

ASIA AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

Choosing Faith

By Elder Leonard Woo
Of the Seventy

The future of your faith is not by chance, but by choice.¹ With that as his principle theme, Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles gave an inspiring sermon at the October 2015 general conference on the importance of choosing faith.

He explained that “Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is not something ethereal, floating loosely in the air. Faith does not fall upon us by chance or stay with us by birth-right. . . . Faith in Jesus Christ is a gift from heaven that comes as we choose to believe.”²



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Elder Leonard Woo

What does choosing faith mean? It means choosing to exercise faith in Jesus Christ, obeying His commandments, and trusting in the power of His Atonement to save us. It also means choosing repentance over pride and stubbornness.

In choosing faith, it is important that we have a correct understanding of this first principle of the gospel. We are grateful to the Prophet Joseph Smith for his inspired and comprehensive *Lectures on Faith*. In this discourse, given to the early Church leaders who attended the School of the Prophets, it states that three fundamentals were necessary in order for any rational and intelligent being to exercise faith in the Father and the Son unto life and salvation:

1. The idea that God does actually exist,
2. Correct ideas of the character, perfections, and attributes of God, and
3. An actual knowledge that the course of life which one pursues is according to God's will.³

The idea that God does actually exist

This is the most basic and perhaps the easiest of all three requirements.

All Christians believe in the existence of the Father and the Son, Jesus Christ. Members of almost all other major religions also believe in the existence of a God or a Supreme Being.

Correct ideas of the character, perfections, and attributes of God

This second requirement differentiates The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from all other churches and religions of the world. Joseph Smith saw God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, in the First Vision.⁴ He had several more visits from the Savior, Old Testament prophets, and other heavenly beings who tutored him on the nature and attributes of the Godhead.⁵ Because of these modern-day revelations, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have the most correct and complete understanding of the “character, perfections, and attributes” of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

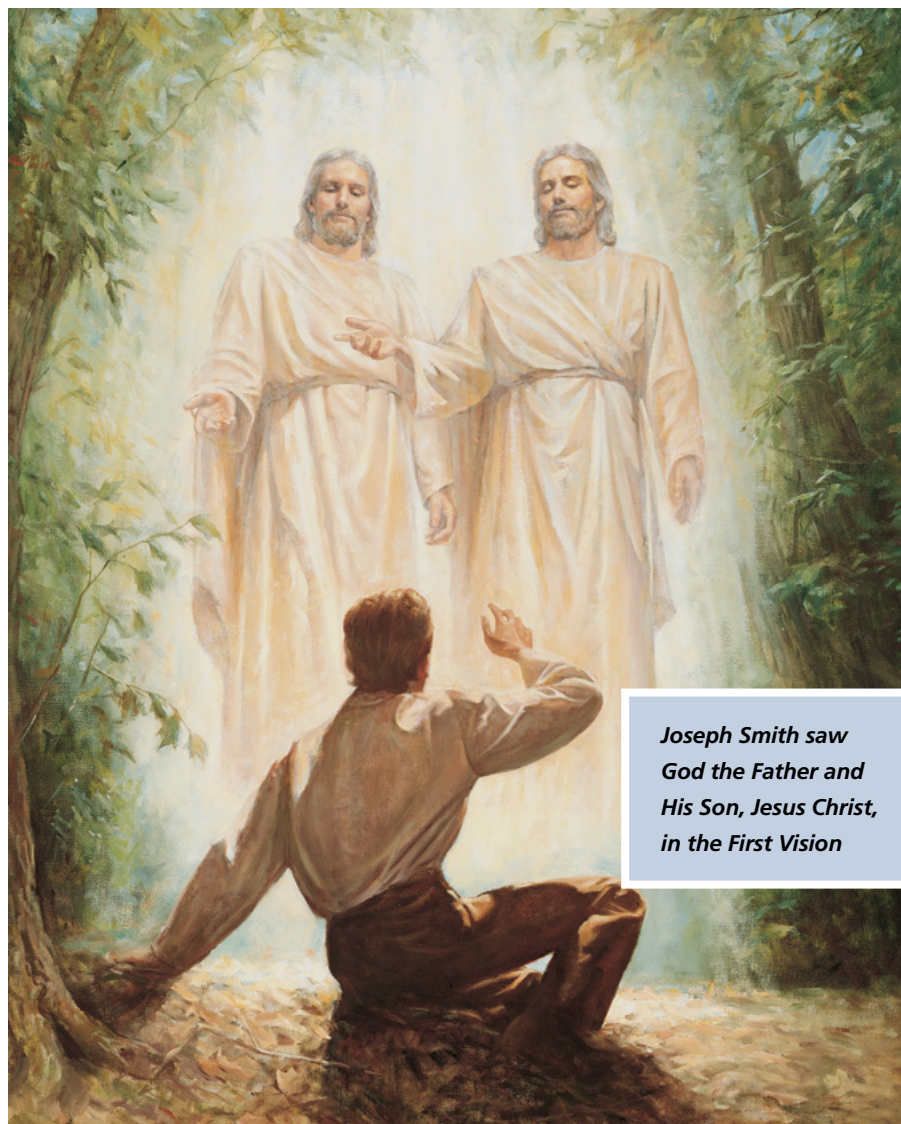
Not having the correct understanding of the attributes of God can hinder a person from believing in God and cultivating strong faith in Him. Some people do not believe in the Bible and therefore do not believe in Christianity because they think Jehovah, the God of the Old Testament, is a heartless God who commanded that whole nations, including women and children, be killed.⁶ This is untrue, as Jehovah of

the Old Testament is the same God as Jesus Christ of the New Testament. While we have to wait for a future date to completely understand some of God’s directives, we do know that Jesus is a long-suffering, patient, and loving God.⁷

When I am faced with difficult personal trials and challenges, it is the testimony that I have of God’s nature—that He knows all things and that His love for me is infinite—that sustains me during my periods of darkness and self-doubt.

An actual knowledge that the course of life which one pursues is according to God’s will

I am impressed with how the application of the three fundamentals or requirements moves from universal to a group, and finally, the individual. The first requirement to believe in the existence of a God has almost universal acceptance among religious people. The second requirement is only fully available and accepted by one group of people, i.e. members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.



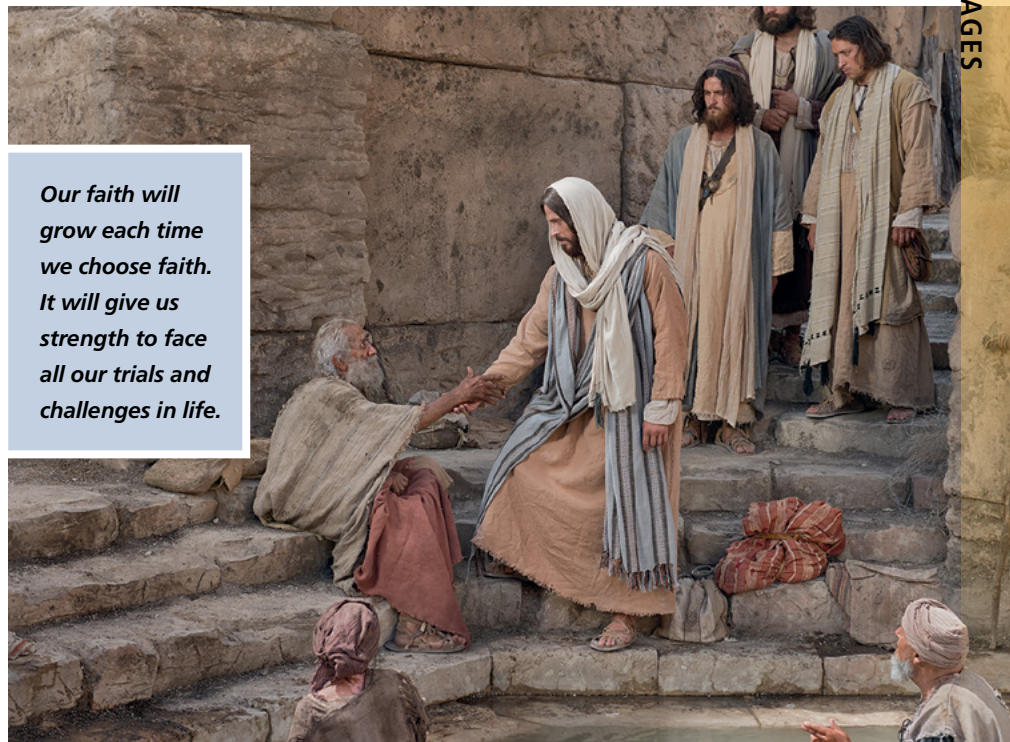
Joseph Smith saw God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, in the First Vision

In the third requirement, we are clearly taught the need for effort from each individual.⁸ This requirement specifically refers to each member's personal effort to bring his or her life in harmony with God's will. To be in harmony with God's will is to be where God wants us to be (for example, by serving a full-time mission), doing the things God would have us do (for example, by accepting callings from our bishops), and saying the things God would have us say (for example, by opening our mouths to share the gospel).

A person who willfully sins, or makes no effort to repent of his or her sins, cannot cultivate the kind of faith necessary to overcome the challenges inherent in mortality.

To choose faith requires continual determination and strength. Satan knows the power and effect of increased faith upon God's covenant people, and he will do everything he can to obstruct us when we choose faith. To have the strength to choose faith, we must diligently do at least these three things:

1. Diligently attend to our daily personal prayers and scripture study.
2. Faithfully observe and keep the Sabbath day holy in our homes and at church. Particular emphasis must be given on the partaking of the Lord's sacrament each Sunday so as to remember Him.



Our faith will grow each time we choose faith. It will give us strength to face all our trials and challenges in life.

3. Ensure that the focus of our discipleship is on Jesus Christ. President Boyd K. Packer (1924–2015), President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, shared the parable of the “Pearl and the Box”⁹ on several occasions to warn that Church members can sometimes be so engrossed with the many programs and activities in the Church that we lose focus that the “author and finisher of our faith”¹⁰ is our Savior, Jesus Christ.

During the recent April 2016 Sunday session of the general conference, President Thomas S. Monson gave only one brief message. In it he admonished that “we choose to

build up within ourselves a great and powerful faith which will be our most effective defense against the designs of the adversary—a real faith, the kind of faith which will sustain us and will bolster our desire to choose the right. . . .

“As we contemplate the decisions we make in our lives each day—whether to make this choice or that choice—**if we choose Christ, we will have made the correct choice.**”¹¹

I know that choosing faith in Jesus Christ will always be right. Our faith will grow each time we choose faith. It will give us strength to face all our trials and challenges in life. In choosing faith we will also find peace and happiness.

If we continually choose faith, we will, at the end of our mortal journey, be able to say as Paul said: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day.”¹² ■

NOTES

1. Neil L. Andersen, “Faith Is Not by Chance, but by Choice,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 65.
2. Neil L. Andersen, “Faith Is Not by Chance, but by Choice,” 65.
3. See *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 38.
4. See Joseph Smith History 1:16–17.
5. See, for example, Doctrine and Covenants 110; Joseph Smith History 1:17–20; 68–74.
6. See 1 Samuel 15:3.
7. See 2 Peter 3:9.
8. See *Lectures on Faith*, 38–48.
9. See Boyd K. Packer, “The Cloven Tongues of Fire,” *Liahona*, July 2000, 7; www.lds.org/ensign/2000/05/the-cloven-tongues-of-fire.
10. Hebrews 12:2.
11. Thomas S. Monson, “Choices,” *Liahona*, May 2016, 86; emphasis added.
12. 2 Timothy 4:7–8.



Enduring in Faith

By Mahalakshmi Jayakaran

Coimbatore First Branch, Coimbatore District

“Choosing faith in all our decisions will uplift our life one step up and give way to our life.”

I would like to share how Heavenly Father blessed me for choosing faith in my decisions.

We didn’t have children for eight years and we were worried. At the same time, my friends were all married and had their own children. I

looked at them and wondered in my heart why our Heavenly Father had not blessed us with children. We did all that we could medically through advanced treatments, but this did not go positively for us. Friends and family were telling me that we should pray to God with faith. Some were telling us that we did not have enough faith. My relatives were saying that since I was converted to Christianity from Hinduism, I was not blessed to have children. But in my heart I knew I was in the right place, and I had faith in Heavenly Father. I have been an institute teacher and have studied the Old Testament, especially the book of Genesis. I remember the prophet Abraham’s story; their faith really touched me and their patience taught me a lesson that I must also patiently wait for the Lord’s will. The Lord told Abraham that in his old age, his wife, Sarah, would bare a son. He and Sarah believed that their generation would be like the stars in the heaven and the sand on the seashore. They believed it; likewise in our lives,

my husband’s patriarchal blessing also pronounced that we would have our own children. I know that the patriarchal blessing is true and will come to pass in our life.

God has all power to perform miracles in people’s lives if they have faith in Him. So as a couple, we decided that we must choose faith in going to temple and seeking the Lord’s help. In 2005, we decided to visit the temple and started to save our money. By 2006 we were able to save the money and visit the Hong Kong China Temple. As we had decided earlier, we went to the celestial room and together we prayed regarding this matter. In the celestial room, the answer came to my husband in a still, small voice. The answer came, but not in the way that we wanted. The answer was that we should adopt a child.

After the temple trip, we got back and we did not act on the answer we received in the temple because we still believed that we could have our own child causing us to set aside the answer we received in the temple. We



and reminded us of the answer we got in temple.

Finally, we prayerfully repented and decided to obey the will of the Lord. The Lord sent an angel to our home in the form of my younger sister Hima to help us in this process. On November 10, 2008, the Lord showed us a baby girl (Keerthana Jayakaran) as promised in the temple. Today she is eight years old and was baptized in this true Church on March 20, 2016, by her father, who holds the priesthood. We again have planned to visit the temple with this blessed baby girl to seal her to us for all eternity as a family.

My testimony is that choosing faith in our Heavenly Father will bring eternal blessings in our lives. ■

also had carried within us the fear of what our family and relatives would look at adoption as. In the same year, we still were trying to get the wisdom of man and taking treatments to fulfill our desire. However, it did not work positively. Medical treatment is not easy for women to go through.

One faithful member of our Church, brother and friend Dr. Santosh Murala called and told my husband that the treatment could be done once but not more than that. If we repeated the treatment, it would bring lots of health challenges in future. He counseled

Faith—Guiding My Life

By Saritha Mary William

Coimbatore Second Branch, Coimbatore District

We live in the time of the last dispensation. Life is full of challenges that can keep us away from the good things the world has to offer. Satan's mission began from the time of Adam and continues to our time. Luckily, our Father in Heaven has granted us a beautiful gift called agency, or choices. I am grateful for my agency to choose faith throughout my life.

Faith is commonly known as believing in something without any

proof. My belief is that faith has proof—the blessings we receive from our Heavenly Father.

I always think of my faith in Jesus Christ and in the gospel like a queen bee. The queen bee is the mother of most, if not all, the bees in her beehive. The queen bee reproduces to multiply her beehive in order to make her hive strong, full, powerful, and forceful. All the bees trust her and know for sure that she is the source of the

entire colony; without her, the colony wouldn't be possible. Similarly, faith is the main element of the gospel to keep our spirit and body functioning. Like the queen bee of a beehive, faith in Jesus Christ will carry us through mortal challenges and trials to give us a happy life of exaltation.

Faith has led my life to this true Church. When I was a freshman in college, faith helped me make right decisions in life. Every day, I moved forward with courage and understanding that the gospel would always give me joy and happiness, no matter what life's challenges would be. I chose to marry a returned



President Thomas S. Monson

missionary and be sealed for time and all eternity in the temple. It's not just my faith alone but also my companion's faith that strengthened our testimonies to bring up our five children in righteous ways.

Faith is helping me to work with inspiration to raise my family in the gospel. My children look up to me as a source of courage, strength, and power. As a mother of five, or the queen bee of the beehive, I have the responsibility to help my children

choose the same faith through which my generations will be blessed.

President Thomas S. Monson shared *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*:

"You will remember that she comes to a crossroads with two paths before her, each stretching onward but in opposite directions. As she contemplates which way to turn, she is confronted by the Cheshire Cat, of whom Alice asks, 'Which path shall I follow?'

"The cat answers, 'That depends where you want to go. If you do not know where you want to go, it doesn't matter which path you take.'

"Unlike Alice, we know where we want to go, and it *does* matter which way we go, for the path we follow in this life leads to our destination in the next life."¹

Choosing faith can bring the power of heaven into our homes, because we know the path leads us to return and live with our Father in Heaven who waits to welcome our joyous return. This return means we will have an eternal family reunion. I look forward to this reunion in faith. ■

NOTE

1. Thomas S. Monson, "Choices," *Liahona*, May 2016, 86.

Preaching the Gospel Two by Two

By Elder Komalpati

India Bangalore Mission

"Ye shall go forth in the power of my Spirit, preaching the gospel, two by two, in my name, lifting up your voices as with the sound of a trumpet, declaring my word like unto angels of God" (D&C 42:6).

We never understood the importance and power of this scripture until we had this experience. One day, as we were walking along a small road in our area trying to locate houses of members, we came across a small cart made to be pulled by oxen.

We decided to take a funny picture with us in the place of the oxen. This is when we realized that together

the oxen could pull the cart down a straight path; however, if there were only one oxen trying to pull the cart, the cart would not move and even if it did, it would only go in circles.

The same is true with missionary work. As full-time missionaries, we can only teach the gospel effectively by both of us. For our investigators to have the greatest chance of progression, we need to work together as a companionship. Like the cart, if only one of the companions is working hard to help investigator to come unto Christ, there will be some frustration. The results will then come only as a

circle from one side of the cart moving faster than the other.

I remember that once while I was attending a young single adult family home evening, my sister shared a story of two missionaries. The two missionaries were walking along a desert. Both had a tough time with each other, and eventually as they were walking, they exchanged few words. One of the missionary gave a big blow to the other and continued walking forward. While the other missionary took a small stick and wrote in the sand: "Today my companion hurt me. I am in so much pain."

As they continued their journey in the desert, the missionary who wrote on sand started to get caught in quicksand. The other missionary helped him out of it and saved his life. Now this time the missionary



*Elder Komalpati
equally yoked
with his mission-
ary companion*

Bengaluru Stake Young Single Adults Activity

By Sumalatha Komalpati

On a bright Saturday morning as everyone walked inside the chapel, anticipation and excitement were high. Lovely hymns invited the Spirit to begin the first session self-reliance. The principles of self-reliance and the vision of the Church to help members become self-reliant and gain a better education and career inspired all to set some goals. We learned that “only when we are self-reliant can we truly emulate the Savior in serving and blessing others” (Robert D. Hales,



wrote on a stone, “My companion saved my life and I am thankful to him.” His companion questioned him, asking why, when he hurt him, he wrote in the sand, but when he saved his life, he wrote on stone?

For that he replied, “I wrote in the sand so that the winds of forgiveness can forgive the mistake you made, but I wrote on stone so that your good works will be appreciated and remembered forever.”

This changed the thoughts of the other missionary and he felt ashamed for hurting him. Later he asked for forgiveness and they both were great companions doing their work. They loved their work, and they loved and cared for each other.

When missionaries learn to work unitedly, companionships can work wonders. Miracles will happen. Investigators will become members and members will become families and be united in the temple for time and eternity.

If companions will stay united, and with members help, the cart will become light and will be easy to manage and to pull. Without such unity, the cart will be heavy and will likely fall into a rut and get stuck.

In Matthew 11:28, the Savior says, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

For all the missionaries who are working hard to uplift this work of salvation, the Savior has promised rest and great blessings. If we continue reading, He says, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:29–30).

How great will be the day because of all the efforts we made; the cart will be lightened and the burden will be reduced. The only way to accomplish this work is to work together more unitedly as companions to pull the cart. With just one photograph, we realized how important it is for us to work together as companions and to be more united.

Sometimes every companionship will have tough times like the one in the story, but we need to forgive and love each other and work together so that we can be lifted up in this missionary work. ■

Elder Komalpati, serves in India Bangalore Mission



“A Gospel Vision of Welfare: Faith in Action,” in *Basic Principles of Welfare and Self-Reliance* [booklet, 2009], 2).

Next we learned the importance of attending institute. In the words of President Thomas S. Monson, we need to “make institute a priority.” Irrespective of our commitments and busy schedules, we need to take time to read the scriptures and improve our gospel knowledge. Institute helps us attain a better understanding and be better people. The session was interactive, and at the end of the session, everyone enrolled for the current year program.

Who doesn't love their family?

Who doesn't want to live with their family forever?

Temples and temple ordinances are blessings that allow us to be sealed to our family and our ancestors. The next session was about family history and how each of us has a responsibility in setting our ancestors free from spirit prison. We need to save them and help them. We are grateful for the technology and the Church resources that help us perform ordinances with just the click of a button. We learned how to

create our own family tree and how to add names of our family members, add pictures, and write stories and memories. I must say family history is fun.

Then it was time for the much-awaited Face to Face with the stake presidency. Questions from the young single adults were collected from a drop box. The questions were answered by a panel. There were many great questions that were asked pertaining to the Perpetual Education Fund, the Word of Wisdom, dating standards and eternal marriage, etc. The answers provided by the panel made everybody think and ponder. The session was very informative, and

the answers given were motivating and helped in answering the questions swirling inside most people's minds. The leaders' testimonies, examples, and love for the young single adults were amazing.

Overall, the morning session was spiritually uplifting, and some great things were taught and learned in unity.

After the delicious lunch, we moved to the fun segment where several games and activities had been arranged. The scorching sun did not seem to be a problem at all. The games and activities helped us make new friends, build teamwork, and have loads of fun. Laughter was echoing in the room and in no time the attendees were reminded about the arrival of their bus.

To end the day on a spiritual note and to implement what we learned throughout the day, we had a stake institute class. We learned about the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and about the testimony of Joseph Smith. At the end of the class, the testimony shared by some of the attendees on how the Book of Mormon changed their lives made everyone feel the Spirit strong. ■

