

# The Principles of My Gospel

Elder Bednar

## Introduction

“Some years ago, in Nauvoo, a gentleman in my hearing, a member of the Legislature, asked Joseph Smith how it was that he was enabled to govern so many people, and to preserve such perfect order; remarking at the same time that it was impossible for them to do it anywhere else. Mr. Smith remarked that it was very easy to do that. ‘How?’ responded the gentleman; ‘to us it is very difficult.’ Mr. Smith replied, ‘I teach them correct principles, and they govern themselves.’”

Learning what doctrine and principles are can help

- scripture study become more meaningful and rewarding
- help us become more receptive to the Holy Ghost
- simplify Gospel-based decisions in our lives

## Definitions

- what is meant by doctrine?
- what are principles?
- how do they relate to one another?

## Doctrine

A doctrine is a fundamental, unchanging truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

- Heavenly Father has a body of flesh and bones
- baptism is necessary to enter the kingdom of God
- all men will be resurrected

## Principle

A principle is an enduring truth or rule individuals can adopt to guide them in making decisions.

Gospel principles are universal and help people apply the doctrines of the gospel to everyday living.

A gospel principle usually suggests action as well as the consequences that follow

- praying always can help us overcome temptation (D&C 10:5)
- if we follow the promptings of the Holy Ghost, He will help us accomplish what the Lord has commanded (1 Nephi 4)

## Quotes

I teach them correct principles, and they govern themselves

- Joseph Smith Jr.

A gospel principle is a doctrinally based guideline for the righteous exercise of moral agency

- Elder Bednar

Principles are concentrated truth, packaged for application

- Elder Richard G. Scott

At times the distinction between a doctrine and a principle can be difficult to discern.

“I wouldn’t spend a lot of time, by the way, trying to distinguish between a principle and a doctrine. I’ve heard conversations of that kind that weren’t very fruitful”

- Elder Henry B. Eyring

[Principles] are found in the scriptures. They are the substance of and the purpose for the revelations

- Elder Boyd K. Packer

One cannot honestly study the scriptures without learning gospel principles because the scriptures have been written to preserve principles for our benefit

- President Marion G. Romney

Search for principles. Carefully separate them from the detail used to explain them

- Elder Richard G. Scott

It is worth great effort to organize the truth we gather to simple statements of principle

- Elder Richard G. Scott

To be known, the truth must be stated and the clearer and more complete the statement is, the better the opportunity will the Holy Spirit have for testifying to the souls of men that the work is true

- B. H. Roberts

If all understand this principle and act in harmony with it, there should be little need for rules

- President Oaks

Correct principles enable us to find our way and to stand firm, steadfast, and immovable so we do not lose our balance and fall in the raging latter-day storms of darkness and confusion.

- Elder Bednar

## Identifying principles

With the definitions of principles behind us

- how do we go about identifying principles?
- why is that important?
- what do we gain from taking the time to identify principles in the scriptures, talks, faith promoting stories, etc.?

## Stated principles

Sometimes principles are somewhat obvious. Like a flag being waved to get our attention.

“thus we see,” “therefore,” “wherefore,” or “behold,”

the scriptural author may be summarizing his message or drawing a conclusion.

## Examples

Thus we may see that the Lord is merciful unto all who will, in the sincerity of their hearts, call upon his holy name

- Helaman 3:27

Therefore, he that will harden his heart, the same receiveth the lesser portion of the word; and he that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word.

- Alma 12:10

Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand

- Ephesians 6:13

Behold, I say unto you, wickedness never was happiness.

- Alma 41:10

## Implied principles

Other times, we have to work a little harder, but with practice, it becomes easier to identify implied principles.

- cause-and-effect relationships
  - analyzing the actions, attitudes, and behaviors of individuals or groups in the scriptural account, and identifying the blessings or consequences that came as a result,

- asking questions
  - What is the moral or point of the story?
  - Why do you think the writer included these events or passages?
  - What did the author intend for us to learn?
  - What are some of the fundamental truths taught in this passage?

- writing notes
  - “if-then” relationship statement
  - and thus we see statements

## Examples

A person who accepts the truth and repents of his sins can lead others to the blessings of the gospel

- Alma the Younger or Paul
  - Alma 36:10–21
  - Acts 9:4–20

If we have faithfully prepared ourselves spiritually, we will be ready when the Lord comes; or those who neglect their spiritual preparation will not be received by the Lord at His coming

- parable of the ten virgins
  - Matthew 25:1–13

As we act with courage and faith in God, we can overcome great challenges in our lives

- David and Goliath
  - 1 Samuel 17:40–51

If we do not doubt, God will deliver us

- 2,000 stripling warriors
  - Alma 56:47–48

If we are humble and willing to follow the counsel of the prophet, we can be healed

- Naaman and Elisha
  - 2 Kings 5:1–14

## Principles from Elder Bednar's talk

### Principle of Non-Distraction

I will not suggest detailed rules, since the circumstances in various wards and branches in our worldwide Church are so different that a specific rule that seems required in one setting may be inappropriate in another. Rather, I will suggest a principle based on the doctrines.

- President Dallin H. Oaks

The principle I suggest to govern those officiating in the sacrament—whether preparing, administering, or passing—is that they should not do anything that would distract any member from his or her worship and renewal of covenants.

- President Dallin H. Oaks

### The Sabbath is a delight

I learned from the scriptures that my conduct and my attitude on the Sabbath constituted a sign between me and my Heavenly Father.

- Pres. Nelson

What sign do I want to give to God?

- Pres. Nelson

### Being Willing to Let God Prevail

Are you willing to let God prevail in your life? Are you willing to let God be the most important influence in your life?

- Pres. Nelson

When your greatest desire is to let God prevail, to be part of Israel, so many decisions become easier. So many issues become nonissues! You know how best to groom yourself. You know what to watch and read, where to spend your time, and with whom to associate. You know what you want to accomplish. You know the kind of person you really want to become.

- Pres. Nelson

## Understanding principles

- know what the words mean
- know how the doctrine or principle can affect their lives
- official resources
- personal revelation, the Holy Ghost

## Feel the truth of principles

- significance of a doctrine or principle
- desire to implement the principle and the strength to do so
- reflect on personal experiences related to that principle

## Apply doctrines and principles

- receive the promised blessings.
- deeper understanding and testimony of the doctrine or principle they have applied.

## Testify of doctrines and principles

- clarifies a person's understanding of gospel doctrines and principles
- improves their ability to teach the gospel to others.
- have a significant impact on the hearts and minds of their peers or others who are listening.