programs to bless the lives of people throughout the world. In 2013 alone, LDS humanitarian programs helped more than 10.5 million people in 130 countries.

This effort extends from providing comfort and life-sustaining goods to making clean water available; to training midwives and doctors to save the lives of thousands of newborn babies; to providing wheelchairs. In addition, the Church assists with vision care and training, immunizations, and growing nutritious food in selected communities.

### Refugee Assistance

The Church has made consistent and considerable effort to aid refugees as well as others suffering from conflicts and food shortages. Recently:

- The Church donated thousands of tents and basic food supplies to families in Chad and constructed hand-pump wells, latrines, and shower buildings in refugee camps in Burkina Faso.
- In Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and the Kurdish region, LDS

Charities is distributing food packets, blankets, medical supplies, hygiene kits, bedding, and winter clothing. In Iraq and the Kurdish region, wheelchairs and other mobility equipment have been delivered to people injured in conflicts.

- In Gaza, pharmaceuticals, medical supplies, and powdered milk were donated to the central hospital.
- In Israel, ultrasound equipment was donated to a medical facility.
- In Ukraine and Russia, the Church has partnered with the United Nations Development Program to provide food, bedding, clothing, and personal hygiene items for 30,000 people displaced during civil unrest.

LDS Charities works to remain politically neutral and to help people of any faith.

### Relief Efforts

The Church also responds when natural disasters occur.

- In Sierra Leone and Liberia, the Church has engaged 1,600 local volunteers to provide training on how to avoid Ebola and provided food and basic sanitation and medical supplies.
- Following flooding caused by a heavy monsoon in Pakistan and India, the Church provided food, hygiene kits, and medical supplies.
- In Tonga, a cyclone destroyed hundreds of homes, including the homes of 116 member families. Members will assist with the rebuilding of their homes. They receive training about how to construct their own shelter and are then asked to assist at least

PHOTOGRAPH BY SARAH JANE WEAVER, CHURCH NEWS



**The Amman Jordan District president and his daughter (right) meet refugees.**

four other people in building theirs. The Church is also restoring crops and providing training in home gardening.

- In Mexico, when a hurricane left thousands of homes damaged or destroyed, local Church leaders provided food and water to affected members, and the Church worked with the state government to provide food kits.

### What You Can Do

Donations to the Humanitarian Aid Fund enable the Church to respond immediately to crises. In addition, wherever they live, members can demonstrate Christlike love, provide service, and build respect for all people. Noticing refugees and immigrants in our own communities, or those weathering a personal disaster, and offering them friendship, interest, and a welcoming environment is a Christlike act that will never be in vain.

Through its humanitarian arm, the Church strives to implement the counsel of President Thomas S. Monson that “we can strengthen one another; we have the capacity to notice the unnoticed. When we have eyes that see, ears that hear, and hearts that know and feel, we can reach out and rescue” (“The Call to Serve,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 47; *Liahona*, Jan. 2001, 58). ■



*Sacred Prayer*, by Linda Curley Christensen

*The Prophet Joseph Smith wrote of his experience at age 14 in the Sacred Grove:*

*“I retired to the woods . . . on the morning of a beautiful, clear day, early in the spring of eighteen hundred and twenty. . . . Amidst all my anxieties I had never as yet made the attempt to pray vocally.*

*“ . . . Having looked around me, and finding myself alone, I kneeled down and began to offer up the desires of my heart to God” (Joseph Smith—History 1:14–15).*



“As we strive to place Christ at the center of our lives by learning His words, by following His teachings, and by walking in His path, He has promised to share with us the eternal life that He died to gain,” said President Thomas S. Monson during the 184th Semiannual General Conference of the Church.

“There is no higher end than this, that we should choose to accept His discipline and become His disciples and do His work throughout our lives. Nothing else, no other choice we make, can make of us what He can.”

THE CHURCH OF  
**JESUS CHRIST**  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

