

Saturday Morning Session

As a Little Child

By President Jeffrey R. Holland

Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

April 2025

I testify that babies and children and youth are images of the kingdom of God flourishing on earth in all of its strength and beauty.

Jesus began the last year of His mortal life by intensifying the training of His Apostles. If His message and His Church were to survive Him, more had to be pressed into the hearts of 12 very ordinary men who had known Him for scarcely 24 months.

One day Jesus witnessed an argument among the Twelve and later asked, “What was it that ye disputed among yourselves?”¹ Apparently embarrassed, they “held their peace,”² the record says. But this greatest of all teachers perceived the thoughts of their hearts³ and sensed the first blush of personal pride. So He “called a little child unto him, ...

“And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

“Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”⁴

It should be noted that even before Christ’s birth, King Benjamin’s farewell sermon included this profound comment on a child’s humility. It says, “The natural man is an enemy to God, ... and will be, forever and ever, unless he ... becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, ... humble, ... full of love, ... even as a child [responds] to his father.”⁵

Now, there are obviously some infantile inclinations we *don’t* encourage. Twenty-five years ago, my then-three-year-old grandson bit his five-year-old sister on the arm. My son-in-law, caring for the children that night, frantically taught his daughter all the lessons on forgiveness he could think of, concluding that her little brother probably didn’t even know what a bite on the arm felt like. That ill-conceived fatherly comment worked for about a minute, maybe a minute and a half, until there was a window-rattling cry from the children’s bedroom, where my granddaughter calmly called out, “He does now.”

So what is it that we are to see in the virtues of life’s junior varsity? What was it that brought Christ Himself to tears in the most tender scene in the entire Book of Mormon? What was Jesus teaching when He called down heavenly fire and protective angels to surround those children, commanding the adults to “behold [their] little ones”?⁶

We don't know what prompted all of that, but I have to think it had something to do with their purity and innocence, their inborn humility, and what it *could* bring to our lives if we retain it.

Why are our days of despair labeled by one as “vanity of vanities”?⁷ How is it that “vain imaginations and the pride of the children of men”⁸ are the words that characterize the great and spacious building, so spiritually dead in Lehi's vision? And the Zoramites, that group who prayed so self-servingly? Of them Alma said, “O God, they [pray] unto thee with their mouths, while they are puffed up ... with the vain things of the world.”⁹

By contrast, is there anything sweeter, more pure, or more humble than a child at prayer? It is as if heaven is in the room. God and Christ are so real, but for others later on, the experience can become more superficial.

As Elder Richard L. Evans quoted some 60 years ago: “Many of us profess to be Christians, yet we ... do not take Him seriously. ... We respect Him, but we don't follow Him. ... We quote His sayings, but we don't live by them.”¹⁰ “We admire Him, but we don't worship Him.”¹¹

How different life could be if the world esteemed Jesus above the level of a profane swearing streak from time to time.

But children really do love Him, and that love can carry over into their other relationships in the playground of life. As a rule, even in their youngest years, children love so easily, they forgive so readily, they laugh so delightfully that even the coldest, hardest heart can melt.

Well, the list goes on and on. Purity? Trust? Courage? Character?

Come with me to view the humility before God demonstrated by one young, very dear friend of mine.



On January 5, 2025—91 days ago—Easton Darrin Jolley had the Aaronic Priesthood conferred upon him and was ordained a deacon in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Easton had longed to pass the sacrament of the Lord's Supper for as long as he could remember. But this sacred opportunity was accompanied by the stomach-wrenching fear that he would fail, that he would fall, that he would be teased or embarrass himself and his family.



You see, Easton has a rare and very destructive illness, Ullrich congenital muscular dystrophy. It has progressively filled his young life with formidable challenges while shattering his hopes and dreams for the future. He will soon be in a wheelchair permanently. His family does not talk about what awaits him after that.

The Sunday after his ordination, Easton would pass the sacrament for the first time. And his privately held motivation was that he could present himself and these sacred emblems to his father, who was the bishop of the ward. In anticipating that task, he had begged and pled and wept and begged, extracting a guarantee that no one, *no one*, would try to help him. For many reasons, private to himself, he needed to do this alone and unaided.

After the priest had broken the bread and blessed it—an emblem representing the broken body of Christ—Easton, with his broken body, limped up to receive his tray. However, there were three sizable steps from the meetinghouse floor to the elevated stand. So, after receiving his tray, he stretched up as high as he could and placed his tray on the surface above the handrail. Then, sitting down on one of the higher steps, with both hands he pulled his right leg up onto the first step. Then he pulled his left leg onto the same step, and so on up until, arduously, he was at the summit of his personal three-step Mount Everest.

He then maneuvered himself to a structural post by which he could climb to a standing position. He made his way back to the tray. A few more steps and he

stood in front of the bishop, his father, who, with tears drenching his eyes and flooding down his face, had to restrain himself from embracing this perfectly courageous and faithful son. And Easton, with relief and a broad smile consuming his face, might well have said, “I have glorified [my father and] have finished the work [he gave] me to do.” ¹²

Faith, loyalty, purity, trust, honor, and, in the end, love for that father he so wished to please. These and a dozen other qualities make *us* also say, “Whosoever ... shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” ¹³

Sisters and brothers and friends, at the top of the list of the most beautiful images I know are babies and children and youth as conscientious and priceless as those we have referred to today. I testify that they are images of the kingdom of God flourishing on earth in all of its strength and beauty.

In that same spirit of testimony, I bear witness that in his youth, Joseph Smith saw what he said he saw and conversed with those with whom he said he spoke. I testify that a humble and pure Russell M. Nelson is God’s ordained and gifted prophet and seer. Coming from a lifetime of reading, I bear witness that the Book of Mormon is the most rewarding book I have ever read and the keystone of my little dwelling in a kingdom of many mansions. I bear witness that priesthood and prayer are restoring my life—Christ’s priesthood and your prayers. I know all this to be true and bear witness of it in the name of the most loyal and humble of all God’s sons—Alpha and Omega, the Great I Am, the crucified, the faithful witness ¹⁴—even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. Mark 9:33 .
2. Mark 9:34 .
3. See Luke 9:47 .
4. Matthew 18:2–4 .
5. Mosiah 3:19 .
6. 3 Nephi 17:23 ; see also verses 11–24 .
7. Ecclesiastes 1:2 .
8. 1 Nephi 12:18 .
9. Alma 31:27 .
10. James W. Clarke, quoted in Richard L. Evans, in Conference Report, Apr. 1965, 136. Elder Evans notes that this quotation came from a radio sermon given by Dr. James W. Clarke, which was quoted by William H. Danforth.
11. Clarke, in Richard L. Evans, in Conference Report, Apr. 1965, 136.

12. John 17:4 . Personal account shared by Brian and Charisa Jolley with Jeffrey R. Holland, Jan. 2025.
13. Matthew 18:4 .
14. See Revelation 1:5 .

Spiritually Whole in Him

By President Camille N. Johnson
Relief Society General President
April 2025

Wholeness does not necessarily mean physical and emotional restoration in this life. Wholeness is born of faith in and conversion to Jesus Christ.

Ten lepers hollered to the Savior, “Have mercy on us.” And Jesus did. He told them to show themselves to the priest, and as they went, they were cleansed of the disease.

And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, shouted praises to God. He returned to the Savior, fell at His feet, and expressed gratitude.

And the Savior said to him who was thankful, “Thy faith hath made thee whole.”
¹

Jesus Christ had healed ten lepers. But one, coming back to the Savior, received something in addition. He was made whole.

Nine lepers were physically healed.

One was physically healed *and* made spiritually whole.

In pondering this story, I have wondered if the converse is true. If healing and wholeness are not the same, can one be made spiritually whole by Him but not yet physically and emotionally healed?

The Master Healer will heal all our afflictions—physical and emotional—in His time. ² But in the waiting to be healed, can one be whole?

What might it mean to be spiritually whole?

We are whole in Jesus Christ when we exercise our agency to follow Him in faith, submit our hearts to Him so He can change them, keep His commandments, and enter a covenant relationship with Him, meekly enduring and learning from the challenges of this earthly estate until we return to His presence and are healed in every way. I can be whole while I wait for healing if I am wholehearted in my relationship with Him.

Faith in Jesus Christ begets hope. I find hope in striving to be whole—a wholeness born of faith in Jesus Christ. Faith in Him increases my hope for healing, and that hope reinforces my faith in Jesus Christ. It is a powerful cycle.
³

The Lord told Enos his faith had made him “whole.” ⁴ Wholeness came as Enos pondered on the words of his prophet-father, Jacob, as he hungered to understand the opportunity for eternal life, as he cried unto God in mighty prayer. And in that state of desire and humility, the voice of the Lord came to him, announcing his sins were forgiven. And Enos asked the Lord, “How is it

done?”⁵ And the Lord responded, “Because of thy faith in Christ, ... thy faith hath made thee whole.”⁶

Through our faith in Jesus Christ, we can seek to be spiritually whole while we wait and hope for physical and emotional healing.

By virtue of His atoning sacrifice, and when we sincerely repent, the Savior heals us from sin, as He did with Enos. His infinite Atonement also reaches our griefs and sorrows.

But He may not provide healing from illness and disease—chronic pain, autoimmune disorders like multiple sclerosis, cancer, anxiety, depression, and the like. That kind of healing is on the Lord’s time. *And* in the meantime, we can choose to be made whole by exercising our faith in Him!

To be whole means to be complete and full. Much like the five wise virgins who had their lamps full with oil when the bridegroom came, we can be whole in Jesus Christ as we fill our lamps with the nourishing oil of conversion to Him.⁷ In that way, we are prepared for the symbolic wedding supper, His Second Coming.

In the parable all ten of the virgins were in the right location, awaiting the bridegroom. Every one of them came with a lamp.

But when He came, at the unexpected midnight hour, the five foolish did not have sufficient oil for their lamps. They were not described as wicked but rather as foolish.⁸ The foolish failed to adequately prepare to keep their lamps burning with the oil of conversion.

And so, in response to their petition to be permitted to enter the wedding supper, the bridegroom responded, “Ye know me not.”⁹

Implying, then, that the five wise virgins *did* know Him. They were whole in Him.

Their lamps were full of the precious oil of conversion, which allowed the wise virgins to enter the marriage feast on the right hand of the bridegroom.¹⁰

As expressed by the Savior, “Be faithful, praying always, having your lamps trimmed and burning, and oil with you, that you may be ready at the coming of the Bridegroom.”¹¹



Five Wise Virgins , by Ben Hammond

A magnificent sculpture depicting the five wise virgins was recently placed on Temple Square, just outside the doors to the Relief Society Building and in the shadow of the Salt Lake Temple. ¹²

It is a location befitting application of the parable. Because when we make and keep covenants, ¹³ particularly those available in the house of the Lord, we fill our lamps with the oil of conversion.





While the women represented as the five wise virgins are not sharing the oil of their conversion, they are sharing their light as they hold up their lamps, which are full of oil and burning brightly. Significantly they are depicted supporting one another—shoulder to shoulder, an arm around another, making eye contact and beckoning others to come to the light.

Indeed, “[we] are the light of the world.” ¹⁴ The Savior declared:

“I give unto you to be the light of this people. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.

“... Do [we] light a candle and put it under a bushel? Nay, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light [unto] all that are in the house;

“Therefore let your light so shine before this people, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father [which] is in heaven.” ¹⁵

We are commanded to share His light. So keep your lamp full of the oil of conversion to Jesus Christ and be prepared to keep your lamp trimmed and burning bright. Then let that light shine. ¹⁶ When we share our light, we bring the relief of Jesus Christ to others, our conversion to Him is deepened, and we can be whole even while we wait for healing. And as we let our light shine brightly, we can be joyful even while we wait.

A scriptural example is useful in reinforcing the principle that we can be whole as we are converted to Jesus Christ and draw strength from Him, even while we wait for healing.

The Apostle Paul had some kind of affliction—what he described as a “thorn in the flesh,” ¹⁷ which three times he had asked the Lord to remove. ¹⁸ And the Lord said to Paul, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” ¹⁹ To which Paul declared:

“Most gladly therefore will I ... glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

“Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, ... in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.” ²⁰

Paul’s example suggests that even in our weakness, our strength in Jesus Christ can be made perfect—that is, complete and whole. Those who wrestle with mortal struggles and turn to God in faith like Paul can receive the blessings of becoming acquainted with God.

Paul was not healed of his affliction, but he was spiritually whole in Jesus Christ. And even in his adversity, the light of his conversion to and strength from Jesus Christ was shining, and he was joyful. In his Epistle to the Philippians, he exclaimed, “Rejoice in the Lord alway[s]: and again I say, Rejoice.” ²¹

Sisters and brothers, the answer is yes, we can be spiritually whole, even while we wait for physical and emotional healing. Wholeness does not necessarily mean physical and emotional restoration in this life. Wholeness is born of faith in and conversion to Jesus Christ and in letting the light of that conversion shine.

“Many are called, but few [choose to be] ²² chosen.” ²³

All will be physically and emotionally healed in the Resurrection. But will you choose *now* to be whole in Him?

I declare with joy that I am converted to the Lord Jesus Christ. I am striving to be whole in Him. I am sure that all things will be restored and healing will come, in His time, because He lives.

Mary Magdalene was a woman healed of Jesus Christ. And she was a woman whole in Jesus Christ. As His disciple, she followed the Savior throughout Galilee and ministered to Him. ²⁴

She was present at the foot of the cross, a witness to His death. ²⁵

She went to His tomb to complete the burial preparations and discovered that the stone covering had been taken away, that the Lord’s body was gone. Mary was at the tomb weeping when she was asked, first by the angels and then by the Savior Himself, “Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?” ²⁶

Mary cried, “They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.” ²⁷

And Jesus tenderly called her by name, “Mary.” And she recognized Him and reverently replied, “Rabboni; ... Master.” ²⁸

Prophesying of the Savior, Isaiah said, “He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces.” ²⁹

His Resurrection allowed Mary’s tears to be wiped away. Surely He will wipe away yours too.

Mary was the first witness of the resurrected Savior. And she was the first to witness to others of what she had seen.

I humbly add my testimony to Mary’s. He is risen. Jesus Christ lives. Ultimately all will be healed, physically and emotionally, in Him. And in the waiting for that

healing, faith in the Master Healer will make us spiritually whole. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. See Luke 17:11–19 . The term “made whole” was translated from a Greek word that means to save, to rescue, to deliver, or to heal. That seems to underscore the vital truth that Jesus Christ can heal us physically *and* He can also deliver, rescue, save, and heal us in other ways.
2. See Alma 40:23 : “The soul shall be restored to the body, and the body to the soul; yea, and every limb and joint shall be restored to its body; yea, even a hair of the head shall not be lost; but all things shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame.” See also Russell M. Nelson, “ Jesus Christ—the Master Healer ,” *Ensign* or *Liahona* , Nov. 2005, 87: “The gift of resurrection is the Lord’s consummate act of healing.”
3. See Moroni 7:40–42 .
4. Enos 1:8 .
5. Enos 1:7 .
6. Enos 1:8 .
7. See Matthew 25:1–13 .
8. Foolish because they did not think that having extra oil was important or necessary.
9. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 25:12 (in Matthew 25:12 , footnote *a*).
10. Of the parable of the ten virgins, Elder David A. Bednar taught:
“Please think of the lamps used by the virgins as the lamps of testimony. The foolish virgins took their lamps of testimony but took no oil with them. Consider the oil to be the oil of conversion. ...
“Were the five wise virgins selfish and unwilling to share, or were they indicating correctly that the oil of conversion cannot be borrowed? Can the spiritual strength that results from consistent obedience to the commandments be given to another person? Can the knowledge obtained through diligent study and pondering of the scriptures be conveyed to one who is in need? Can the peace the gospel brings to a faithful Latter-day Saint be transferred to an individual experiencing adversity or great challenge? The clear answer to each of these questions is no.”

He went on to explain that we have an “individual responsibility to keep our lamp of testimony burning and to obtain an ample supply of the oil of conversion. This precious oil is acquired one drop at a time—‘line upon line [and] precept upon precept’ (2 Nephi 28:30), patiently and persistently. No shortcut is available; no last-minute flurry of preparation is possible” (“ Converted unto the Lord ,” *Ensign* or *Liahona* , Nov. 2012, 109).

11. Doctrine and Covenants 33:17 . President Russell M. Nelson has counseled: “Now is the time for you and for me to prepare for the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ. Now is the time for us to make our discipleship our highest priority” (“ The Lord Jesus Christ Will Come Again ,” *Liahona* , Nov. 2024, 121).
12. The sculptor of *Five Wise Virgins* is artist Ben Hammond, who portrayed the five wise virgins as women of various ages and racial backgrounds, representing the diversity of women who are converted disciples of Jesus Christ.
13. When we partake of the sacrament, we renew all the covenants we have made with the Lord and make a new covenant that we are willing to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ and obey His commandments. Worthy participation in priesthood ordinances and making and keeping covenants make us whole. This principle is beautifully expressed in the sacrament hymn “Bread of Life, Living Water”:

Bread of Life, Living Water,
Feed my soul, fill my heart.
Lord, give me new life in Thee
And make me *whole* —complete and holy—
Bound to Thee eternally.

(*Hymns—For Home and Church* , Gospel Library; emphasis added.)

14. Matthew 5:14 .

15. 3 Nephi 12:14–16 .

16. In the words of the hymn:

This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine. ...
Ev’rywhere I go, I’m gonna let it shine. ...
Jesus gave it to me; I’m gonna let it shine.
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

(“This Little Light of Mine,” *Hymns —For Home and Church* ,
Gospel Library.)

17. 2 Corinthians 12:7 .

18. See 2 Corinthians 12:8 .

19. 2 Corinthians 12:9 .

20. 2 Corinthians 12:9–10 .

21. Philippians 4:4 ; see also 2 Corinthians 1:3–4 : “Blessed be God,
even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies,
and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our
tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in
any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are
comforted of God.”

22. See David A. Bednar, “ Put On Thy Strength, O Zion ,” *Liahona* ,
Nov. 2022, 94.

23. Matthew 22:14 ; see also Doctrine and Covenants 121:34–35 .

24. See Luke 8:2–3 .

25. See John 19:25 .

26. John 20:15 ; see also verse 13 .

27. John 20:13 .

28. John 20:16 .

29. Isaiah 25:8 .

Right Before Our Eyes

By Elder Ronald A. Rasband
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles
April 2025

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is growing in members and families, missions and missionaries, meetinghouses and temples.

Brothers and sisters, I am so grateful to be with you. We love you, we are grateful for you, and we feel blessed by your prayers.

President Russell M. Nelson said at our last conference: “Do you see what is happening right before our eyes? I pray that we will not miss the majesty of this moment! The Lord is indeed hastening His work.” ¹

Hastening His work. “Hastening” is a word that matters. It suggests moving quickly, accelerating, and even urgency. In the growth of the Church and the plan of Christ, hastening is happening. And we are all a part of it.

In April 1834 in Kirtland, Ohio, the Prophet Joseph Smith gathered all who held the priesthood into a little schoolhouse about 14 feet (4.3 m) square. We could fit dozens of those schoolhouses in this Conference Center, with room to spare. Joseph Smith said, “It is only a little handful of Priesthood you see here tonight, but this Church will fill North and South America—it will fill the world.” ²

That prophecy is being fulfilled “right before our eyes.” The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is growing in members and families, missions and missionaries, meetinghouses and temples, and in enrollment in our seminaries, institutes, and universities all around the world.

We are grateful to be on earth when the Church is increasing in numbers and influence, but more importantly in the hearts and lives of its members. We are known as disciples of Jesus Christ. We share our testimonies of Him, His Church, His ways, and His covenant path. We are His people, and He is our Savior.

I marvel at what President Nelson calls the “majesty of this moment” ³ and express profound gratitude to the Lord for His work. I encourage us to stand tall as His disciples, eyewitnesses of the fulfillment of prophecy, both ancient and modern.

There are naysayers who shout, “‘Lo, here!’ and ... ‘Lo, there!’” ⁴ just as they did in the Prophet Joseph Smith’s time. However, they are and will be but mere footnotes in this noble work. Remember the words of Joseph Smith: “No unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing; persecutions may rage, ... but the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done.” ⁵

In my assignments this year, I have had a front row seat to the Lord hastening His work. The Church is building temples at an unprecedented pace, giving more members an opportunity to worship in the house of the Lord. Second, missionary work is gathering record numbers to the fold of the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ. And third, Church education in many configurations is at a new high in teaching those who “seek this Jesus.”⁶

Today the Church has 367 temples in various stages of design, construction, or operation. And for what purpose? The answer is proclaimed on each temple: “Holiness to the Lord.”⁷ The temple opens the way to the highest blessings our Father in Heaven has for each one of us. Brothers and sisters, we are hastening our holiness as we live temple worthy, as we worship in the house of the Lord, and as we make covenants with God for ourselves and on behalf of our ancestors on the other side of the veil.

President Nelson has said: “The assaults of the adversary are increasing exponentially, in intensity and in variety. Our need to be in the temple on a regular basis has never been greater. I plead with you to take a prayerful look at how you spend your time.”⁸ In His house we can feel the Lord’s hallowed presence and transcendent peace.



Last year I was privileged to preside at the dedication of the Mendoza Argentina Temple. In my message, I referred to Elder Melvin J. Ballard's 1926 prophecy that the work of the Lord would grow slowly for a time in South America, "just as an oak grows slowly from an acorn. It will not shoot up in a day," but thousands would join the Church, and the nations of South America would become "a power in the Church."⁹ I saw that prophecy fulfilled right before my eyes.

Mendoza, once a small acorn, has become a mighty oak. That growth is being repeated across continents and isles of the sea.

We see the Lord hastening His work in missions. In 2024, 80,000 missionaries were serving in 450 missions.¹⁰ Thirty-six of those are new missions.¹¹ Last year missionary work brought over 308,000 new members into the Church.¹² More than numbers, the spirit of the gathering is bringing souls to Jesus Christ and His gospel.¹³

I think of the Apostles Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball, who in 1839 set off as missionaries to the British Isles. They were ill; they left families sick and destitute. Nevertheless, the two climbed into a wagon, and while still in sight of their loved ones, Heber said, “Let’s rise up and give them a cheer.” The two struggled to their feet and shouted, “Hurrah, hurrah for Israel.”¹⁴



I saw that same enthusiasm for the Lord’s work in Lima, Peru, when I met with missionaries from the missionary training center and missions in Lima. What a sight! I saw the hastening right before my eyes. There are now seven missions in just the city of Lima.¹⁵

At the end of our meeting, the missionaries had a special surprise for me. They rose up and cheered, “Hurrah for Israel.” I will never forget that moment; I wish all of you could have been there. Right before my eyes were missionaries who had set aside “the things of this world”¹⁶ to serve the Lord and help hasten His coming.

We see the Lord hastening educational opportunities for our members and even those not of our faith around the world. One of the things that distinguishes us as a church is our emphasis on education. The Lord commanded in the early days of the Restoration to “seek learning, even by study and also by faith.”¹⁷ That is happening today and is worthy of a resounding “hurrah.”

Currently more than 800,000 students worldwide are enrolled in seminary and institute, the highest enrollment in the history of the Church.¹⁸ Our youth gather in a variety of ways, from early morning, daytime, and evening classes to

online and in-home study. They are a mighty and righteous battalion, gaining strength from each other as they learn of Jesus Christ, follow, and testify of Him as the Son of God.



Last fall I spoke at a devotional to an arena full of seminary and institute students and their parents at the University of Utah.¹⁹ Their attendance said much about their desire to know and follow Jesus Christ. My message to those students was clear: Give the Lord equal time. I counseled them to balance their studies with true higher learning, even a study of “the Son of the living God.”²⁰

I ask the same of everyone today: Whatever is on your to-do list, give equal time, not spare time, to the Lord in personal scripture study, family study of *Come, Follow Me*, prayer, Church callings, ministering, partaking of the sacrament, worshipping in the temple, and pondering the things of God. Our Lord and Savior has said, “Learn of me ... and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”²¹ Take Him at His word. And give Him equal time.

President Nelson has said: “I plead with you to let God prevail in your life. Give Him a fair share of your time. As you do, notice what happens to your positive spiritual momentum.”²²

We see that momentum building at seminaries, institutes, and Church universities. In these environments, the Lord is a priority. So should He be in each one of our lives.

Another area that shows the growing reach of education in the Church is BYU–Pathway Worldwide. Across the world, enrollment has reached nearly 75,000 and continues to grow rapidly. Most are members, and more than one-third are in Africa.²³ Pathway is all about access to education. Completing the courses means access to employment, and access to employment means a better life for families and more opportunities to serve the Lord.



When I was meeting with stake leaders in Uganda, I learned that the entire stake presidency was enrolled in BYU–Pathway. The more prepared we are temporally and spiritually, the more we can thwart the adversary’s cunning attacks. Remember the words of Peter: “The devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.” ²⁴

I recognize that in the midst of the good news of the gospel, there are those who struggle, who have faith challenges, doubts, and questions that seem to have no answers. Brothers and sisters, Jesus Christ is the answer. ²⁵ Start with Him. Look for His hand in your life. Listen to Him. “Let not your heart be troubled,” ²⁶ He said in His last hours to His disciples before Gethsemane, ²⁷ before carrying His cross through the streets of Jerusalem, ²⁸ before Golgotha, ²⁹ where He completed His atoning sacrifice—what only He, the Begotten Son of God, could do.

Know that He understands. He took upon Himself all our sins, ³⁰ mistakes, misery, and very bad days that we might live again with our Father in Heaven in eternity. ³¹ He has said, “Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not.” ³² Faith in Jesus Christ can lift you up ³³ and heal your wounded soul. ³⁴ Trust Him ³⁵ and you will hasten your return to “the arms of his love.” ³⁶

I emphasize again the words of our living prophet: “Do you see what is happening *right before our eyes* ? I pray that we will not miss the majesty of this moment! The Lord is hastening His work.” ³⁷ May we as disciples of our day shout, “Hurrah for Israel” as we prepare for the return of our Lord and Savior. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. Russell M. Nelson, “The Lord Jesus Christ Will Come Again,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2024, 121; see also Doctrine and Covenants 88:73 : “Behold, I will hasten my work in its time.”
2. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 137.
3. Russell M. Nelson, “The Lord Jesus Christ Will Come Again,” 121; see also Doctrine and Covenants 88:73 : “Behold, I will hasten my work in its time.”
4. Joseph Smith—History 1:5 .
5. Joseph Smith, in History, 1838–1856, vol. C-1, 1285, josephsmithpapers.org .
6. Ether 12:41 .
7. The inscription “Holiness to the Lord” is on the exterior of every temple of the Church. Most also include the phrase “The House of the Lord.”
8. Russell M. Nelson, “Becoming Exemplary Latter-day Saints,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 114.
9. Melvin J. Ballard, in Melvin R. Ballard, *Melvin J. Ballard: Crusader for Righteousness* (1966), 84.
10. See Mary Richards, host, *Church News* podcast, episode 217, “Elder W. Mark Bassett and David N. Weidman of the Church’s Missionary Department on the Expanding Role of Missionary Work,” *Church News*, Dec. 3, 2024, thechurchnews.com.
11. See “The Church of Jesus Christ Will Create 36 New Missions in 2024,” Newsroom, Nov. 1, 2023, newsroom.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
12. Information provided by the Church’s Missionary Department. In 2022, the number of convert baptisms was 212,172. In 2023, it increased to 251,763. In 2024, 308,682 individuals were baptized.
13. President Gordon B. Hinckley stated: “I need not remind you that this cause in which we are engaged is not an ordinary cause. It is the cause of Christ. It is the kingdom of God our Eternal Father. It is the building of Zion on the earth” (“An Ensign to the Nations,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, 53).
14. In Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball, an Apostle; the Father and Founder of the British Mission* (1888), 276.

15. Information provided by the Church's Missionary Department.
16. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:38 (in Matthew 6:33 , footnote *a*).
17. Doctrine and Covenants 88:118 .
18. See Tad Walch, "Enrollment Growth at Latter-day Saint Universities Rebutts Narrative About Young Adults Losing Faith," *Deseret News* , Nov. 23, 2024, [deseret.com](https://www.deseret.com).
19. See Rachel Sterzer Gibson, "Give the Lord 'Equal Time,' Elder Rasband Encourages During Devotional to 10,000 Youth and Young Adults," *Church News* , Oct. 14, 2024, [thechurchnews.com](https://www.thechurchnews.com).
20. Matthew 16:16 .
21. Matthew 11:29 .
22. Russell M. Nelson, " The Power of Spiritual Momentum ," *Liahona* , May 2022, 99.
23. See Walch, "Enrollment Growth at Latter-day Saint Universities," *Deseret News* , Nov. 23, 2024, [deseret.com](https://www.deseret.com).
24. 1 Peter 5:8 .
25. See Russell M. Nelson, " The Answer Is Always Jesus Christ ," *Liahona* , May 2023, 127–28.
26. John 14:27 .
27. See Matthew 26:36–38 .
28. See Luke 23:26 ; John 19:17 .
29. See John 19:17 ; 1 Nephi 11:33 ; 3 Nephi 27:14–15 .
30. See Alma 7:14 ; Doctrine and Covenants 76:41–42 .
31. See Moses 1:39 .
32. Doctrine and Covenants 6:36 .
33. See Moroni 9:25 .
34. See Psalm 147:3 ; Jacob 2:8 .
35. See Proverbs 3:5 .
36. 2 Nephi 1:15 .
37. Russell M. Nelson, " The Lord Jesus Christ Will Come Again ," 121, emphasis added; see also Doctrine and Covenants 88:73 : "Behold, I will hasten my work in its time."

The Atonement of Jesus Christ Provides the Ultimate Rescue

By Elder Quentin L. Cook

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

April 2025

As we turn to Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, He rescues us from the storms of life through His Atonement.

The Atonement of Jesus Christ provides the ultimate rescue from the trials we face in this life. President Russell M. Nelson assigned me to dedicate the Casper Wyoming Temple late last year. ¹ It was a profound, emotional, and spiritual experience. It brought into clear focus the role temples play in rescuing God's children through the Savior's Atonement.

The stakes in the Casper Wyoming Temple District include a portion of the overland trail used by Latter-day Saint pioneers between 1847 and 1868. In preparation for the temple dedication, I reread some of the history of the trail along the Platte River near Casper and continuing to Salt Lake City. The trail had been a thoroughfare for hundreds of thousands of western emigrants. My primary emphasis was the more than 60,000 Latter-day Saint pioneers who traveled the trail.

Most of our pioneers came by wagon, but about 3,000 crossed in 10 handcart companies. Eight of these handcart companies made the monumental trek with remarkable success and few deaths. The Willie and Martin handcart companies of 1856 were the exception. ²

I reviewed the accounts of the Willie and Martin handcart companies from the time the terrible weather conditions commenced. I became intimately aware of the challenges they faced at the crossing of the Sweetwater River, Martin's Cove, Rocky Ridge, and Rock Creek Hollow.



Between Storms , by Albin Veselka

I had not been inside the Casper Temple prior to the dedication. When I entered the foyer, my attention was immediately drawn to an original handcart painting titled *Between Storms* .³ The painting was clearly not intended to depict the tragedies that had occurred. As I gazed at it, I thought, “This painting is correct; the vast majority of handcart pioneers did not experience tragedies.” I could not help feeling that this is like life in general. Sometimes we are between storms and sometimes between clouds and sunshine.⁴



Heaven's Portal , by Jim Wilcox

When I turned to the original painting on the other wall, titled *Heaven's Portal* ,⁵ I realized that this beautiful summer painting of what was called “Devil’s Gate,” with the calm and clear Sweetwater River flowing through it, presented

the beauty of the Lord's creation, not just the challenges the pioneers faced in that horrible winter season.

Then I looked forward, behind the recommend desk, and saw a beautiful painting of the Savior.⁶ This immediately invoked overwhelming feelings of gratitude. In a world of great beauty, there are also enormous challenges. As we turn to Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, He rescues us from the storms of life through His Atonement in accordance with the Father's plan.

For me, the foyer was a perfect preparation for the temple ordinance rooms that allow us to receive the ordinances of exaltation, to make sacred covenants, and to fully accept and experience the blessings of the Savior's Atonement. The Father's plan of happiness is based on the Savior's atoning rescue.

The pioneer experience provides Latter-day Saints with a unique historical tradition and a powerful collective spiritual legacy. For some, the migration had been years in the making after being forcefully driven from both Missouri and Nauvoo. For others, it began after President Brigham Young announced the handcart plan, which was intended to make emigration more affordable. The handcarts cost much less than wagons and oxen.⁷

A missionary in England, Millen Atwood, said that when the handcart plan was announced, "it ran like fire in dry stubble, and the hearts of the poor Saints leapt with joy and gladness." Many had "prayed and fasted day after day, and night after night, that they might have the privilege of uniting with their brethren and sisters in [the] mountains."⁸

Most of the handcart Saints experienced hardship but avoided major adverse events. But two handcart companies, the Willie company and the Martin company, experienced starvation, exposure to freezing weather, and many deaths.⁹

Most of these travelers sailed from Liverpool, England, in May of 1856 aboard two ships.¹⁰ They arrived at the handcart outfitting site in Iowa City in June and July.¹¹ Despite warnings, both companies departed for the Salt Lake Valley too *late* in the season.

President Brigham Young first became aware of the perilous situation of these companies on October 4, 1856. The next day he stood before the Saints in Salt Lake City and said, "Many of our brethren and sisters are on the plains with handcarts, ... and they must be brought here; we must send assistance to them ... before the winter sets in."¹²

He asked the bishops to provide 60 mule teams, 12 or more wagons, and 12 tons (10,886 kg) of flour and proclaimed, "Go and bring in those people now on the plains."¹³

The combined number of pioneers in the Willie and Martin handcart companies was approximately 1,100. Some 200 of these precious Saints died along the trail.¹⁴ Without the timely rescue, many more would have perished.

The winter storms began nearly two weeks after the first rescuers left Salt Lake City. The accounts of members of the Willie and Martin companies describe

devastating challenges after the storms began. These accounts also depict the great joy when the rescuers arrived.

Describing the arrival scene, Mary Hurren said: “Tears streamed down the cheeks of the men, and the children danced for joy. As soon as the people could control their feelings, they all knelt down in the snow and gave thanks to God.”

15

Two days later, the Willie company had to travel the most difficult part of the trail, going over Rocky Ridge, in a freezing storm. The last of them didn’t reach camp until 5:00 the next morning. Thirteen people died and were buried in a common grave. 16

On November 7, the Willie company was nearing the Salt Lake Valley, but that morning there were still three deaths. 17 Two days later, the Willie company finally reached Salt Lake, where they had a marvelous greeting and were welcomed into the homes of the Saints.

That same day, the Martin company was still 325 miles (523 km) back on the trail, continuing to suffer from cold and inadequate food. A few days earlier, they had crossed the Sweetwater River to reach what is now called Martin’s Cove, where they hoped to find protection from the elements. One of the pioneers said, “It was the worst river crossing of the expedition.” 18 Some of the rescuers—like my great-grandfather David Patten Kimball, who was just 17 years old, along with his young friends “George W. Grant, Allen Huntington, Stephen Taylor, and Ira Nebeker—spent hours in the frigid water,” heroically helping the company make the Sweetwater crossing. 19

While this event has received much attention, as I learned more about the rescuers, I realized that all of them were following the prophet and played critical roles in saving the stranded Saints. All the rescuers were heroic, as were the emigrants.

Studying their story, I appreciated the precious relationships and the long-term eternal vision among the emigrants. John and Maria Linford and their three sons were members of the Willie company. John died hours before the first rescuers arrived. He had told Maria that he was glad they had made the journey. “I shall not live to reach Salt Lake,” he said, “but you and the boys will, and I do not regret all we have gone through if our boys can grow up and raise their families in Zion.” 20

President James E. Faust provided this marvelous summary: “In the heroic effort of the handcart pioneers, we learn a great truth. All must pass through a refiner’s fire, and the insignificant and unimportant in our lives can melt away like dross and make our faith bright, intact, and strong. There seems to be a full measure of anguish, sorrow, and often heartbreak for everyone, including those who earnestly seek to do right and be faithful. Yet this is part of the purging to become acquainted with God.” 21

In His eternity-shaping Atonement and Resurrection, the Savior broke “the bands of death, having gained the victory over death” for everyone. 22 For those who have repented of sins, He has “taken upon himself their iniquity and their transgressions, having redeemed them, and satisfied the demands of justice.” 23

Without the Atonement, we cannot save ourselves from sin and death.²⁴ While sin can play a significant role in our trials, life's adversities are compounded by mistakes, bad decisions, evil actions by others, and many things outside of our control.

Preach My Gospel teaches: "As we rely on Jesus Christ and His Atonement, He can help us endure our trials, sicknesses, and pain. We can be filled with joy, peace, and consolation. All that is unfair about life can be made right through the Atonement of Jesus Christ."²⁵

During this Easter season, our focus is on the Savior and His atoning sacrifice. The Atonement provides hope and light at a time that for many seems dark and dreary. President Gordon B. Hinckley declared, "When all of history is examined, ... [there is] nothing ... so wonderful, so majestic, so tremendous as this act of grace."²⁶

I share three recommendations which I think are particularly relevant for our day.

First, do not underestimate the importance of doing what we can to rescue others from physical and especially spiritual challenges.²⁷

Second, gratefully accept the Savior's Atonement. We all should strive to exhibit joy and happiness even as we face the challenges of life. Our goal should be to live optimistically on the sunny side of the street. I have observed my precious companion, Mary, do this her entire life. I have appreciated her sparkling, uplifting approach even as we have faced problems throughout the years.

My third counsel is to set aside consistent time to faithfully contemplate the Savior's Atonement. There are many ways to do this in our personal religious observance. However, attending sacrament meeting and partaking of the sacrament are especially significant.

Equally important is regular attendance in a temple where possible. The temple provides a continuing remembrance of the Savior's Atonement and what it overcomes. And, even more important, temple attendance allows us to provide a spiritual rescue for our deceased loved ones and more distant ancestors.

President Russell M. Nelson, at our last conference, emphasized this principle and added, "[Temple] blessings ... help to prepare a people who will help prepare the world for the Second Coming of the Lord!"²⁸

We must never forget the sacrifices and examples of prior generations, but our adulation, appreciation, and worship should be centered on the Savior of the world and His atoning sacrifice. I testify that the key to the Father's plan of happiness is the Atonement wrought by our Savior, Jesus Christ. He lives and guides His Church. The Atonement of Jesus Christ provides the ultimate rescue from the trials we face in this life. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. The Casper Wyoming Temple was dedicated on November 24, 2024.

2. I became aware of the Willie and Martin companies and the tragedies they faced when I was very young. My great-grandfather David Patten Kimball was part of the team from the Salt Lake Valley that President Brigham Young sent to rescue these Saints. (See *Saints: The Story of the Church of Jesus Christ in the Latter Days* , vol. 2, *No Unhallowed Hand, 1846–1893* [2020], 237.)
3. Albin Veselka, *Between Storms* , original painting in the Casper Wyoming Temple (see “Casper Wyoming Temple Open House Commences ,” Newsroom, Aug. 26, 2024, newsroom.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).
4. “Thru cloud and sunshine, Lord, abide with me!” (“Abide with Me!,” *Hymns* , no. 166).
5. Jim Wilcox, *Heaven’s Portal* , original painting in the Casper Wyoming Temple (see “Casper Wyoming Temple Open House Commences ,” newsroom.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).
6. Joseph Brickey, *Risen Hope* , giclée of original painting (see “Casper Wyoming Temple Open House Commences ,” newsroom.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).
7. See William G. Hartley, “The Place of Mormon Handcart Companies in America’s Westward Migration Story,” *The Annals of Iowa* , vol. 65, nos. 2, 3 (Spring/Summer 2006), 107–9.
8. Millen Atwood, “Account of His Mission,” *Deseret News* , Nov. 26, 1856, 300; cited in Andrew D. Olsen and Jolene S. Allphin, *Follow Me to Zion: Stories from the Willie Handcart Pioneers* (2013), xi.
9. The Hodgetts and Hunt wagon companies traveled near the Martin handcart company and also needed to be rescued.
10. Most of the Willie company left Liverpool, England, on the ship *Thornton* on May 4, 1856. Most of the Martin company left Liverpool, England, on the ship *Horizon* on May 25, 1856.
11. See “Handcart Camp Dedicated in Iowa as Historic Site,” *Church News* , Aug. 9, 1980, 3, 5.
12. Brigham Young, “Remarks,” *Deseret News* , Oct. 15, 1856, 252; punctuation modernized.
13. Brigham Young, “Remarks,” 252.
14. See Olsen and Allphin, *Follow Me to Zion* , 217.
15. Mary Hurren, in Olsen and Allphin, *Follow Me to Zion* , 131.

16. On July 23, 1994, President Gordon B. Hinckley dedicated the Rock Creek Hollow Monument and paid tribute to the faithful Saints who died from the trek over Rocky Ridge (see Julie Dockstader Heaps, “Trail of Handcart Pioneers Sanctified by Sacrifice,” *Church News* , July 30, 1994, 8–9, 11). President Robert Scott Lorimer accompanied President Hinckley at the dedication. As stake president of the Riverton Wyoming Stake, he played a central role in identifying and overseeing historical and spiritual actions for those who experienced the tragedy.
17. See James G. Willie emigrating company journal, Nov. 7, 1856, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.
18. John Jaques, “Some Reminiscences,” *Salt Lake Daily Herald* , Dec. 15, 1878, 1.
19. *Saints* , 2:237. My grandfather Crozier, the son of David Patten, taught me important lessons. He emphasized that David was following the prophet, and we should follow the prophet’s counsel in our day.
20. John Linford, in Golden C. Linford, *Linford Family Heritage* (1995), 214; see also Val Parrish, “President’s Message,” *Pioneer* , vol. 71, no. 3 (Fall 2024), 1.
21. James E. Faust, in “Faith in Every Footstep: The Epic Pioneer Journey” (video presentation in general conference, Apr. 6, 1997), *Ensign* , May 1997, 63.
22. Mosiah 15:8 .
23. Mosiah 15:9 ; see also Alma 34:16 .
24. See Alma 22:12–15 .
25. *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ* (2023), 56.
26. Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Wondrous and True Story of Christmas,” *Ensign* or *Liahona* , Dec. 2000, 4.
27. President Thomas S. Monson both taught and lived the rescue principle (see *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Thomas S. Monson* [2020], 67–76).
28. Russell M. Nelson, “The Lord Jesus Christ Will Come Again,” *Liahona* , Nov. 2024, 121.

My Love for the Savior Is My “Why”

By Elder Ricardo P. Giménez

Of the Seventy

April 2025

I love our Savior. This is the real and most powerful reason why I do what I do.

Have you ever noticed that our dear prophet, President Russell M. Nelson, continuously extends invitations to us? Not surprisingly, he has invited us to study and ponder the messages shared at the last two conferences. In April 2024, he said, “I hope you will repeatedly study the messages of this conference throughout the coming months.”¹ Then, in October 2024, he said: “I urge you to study [the speakers’] messages. Use them as a litmus test of what is true and what is not during the next six months.”²

These invitations can be added to prophetic invitations we have received throughout our lifetimes, including and especially those we have received in recent years. We may feel or think these invitations are another thing we need to add to our to-do lists, simply because we were invited or asked to do it. But could there be more to it?

Pondering over this and all the invitations we had received, I recalled something that I learned and decided long ago. I am trying to do these things which are essential to me because I love Him; I love our Savior. This is the real and most powerful reason why I do what I do, and then connected with this is my love for you, my fellow brothers and sisters.

As your brother, I hope you will consider my words as a sincere invitation to seek to understand the opportunity to link everything we do with our love for the Savior.

Doing this will help us understand the real “why” behind everything we do as disciples of the Savior. This will help us strengthen our covenantal connection with God, understanding His divine and eternal truths—His eternal and absolute truths that will never change. Eternal truths like “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”³

It is interesting that sometimes because we have consistently done things to the point that they have turned into traditions, we allow these traditions or activities to dictate our efforts to build faith in Jesus Christ. It seems that we do these things because we have done them for many years, without considering their impact on our covenantal connection with the Savior.

In our world, we usually focus on what we do and on consistently accomplishing tasks and goals. In a spiritual sphere, we have the opportunity to go beyond just doing things or achieving goals by understanding why we are doing them. If we can understand and connect that the reason behind our actions relates to our love for the Savior and our Heavenly Father, by taking advantage of these

opportunities we will understand that even though doing righteous things like having Church activities or traditions and appropriately doing them is a good thing, when we connect them with the “why,” we will be blessed to understand the reason. It won’t be just doing good things or doing them right; we will also get them right.

For example, when you set a goal to read the scriptures, offer sincere prayers, or prepare an activity for your family or ward, is the real goal simply to accomplish these tasks? Or are these actions the means, the tools at your disposal, to achieve the true goal? Is the purpose merely to hold an activity because we have done it for many years and then check the box that we have completed it? Or, once again, are these the means we use to learn, to feel, and to connect with the Savior?

Please don’t misunderstand my point about having activities and traditions or setting goals and working hard to achieve them; there is nothing wrong with this. However, I invite you to open your hearts and minds to the opportunity and blessing of understanding why we do these things and how we practice our religion.

A prime example of Christ-centered traditions is the challenge President Dallin H. Oaks extended to all of us in the name of the First Presidency. President Oaks said: “As we enter this new year, let us prepare for an Easter celebration of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. ... No matter what others believe or do, we should celebrate the Resurrection of our living Savior by studying His teachings and helping to establish Easter traditions in our society as a whole, especially within our own families.”⁴ As you can see, it is not just an invitation to have traditions. Instead, we use these traditions as a means to learn more about the Savior and remember His Resurrection.

The more we can connect the reason with our love for the Savior, the more we will be able to receive what we need or are seeking. President Nelson said, “Whatever questions or problems you have, the answer is always found in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.” And then he extended this invitation: “Learn more about His Atonement, His love, His mercy, His doctrine, and His restored gospel of healing and progression. Turn to Him! Follow Him!”⁵

Ponder this in your hearts and minds: Do you believe President Nelson’s invitation had the intention of helping us prepare a checklist where we will accumulate more knowledge and complete tasks so we can check off his invitation from our to-do lists? Or is he inviting us to consider the aspects of these eternal truths and principles as an opportunity to understand the “why” and connect the Savior’s covenantal love for us with our lifelong discipleship journey?

Let me illustrate the principle that I am trying to convey. One option, which is probably extreme, could be to read all the messages from general conference all at once; then, when I am done, I will check this invitation from my to-do list without doing anything else with what I read. I understand this is an extreme case, but it is not unreal. Probably, many are at some point between this and the ideal.

The invitation is to study and ponder the messages from the general conference and use them to determine and understand what we each can do to improve.

When we accept the invitation, understanding the “why” behind it, we will have more opportunities to become closer to the Savior. We will begin to understand that because I love the Savior, I want to learn more about Him by studying the words of the living prophets. And because I love my fellow man, I will share the teachings of prophets, seers, and revelators with others, starting with my loved ones.

In both examples, you are doing a righteous thing. In one, the goal seems to be using the means that Heavenly Father and the Savior have given us, which are the messages shared during general conference. The second version embraces the profound blessing of gaining insight into the underlying reasons, offering a pathway to understand eternal truth and the blessings promised to all who make the teachings and life of our Savior, Jesus Christ, the focal point of their lives.

Dear brothers and sisters, I hope you can feel and see the importance of connecting our actions with our love for the Savior. In a globalized world, many voices will try to influence you and, if possible, lead you to believe that some fundamental truths of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ are unnecessary. These voices start with the essential truth of the need for a restoration in these the last days, including the necessity of having God’s kingdom on earth, represented by the restored Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

You may hear voices insisting that only a personal relationship or understanding with the Savior is sufficient and that religion or the restored Church is unnecessary or nonessential. I invite you to be slow to consider or even be immune to being influenced by these misleading ideas and to be quicker to remember what the Savior has been telling and teaching us since ancient times—beginning with the love of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ for us and connecting our love for Them as the reason to follow Them.

God the Father and His Son came and spoke with Joseph Smith to restore Jesus Christ’s Church and to initiate the dispensation of the fulness of times, His kingdom on earth. Therefore, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the means established by Heavenly Father to access covenants that enable us to return home. Thus, we need more than just a personal relationship with Heavenly Father and His Son; we require essential priesthood ordinances through which we make covenants with Them. This provides a covenantal connection with Them and grants us access to Their covenantal love, making it possible to attain the highest kingdom of glory prepared for all those who are true and faithful to their covenants.

With all the energy of my soul, I bear witness to the reality and divinity of our Savior, Jesus Christ. He loves you. He knows what is happening in your life. His arms are wide open, extending the invitation “Come unto me, ... and I will give you rest.”⁶

I love the Savior, and my love for Him is my “why.” In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. Russell M. Nelson, “Rejoice in the Gift of Priesthood Keys,” *Liahona*, May 2024, 119.

2. Russell M. Nelson, “ The Lord Jesus Christ Will Come Again ,”
Liahona , Nov. 2024, 121.
3. John 3:16 .
4. Dallin H. Oaks, Facebook, Feb. 16, 2025, facebook.com/dallin.h.oaks.
5. Russell M. Nelson, “ The Answer Is Always Jesus Christ ,”
Liahona , May 2023, 127.
6. Matthew 11:28 .

“Draw Near unto Me”

By President Henry B. Eyring
Second Counselor in the First Presidency
April 2025

Jesus Christ loves each of us. He offers us the opportunity to draw closer to Him.

My dear brothers and sisters, it is a joy for me to be with you in this general conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This is His Church. We are gathered in buildings and homes all over the world in His name.

We take His name upon us when we enter His kingdom by covenant. He is the resurrected and glorified Son of God. We are mortals, subject to sin and death. Yet, in His love for each of us, the Savior invites us to come closer to Him.



Here is His invitation to us: “Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you; seek me diligently and ye shall find me; ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” ¹

There are times we feel close to the Savior Jesus Christ. And yet, sometimes during our mortal trials, we feel some distance from Him and wish for an assurance that He knows what is in our hearts and loves us as individuals.

The Savior’s invitation includes the way to feel that assurance. Draw near Him by always remembering Him. Seek Him diligently through scripture study. Ask through heartfelt prayer to Heavenly Father to feel closer to His Beloved Son.

There is a simple way to think about it. It is what you would do if you were separated for a time from dear friends. You would find a way to communicate with them, you would cherish any message you received from them, and you would do all you could to help them.

The more that happened, the longer it lasted, the deeper the bond of affection would be strengthened, and you would feel yourself drawing ever nearer. If much time passed without the cherished communication and the opportunity to help one another, the bond would weaken.

Jesus Christ loves each of us. He offers that opportunity to draw closer to Him. As with a loving friend, you will do it in much the same way, by communicating through prayer to Heavenly Father in the name of Jesus Christ, listening for cherished guidance from the Holy Ghost, and then serving others for the Savior cheerfully. Soon you would feel that blessing of drawing nearer to Him.

In my youth, I experienced the joy of coming closer to the Savior—and of His coming closer to me—through simple acts of obedience to the commandments. When I was young, the sacrament was offered during an evening meeting. I can still remember one specific night, more than 75 years ago, when it was dark and cold outside. I remember a feeling of light and warmth as I realized that I had kept the commandment to gather with the Saints to partake of the sacrament, covenanting with our Heavenly Father to always remember His Son and keep His commandments.

At the end of the meeting that night, we sang the hymn “Abide with Me; ’Tis Eventide,” with the memorable words “O Savior, stay this night with me.”²

These words brought an overwhelming sense of the Spirit to me, even as a young boy. I felt the Savior’s love and closeness that evening through the comfort of the Holy Ghost.

Years later I wanted to rekindle the same feeling of the Savior’s love and the closeness I had felt to the Lord during that sacrament meeting in my youth. So I kept another simple commandment: I searched the scriptures.

In the book of Luke, I read of the third day after His Crucifixion and burial, when faithful servants had come, out of love for the Savior, to anoint His body. When they arrived, they found the stone rolled away from the tomb and saw that His body was not there.



Two angels stood by and asked why they were afraid:

“Why seek ye the living among the dead?

“He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee,

“Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.”³



That evening at dusk, two disciples walked from Jerusalem on the road to Emmaus, and the resurrected Lord appeared to them and walked with them.

The book of Luke allows us to walk with them that evening:

“And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.

“But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.

“And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?

“And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?”⁴

They told Him of their sadness that Jesus had died when they had trusted He would be the Redeemer of Israel.

There must have been affection in the risen Lord’s voice as He spoke to these two sorrowful and mourning disciples.

As I continued to read, there came these words that warmed my heart, just as I had felt when I was a little boy:

“And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further.

“But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them.”⁵



The Savior accepted that night the invitation to enter the house of His disciples. He sat at meat with them. He took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to them. Their eyes were opened, and they knew Him. Then He vanished out of their sight.

Luke recorded for us the feelings of those blessed disciples: “And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?” ⁶

The two disciples then rushed back to Jerusalem to tell the eleven Apostles what had happened. As they were sharing their experience, the Savior appeared again.

He stood in the midst of them and “saith unto them, Peace be unto you.” ⁷ He then reviewed the prophecies of His mission to atone for the sins of all His Father’s children and to break the bands of death.

“And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:

“And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

“And ye are witnesses of these things.” ⁸



Just as His beloved disciples, every child of Heavenly Father who has chosen to enter through the gate of baptism is under covenant to be a witness of the Savior and to care for those in need throughout our mortal lives. This commitment was made plain for us by the great Book of Mormon prophet Alma centuries ago at the Waters of Mormon:

“As ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light;

“Yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places ... , even until death, that ye may be redeemed of God, ... that ye may have eternal life.”⁹

As you are faithful to these promises, you will find that the Lord keeps His promise to be one with you in your service, making your burdens light. You will come to know the Savior, and in time you will come to be like Him and “be perfected in him.”¹⁰ By helping others for the Savior, you will find that you are drawing nearer to Him.

Many of you have loved ones who are wandering off the path to eternal life. You wonder what more you can do to bring them back. You can depend on the Lord to draw closer to them as you serve Him in faith.

You may remember the Lord’s promise to Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon when they were away from their families on His errands: “My friends Sidney and Joseph, your families are well; they are in mine hands, and I will do with them as seemeth me good; for in me there is all power.”¹¹

As you bind up the wounds of those in need, the Lord’s power will sustain you. His arms will be outstretched with yours to succor and bless the children of our Heavenly Father.

Every covenant servant of Jesus Christ will receive His direction from the Spirit as they bless and serve others for Him. Then they will feel the Savior’s love and find joy in being drawn closer to Him.

I am a witness of the Resurrection of the Lord as surely as if I had been there with the two disciples in the house on Emmaus road. I know that He lives.

This is His true Church—the Church of Jesus Christ. We will, on the Day of Judgment, stand before the Savior, face to face. It will be a time of great joy for those, in this life, who have drawn close to Him in His service and can eagerly anticipate to hear His words: “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.” ¹²

I testify as a witness of the risen Savior and our Redeemer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. Doctrine and Covenants 88:63 .
2. “Abide with Me; ’Tis Eventide,” *Hymns* , no. 165.
3. Luke 24:5–7 .
4. Luke 24:15–18 .
5. Luke 24:28–29 .
6. Luke 24:32 .
7. Luke 24:36 .
8. Luke 24:46–48 .
9. Mosiah 18:8–9 .
10. Moroni 10:32 .
11. Doctrine and Covenants 100:1 .
12. Matthew 25:21 .

Saturday Afternoon Session

Cherishing Life

By Elder Neil L. Andersen

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

April 2025

Life is a most precious part of our Father's perfect plan, and by His decree we cherish and preserve life.

Our Savior, Jesus Christ, taught us, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” ¹

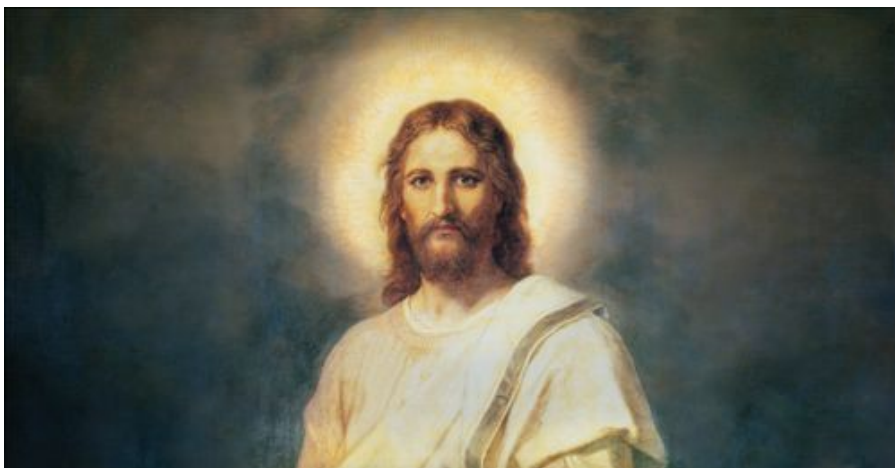
A bishop in Utah recently shared with me an outpouring of love in his ward for a young woman and her family. Through a series of beautiful events, the parents determined to return to the Savior and His Church. During the time they were distant from the Church, their teenage daughter was involved with a young man. Returning, this precious daughter felt immense love from her Heavenly Father during a Young Women testimony meeting. She determined to more fully live the commandments. She wrote, “I began the repentance process with my bishop.” ²

Soon after, she became ill. In her words: “[A] test showed ... I was pregnant. I ... began to cry. ... My dad wrapped me in his arms and assured me everything [would] be OK. ... My boyfriend ... asked me to get rid of the baby. ... I declined.”

Care for Those in Need

She continued: “I have received so much love and support from our ward family. It has been overwhelming. [My] bishop and Young Women president have gone above and beyond to show their love and support. ... I have seen the Lord's hand ... guiding me and my family. ... A ward such as mine is the family everyone needs, especially a young woman in my position.” ³

She and her family, and her ward family, lovingly welcomed her baby boy this past February.



President Russell M. Nelson said, “A hallmark of the Lord’s true and living Church will always be an organized ... effort to minister to individual children of God ... [ministering with loving-kindness] to the one, just as He did.”⁴

Helping Righteous Choices

When a single woman discovers that she is expecting an unanticipated child, health concerns, spiritual turmoil, embarrassment, financial worries, educational questions, marriage uncertainty, and the sadness of shattered dreams can, in a moment of pain and bewilderment, lead a thoughtful woman to take steps that will bring deep pain and regret.

For any listening who have experienced the deep pain and regret from having or participating in an abortion,⁵ please remember: Although we cannot change the past, God can heal the past.⁶ Forgiveness can come through the miracle of His atoning grace as you turn to Him with a humble and repentant heart.⁷

Two words are often attached to the sanctity of mortal birth: life and choice. Life is a most precious part of our Father’s perfect plan, and by His decree we cherish and preserve life; and we choose the continuation of life once conceived. We also treasure the gift of choice, of moral agency—helping to strengthen righteous choices approved by God that bring eternal happiness.⁸

When a woman and a man are in such a fragile time, facing a crucial choice, our words, our hands, our hearts—spiritually, emotionally, and financially—can bless them to feel the Savior’s love and, as President Henry B. Eyring has said, bring a clarifying adjustment to their spiritual eyes from “what they think they see” to “what they cannot yet see.”⁹

The Doctrine of Mortal Life

President Dallin H. Oaks said: “Our attitude toward abortion is not based on revealed knowledge of when mortal life begins. ... It is fixed by our knowledge that ... all of the spirit children of God must come to this earth for a glorious

purpose, and that individual identity began long before conception and will continue for all the eternities to come.”¹⁰

The word of the Lord concerning the unborn, given voice through the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has never varied and echoes the words of prophets through the ages, giving divine clarity to what the Lord has asked of us.¹¹

“The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints believes in the sanctity of human life. Therefore, the Church opposes elective abortion for personal or social convenience, and counsels its members not to submit to, perform, encourage, pay for, or arrange for such abortions.

“The [Lord] allows for possible exceptions ... when:

- Pregnancy results from rape or incest, or
- A competent physician determines that the life or health of the mother is in serious jeopardy, or
- A competent physician determines that the fetus has severe defects that will not allow the baby to survive beyond birth.”

The First Presidency continues: “Abortion is a most serious matter. [Even in these rare situations] it should be considered only after the persons responsible have received confirmation through prayer”¹² and counseled with others.

Thirty years ago, the Lord’s prophets issued a proclamation to the world. It includes these words:

“We ... declare that God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife.

“We declare the means by which mortal life is created to be divinely appointed. We affirm the sanctity of life and of its importance in God’s eternal plan.”¹³

Nurturing and protecting life that is yet unborn is not a political position. It is a moral law confirmed by the Lord through His prophets.

Speaking More Openly

A statement by President J. Reuben Clark Jr., who served in the First Presidency, beautifully describes our youth today: “The youth of the Church are hungry for things of the Spirit; they are eager to learn the gospel, and they want it straight, undiluted. They want to know about ... our beliefs; they want to gain testimonies of [the] truth. They are ... inquirers, seekers after truth.”¹⁴ Let us speak more often with faith and compassion to our youth in our homes, and with each other in our Relief Society and elders quorum meetings, about the Lord’s law of chastity, the sanctity of life, and the care of the unborn and their mothers.¹⁵

A dear sister wrote to me of an experience she had decades ago: “As a 17-year-old ... , I found myself pregnant with little to no support from my boyfriend. I felt ashamed and alone [but I] never considered [an abortion]. ... I [had] my

loving family and my bishop, with whom I met regularly for guidance. ... I turned to God. I studied the scriptures ... and prayed [and] found strength through my Savior and the repentance process. ... I received an answer [to my prayers] that I could not deny. ... It was heartbreaking, but I knew I would be placing my daughter for adoption. ... I prayed for courage [and] felt the Savior's love so clearly through repentance, I know that God ... answers prayers and strengthens us." ¹⁶

A loving couple adopted the precious baby girl and taught her the gospel. She is now married with a beautiful family of her own. ¹⁷

At times, profoundly difficult and agonizing uncertainty can accompany the protection of life. ¹⁸

Recently a young couple whom Kathy and I love wrote me about the precious baby they were expecting.

The father wrote: "[When my wife was] 10 weeks pregnant we found out that our miracle baby has the genetic condition of trisomy 21, commonly known as Down syndrome. We felt the pressure ... from the medical field to consider termination. A few weeks later we discovered ... our unborn child ... would require multiple heart surgeries in her first year of life. Throughout this process as we prayed fervently for divine help, ... we have felt the Spirit give us comfort. We received revelation and understanding that our daughter is an elite child of Heavenly Father and has an immense desire to be in our family and to come to earth."

The baby's mother wrote: "[We] were completely shocked, confused, and honestly devastated by the news. ... When I was 14 weeks pregnant, we found out that our baby had multiple congenital heart defects, one that could be potentially fatal. We saw countless doctors and specialists from 10–18 weeks' gestation. ... At each of our appointments, we were asked if we wanted to continue with the pregnancy or terminate. ... The Savior healed my heart and gave me a sense of peace and excitement about our baby girl. ... [Heavenly Father] has shown me time and time again that He has a perfect plan for me [and] I trust Him." ¹⁹

They excitedly welcomed their baby girl exactly one week ago today. She is theirs and they are hers forever.

Undaunted faith and remarkable courage are hallmarks of disciples of Jesus Christ.

A Remarkable Example of Faith

Through the years, I have had the privilege of meeting with men and women who have humbly sought to return to the covenant path and to their priesthood and temple blessings many years after a loss of their membership.

On one occasion, I was to interview a man on behalf of the First Presidency for the restoration of his priesthood and temple blessings.

After his marriage in the holy temple, and after having three wonderful children, the man was unfaithful to his wife and his sacred covenants. A single woman became pregnant and wanted an abortion.

The husband's saintly wife pleaded with the woman to have the baby and promised that she would raise the child, once he was born, with her own children.

The single woman thoughtfully agreed not to end the pregnancy.

It had now been 10 years. The humble sister sitting in front of me loved the boy as her own and told me of her husband's efforts to make amends and to love and care for her and the family. The father wept as she spoke.²⁰

How could this noble woman of God take a child as her own who could be a daily reminder of the unfaithfulness of her husband? How? Because she found strength through Jesus Christ and she believed in the sacredness of life, the holiness of life. She knew the unborn child was a child of God, innocent and pure.



My dear brothers and sisters, the diminishing love for unborn children worldwide is a grave concern. God cherishes life. It is His work and His glory to bring immortality and eternal life to His children.²¹ As disciples of Jesus Christ, we cherish life. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."²² May we share our love even more abundantly with those who need us so desperately. I express my love for you and our Heavenly Father's love for His children coming to earth. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.²³

Notes

1. John 13:35 ; see also Matthew 22:36–40 .
2. Personal correspondence, Feb. 6, 2025; used with permission.
3. Personal correspondence, Feb. 6, 2025; used with permission.

4. Russell M. Nelson, “ Ministering with the Power and Authority of God ,” *Ensign* or *Liahona* , May 2018, 69.
5. An example of a righteous woman in France; see Neil L. Andersen, *The Divine Gift of Forgiveness* (2019), 154–56.
6. See Neil L. Andersen, *The Divine Gift of Forgiveness* , 219; see also Neil L. Andersen, *Jesus Is the Christ* (2023), 5.
7. See official statement on abortion: “ Abortion ,” newsroom.ChurchofJesusChrist.org. The *General Handbook* states, “A person may repent and be forgiven for the sin of abortion” (*General Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* , 38.6.1 , Gospel Library). President Ezra Taft Benson said: “Godly sorrow is a gift of the Spirit. It is a deep realization that our actions have offended our Father and our God. It is the sharp and [deep] awareness that our behavior caused the Savior, He who knew no sin, even the greatest of all, to endure agony and suffering. Our sins caused Him to bleed at every pore. This very real mental and spiritual anguish is what the scriptures refer to as having ‘a broken heart and a contrite spirit’ [see Doctrine and Covenants 20:37]. Such a spirit is the absolute prerequisite for true repentance” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson* [2014], 83; see also 2 Corinthians 7:10 ; 3 Nephi 9:20 ; 18:32).
8. “The Lord said unto Enoch: Behold these thy brethren; they are the workmanship of mine own hands, and I gave unto them their knowledge, in the day I created them; and in the Garden of Eden, gave I unto man his agency;

“And unto thy brethren have I said, and also given commandment, that they should love one another, and that they should choose me, their Father” (Moses 7:32–33).
9. Henry B. Eyring, *To Draw Closer to God* (1997), 143.
10. Dallin H. Oaks, “ The Great Plan of Happiness ,” *Ensign* , Nov. 1993, 74. President Nelson has said: “It is not a question of when ‘meaningful life’ begins or when the spirit ‘quickens’ the body. In the biological sciences, it is known that life begins when two germ cells unite to become one cell, bringing together twenty-three chromosomes from both the father and from the mother. ... The onset of life is not a debatable issue, but a fact of science” (“ Reverence for Life ,” *Ensign* , May 1985, 13).
11. President John Taylor said in 1879, “We must [object to] feticide, infanticide, and other abominable practices ... either in the shape of legislative enactment, judicial decision or any other

adjunct of civilization” (“Discourse,” *Deseret News* , Dec. 31, 1879, 755; spelling modernized).

12. Official statement on abortion: “ Abortion ,” newsroom.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
13. “ The Family: A Proclamation to the World ,” Gospel Library.
14. J. Reuben Clark Jr., *The Charted Course of the Church in Education* , rev. ed. (1994; address to Church Educational System religious educators, Aug. 8, 1938), 3, Gospel Library.
15. See Topics and Questions, “ Abortion ,” Gospel Library.
16. Personal correspondence, Feb. 13, 2025; used with permission.
17. Another example of the blessing of adoption is the story of Sherilyn Stinson and her daughter, Allison, along with Allison’s birth mother, Jill Morgensen (see Mary Richards, “Navigating the Journey of Adoption Reunification,” *Church News* , Nov. 18, 2024, thechurchnews.com).
18. With the help of the Lord and our outstretched arms, many are blessed to find their way. See Amanda Becker, “ Finding Hope as a Single Expectant Mother ,” *Liahona* , July 2022 (digital only); “ The Adoption Decision ,” *New Era* , Mar. 2006, 28–33.
19. Personal correspondence, Feb. 17, 2025; used with permission.
20. Personal experience; see Neil L. Andersen, *The Divine Gift of Forgiveness* , 246–47.
21. See Moses 1:39 .
22. John 13:35 ; see also Matthew 22:36–40 .
23. Other resources that may be helpful: Topics and Questions, “ Unwed Pregnancy ,” Gospel Library; “ Single Expectant Parents ,” *General Handbook* , 38.6.19; Counseling Resources, “ Single Expectant Parents ,” Gospel Library.

Divine Authority, Sublime Young Men

By President Steven J. Lund
Young Men General President
April 2025

I am forever grateful that holders of the Aaronic Priesthood, with its powers, ordinances, and duties, do bless all of us.

Thank you, Elder Andersen, for that remarkable expression of priesthood power and of the power of the Savior's Atonement.

One Sunday morning this January, as I sat in sacrament meeting, over a dozen young men were sustained to be advanced in the Aaronic Priesthood. I felt the world changing beneath our feet.

It struck me that all around the world, time zone by time zone, in sacrament meetings just like that one, tens of thousands of deacons, teachers, and priests—like President Holland's friend this morning, Easton—were being sustained to be ordained into lifelong priesthood ministries that would span the length and breadth of the gathering of Israel.

Each January, hands are laid on the heads of about 100,000 young men, connecting them through ordinance to a bright line of authority stretching back through the Restoration epoch to Joseph and Oliver, to John the Baptist, and to Jesus Christ.

Now, ours is not always a very demonstrative church. Here, we do understatement.

But still, seeing this rolling thunder of newly ordained priesthood holders spreading across the earth, I wondered—in a “church of joy”¹ kind of way—if it shouldn't be shouted from the rooftops. “Today,” I thought, “there should be trumpets and crashing cymbals and blazing Roman candles. There should be parades!”

Knowing God's power for what it truly is, we were witness to the disruption of the very patterns of this world by godly authority spreading across the earth.

These ordinations launch these young men into lifetimes of service as they will find themselves in consequential times and places where their presence and prayers and the powers of the priesthood of God they hold will profoundly matter.

This controlled chain reaction began with a ministering angel sent of God. The resurrected John the Baptist of ancient times appeared to Joseph and Oliver, placed his hands on their heads, and said, “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” (Doctrine and Covenants 13:1).

John called this authority the “Priesthood of Aaron,” after Moses's brother and priesthood companion. Anciently, the holders of this priesthood of Aaron were

to teach and assist with ordinances—ordinances that focused discipleship on the future Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ (see Deuteronomy 33:10).

The book of Numbers explicitly assigns to holders of the priesthood of Aaron the tasks of handling the vessels of the ordinances. “And thou shalt appoint Aaron and his sons ... and their charge shall be ... the table ... and the vessels of the sanctuary wherewith they minister” (Numbers 3:10, 31).

The Old Testament ordinance of animal sacrifice was fulfilled and replaced through the Savior’s life and Atonement. That ancient ordinance was replaced with the ordinance we now call the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper.

The Lord entrusts today’s bearers of the priesthood of Aaron to do very much the same things they did anciently: to teach and to administer ordinances—all to remind us of His Atonement.

When deacons, teachers, and priests help with the sacrament, they receive its blessings just like everyone else: by keeping the covenant they make as they individually partake of the bread and the water. But in the performance of these sacred duties, they also learn more about their priesthood roles and responsibilities.

The Aaronic Priesthood is called the preparatory priesthood partly because its ordinances allow them to experience the weight and the joy of being on the Lord’s errand, preparing them for future priesthood service, when they may be called upon to minister in unforeseeable ways—including pronouncing inspired blessings in times when hopes and dreams, and even life and death, hang in precarious balance.

Such serious expectations require serious preparation.

The Doctrine and Covenants explains that deacons and teachers are “to warn, expound, exhort, and teach, and invite all to come unto Christ” (Doctrine and Covenants 20:59). In addition to these opportunities, priests are to “preach ... and baptize” (Doctrine and Covenants 20:50).

Well, all that sounds like a lot, but in the real world, these things happen naturally and all over the world.

One bishop taught his new deacons quorum presidency these duties. So the young presidency began to talk about what that might look like in their quorum and in their ward. They decided they should start visiting elderly ward members to see what they needed and then do that.

Among those they served was Alan, a rough, often profane, and sometimes hostile neighbor. Alan’s wife, Wanda, became a member of the Church, but Alan was, as we say, something of a piece of work.

Still, the deacons went to work, comically ignoring his insults, while they shoveled snow and took out trash. Deacons can be hard to hate, and Alan eventually began to love them. At some point they invited him to church.

“I don’t like church,” he responded.

“Well, you like us,” they said. “So come with us. You can just come to our quorum meeting if you want.”

And with the bishop’s approval, he came—and he kept coming.

The deacons became teachers, and as they continued to serve him, he taught them to work on cars and to build things. By the time these deacons-turned-teachers became priests, Alan was calling them “my boys.”

They were earnestly preparing for missions and asked him if they could practice missionary lessons with him. He swore that he would never listen and never believe, but, yeah, they could practice at his house.

And then Alan got sick. And he softened.

And one day in quorum meeting, he tenderly asked them to pray for him to quit smoking, and so they did. But then they followed him home and confiscated all of his tobacco stash.

As his failing health put Alan into hospitals and rehab centers, “his boys” served him, quietly exuding powers of priesthood and of love unfeigned (see Doctrine and Covenants 121:41).

The miracle continued when Alan asked to be baptized—but then he passed away before it could happen. At his request, his deacons-turned-priests were the pallbearers and the speakers at his funeral, where they—fittingly—warned, expounded, exhorted, taught, and invited all to Christ.

And later, in the temple, it was one of “Alan’s boys” who baptized that erstwhile deacons quorum president in proxy for Alan.

Everything John the Baptist said to do, they did. They did what deacons, teachers, and priests do all over this Church and all over this world.

One of the things holders of the priesthood of Aaron are charged to do involves the ordinance of the sacrament.

Last year I met an inspired bishop and his wonderful wife. On a recent Saturday morning, they were driving to their son’s baptism and suffered the tragic and sudden loss of their darling two-year-old daughter, Tess.

The next morning their ward members gathered for sacrament meeting filled with compassion, also suffering over the loss of this perfect little girl. No one expected the bishop’s family to be at church that morning, but a couple of minutes before the meeting started, they quietly entered and took their place.

The bishop went to the stand and walked past his usual seat between his counselors and sat down instead between his priests at the sacrament table.

During that anguished and sleepless night before of searching for understanding and peace, he had received a strong impression of what his family most needed—and what his ward most needed. It was to hear the voice of their bishop, their ward Aaronic Priesthood president, their grieving father, pronounce the promises of the sacramental covenant.

So, in due course, he knelt with those priests and spoke to His Father. With the pathos of that occasion, he pronounced some of the most powerful words that anyone is ever allowed to say out loud in this lifetime.²

Words of eternal consequence.

Words of ordinance.

Words of covenant.

Instruction that connects us to the very purposes of this life—and to the most magnificent outcomes of Heavenly Father’s plan for us.

Can you imagine what the congregation heard in that chapel that day—what they felt in the words that we hear every Sunday in our chapels?

“O God, the Eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this bread to the souls of all those who partake of it, that they may eat in remembrance of the body of thy Son, and witness unto thee, O God, the Eternal Father, that they are willing to take upon them the name of thy Son, and always remember him and keep his commandments which he has given them; that they may always have his Spirit to be with them. Amen” (Doctrine and Covenants 20:77).

And then: “O God, the Eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this [water] to the souls of all those who drink of it, that they may do it in remembrance of the blood of thy Son, which was shed for them; that they may witness unto thee, O God, the Eternal Father, that they do always remember him, that they may have his Spirit to be with them. Amen” (Doctrine and Covenants 20:79).

This good father and mother testify that that promise has been fulfilled. They do, in fact, to their everlasting comfort, “have his Spirit to be with them.”

I am forever grateful that holders of the Aaronic Priesthood, with its powers, ordinances, and duties, do bless all of us through the keys of the very “ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins” (Doctrine and Covenants 13:1). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. See Patrick Kearon, “ Welcome to the Church of Joy ,” *Liahona* , Nov. 2024, 36–38.
2. In his seminal general conference address “ Welcome to the Church of Joy ,” Elder Kearon directed us in footnote 10 to President Gordon B. Hinckley’s teaching: “When you, as a priest, kneel at the sacrament table and offer up the prayer, which came by revelation, you place the entire congregation under covenant with the Lord. Is this a small thing? It is a most important and remarkable thing” (“ The Aaronic Priesthood—a Gift from God ,” *Ensign* , May 1988, 46).

“Return unto Me ... That I May Heal You”

By Elder S. Mark Palmer
Of the Presidency of the Seventy
April 2025

There is rejoicing in heaven over those who return. It is not too late for you to come back.

We once lived in a home surrounded by majestic trees. ¹ Next to the entrance was a beautiful willow tree. One sad night a mighty storm blew, and the willow came crashing down. It lay on the ground with its roots pulled out and was a sorry sight.

I was ready to rev up the chainsaw and cut the tree up for firewood when our neighbour came running out to stop me. He chastised me for giving up on the tree, and he emphatically urged us not to get rid of it. He then pointed to one root still in the ground and said that if we propped the tree up, cut off its branches, and nourished it, the roots would take hold once again.





I was sceptical and doubted how a tree so obviously fallen and in trouble could possibly survive and come back to life. I reasoned that even if it did begin growing again, it would surely not survive the next storm. But knowing our neighbour believed the tree still had a future, we went along with the plan.





And the result? After some time, we saw signs of life as the tree began to take root. Now, 12 years later, the tree is vibrant and full of life, with strong roots, and once again contributing to the beauty of the landscape.



While I meet Saints around the world, I am reminded of this willow tree and how there is hope even when all seems lost. Some once had testimonies of the gospel that were strong and vibrant like the willow. Then, for uniquely personal reasons, those testimonies became weakened, leading to a loss of faith. Others hang on with the slimmest of roots tapping into gospel soil.

Yet again and again, I am inspired by the stories of so many who have chosen to renew their discipleship and come back to their Church home. Rather than discarding their faith and belief like worthless firewood, instead they have responded to spiritual promptings and loving invitations to return.

I attended a stake conference in Korea where a returning member shared: “I thank the brothers for their willingness to accept my lack of faith and my weakness, for reaching out to me, and for the members who are always so kind to me. I still have a lot of friends around me who are less active. It’s funny, but they tell each other to go back to the Church to get their faith back. I think maybe they are all *longing for faith* .”

To all who are longing for faith, we invite you to come back. I promise your faith can be strengthened as you once again worship with the Saints.

A former missionary from Africa wrote a senior Church leader, apologising and seeking forgiveness for being offended by his teachings about a certain cultural tradition, which then led him to leave the Church. He humbly expressed: “Sadly, the fact that I took offense 15 years ago has made me pay an extremely heavy price. *I lost so much* —much more than I ever imagined. I am deeply embarrassed by the harm I may have caused along the way, but above all else I am pleased that I have found my way back.”

To all who recognise what you have lost, we invite you to come back so you can once again taste the joyous fruit of the gospel.

A sister in the United States was gone from the Church for many years. Her story of coming back includes powerful lessons for parents and family members who anguish over loved ones who step away. She wrote:

“I could list a myriad of reasons for why I walked away from the Church, the gospel, and in a way, my family. But they really don’t matter. I didn’t make one big decision to leave the Church—I probably made a thousand choices. But one thing I have always known is that my parents did make one big decision, and they stuck to it. They decided to love me.

“I couldn’t possibly know how many tears have been shed, how many sleepless nights, nor how many heartfelt pleading words of prayer have been uttered on my behalf. *They didn’t call me out on my sins; rather, they called out to me in my sinfulness*. They didn’t make me feel unwelcome in their home and at family gatherings; any of those feelings were of my own doing. Instead, they continued to welcome me. They must have seen my light dim over time. But they knew that the person I was back then was just a shadow of who I was yet to become.

“Just as my path away from the Church was complex, so was my way back. But one thing that was not hard about coming back was the feeling of being back home where I belong.”

My message today is especially to all who once felt the Spirit but question whether there is a way back or a place for you in the restored Church of Jesus Christ. It is also for any who are barely hanging on or who are tempted to step away.

This message is not a challenge, and it is not a condemnation. It is an invitation, extended with love and a sincere desire to welcome you back to your spiritual home.

I have prayed that you will feel the witness of the Holy Ghost as you now hear this loving invitation and magnificent promise from our Saviour, Jesus Christ:

*“Will ye not now return unto me , and repent of your sins , and be converted, that I may heal you?”*²

Every week many are responding to the Saviour’s invitation by returning to discipleship and Church activity, quietly and humbly seeking the healing that Jesus promises. And contrary to narratives which sometimes circulate, record numbers of our young people are choosing to stay strong and to grow their faith in Jesus Christ.³

When some of Jesus’s followers in Capernaum found His teachings hard and chose to leave, He turned to His Apostles and asked, “Will ye also go away?”⁴

This is the question we each must answer as we face our individual times of testing. Peter’s response to Jesus is timeless and resounding: “To whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.”⁵

So as you consider the Saviour's invitation to return unto Him, what might you learn from the story of the willow tree?

1. The journey back is often not easy or comfortable, but it is worth it. When our willow was stood back up, all its branches were cut away. It was not pretty. We too may feel vulnerable as we discard old ways and are stripped of pride. ⁶ Focusing your faith on Jesus Christ and His gospel—the trunk and the roots—will give you the hope and the courage to take that first step back. ⁷
2. It took many years for our willow to regain its former strength and beauty. Now it is even stronger and more beautiful than before. Be patient as your faith and testimony also grow. ⁸ This includes not taking offense at thoughtless comments like “Where have you been all these years?”
3. The willow would never have survived without constant care and nourishment. You will nourish your faith and your testimony as you feast at the sacrament table each week and as you worship in the house of the Lord. ⁹
4. Just as the willow needed sunshine for its branches and leaves to grow again, so your testimony will grow as you stay sensitive to the feelings and the witness of the Spirit. ¹⁰ Learn from Amulek, who described his time as a less-active member by saying, “I was called many times and I would not hear.” ¹¹
5. My neighbour knew what the willow could once again become. So too the Lord knows your divine potential and what your faith and your testimony can become. He will never give up on you. ¹² Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, all that is broken can be healed. ¹³

I witness that there is rejoicing in heaven over those who return. ¹⁴ You are needed, and you are loved. ¹⁵ I testify that Jesus Christ is our Saviour and that He blesses all who return unto Him with greater peace and with great joy. His arms of mercy are not folded but are open and extended to you. ¹⁶ It is not too late for you to come back. ¹⁷ With all the love in our hearts, we welcome you home. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. This was and still is the mission home for the Washington Spokane Mission. The photos of the willow tree were taken by my wife, Jacqui.
2. 3 Nephi 9:13 . Note that the invitation to repent applies to us all. See 1 John 1:8 (“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves”) and President Russell M. Nelson’s invitation to

repent daily: “The Power of Spiritual Momentum,” *Liahona*, May 2022, 98–99.

3. See Quentin L. Cook, “Facing Life and Faith Challenges” (worldwide devotional for young adults, Nov. 14, 2023), Gospel Library: “For your information, youth and young adults are not less active or leaving the Church in higher numbers than in the past, as has been widely circulated. The number of missionaries called to serve has significantly increased. The percentage of Church participation for the rising generation shows a continuous upward trend. Moreover, the number of young adults attending institute has also been increasing.”

See also D. Todd Christofferson and Clark G. Gilbert, “Video: Elder Christofferson Challenges Narrative, Says Spirit Working in Youth,” *Church News*, Dec. 13, 2024, newsroom.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

4. John 6:67 .

5. John 6:68 .

6. See Alma 5:28 .

7. See Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Nourish the Roots, and the Branches Will Grow,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2024, 102: “Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice are the root of our testimony. All other things are branches. ... When it comes to nourishing our testimonies of Jesus Christ, I wonder if we sometimes mistake the branches for the roots. ... Nourish the roots, and the branches will grow.”

8. See Alma 32:41 .

9. See Russell M. Nelson, “Think Celestial!,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2023, 119: “Spending more time in the temple builds faith. And your service and worship in the temple will help you to think celestial.”

See also Russell M. Nelson, “Rejoice in the Gift of Priesthood Keys,” *Liahona*, May 2024, 122: “Here is my promise. Nothing will help you *more* to hold fast to the iron rod than worshipping in the temple. ... Nothing will bolster your testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Atonement or help you understand God’s magnificent plan *more* .”

10. See Alma 32:28 .

11. Alma 10:6 .

12. See Patrick Kearon, “God’s Intent Is to Bring You Home,” *Liahona*, May 2024, 87: “God is in relentless pursuit of you.”

13. See Jeffrey R. Holland, “ Broken Things to Mend ,” *Ensign* or *Liahona* , May 2006, 69–71.
14. See Luke 15:11–32 ; Doctrine and Covenants 18:13 .
15. See John 15:9 .
16. See Alma 5:33 .
17. See Russell M. Nelson, “ The Lord Jesus Christ Will Come Again ,” *Liahona* , Nov. 2024, 122: “It is neither too early nor too late for you to become a devout disciple of Jesus Christ. Then you will experience fully the blessings of His Atonement.”

See also Russell M. Nelson, “ The Power of Spiritual Momentum ,” 99: “If you feel you have strayed off the covenant path too far or too long and have no way to return, that simply is not true.”

Faith: A Bond of Trust and Loyalty

By Elder Sandino Roman
Of the Seventy
April 2025

Faith sprouts as we trust in Jesus Christ and blooms as we are faithful and loyal to Him.

When I was 17, I made an agreement with my friend José Luis to teach him how to swim. So one morning we dedicated time to practice. When our lesson was over and I was leaving the pool, I heard my friend shouting for help. He was drowning in the deep end of the pool.

I threw myself into the water and swam toward him while praying for help. As I grabbed his hand to pull him to the surface, my desperate friend climbed onto my back and put me in a choke hold. Now we were both drowning. Trying my best to reach the surface, I prayed with all my might for a miracle from God. Then, slowly but steadily, the power of God was manifest as I felt a hand propelling me toward the shallow end of the pool, bringing us to safety.

This experience confirmed a profound lesson President Russell M. Nelson once taught: “When you reach up for the Lord’s power in your life with the same intensity that a drowning person has when grasping and gasping for air, power from Jesus Christ will be yours.” ¹

Dear children and young people, today I want to talk to you about the essential principle of faith in Jesus Christ.

Faith in Christ Means Trusting Him

What does it mean to have faith in Christ? Does it mean we *believe in Him* or have a testimony that He is real? That may be a start, but it’s more than that.

Have you ever thought of faith as *trust* ? ² Think of the person you trust the most—perhaps a family member or a friend. Why do you trust them? It is probably because you have seen their constant *love* and *help* .

When we have faith in Christ, we recognize His blessings and develop a relationship of trust with Him. ³

How Can You Increase Your Trust in Christ?

In a recent youth devotional, you were invited to meditate on a time in your life when you received a ray of heavenly light. ⁴ Try this exercise!

Start by meditating about Christ and the happiness His Atonement and gospel bring to your life. Also, make a record of the “spiritually defining memories” ⁵ where God has been there for you, for your loved ones, and for the people in the scriptures. Now, these testimonies will not bring power to your life until the

Spirit etches them in the “fleshy tables” of your heart.⁶ So ponder and record all God set in motion for these miracles to come at just the right time.⁷

Next, use this exercise as an opportunity to get closer to God. Pray to your Heavenly Father as if it were the first time. Express your love and gratitude for His blessings.⁸ Even ask Him how He feels about you and about the direction your life is taking.⁹

If you are sincere and humble, you will hear His answer and begin a personal and lasting relationship with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. Not only that, but your religious habits will become meaningful! For instance, you will look forward to your prayers, personal study, and temple worship as opportunities to get to know Them and be with Them.

Faith Flourishes with Loyalty

Notice that faith sprouts as we trust in Jesus Christ and blooms as we are faithful and loyal to Him. If you want a true relationship with Christ, show Him by making covenants and honoring them with faithfulness and loyalty. Making covenants with Jesus Christ builds hope. Honoring them builds faith.¹⁰

Let me use a personal example: When I was a child, I found my mother crying alone one day. When I asked her why, she gently said, “I need you to be a good boy.” Even though I knew that I was not the cause of her distress, I loved and trusted my mother like no one else and wanted to make her life less difficult. So, with tears in my eyes and with all the solemnity that a nine-year-old can have, I promised her that day I would always strive to be the best son and make her proud.

Can you imagine the power that promise had—and still has—on me?

That promise with her would guide my life. Before making decisions, I would consider whether my actions would please her. The bond of this promise and the relationship with my mother were the anchors for my conduct throughout my life.

Years later, as I came to know Jesus Christ better, I already knew how to base my faith in Him. I made covenants with the Lord, and as I have sought to honor them, He has forgiven my sins, guided my life, and “filled me with his love” to the very core of my being.¹¹ Christ has instilled in me a deep love, respect, and loyalty for Him.¹²

Do you understand why “faith is a principle of action”¹³ and that “without faith it is impossible to please [God]”?¹⁴

As you try to do what pleases Him,¹⁵ you will say, like Joseph in Egypt when he was tempted by Potiphar’s wife, “How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?”¹⁶ And when faced with opposition, you will say, like the young Prophet Joseph, “I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it; ... I knew that by so doing I would offend God.”¹⁷

So faith in Jesus Christ is a bond of trust forged in loyalty¹⁸ and love. In other words, in gratitude for God's merciful love (*hesed*¹⁹), we show our loyal love (*emunah*²⁰) by keeping His commandments.

Christ promises, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them ... shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him."²¹ If you commit to being loyal to Him, He will manifest His love for you.²²

Faith in the Face of Adversity

But how should you respond to such adverse situations that require His miracles? While challenges are inevitable and sometimes frightening, simply walk undaunted²³ toward Him, just as the 2025 FSY conference theme invites: "Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not."²⁴

How Can You Walk Undaunted Toward Him?

Imagine that you are an explorer in uncharted territory. To overcome the obstacles ahead, you need a source of light. Your faithfulness to God and your constant interactions with Him are the fuel for your lantern. So when you encounter dark and perilous situations, instead of walking toward them blindly, you will turn on your lamp filled with the oil of faith in Christ to shed glimmers of hope on the uncertain path.²⁵ Your past experiences will increase your hope that the Lord will sustain you on your journey.



How Far Will You Go with Your Hope and Faith in Christ?

Remember my story at the pool? In that moment of despair, the miracle came in the way I had expected, but God does not guarantee that it will always be according to our will. Our faith must be centered in Christ and our hope in His

blessings, as He chooses to send them. “Expect miracles,”²⁶ but “let God prevail in our lives.”²⁷

God’s Promises to His Faithful People

My young friends, how much we love and trust you! You *belong* to the family of God and are children of the covenant.²⁸ *Believe* and trust in Jesus Christ. He will enable you to truly *become* His disciples.

I invite you to begin today to nurture your relationship with Jesus Christ.²⁹ Make a commitment to never forsake Him.³⁰

Your loyalty, love, and trust in Christ will shape your character and identity³¹ after His. You will gain confidence and strength to overcome Satan’s attacks.³² And when you make mistakes, you will yearn for His forgiveness.³³ Finally, your hope for the future will be bright.³⁴ He will trust you with His power to accomplish anything He expects of you,³⁵ even the power to return to His presence.³⁶

I testify to you of the joy that comes from singing “the song of redeeming love”³⁷ and being “encircled about eternally in the arms of his love.”³⁸ In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. Russell M. Nelson, “Drawing the Power of Jesus Christ into Our Lives,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2017, 42.
2. The word *faith* comes from the Latin *fides*, which means “to trust” (see Michiel de Vaan, *Etymological Dictionary of Latin and the Other Italic Languages* [2008], “fido”). The Greek cognate, πίστις, translates as “trusting” (see Robert Beekes, *Etymological Dictionary of Greek* [2010], 1:1161–62).
3. “Faith is confidence and trust in Jesus Christ” (Guide to the Scriptures, “Faith,” Gospel Library).
4. See “Look unto Christ” (worldwide discussion for youth, Jan. 5, 2025), Gospel Library; see also Alexander Dushku, “Pillars and Rays,” *Liahona*, May 2024, 14–16.
5. See Neil L. Andersen, “Spiritually Defining Memories,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2020, 18–22.
6. See 2 Corinthians 3:2–3; see also Moroni 10:3; Russell M. Nelson, “Hear Him,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2020, 88–92.
7. See Ronald A. Rasband, “By Divine Design,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2017, 55–57.

8. See Mosiah 2:20–21 ; Doctrine and Covenants 59:21 .
9. See “ Appendix 1: Sixth Theological Lecture on Faith , circa January–May 1835, as Published in *Latter Day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate* ,” 124–25, josephsmithpapers.org.
10. See Moroni 7:41 ; see also Stephen M. R. Covey and Rebecca R. Merrill, *The Speed of Trust: The One Thing That Changes Everything* (2006), 215.
11. 2 Nephi 4:21 .
12. “God is my friend. In him I shall find comfort. ... I desire to be with Christ. I count not my life dear to me [except] to do his will” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 243–44).
13. Bible Dictionary, “ Faith .”
14. Hebrews 11:6 .
15. See John 8:29 .
16. Genesis 39:9 .
17. Joseph Smith—History 1:25 .
18. President Gordon B. Hinckley taught, “Pray to your Heavenly Father in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and always, under all circumstances, by the very nature of your lives show your loyalty and your love” (“ Loyalty ,” *Ensign* or *Liahona* , May 2003, 60; see also Brent J. Schmidt, *Relational Faith: The Transformation and Restoration of Pistis as Knowledge, Trust, Confidence, and Covenantal Faithfulness* [2022], 9; Teresa Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith: Pistis and Fides in the Early Roman Empire and Early Churches* [2015], 127–28).
19. See Russell M. Nelson, “ The Everlasting Covenant ,” *Liahona* , Oct. 2022, 4–11.
20. “The Hebrew word for faith is אמונה (*emunah*) and is an action oriented word meaning ‘support.’ ... [It] places the action on the one who ‘supports God.’ It is not a knowing that God will act, but rather I will do what I can to support God. This idea of support for the word *emunah* can be seen in Exodus 17:12 It is the support/ *emunah* of Aaron and Hur that held [up] Moses’ arms, not the support/ *emunah* of Moses. When we say, ‘I have faith in God,’ we should be thinking, ‘I will do what I can to support God’” (Jeff A. Benner, “Faith,” Ancient Hebrew Research Center, ancient-hebrew.org).
21. John 14:21 ; see also verse 23 .

22. See John 15:9–10 .
23. See Russell M. Nelson, “ Drawing the Power of Jesus Christ into Our Lives ,” 39–42.
24. Doctrine and Covenants 6:36 .
25. See Neil L. Andersen, “ Faith Is Not by Chance, but by Choice ,” *Ensign* or *Liahona* , Nov. 2015, 65–68.
26. Russell M. Nelson, “ The Power of Spiritual Momentum ,” *Liahona* , May 2022, 99.
27. See Russell M. Nelson, “ Let God Prevail ,” *Ensign* or *Liahona* , Nov. 2020, 92–95.
28. See Russell M. Nelson, “ Children of the Covenant ,” *Ensign* , May 1995, 32–35.
29. “ *Jesus is my friend*. None other has given me so much. ... I hope that I am deemed worthy of being a friend to Him” (Gordon B. Hinckley, “ My Testimony ,” *Ensign* , May 2000, 71; *Liahona* , July 2000, 85).
30. See John 6:67–68 ; Doctrine and Covenants 6:20 .
31. See Russell M. Nelson, “ Choices for Eternity ” (worldwide devotional for young adults, May 15, 2022), Gospel Library; Richard G. Scott, *21 Principles: Divine Truths to Help You Live by the Spirit* (2013), 90.
32. See Alma 48:17 .
33. See Mosiah 4:2 ; Alma 36:18 .
34. See Thomas S. Monson, “ Be of Good Cheer ,” *Ensign* or *Liahona* , May 2009, 92.
35. See Isaiah 58:9 ; Helaman 10:4–5 ; Ether 12:30 ; Moroni 7:33 .
36. See 2 Nephi 25:23 .
37. Alma 5:26 ; see also Alma 5:9 ; 26:13 .
38. 2 Nephi 1:15 .

Personal Preparation to Meet the Savior

By Elder Dale G. Renlund
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles
April 2025

Follow the Savior's teachings. His instructions are neither mysterious nor complex. When we follow them, we do not need to fear or be anxious.

My dear brothers and sisters, last October, President Russell M. Nelson taught, “Now is the time for you and for me to prepare for the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ.”¹ When President Nelson speaks about the Second Coming, it is always with joyful optimism. However, a girl in Primary recently told me that she becomes anxious whenever the Second Coming is mentioned. She said, “I’m scared because bad things are going to happen before Jesus comes again.”

It is not just children who may feel this way. The best advice for her, for you, and for me is to follow the Savior’s teachings. His instructions are neither mysterious nor complex. When we follow them, we do not need to fear or be anxious.²

Toward the end of His mortal ministry, Jesus Christ was asked when He would come again. In answering, He taught three parables, recorded in Matthew 25, about how to prepare to meet Him—whether at His Second Coming or whenever we leave this world.³ These teachings are crucial because personal preparation to meet Him is central to life’s purpose.⁴

The Savior first told the parable of the ten virgins. In this parable, ten virgins went to a wedding feast. Five wisely brought oil to fill their lamps, and five foolishly did not. When the bridegroom’s imminent arrival was announced, the foolish virgins left to buy oil. When they returned, it was too late; the door to the feast was shut.⁵

Jesus identified three aspects of the parable to help us. He explained:

“And at that day, when I shall come in my glory, shall the parable be fulfilled which I spake concerning the ten virgins.

“For they that are wise and have received the truth, and have taken the Holy Spirit for their guide, and have not been deceived—verily I say unto you, they shall ... abide the day.”⁶

In other words, they did not need to fear or be anxious, because they would survive and prosper. They would prevail.

If we are wise, we receive the truth by accepting the gospel of Jesus Christ through priesthood ordinances and covenants. Next, we strive to remain worthy of having the Holy Ghost always with us. This capability must be acquired

individually and personally, drop by drop.⁷ Consistent, personal, private acts of devotion invite the Holy Ghost to guide us.⁸

The third element that Jesus highlighted is avoiding deception. The Savior warned:

“Take heed that no man deceive you.

“For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.”⁹

The Savior knew pretenders would try to deceive the very elect and that many disciples would be duped.¹⁰ We should neither believe those who falsely claim divine sanction nor venture into metaphorical deserts or secret chambers to be taught by counterfeits.

The Book of Mormon teaches us how we can differentiate deceivers from disciples. Disciples always promote believing in God, serving Him, and doing good.¹¹ We will not be deceived when we seek and take counsel from trusted individuals who are themselves faithful disciples of the Savior.¹²

We can also avoid deception by worshipping regularly in the temple. This helps us maintain an eternal perspective and protects us from influences that might distract or divert us from the covenant path.¹³

The essential lesson of this parable of the ten virgins is that we are wise when we accept the gospel, seek to have the Holy Ghost with us, and avoid deception. The five wise virgins could not help those without oil; no one can accept the gospel, take the Holy Ghost as a guide, and avoid deception on our behalf.¹⁴ We have to do this for ourselves.

The Savior then told the parable of the talents.¹⁵ In this parable, a man gave differing amounts of money, referred to as talents,¹⁶ to three servants. To one servant he gave five talents, to another he gave two, and to a third he gave one. Over time, the first two servants doubled what they had received. But the third servant simply buried his single talent. To both servants who had doubled their talents, the man said, “Well done, ... good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.”¹⁷

The man then chided the servant who had buried his talent for being “wicked and slothful.”¹⁸ This servant’s talent was taken away, and he was banished. Yet, had this servant doubled his talent, he would have received the same commendation and reward as the other servants.¹⁹

One message of this parable is that God expects us to magnify the abilities we have been given,²⁰ but He does not want us to compare our abilities to those of others. Consider this insight provided by the 18th-century Hasidic scholar Zusya of Anipol. Zusya was a renowned teacher who began to fear as he approached death. His disciples asked, “Master, why do you tremble? You’ve lived a good life; surely God will grant you a great reward.”

Zusya said: “If God says to me, ‘Zusya, why were you not another Moses?’ I will say, ‘Because you didn’t give me the greatness of soul that you gave Moses.’ And

if I stand before God and He says, ‘Zusya, why were you not another Solomon?’ I will say, ‘Because you didn’t give me the wisdom of Solomon.’ But, alas, what will I say if I stand before my Maker and He says, ‘Zusya, why were you not Zusya? Why were you not the man I gave you the capacity to be?’ Ah, that is why I tremble.”²¹

Indeed, God will be disappointed if we do not rely upon the merits, mercy, and grace of the Savior to magnify the God-given abilities we have received. With His loving assistance, He expects us to become the best version of ourselves. That we may start with differing abilities is irrelevant to Him. And it should be to us.²²

Finally, the Savior told the parable of the sheep and goats.²³ When He returns in His glory, “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.”²⁴

Those on His right became heirs in His kingdom, and those on His left received no inheritance. The distinguishing characteristic was whether they fed Him when He was hungry, gave Him drink when He was thirsty, housed Him when He was a stranger, clothed Him when He was naked, and visited Him when He was sick or imprisoned.

Everyone was perplexed, both those on the right hand and those on the left hand. They asked when they had, or when they had not, given Him food, drink, and clothing or helped Him when He was vulnerable.²⁵ In response, the Savior said, “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.”²⁶

The message of the parable is clear: when we serve others, we serve God;²⁷ when we don’t, we disappoint. He expects us to use our gifts, talents, and abilities to bless the lives of Heavenly Father’s children. The divine impulse to serve others is illustrated in a poem written in the 19th century by the Finnish poet Johan Ludvig Runeberg. My siblings and I repeatedly heard the poem “Farmer Paavo” throughout our childhoods. In the poem, Paavo was a poor farmer who lived with his wife and children in the lake region of central Finland. Several years in a row, most of his crops were destroyed, whether through the runoff from the spring snowmelt, summer hailstorms, or an early autumn frost. Each time the meager harvest came in, the farmer’s wife lamented, “Paavo, Paavo, you unfortunate old man, God has forsaken us.” Paavo, in turn, stoically said, “Mix bark with the rye flour to make bread so the children won’t go hungry.²⁸ I’ll work harder to drain the marshy fields. God is testing us, but He will provide.”

Each time the crops were destroyed, Paavo directed his wife to double the amount of bark that she mixed into the flour to ward off starvation. He also worked harder, digging trenches to drain the ground and decrease his fields’ susceptibility to a spring runoff and an early autumn frost.

After years of hardship, Paavo finally harvested a rich crop. His wife exulted, “Paavo, Paavo, these are happy times! It is time to throw away the bark, and bake bread made only with rye.” But Paavo solemnly took his wife’s hand and said, “Mix half the flour with bark, for our neighbor’s fields have frosted over.”

²⁹ Paavo sacrificed his and his family's bounty to help his devastated and destitute neighbor.

The lesson of the Savior's parable of the sheep and goats is that we are to use the gifts we have been given—time, talents, and blessings—to serve Heavenly Father's children, especially the most vulnerable and needy. ³⁰

My invitation to the anxious Primary child I mentioned earlier, and to each of you, is to follow Jesus Christ and to trust the Holy Ghost as you would a cherished friend. Rely on those who love you and who love the Savior. Seek God's guidance to develop your unique abilities, and help others, even when it isn't easy. ³¹ You will be ready to meet the Savior, and you can join President Nelson in being joyfully optimistic. ³² In doing so, you help the world prepare for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, and you will be blessed with sufficient hope to enter the rest and joy of the Lord, now and in the future. ³³

As we sing in one of our new hymns:

Rejoice! And prepare for that day! ...

No one knows the day and hour when He will come again,

But He'll return as scriptures say; it will be a joyful day

When our beloved Savior comes again. ³⁴

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. Russell M. Nelson, "The Lord Jesus Christ Will Come Again," *Liahona*, Nov. 2024, 121.
2. We need not feel anxious, because Jesus Christ will transform us so that we are ready to meet Him. As we consistently honor our covenants and keep the commandments, we gradually become, through His grace and blessings, more and more like the Savior. And as we do, we will be prepared for His Second Coming. As stated in 1 John 3:2–3 :
"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.
"And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."
3. The Lord's Second Coming will occur at the beginning of the millennial era, when He returns in glory, and all will acknowledge that He was and is the promised Messiah (see Isaiah 45:23 ; Zechariah 12:10 ; Doctrine and Covenants 88:104).

4. See Russell M. Nelson, “ Opening Message ,” *Liahona* , May 2020, 6.
5. See Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 25:1 (in Matthew 25:1 , footnote *a*); Matthew 25:1–4, 6–13 .
6. Doctrine and Covenants 45:56–57 .
7. See David A. Bednar, “ Converted unto the Lord ,” *Ensign* or *Liahona* , Nov. 2012, 109.
8. See 2 Nephi 32:5 .
9. Matthew 24:4–5 .
10. See Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:5–6, 8–9, 21–22, 25–26 .
11. See Moroni 7:13, 15–17 . The teachings in the Book of Mormon combine with and clarify biblical teachings “unto the confounding of false doctrines” (2 Nephi 3:12). Perhaps this is part of the rationale for President Russell M. Nelson’s teaching that the Book of Mormon is God’s instrument to prepare the world for the Second Coming (see “ The Book of Mormon, the Gathering of Israel, and the Second Coming ,” *Ensign* , July 2014, 29; *Liahona* , July 2014, 27).
12. See Russell M. Nelson, “ Think Celestial! ,” *Liahona* , Nov. 2023, 119. President Nelson also taught: “Don’t pollute [your testimony] with false philosophies of unbelieving men and women” (“ Overcome the World and Find Rest ,” *Liahona* , Nov. 2022, 97). “Take your questions to the Lord and to other faithful sources. ... Stop increasing your doubts by rehearsing them with other doubters” (“ Christ Is Risen; Faith in Him Will Move Mountains ,” *Liahona* , May 2021, 103). As the Book of Mormon prophet Alma the Elder counseled, “Trust no one to be your teacher nor your minister, except he be a man of God, walking in his ways and keeping his commandments” (Mosiah 23:14). In this dispensation, the Savior taught us to rely only on those “whose spirit is contrite, ... whose language is meek and edifieth, ... [who] trembleth under my power ... and ... bring forth fruits of praise and wisdom, according to the revelations and truths which I have given you” (see Doctrine and Covenants 52:14–19).
13. See Russell M. Nelson, “ The Lord Jesus Christ Will Come Again ,” 121.
14. When vicarious ordinances are performed on behalf of deceased ancestors, those ancestors decide for themselves whether they accept the gospel and remain faithful or not. Even in those circumstances, no one makes decisions for another.

15. See Matthew 25:14–30 .
16. See Guide to the Scriptures, “Talent .” A talent was an ancient unit of weight and monetary value in Greek and Roman times. It is estimated that one talent was worth about 6,000 denarii, and since a denarius was roughly a day’s wage for a laborer, a single talent would be equivalent to about 20 years of wages for an average worker.
17. Matthew 25:21 ; see also verse 23 .
18. See Matthew 25:24–26 .
19. Extending the parable, in the eternal scheme of things, once each servant enters the joy of his lord and becomes an heir to all that the lord has, the apparent, minor differences in what each servant had at the beginning become negligible.
20. Additionally, the Lord likens the talents referred to in this parable to various aspects of life and the gospel, including knowledge and testimony (see Ether 12:35 ; Doctrine and Covenants 60:2, 13) as well as property and stewardship (see Doctrine and Covenants 82:18).
21. See Harold S. Kushner, *Overcoming Life’s Disappointments* (2006), 26.
22. As stated in *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ* (2023), 48, “All that is unfair in life can be made right through the Atonement of Jesus Christ.”
23. See Matthew 25:31–46 .
24. Matthew 25:32–33 .
25. See Matthew 25:37–39, 44 .
26. Matthew 25:40 ; see also verse 45 .
27. See Mosiah 2:17 . We participate in the Savior’s mission when we share His gospel, help heal the brokenhearted (see Isaiah 61:1–3 ; Luke 4:16–21), succor the weak, lift hands that hang down, and strengthen feeble knees (see Doctrine and Covenants 81:5).
28. The inner layer of the bark from a birch tree contains some carbohydrates and fiber. It can be consumed as a last resort.
29. See Johan Ludvig Runeberg, “Högt Bland Saarijärvis Moar,” *Idyll och epigram Dikter* (1830), nummer 25; *Suomen kansalliskirjallisuus* (Helsinki, 1941), 9:50–52; sv.wikisource.org/wiki/Högt_bland_Saarijärvis_moar. The translation from the Swedish is mine.

30. This represents what God directed ancient Israel to do: “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” (Deuteronomy 15:11).
31. See Dallin H. Oaks, “ Preparation for the Second Coming ,” *Ensign* or *Liahona* , May 2004, 7–10, for a wonderful discourse about the Second Coming and ways to prepare for it.
32. See Russell M. Nelson, “ Overcome the World and Find Rest ,” 95–98. President Nelson taught, “One crucial element of this gathering is preparing a people who are able, ready, and worthy to receive the Lord when He comes again, a people who have already chosen Jesus Christ over this fallen world, a people who rejoice in their agency to live the higher, holier laws of Jesus Christ” (“ Overcome the World and Find Rest ,” 98).
33. See Moroni 7:3 . President Joseph F. Smith taught: “The rest ... referred to is not physical rest. ... [It is] the spiritual rest and peace which are born from a settled conviction of the truth. ... We may thus enter into the rest of the Lord today, by coming to an understanding of the truths of the gospel. ... [Those who have entered this rest are those] whose minds have become satisfied, and who have set their eyes upon the mark of their high calling with an invincible determination in their hearts to be steadfast in the truth, and who are treading in humility and righteousness the path marked out for ... followers of Jesus Christ. But there are many who, not having reached this point of determined conviction, are driven about by every wind of doctrine, thus being ill at ease, unsettled, restless. These are they who are discouraged over incidents that occur in the Church, and in the nation, and in the turmoils of men. ... They harbor a feeling of suspicion, unrest, uncertainty. Their thoughts are disturbed, and they become excited with the least change, like one at sea who has lost his bearings” (*Gospel Doctrine* , 5th ed. [1939], 126).
34. “When the Savior Comes Again,” *Hymns—For Home and Church* , Gospel Library.

True to the Faith That Our Parents Have Cherished

By Elder Hans T. Boom
Of the Seventy
April 2025

Please learn and receive strength from the faith and testimonies of those who came before you.

While I was visiting the Nashville Tennessee Temple for a temple review, I was privileged to do a walk-through as part of this assignment, reviewing this beautiful house of the Lord. I was especially impressed with the painting of Mary Wanlass called *Carry On* hanging on the wall in the office of the matron.

This is the story behind the painting:

“In Missouri in 1862, the 14-year-old Mary Wanlass promised her dying stepmother that she would see to it that her disabled father [and her four much younger siblings would all make] it to the Valley of the Great Salt Lake. ... Mary drove the oxen and milk cows that pulled the wagon, in which her father [was bedridden, and] she cared for her ... siblings. After each day’s journey, she fed the family by foraging edible plants, flowers, and berries. Her only compass was the instruction she had received to keep traveling west ‘until the clouds become mountains.’

“They reached [the] Utah Valley in September, having traveled all spring and summer. Her father died not long after the family settled in Utah County, where Mary later married and raised her [own] family.” ¹

This is an amazing story of the faith and strength of a 14-year-old young woman that can help each one of us today to “just carry on.”

“Just carry on”—or freely translated in my native Dutch language, *Gewoon doorgaan* —is also my mom and dad’s lifelong slogan.

My parents and in-laws are the pioneers in our family. They have crossed their own “plains,” just like all those who are coming into the Church, the Lord’s fold, every day. Their stories have little to do with oxen and wagons but have the same effect on future generations.

They embraced the gospel and were baptized in their young adult years. Both my parents had a difficult childhood. My father grew up on the island of Java in Indonesia. During World War II, he was forcefully separated from his family and interned in a concentration camp, where he suffered unspeakable hardships at a young age.

My mother was raised in a broken home and also suffered from hunger and the hardships of World War II. At times she even had to resort to eating tulip bulbs. Due to her father’s actions and his subsequent divorce from her mother, it was sometimes difficult for her to see Heavenly Father as a loving Father.

My parents met at a Church activity and shortly after decided to get married and sealed in the Bern Switzerland Temple. Waiting at the railway station, having spent the last of their little savings for the trip to the temple, they wondered how they would make ends meet but were confident that it would all work out. And it did!

They started to raise their family from a very humble single attic-room apartment in the heart of Amsterdam. After several years of washing their clothes by hand, they had finally saved up enough money to purchase a washing machine. Just before they would make the purchase, the bishop visited them, asking for a contribution to build the meetinghouse in Amsterdam. They decided to give all they had saved for the washing machine and continued to do the laundry by hand.

As a family we went through some hardships, just like any other family. These have only made us stronger and have deepened our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, just like when Alma was sharing his story with his son Helaman, where he told him that he had been “supported under trials and troubles of every kind” because he had put his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. ²

How did two people who experienced so many trials in their younger years become the very best parents I could ever wish for? The answer is simple: they fully embraced the gospel and live by their covenants to this very day!

After more than 65 years of marriage, my mother, who suffered from Alzheimer’s disease, passed away in February. My father, at the age of 92 and still living at home, visited her as often as he could until she passed away. Some time ago he mentioned to my younger siblings that the dreadful experiences in the camp in Indonesia during World War II had prepared him to patiently care for his wife for so many years as she fell ill and deteriorated from this horrible disease and also for the fateful day he had to entrust her primary care to others and could not be by her side anymore. Their motto has been and still is to “Just carry on,” having a perfect hope in Christ to be raised up at the last day and to dwell with Him in glory forever. ³

Their faith and testimonies are a driving strength for the generations that have come after them.

In the village where my wife grew up, her parents, who were good churchgoing people, embraced the gospel as a young married couple with my wife as their two-year-old daughter and only child at that time. Their decision to become members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints had a great impact on their lives as they were shunned by the villagers and by their family. It took many years, loving notes to family members, and service to the community before they were finally accepted.

On one occasion when my wife’s father was serving as a bishop, he was falsely accused of something and was immediately released. My mother-in-law was so hurt that she asked her husband if they should continue to go to church. He answered that they of course would continue to go to church since this is not the church of men, but this is the Church of Jesus Christ.

It took some time before the truth came to light and apologies were made. What could have been their breaking point just added to their strength and conviction.

Why is it that some of us take for granted the faith and testimonies of our parents who through all their hardships have remained faithful? Do we think that they do not have a clear understanding of things? They were not and are not deceived! They just have had too many experiences with the Spirit and can say with the Prophet Joseph, “I knew it, ... and I could not deny it.” ⁴

Don't you love the song about the army of Helaman, found in the *Children's Songbook* ?

We have been born, as Nephi of old,

To goodly parents who love the Lord.

We have been taught, and we understand,

That we must do as the Lord commands. ⁵

Even when this might not be the case, as my mother experienced as a child, you can become one of those “goodly parents who love the Lord” and provide a righteous example to others.

Do we feel that this is absolutely true when we sing it? Do you feel that you are “as the army of Helaman” and that you “will be the Lord’s missionaries to bring the world his truth”? ⁶ I have felt it on so many occasions while singing this song in several FSY settings and other youth gatherings.

Or what do we feel when we sing the hymn “True to the Faith”?

Shall the youth of Zion falter

In defending truth and right?

While the enemy assaileth,

Shall we shrink or shun the fight? No!

True to the faith that our parents have cherished. ⁷

To those of the rising generation wherever you are and in whatever situation you may find yourself, please learn and receive strength from the faith and testimonies of those who came before you. It will help you understand that in order to gain or grow a testimony, sacrifices will have to be made and that “sacrifice brings forth the blessings of heaven.” ⁸

Thinking about a sacrifice that will truly bless your life, please consider and pray about the invitation of our beloved prophet, President Russell M. Nelson, when he asked “ *every* worthy, able young man to prepare for and serve a mission. For Latter-day Saint young men, missionary service is a priesthood responsibility. ...

“For ... young and able sisters, a mission is also a powerful, but *optional* , opportunity.” ⁹

You could be called as a service or a teaching missionary. Both types of missionaries contribute to the same goal of bringing souls to Christ, each in their own unique and powerful way.

In both types of service, you will show the Lord you love Him and that you want to get to know Him better. Remember, “for how knoweth a man the master

whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?”¹⁰

All of us, whether we are the first generation in the gospel or the fifth, should ask ourselves, What stories of faith, strength, and celestial commitment will I pass on to the next generation?

Let us all continue in our efforts to get to know our Savior, Jesus Christ, better and to make Him the center of our lives. He is the rock upon which we must build so that when times become difficult, we will be able to stand firm.¹¹

Let us be “true to the faith that our parents have cherished, true to truth for which martyrs have perished, to God’s command, soul, heart, and hand, faithful and true we will ever stand.”¹² In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. “The Story Behind *Carry On* ,” alyoung.com.
2. Alma 36:27 .
3. See Alma 36:28 .
4. Joseph Smith—History 1:25 .
5. “We’ll Bring the World His Truth,” *Children’s Songbook* , 172–73.
6. *Children’s Songbook* , 172–73.
7. “True to the Faith,” *Hymns* , no. 254.
8. “Praise to the Man,” *Hymns* , no. 27.
9. Russell M. Nelson, “ Preaching the Gospel of Peace ,” *Liahona* , May 2022, 6.
10. Mosiah 5:13 .
11. See Helaman 5:12 .
12. *Hymns* , no. 254.

“By This All Will Know That You Are My Disciples”

By Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles
April 2025

Our love for God and His children is a powerful testimony to the world that this is truly the Savior’s Church.

Many years ago Sister Uchtdorf and I were traveling through southern Germany. It was just before Easter, and we invited a good friend, who was not a member of the Church, to join us in our Sunday worship service. We loved this dear friend, so it was normal and natural to share with her how we felt about the Savior and His Church and to invite her to come and see! She accepted the invitation and joined us at the meetings of a nearby branch.

If you have ever brought a friend to church for the first time, you can probably relate to the way I felt that Sunday morning. I wanted everything to go perfectly. Our friend was a highly educated, spiritual person. I earnestly hoped the meetings of this branch would make a good impression on her and represent the Church well.

The branch met in some rented rooms on the second floor of a grocery store. To get there, we had to take the stairs at the back of the building, passing the strong aromas from goods stored there.

As the sacrament meeting began, I thought about my friend experiencing this for the first time, and I couldn’t help but notice things that made me cringe a little. The singing, for example, didn’t exactly sound like the Tabernacle Choir. Restless, noisy children could be heard during the sacrament. The speakers did their best, but they were not skilled at public speaking. I sat uncomfortably through the meeting, hoping that maybe Sunday School would be better.

It wasn’t.

All morning I worried about what our friend must think of this church we had taken her to.

Afterward, as we drove home, I turned to talk to our friend. I wanted to explain that this was just one small branch and it didn’t really represent the Church as a whole. But before I could say a word, she spoke up.

“That was beautiful,” she said.

I was speechless.

She continued, “I’m so impressed with how people treat each other in your church. They all seem to come from different backgrounds, and yet it’s clear that they genuinely love each other. This is what I imagine Christ wanted His Church to be like.”

Well, I quickly repented of my judgmental attitude. I had wanted picture-perfect meetings to impress my friend. But what the members of this branch had achieved was a heart-perfect spirit of love, kindness, patience, and compassion.

That Faith Might Increase in the Earth

My dear brothers and sisters, my dear friends, I love The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It is the Savior's true and living Church, and it teaches the restored fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. His priesthood power and authority reside here. Jesus Christ leads this Church personally, through servants He has called and authorized, and by a living prophet, even President Russell M. Nelson. The Savior has given the Latter-day Saints a unique mission to gather God's children and prepare the world for the Savior's Second Coming. I bear my witness that all of this is true.

But it's important to remember that when most people experience the Church of Jesus Christ for the first time, they aren't thinking about priesthood authority or ordinances or the gathering of Israel. What they're likely to notice, above all else, is how they feel when they're with us and how we treat each other.

"Love one another," Jesus said. "By this all will know that you are My disciples."

¹ Very often, a person's first *testimony* of Jesus Christ comes when he or she feels love among *disciples* of Jesus Christ.

The Savior declared that He restored His Church so "that faith ... might increase in the earth."² Therefore, when people visit our Church meetings, the Savior wants them to leave with stronger faith in Him! The love our friends feel among us will lift them closer to Jesus Christ! That is our simple goal every time we gather.

Anyone who is seeking greater faith in Christ or a closer connection to Heavenly Father should feel right at home in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Inviting them to our meetings can be as normal and as natural as inviting them into our homes.³

The Ideal and the Real

Now, I realize that I'm describing the ideal. And in this mortal life, we rarely get to experience the ideal. And "until the perfect day,"⁴ there will always be a gap between the ideal and the real. So, what should we do when the Church *doesn't* feel like the perfect day? When, for whatever reason, our ward *doesn't* yet nurture perfect faith or love? Or when it feels that we don't fit in?

One thing we should *not* do is give up on the ideal!

The title page of the Book of Mormon includes this important caution: "If there are faults," it says, "they are the mistakes of men; wherefore, condemn not the things of God."

Can a book—or a church or a person—have "faults" and "mistakes" and still be the work of God?

My answer is a resounding *yes* !

So, while we hold ourselves to the Lord's high standards, let's also be patient with one another. We are each a work in progress, and we all rely on the Savior for any progress we make. That's true for us as individuals, and it's true for the kingdom of God on earth.

The Lord invites us not just to *join* His kingdom but also to be anxiously engaged in *building* it. God envisions a people who are “of one heart and one mind.”⁵ And to be of *one* heart, we must seek *pure* hearts,⁶ and that requires a *mighty change of heart*.⁷

But that doesn't mean changing my heart to align with yours. Nor does it mean changing your heart to align with mine. It means that we all change our hearts to align with the Savior.

If we are not there yet, remember: with the Lord's help, nothing is impossible.⁸

Fit and Belonging

And if you ever feel like you don't quite fit in, please know that you are not alone. Haven't we all been in life situations when we felt like the stranger in the room? I have experienced this more than once. When I was 11 years old, my family was forced to leave our home and move to an unfamiliar region. Everything was different from what I was used to. And my accent made it clear to the other children that *I* was different from what *they* were used to. At a time when I desperately needed friendship and belonging, I felt lonely and displaced.

Here on earth, most of the differences we notice—the differences some of us use to categorize each other—have to do with earthly things: physical appearance, nationality, language, clothing, customs, and so on. But “God does not view things the way people do. People look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”⁹

From His perspective, there is one category that comes before all others: child of God.¹⁰ And we all fit perfectly in this one.

It's natural to want to be around people who look, talk, act, and think like we do. There is a place for that.

But in the Savior's Church, we gather all of God's children who are willing to be gathered and who seek the truth. It is not our physical appearance, our political views, our culture, or our ethnicity that brings us together. It is not our common background that unites us. It is our common objective, our love for God and love for our neighbor, our commitment to Jesus Christ and His restored gospel. We are “one in Christ.”¹¹

The unity we seek is not to have everyone stand in the same place; it is to have everyone face in the same direction—toward Jesus Christ.¹² We are one not because of where we've been but where we are striving to go, not because of who we are but who we seek to become.

That is what Christ's true Church is all about.

One Body

If you love God, if you want to know Him better by following His Son, then you belong here. If you're earnestly seeking to keep the Savior's commandments—even though you're not perfect at it yet—then you are a perfect fit for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

And what if you're different from people around you? That doesn't make you a misfit—it makes you a needed part of the body of Christ. All are needed in the body of Christ. ¹³ The ears perceive things that the eyes never could. The feet do things that the hands would be ineffective at. ¹⁴

That doesn't mean your job is to change everyone to be like yourself. But it does mean that you have something important to contribute—and that you have something important to learn!

One Voice

In every session of general conference, we're blessed with inspiring music from talented choirs. As you listen, you might notice that the singers don't all sing the same notes. Sometimes one section carries the melody, sometimes another. But they all contribute to the beautiful sound, and they're completely unified. Each choir member has the same central goal: to praise God and lift our hearts to Him. Each must have his or her mind and heart fixed on the same divine purpose. And when that happens, they truly become one voice.

If you are not yet a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we invite you to join us as we rejoice in the Savior's "song of redeeming love." ¹⁵ We need you. We love you. The Church will be better with your efforts to serve the Lord and His children.

If you have already shown, through baptism, through making covenants with God, your desire to "come into the fold of God, and to be called his people," ¹⁶ thank you for being part of this great and divine work and for helping to make the Church of Jesus Christ what the Savior wants it to be.

As I learned from my friend in Germany, our love for God and His children is a powerful testimony to the world that this is truly the Savior's Church.

May God bless us to patiently but diligently seek to live up to the ideals our Savior, Redeemer, and Master has set for us—so all will know that we are His disciples. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. John 13:34–35, New King James Version.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 1:21 .
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 46:5–6 .
4. Doctrine and Covenants 50:24 .

5. Moses 7:18 .
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 97:21 .
7. See Alma 5:14 .
8. See Luke 1:37 .
9. 1 Samuel 16:7 , New English Translation.
10. See Russell M. Nelson, “ Choices for Eternity ” (worldwide devotional for young adults, May 15, 2022), Gospel Library.
11. Galatians 3:28 .
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 6:36 .
13. See 1 Corinthians 12:12–27 . In the body of Christ, we don’t ignore differences, and we don’t merely tolerate them. We are thankful for the unique contribution each member makes, for the good of the whole body.
14. Just as it would be incorrect for the ear to look at the body and say, “I’m not like the eye; there must not be a place for me here,” it would be equally incorrect for the eye to say to the ear, “You’re not like me; we have no need of you here” (see 1 Corinthians 12:16, 21).
15. Alma 5:26 .
16. Mosiah 18:8 . When we are baptized, we witness that, among other things, we want to be part of a people who “bear one another’s burdens” and “mourn with those [who] mourn” and “comfort those that stand in need of comfort” (verses 8–9). In other words, when we join the Church of Jesus Christ, we are saying—humbly but clearly—that we want to become more like our beloved Savior, and we want to do it together.

Saturday Evening Session

And We Talk of Christ

By Elder Gary E. Stevenson

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

April 2025

We are followers of Jesus Christ, and we seek to both receive and share His light.

Introduction

At the end of a long overseas assignment, my wife, Lesa, and I stepped into an airport terminal in preparation for just one more flight—a red-eye—to get home. As we stood with many others moving a step at a time in long lines, we could feel the growing anxiety of fellow travelers worried about making flights, getting through passport and visa review, and successfully navigating security checks.

We finally reached a station occupied by a customs officer who seemed unaffected by the high levels of stress and anxiety in the room. She almost mechanically, with no eye contact, reached for my documents, confirmed my picture, thumbed through one page after another, and finally stamped my passport with a heavy thud.

She then reached for Lesa's papers. Devoid of emotion, head down and focused on her work, she methodically thumbed through the pages with an expert eye, focusing on the details of the documents in front of her. We were somewhat surprised when she suddenly stopped, lifted her head, and made eye contact with Lesa in a deliberate and warm upward gaze. With a tender smile, she gently stamped Lesa's passport and handed the documents back to her. My wife smiled in return, accepted the documents, and exchanged warm parting words.

"What just happened?" I asked incredulously.

Lesa then showed me what the agent had seen—a small card with the image of the Savior. It had accidentally slipped from Lesa's purse into the folds of her passport. This is what the customs officer had found. This is what had changed her whole demeanor.



Grace and Truth , by Simon Dewey, courtesy of altusfineart.com, © 2025, used with permission

This small picture of the Savior connected the hearts of two otherwise disconnected strangers. It transformed the impersonal to personal, capturing the beauty, the miracle, and the reality of the Light of Jesus Christ. For the remainder of that day and often since, I have contemplated that sweet, simple moment with awe and have rejoiced in the glorious effect of the Light of Christ upon God's children.

We Talk of Christ

We are followers of Jesus Christ, and we seek to both *receive* and *share* His light. Implicit in the name of the Church is our theology of “Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.” ¹ Through ancient and living prophets, our Heavenly Father has commanded us to “hear Him!” ² and to “come unto Christ.” ³ “We talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, [and] we prophesy of Christ.” ⁴

We *teach* that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, ⁵ and during His earthly ministry, Jesus taught His gospel and established His Church. ⁶

We *testify* that at the end of His life, Jesus atoned for our sins when He suffered in the Garden of Gethsemane, ⁷ was crucified on the cross, ⁸ and then was resurrected. ⁹

We *rejoice* that because of the Savior's atoning sacrifice, we can be forgiven and cleansed of our sins as we repent. This brings us peace and hope while making it possible for us to return to God's presence and receive a fulness of joy. ¹⁰



We *prophesy* that because of Jesus’s Resurrection, death is not the end but an important step forward. “We will all be resurrected after we die. This means that each person’s spirit and body will be reunited and live forever.” ¹¹

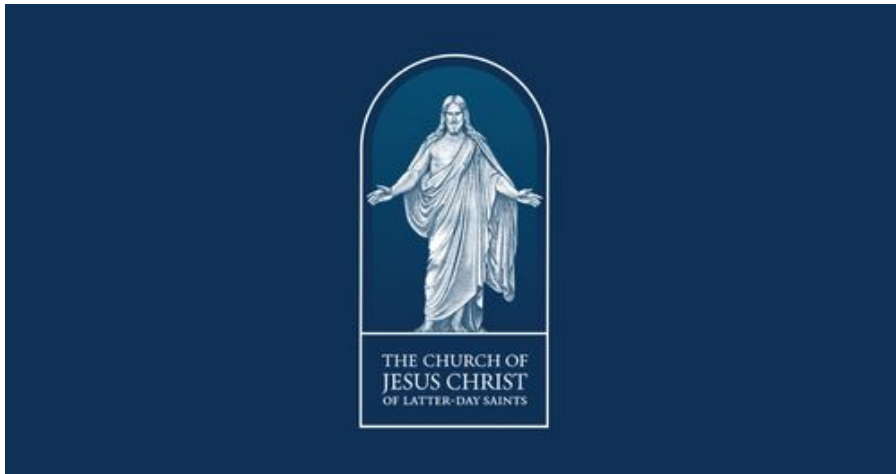
Come unto Christ

Living prophets in our day—who receive revelation from God to teach and lead us—are increasingly inviting us to come unto Christ. They are helping us to center our hearts, ears, and eyes more fully on Him. We could cite numerous examples of adjustments and enhancements announced by the First Presidency that are designed to focus us on Jesus Christ. Some of these include:

- The decision to retire the name “Mormon Church” and to replace it with the correct name, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. ¹²
- The availability of new, inspired Christ-themed art for display in meetinghouses. ¹³
- Young Women and Aaronic Priesthood quorum themes and music focused on Jesus Christ, such as “Disciple of Christ” and “Look unto Christ.” ¹⁴
- Greater emphasis on the Atonement and literal Resurrection of Jesus Christ as the most glorious events in history. ¹⁵
- Celebration of Easter as a season and not just a holiday, with an emphasis on Jesus Christ. ¹⁶
- The introduction of the visual identifier of the Church of Jesus Christ and its symbolic nature. ¹⁷

Let us look closer at the impact of some of these. First, the Church symbol.

The Church Symbol



In 2020, President Russell M. Nelson introduced a new visual identifier for the Church. This symbol reflects the truth that Christ is at the center of His Church and should be at the center of our lives. ¹⁸ We now see this familiar symbol on temple recommends, on Church websites and magazines, as the icon for the Gospel Library app, and even on military ID tags for many members of the Church serving in the armed forces. The symbol includes the name of the Church contained within a cornerstone, a reminder that Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone, ¹⁹ shown here in Cambodian and in use in 145 languages.



The center of the symbol is a representation of Bertel Thorvaldsen's beloved marble *Christus* statue, which has become widely associated with the Church and is found in visitors' centers and on temple grounds around the world. Its prominence in the Church symbol suggests that Christ should be the center of all we do. Likewise, the Savior's outstretched arms indicate His promise to embrace

all who will come unto Him. This symbol is a visual representation of the love of the Savior Jesus Christ and a constant reminder of the living Christ.



Out of curiosity, I have inquired of many families and friends concerning one important element of the Church symbol. Surprisingly, many are not aware of a hallowed feature that it embodies. Jesus Christ stands *under* the arch. This represents the resurrected Savior emerging from the tomb. We truly celebrate the *resurrected, living Christ* , even in the use of the Church symbol.

Higher and Holier Easter

Now let us contemplate the significance of Easter. In recent First Presidency messages concerning Easter, we have been challenged to “celebrate the Resurrection of our living Savior by studying His teachings and helping to establish Easter traditions in our society as a whole, especially within our own families.”²⁰ In short, we have been encouraged to move to a higher and holier celebration of Easter.

I love continuing revelation concerning Easter and am gratified for your many efforts to make Easter a sacred and holy occasion. In addition to holding a one-hour sacrament meeting on Easter Sunday, other examples of worthy activities include ward and stake devotionals and activities on Palm Sunday as well as during Holy Week. These remembrances include activities with children and youth and often incorporate interfaith choirs. Others have held “Living Christ” open houses for members and friends and have participated in multid denominational community Easter events.

Such activities mirror the multitudes in the city of Jerusalem whose voices joined together to praise the Savior during His triumphal entry. Equally impressive are reports of your responses to the First Presidency’s invitation to worship at home as families to commemorate this most important holiday.²¹

I believe that family worship surrounding Easter has elevated remarkably. Two years ago, I spoke about our family’s determination to improve the way we honor Easter. Admittedly, this is still a work in progress. We have always

enjoyed a special Easter Sunday meal, Easter baskets, and an Easter egg hunt, and we still do. However, adding an intentional spiritual dimension that focuses on Jesus Christ and His Atonement to our celebration has brought a sweet balance to our commemoration of these most holy of all events.



This year will be our third attempt to make Easter more Christ-centered. Like the Christmas nativity, our family Easter Day play includes rudimentary costumes, reading of scriptures from the New Testament and Book of Mormon, music, Easter pictures, palm fronds—and a little chaos, if I’m being completely honest. Children and grandchildren reading and reciting the Palm Sunday praises of “Hosanna ... Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest” and “This is Jesus ... of Galilee” ²² seem as relevant as “Peace on earth, good will to men” ²³ is at Christmastime.

We now enjoy a mix of decorations. What was once almost exclusively bunnies and Easter eggs is now balanced with the *Christus* and images of the empty tomb, the resurrected Savior appearing in the garden outside the tomb, and the Savior’s appearance to the Nephites. We are also striving to make Easter a season rather than just a day. We are trying to be more conversant, thoughtful, and celebratory of Palm Sunday and Good Friday and of the sacred events that took place during all of Holy Week.

Easter allows us to honor both the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ and the literal and joyous Resurrection of Him. Our hearts are heavy as we imagine the Savior’s suffering in the garden and upon Calvary, but our hearts rejoice as we envision the empty tomb and the heavenly decree “He is risen!” ²⁴

A Literal Resurrection

Recent First Presidency encouragement to look “forward to Easter and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ—the most glorious of all messages to mankind”²⁵ highlights the magnitude of this season. While there appears to be a growing trend among various Christian theologians to view the Resurrection in figurative and symbolic terms, we affirm our doctrine that “the Resurrection means that all who have ever lived will be resurrected, and the Resurrection is literal.”²⁶ “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”²⁷ Jesus Christ broke the bands of death for every living soul.²⁸

We truly stand all amazed at the grace Jesus offers us.²⁹ We embrace His words that “greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”³⁰

C. S. Lewis stated that “to preach Christianity meant [to the Apostles] primarily to preach the Resurrection. ... The Resurrection is the central theme in every Christian sermon reported in the Acts. The Resurrection, and its consequences, were the ‘gospel’ or good news which the Christians brought.”³¹

I proclaim that “there is a resurrection, ... the grave hath no victory, and the sting of death is swallowed up in Christ.”³²

Conclusion and Testimony

In conclusion, I testify that all who accept the invitations from our living prophet and his counselors to more intentionally commemorate the holy events that Easter represents will find that their bond with Jesus Christ grows ever stronger.

Just days ago, I learned about a grandmother who rehearsed the Easter story with her four-year-old grandson by using simple replicas of the tomb, the stone that covered the sepulchre, Jesus, Mary, the disciples, and the angel. The little boy watched and listened intently as his grandma shared the burial, closing and opening of the tomb, and the garden scene of the Resurrection. He later carefully repeated the story in surprising detail to his parents as he moved the figures about himself. Following this sweet moment, he was asked if he knew why we have Easter. The boy looked up and with childlike reasoning answered, “Cuz Him’s alive.”



I add my testimony to his—and to yours and to that of angels and prophets—that He is risen and that He lives, of which I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. Ephesians 2:20 .
2. Joseph Smith—History 1:17 .
3. Omni 1:26 ; Moroni 10:30 .
4. 2 Nephi 25:26 .
5. See Matthew 3:17 ; John 3:16–17 ; Hebrews 1:1–3 ; 3 Nephi 11:7 ; Doctrine and Covenants 93:15–17 ; Joseph Smith—History 1:17 .
6. See Matthew 16:18 ; Acts 2:47 ; 3 Nephi 21:22 .
7. See Matthew 26:36–46 ; Mark 14:32–41 ; Luke 22:39–46 ; see also Isaiah 53:4–12 ; Doctrine and Covenants 19:16–19 .
8. See Matthew 27:26–51 ; Mark 15:15–38 ; Luke 23:32–49 ; John 19:1–6, 14–37 ; see also 1 Nephi 11:32–33 ; 2 Nephi 9:5 ; Mosiah 14:12 ; Doctrine and Covenants 45:52 ; 53:2 ; 110:2–5 .
9. See Matthew 28:1–10, 16–18 ; Mark 16:1–14 ; Luke 24:1–48 ; John 20:1–31 ; 21:1–14 ; 3 Nephi 9:22 ; 11:1–17 .

10. See Mosiah 2:41 .
11. *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ* (2023), 10.
12. See Russell M. Nelson, “ The Correct Name of the Church ,” *Ensign* or *Liahona* , Nov. 2018, 87–90.
13. See First Presidency letter, May 11, 2020.
14. See “ Young Women Theme ,” Gospel Library; “ Aaronic Priesthood Quorum Theme ,” Gospel Library; “ Disciple of Christ ,” Music Library; “ Look unto Christ ,” Music Library.
15. See Russell M. Nelson, Facebook, Mar. 16, 2025, facebook.com/russell.m.nelson .
16. See Gary E. Stevenson, “ The Greatest Easter Story Ever Told ,” *Liahona* , May 2023, 6–9; “Easter 2025” (notice to Church leaders), Mar. 11, 2025.
17. See Russell M. Nelson, “ Opening the Heavens for Help ,” *Ensign* or *Liahona* , May 2020, 73.
18. See Russell M. Nelson, “ Opening the Heavens for Help ,” 73.
19. See Ephesians 2:19–20 ; 1 Peter 2:3–6 .
20. Dallin H. Oaks, “ He Is Risen! A Special 2025 Easter Season Message from the First Presidency ” (video), Gospel Library.
21. See Russell M. Nelson, “ The Answer Is Always Jesus Christ ,” *Liahona*, May 2023, 127; First Presidency letter, Feb. 15, 2023.
22. Matthew 21:9, 11 .
23. “I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day,” *Hymns* , no. 214; see also Luke 2:14 .
24. See Matthew 28:6 ; Mark 16:6 ; Luke 24:6 ; see also Matthew 28:1–10, 16–18 ; Mark 16:1–14 ; Luke 24:1–48 ; John 20:1–31 ; 21:1–14 ; 3 Nephi 9:22 ; 11:1–17 .
25. Dallin H. Oaks, Facebook, Jan. 2, 2025, facebook.com/dallin.h.oaks .
26. Dallin H. Oaks, “ He Is Risen! ”
27. 1 Corinthians 15:22 .
28. See Mosiah 15:7–8 .
29. See “I Stand All Amazed,” *Hymns* , no. 193.
30. John 15:13 .
31. C. S. Lewis, *Miracles: A Preliminary Study* (1947), 171–72.

32. Mosiah 16:8 .

Thou Art the Christ

(Matthew 16:16)

By Sister Amy A. Wright

First Counselor in the Primary General Presidency

April 2025

We want our children to believe in Jesus Christ, belong to Jesus Christ and His Church through covenant, and strive to become like Jesus Christ.

When our son Eli was in fourth grade, his class set up a mock government where he was elected by his peers to serve as class judge. One day a sitting judge from the Utah Second District Court visited, put his official robes on Eli, and then administered an oath of office for their class. This ignited in Eli's young, impressionable soul a passion for studying law and the Lawgiver Himself, Jesus Christ.

After years of diligent effort, Eli received an invitation for an interview with one of his top choices for law school. He pronounced, "Mom, I was asked 10 questions. The final question was, 'Where do you derive your moral compass?' I stated that throughout history humankind has derived systems of morality by patterning their lives from archetypes. The archetype of morality I strive to pattern my life from is that of Jesus Christ. I stated if all of humanity abided by the teachings of Jesus Christ in the Sermon on the Mount, the world would be a better, more peaceful place." Then the interview ended, and he thought to himself, "There go my childhood dreams. No one in secular academia wants to hear about Jesus Christ."

Two weeks later, Eli was admitted with a scholarship. Before committing, we visited the campus. The law school looked like a castle and was set high on a hill overlooking a beautiful lake. Remarkably, as we walked through the magnificent library and stately corridors, we found on banners and carved in stone attributes from the Sermon on the Mount.

The Sermon on the Mount ¹ is decisively the most noteworthy discourse ever delivered, ² pioneering in its teachings. No other sermon can help us better understand the character of Jesus Christ, His divine attributes, ³ and our ultimate purpose to become like Him.

Lifelong discipleship of Jesus Christ begins in our homes—and in Primary as early as 18 months of age. We want our children to *believe* in Jesus Christ, *belong* to Jesus Christ and His Church through covenant, and strive to *become* like Jesus Christ.

Believe in Jesus Christ

First, believe in Jesus Christ.

After the bread of life sermon, “many of [the Lord’s] disciples” found it hard to accept His teachings and doctrine, and they “went back, and *walked no more with him.*” ⁴ Jesus then turned to the Twelve and asked a heart-wrenching question: “Will ye also go away?” ⁵

Peter responded:

“Lord, *to whom shall we go* ? thou hast the words of eternal life.

“... We believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.” ⁶

As Peter demonstrated, belief is “to have faith in someone or to accept something as true.” ⁷ And for our faith to lead to salvation, it must be centered in the Lord Jesus Christ. ⁸ “We ... exercise faith in [Jesus] Christ when we have an assurance that He exists, [an understanding] of His [true] character [and nature], and a knowledge that we are striving to live according to His will.” ⁹

Our beloved prophet, President Russell M. Nelson, declared, “Faith in Jesus Christ is the foundation of all belief and the conduit of divine power.” ¹⁰

How can we help children strengthen their belief in Jesus Christ and access His divine power? We need to look no further than to our Savior Himself.

“[The Lord] spake unto the people, saying:

“Behold, I am Jesus Christ. ...

“Arise and come forth. ...

“... The multitude went forth, and thrust their hands into his side, and did feel the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet; and this they did do, going forth one by one ... and did *see* with their eyes and did *feel* with their hands, and did *know* of a surety and did *bear record* , that it was he.” ¹¹

I invite you to ponder what this can look like in the life of young children. Do they *hear* testimonies of Jesus Christ and His gospel? Do they *see* reverential, worshipful images of His ministry and godhood? Do they *feel* and recognize the Holy Ghost testifying of His reality and divinity? Do they *know* of His message and mission?

Belong to Jesus Christ and His Church

Second, belong to Jesus Christ and His Church.

King Benjamin’s people experienced a mighty change of heart ¹² and by covenant dedicated their lives to doing God’s will. Because of the covenant they made with God and Jesus Christ, they were “called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters.” ¹³ As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we have a covenantal responsibility to build His kingdom and prepare for His return. ¹⁴



How can we help children make and keep sacred covenants? In the *Come, Follow Me* manual, in appendix A and B, we find conversation starters and lessons that will empower families and support teachers and leaders in their sacred responsibility to prepare children for a lifetime on God’s covenant path.

15

Become like Jesus Christ

Third, become like Jesus Christ.

In the Book of Mormon, the Savior admonished His newly called disciples to emulate Him as closely as possible: “What manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am.” 16

How can we help baptized and confirmed children fulfill their covenantal responsibility to gather themselves and others unto Jesus Christ? 17 Lifelong discipleship requires us to “be ... doers of the word, and not hearers only.” 18

When extending invitations to the Lord’s youngest disciples, please take every opportunity to lead them, guide them, walk beside them, and help them find the Way. 19 Counsel with these precious little ones as they prepare to teach, 20 testify, 21 pray, 22 or serve 23 so they are confident and experience joy in fulfilling their responsibilities. Seek inspired ways to help them come to know this is their Church and they have a vital role to play in preparing for the Savior’s return. 24

As Jesus Christ becomes the focus of our lives, what we desire, and how we desire it, is forever altered. Conversion changes everything! It changes our nature “that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually.” 25

It changes how we spend our time, our resources; what we read, watch, listen to, and share. It even changes how we respond in a distinguished, academic, career-on-the-line interview.

We need to infuse the Light of Jesus Christ²⁶ into every corner of our lives.²⁷ If we are not testifying to the veracity of His premortal godhood,²⁸ His divine mission,²⁹ and His prison-bursting Resurrection³⁰ in our homes and in every single meeting of this Church, then our messages of love, service, honesty, humility, gratitude, and compassion can become nothing more than a jaunty pep talk of thoughtful living. Without Jesus Christ there is no power to change, no purpose to aspire to, and no reconciliation of the travails of life. If we become casual³¹ in our discipleship of Jesus Christ, it could be catastrophic for our children.³²

When we tell our children we love them, are we also telling them that their Father in Heaven and Savior Jesus Christ love them?³³ Our love may comfort and inspire, but *Their* love can sanctify,³⁴ exalt,³⁵ and heal.³⁶

This Jesus should not be a fictional Jesus,³⁷ or a simplistic Jesus,³⁸ or a bodiless Jesus,³⁹ or a casual Jesus,⁴⁰ or an unknown Jesus,⁴¹ but a glorified,⁴² omnipotent,⁴³ resurrected,⁴⁴ exalted,⁴⁵ worshipful,⁴⁶ powerful⁴⁷ Only Begotten Son of God,⁴⁸ *who is mighty to save*.⁴⁹ And as a young child in the Philippines compellingly testified to me one day, “We are worth saving!” In the sacred and holy name of Him “whom God hath set forth to be [the great] propitiation,”⁵⁰ Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. See Matthew 5–7 .
2. President Thomas S. Monson said that the Sermon on the Mount was “the greatest sermon ever given” (“The Way Home ,” *Ensign* , May 1975, 15).
3. See “ Seek Christlike Attributes ,” chapter 6 of *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ* (2023), 123–38.
4. John 6:66 ; emphasis added.
5. John 6:67 .
6. John 6:68–69 ; emphasis added.
7. Guide to the Scriptures, “ Belief, Believe ,” Gospel Library.
8. See Acts 4:10–12 ; Mosiah 3:17 ; Moroni 7:24–26 ; Articles of Faith 1:4 .
9. Topics and Questions, “ Faith in Jesus Christ ,” Gospel Library; see also *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 38.
10. Russell M. Nelson, “ Christ Is Risen; Faith in Him Will Move Mountains ,” *Liahona* , May 2021, 102.

11. 3 Nephi 11:9–10, 14–15 ; emphasis added.
12. See Mosiah 5:2 ; Alma 5:12, 14 .
13. Mosiah 5:7 .
14. See Russell M. Nelson, “ The Lord Jesus Christ Will Come Again ,” *Liahona* , Nov. 2024, 121–22.
15. See appendix A, “ For Parents—Preparing Your Children for a Lifetime on God’s Covenant Path ,” and appendix B, “ For Primary—Preparing Children for a Lifetime on God’s Covenant Path ,” in *Come, Follow Me—For Home and Church: Doctrine and Covenants 2025* .
16. 3 Nephi 27:27 ; see also 2 Nephi 2:6–8 ; Moroni 7:48 . The scriptures teach that those *who will inherit* the celestial kingdom *are* righteous individuals who, through the grace of Jesus Christ, have become like Him.
17. See “ A Message for Children from President Russell M. Nelson ” (video, Friend to Friend 2021 broadcast), Gospel Library.
18. James 1:22 .
19. See “I Am a Child of God,” *Hymns* , no. 301; see also John 14:6 .
20. See *General Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* , 12.2.1.2 , 29.2.1.4 , Gospel Library.
21. See *General Handbook* , 29.2.2 .
22. See *General Handbook* , 12.2.1.2 , 29.6 .
23. See *General Handbook* , 12.2.1.3 ; “ Primary Children Invited to Serve Other Children in 2025 ,” Newsroom, Jan. 9, 2025, newsroom.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
24. See Acts 1:11 ; 1 Thessalonians 4:16 ; Doctrine and Covenants 1:12 ; 34:6–7 ; 49:7 .
25. Mosiah 5:2 .
26. See John 8:12 ; Doctrine and Covenants 93:2 .
27. See Alma 19:6 .
28. See Doctrine and Covenants 76:4 .
29. See John 3:14–17 .
30. See 1 Corinthians 15:20–23 .
31. See Becky Craven, “ Careful versus Casual ,” *Ensign* or *Liahona* , May 2019, 9–11.
32. See 2 Nephi 25:26 .

33. See John 3:16 ; 13:34–35 ; 1 Nephi 19:9 .
34. See Moses 6:59–60 ; Moroni 10:33 .
35. See Doctrine and Covenants 14:7 ; 84:36–38; Moses 1:39 .
President Joseph Fielding Smith wrote: “The Father has promised through the Son that all that he has shall be given to those who are obedient to his commandments. *They shall increase in knowledge, wisdom, and power, going from grace to grace, until the fulness of the perfect day shall burst upon them*” (*Doctrines of Salvation* , comp. Bruce R. McConkie [1955], 2:36).
36. See 3 Nephi 17:7 .
37. See 2 Peter 1:16–18 ; Joseph Smith—History 1:17 .
38. See Doctrine and Covenants 110:1–4 .
39. See Dallin H. Oaks, “ Apostasy and Restoration ,” *Ensign* , May 1995, 84–86.
40. See Elder D. Todd Christofferson:
“The importance of having a sense of the sacred is simply this—if one does not appreciate holy things, he will lose them. Absent a feeling of reverence, he will grow increasingly casual in attitude and lax in conduct. He will drift from the moorings that his covenants with God could provide. His feeling of accountability to God will diminish and then be forgotten. Thereafter, he will care only about his own comfort and satisfying his uncontrolled appetites. Finally, he will come to despise sacred things, even God, and then he will despise himself.

“On the other hand, with a sense of the sacred, one grows in understanding and truth. The Holy Spirit becomes his frequent and then constant companion. More and more he will stand in holy places and be entrusted with holy things. Just the opposite of cynicism and despair, his end is eternal life” (“ A Sense of the Sacred ” [Brigham Young University devotional, Nov. 7, 2004], 1, speeches.byu.edu).
41. See Acts 17:23 ; Alma 30:52–53 .
42. See John 17:3–5 .
43. See Mosiah 3:5 .
44. See Luke 24:1–6 ; 3 Nephi 11 .
45. See Philippians 2:9–11 .
46. See 2 Nephi 25:29 .

47. See Exodus 19:16 ; Luke 4:32 ; John 1:12 ; Romans 13:1 ; 1 Nephi 17:48 .
48. See John 3:16 .
49. See 2 Nephi 31:19 ; Alma 7:14 ; 34:18 .
50. Romans 3:25 ; see also 1 John 2:2 ; 4:10 .

The Plan of Mercy

By Elder James R. Rasband
Of the Seventy
April 2025

The Lord is merciful and our Heavenly Father's plan of salvation is truly a plan of mercy.

A Prophet's Invitation

Last April, soon after the joyful news that the Church had acquired the Kirtland Temple, President Russell M. Nelson invited us to study the dedicatory prayer of the Kirtland Temple, recorded in section 109 of the Doctrine and Covenants .¹ The dedicatory prayer, said President Nelson, “is a tutorial about how the temple spiritually empowers you and me to meet the challenges of life in these last days.”²

I am sure your study of section 109 yielded insights that blessed you. This evening, I share a couple of things I learned as I followed our prophet's invitation. The peace-giving path down which my study led reminded me that the Lord is merciful and that our Heavenly Father's plan of salvation is truly a plan of mercy.

Newly Called Missionaries Serving in the Temple

As you may be aware, “newly called missionaries are encouraged to receive the temple endowment as soon as possible and to attend the temple as often as circumstances allow.” Once endowed, they also “may serve as temple ... workers before they begin missionary service.”³

Time in the temple before entering the missionary training center (MTC) can be a wonderful blessing for new missionaries as they learn more about temple covenants before sharing the blessings of those covenants with the world.

But in studying section 109, I learned that in the temple, God empowers new missionaries—indeed, all of us—in an additional, sacred way.⁴ In the dedicatory prayer, given by revelation, the Prophet Joseph Smith prayed that “when thy servants shall go out from thy house ... to bear testimony of thy name,” the “hearts” of “all people” would “be softened”—both the “great ones of the earth” and “all the poor, the needy, and [the] afflicted.” He prayed that “their prejudices may give way before the truth, and thy people may obtain favor in the sight of all; that all the ends of the earth may know that we, thy servants, have heard thy voice, and that thou hast sent us.”⁵

This is a beautiful promise for a newly called missionary—to have prejudices “give way before the truth,” to “obtain favor in the sight of all,” and to have the world know they are sent by the Lord. Each of us surely needs these same blessings. What a blessing it would be to have hearts softened as we interact

with neighbors and coworkers. The dedicatory prayer does not explain exactly how our time in the temple will soften others' hearts, but I am convinced it is bound up with how time in the house of the Lord softens our own hearts by centering us on Jesus Christ and His mercy.⁶

The Lord Answers Joseph Smith's Plea for Mercy

As I studied the Kirtland dedicatory prayer, I was also struck that Joseph again and again pleaded for mercy—for the members of the Church,⁷ for the enemies of the Church,⁸ for the leaders of the country, for the nations of the earth.⁹ And, very personally, he pleaded with the Lord to remember him¹⁰ and to have mercy upon his beloved Emma and their children.¹¹

How must Joseph have felt when, one week later, on Easter Day, April 3, 1836, in the Kirtland Temple, the Savior appeared to him and Oliver Cowdery and, as recorded in section 110 of the Doctrine and Covenants, said, "I have accepted this house, and my name shall be here; and I will manifest myself to my people in mercy in this house."¹² This promise of mercy must have had special meaning to Joseph.¹³ And as President Nelson taught last April, this promise also "applies to *every* dedicated temple today."¹⁴

Finding Mercy in the House of the Lord

There are so many ways in which we each can find mercy in the house of the Lord. This has been true since the Lord first commanded Israel to build a tabernacle and to place at its center the "mercy seat."¹⁵ In the temple, we find mercy in the covenants we make. Those covenants, in addition to the baptismal covenant, bind us to the Father and the Son and give us increased access to what President Nelson has taught is "a special kind of love and mercy ... called *hesed*" in Hebrew.¹⁶

We find mercy in the opportunity to be sealed to our families for eternity. In the temple, we also come to understand with greater clarity that the Creation, the Fall, the Savior's atoning sacrifice, and our ability to enter again into our Heavenly Father's presence¹⁷—indeed, every part of the plan of salvation—are manifestations of mercy.¹⁸ It might be said that the plan of salvation is a plan of happiness precisely because it is a "plan of mercy."¹⁹

Seeking Forgiveness Opens the Door to the Holy Ghost

I am grateful for the beautiful promise in section 110 that the Lord will manifest Himself in mercy in His temples. I am also grateful for what it reveals about how the Lord will manifest Himself in mercy whenever we, like Joseph, plead for mercy.

Joseph Smith's plea for mercy in section 109 was not the first time his pleas for mercy prompted revelation. In the Sacred Grove, young Joseph prayed not just to know which Church was true, but he also said that he "cried unto the Lord for

mercy, for there was none else to whom I could go [to] obtain mercy.”²⁰ Somehow his recognition that he needed mercy that only the Lord could provide helped open the windows of heaven. Three years later the angel Moroni appeared, following what Joseph said was his “prayer and supplication to Almighty God for forgiveness of all my sins and follies.”²¹

This pattern of revelation following a plea for mercy is a familiar one in the scriptures. Enos heard the voice of the Lord only after praying for forgiveness.

²² King Lamoni’s father’s conversion begins with his prayer, “I will give away all my sins to know thee.”²³ We may not be blessed with these same dramatic experiences, but for those who sometimes struggle to feel answers to prayer, seeking the Lord’s mercy is one of the most powerful ways to feel the witness of the Holy Ghost.²⁴

Pondering God’s Mercy Opens the Door to a Testimony of the Book of Mormon

A similar principle is beautifully taught in Moroni 10:3–5. We often shorthand these verses to teach that through sincere prayer, we can learn whether the Book of Mormon is true. But this shorthand can neglect the important role of mercy. Listen to how Moroni begins his exhortation: “I would exhort you that when ye shall read these things, ... that ye would remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam even down until the time that ye shall receive these things, and ponder it in your hearts.”²⁵

Moroni urges us not only to read these things—the records he was about to seal up—but also to *ponder* in our hearts what the Book of Mormon reveals about “how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men.”²⁶ It is pondering upon the Lord’s mercy that prepares us to “ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true.”²⁷

As we ponder on the Book of Mormon, we might ask: Is it really true, as Alma taught, that God’s plan of mercy assures that every person who ever lived on this earth will be resurrected²⁸ and that they will “be restored to their ... perfect frame”?²⁹ Is Amulek right—can the Savior’s mercy satisfy *all* the bitterly real demands of justice that we would otherwise be obligated to pay and instead “[encircle us] in the arms of safety”?³⁰

Is it true, as Alma testified, that Christ suffered not only for our sins but for our “pains and afflictions” so that He could “know ... how to succor his people according to their infirmities”?³¹ Is the Lord really so merciful, as King Benjamin taught, that as a free gift, He atoned “for the sins of those ... who have died not knowing the will of God concerning them, or who have ignorantly sinned”?³²

Is it true, as Lehi said, that “Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy”?³³ And is it really true, as Abinadi testified, quoting Isaiah, that Jesus Christ was “wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed”?³⁴

In sum, is the Father's plan as taught in the Book of Mormon really this merciful? I testify that it is and that the peace-giving and hopeful teachings of mercy in the Book of Mormon are true.

Still, I imagine that some may be struggling, despite your faithful reading and prayers, to realize Moroni's promise that Heavenly Father "will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost."³⁵ I know this struggle because I felt it, many years ago, when my own first couple of reads of the Book of Mormon did not yield an immediate and clear answer to my prayers.

If you are struggling, may I invite you to follow Moroni's counsel to ponder on the many ways the Book of Mormon teaches "how merciful the Lord hath been [to] the children of men"?³⁶ Based on my experience, I hope that when you do, the peace of the Holy Ghost can enter your heart and you can know, believe, and feel³⁷ that the Book of Mormon and the plan of mercy it teaches are true.³⁸

I express my gratitude for the Father's great plan of mercy and for the Savior's willingness to carry it out. I know that He will manifest Himself in mercy in His holy temple and in every part of our life if we will seek Him. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. See Russell M. Nelson, "Rejoice in the Gift of Priesthood Keys," *Liahona*, May 2024, 121.
2. Russell M. Nelson, "Rejoice in the Gift of Priesthood Keys," 121.
3. *General Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 24.5.1, Gospel Library.
4. As with all temple blessings, God's bestowal of these blessings is dependent upon our keeping the covenants we make in the temple. See Russell M. Nelson, "Overcome the World and Find Rest," *Liahona*, Nov. 2022, 96: "Each person who makes covenants ... in temples—and keeps them—has increased access to the power of Jesus Christ."

As another example, consider the First Presidency's statement on wearing the temple garment: "As you keep your covenants, including the sacred privilege to wear the garment as instructed in the initiatory ordinances, you will have greater access to the Savior's mercy, protection, strength, and power" (*General Handbook*, 26.3.3.2; emphasis added).
5. Doctrine and Covenants 109:55–57.
6. See Russell M. Nelson, "The Lord Jesus Christ Will Come Again," *Liahona*, Nov. 2024, 121–22: "Here is my promise to you: Every sincere seeker of Jesus Christ will find Him in the temple. You will feel His mercy."

7. See Doctrine and Covenants 109:34 : “Have mercy upon this people, and as all men sin, forgive the transgressions of thy people, and let them be blotted out forever.”
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 109:50 .
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 109:54 . Joseph also asked the Lord “to have mercy upon the children of Jacob, that Jerusalem, from this hour, may begin to be redeemed; and the yoke of bondage may begin to be broken off from the house of David; and the children of Judah may begin to return to the lands which thou didst give to Abraham, their father” (Doctrine and Covenants 109:62–64).
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 109:68 .
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 109:69 . The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines *mercy* as “clemency and compassion shown to a person who is in a position of powerlessness” (“mercy,” oed.com). Mercy, like grace, is an expression of God’s love and kindness—His *hesed* . Whereas *mercy* is focused on withholding a punishment we deserve, *grace* typically refers to God giving us blessings we do not deserve and without regard to merit.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 110:7 .
13. In a manifestation of personalized mercy, Joseph and Oliver were told, “Behold, your sins are forgiven you; you are clean before me; therefore, lift up your heads and rejoice” (Doctrine and Covenants 110:5).
14. Russell M. Nelson, “ Rejoice in the Gift of Priesthood Keys ,” 119. President Nelson said, “I invite you to ponder what the Lord’s promise means for you personally.”
15. See Bible Dictionary, “ Tabernacle ”: “The Holy of Holies contained only one piece of furniture: the Ark of the Covenant. ... Upon the ark and forming the lid was the mercy seat. It served, with the ark beneath, as an altar on which the highest atonement known to the Jewish law was effected. On it was sprinkled the blood of the sin offering of the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:14–15). The mercy seat was the place of the manifestation of God’s glory (Ex. 25:22).”
16. Russell M. Nelson, “ The Everlasting Covenant ,” *Liahona* , Oct. 2022, 5. As President Nelson points out, *hesed* has no precise English equivalent, but its most common translation in the Old Testament is *mercy* . Of the 248 times the word *hesed* appears in the King James Version of the Old Testament, *mercy* is used 149

times, *kindness* 40 times, and *lovingkindness* 30 times (see Blue Letter Bible, blueletterbible.org/lexicon/h2617/kjv/wlc/o-1/).

17. See *General Handbook* , 27.2 . The Savior teaches us that none of us can come unto the Father except through Him (see John 14:6). In the Doctrine and Covenants, the Savior provides this beautiful description of His plea for mercy on our behalf:

“Listen to him who is the advocate with the Father, who is pleading your cause before him—

“Saying: Father, behold the sufferings and death of him who did no sin, in whom thou wast well pleased; behold the blood of thy Son which was shed, the blood of him whom thou gavest that thyself might be glorified;

“Wherefore, Father, spare these my brethren that believe on my name, that they may come unto me and have everlasting life” (Doctrine and Covenants 45:3–5).

18. President Jeffrey R. Holland once said, “Surely the thing God enjoys most about being God is the thrill of being merciful, especially to those who don’t expect it and often feel they don’t deserve it” (“ The Laborers in the Vineyard ,” *Ensign* or *Liahona* , May 2012, 33). See also Doctrine and Covenants 128:19 : “Now, what do we hear in the gospel which we have received? A voice of gladness! A voice of mercy from heaven; and a voice of truth out of the earth; glad tidings for the dead; a voice of gladness for the living and the dead; glad tidings of great joy.”

19. Alma 42:15 . Mercy has always been at the very center of the plan of salvation. Three advent scriptures are illustrative. Nephi concludes the very first chapter of the Book of Mormon by saying, “Behold, I, Nephi, will show unto you that the tender mercies of the Lord are over all those whom he hath chosen, because of their faith, to make them mighty even unto the power of deliverance” (1 Nephi 1:20).

In Exodus 34:6 , the Lord proclaims His name to Moses as “The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.” Some have suggested that this verse may be referenced by Old Testament prophets more than any other verse in the Old Testament (see, for example, Bible Project, “The Most Quoted Verse in the Bible,” bibleproject.com/podcast/most-quoted-verse-bible/).

In the New Testament, in the book of Luke, recall that Zacharias was struck “dumb, and not able to speak” when he doubted the angel’s promise that Elisabeth in her old age would bear a son, who would be John the Baptist (Luke 1:20). When Zacharias’s

voice was finally loosed, he was “filled with the Holy Ghost,” and in the first public declaration that the time for the Messiah had finally arrived, he prophesied that the Lord would come “to perform *the mercy* promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; the oath which he sware to our father Abraham” (Luke 1:67, 72–73 ; emphasis added).

20. Gospel Topics Essays, “ First Vision Accounts ,” Gospel Library; see especially the 1832 account .
21. Joseph Smith—History 1:29 . Doctrine and Covenants 20:5–6 provides another description of the role of repentance in these two powerful visions. Joseph said that “no one need suppose me guilty of any great or malignant sins,” but he “felt condemned for [his] weaknesses and imperfections” and needed forgiveness (Joseph Smith—History 1:28, 29).
22. See Enos 1:1–8 .
23. Alma 22:18 . Alma’s prayer, “O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me,” leads to a flood of light and relief from pain (see Alma 36:17–20). President Jeffrey R. Holland once said of Alma’s plea: “Perhaps such a prayer, though brief, is the most significant one that can be uttered in a fallen world. Whatever other prayers we offer, whatever other needs we have, all come back to that plea: ‘O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me’” (*Our Day Star Rising: Exploring the New Testament with Jeffrey R. Holland* [2022], 170–71).
24. Elder Kyle S. McKay beautifully taught, “Joseph’s life of regular repentance gives me confidence to ‘come boldly unto the throne of grace, that [I] may obtain mercy’” (“ The Man Who Communed with Jehovah ,” *Liahona* , Nov. 2024, 61).
25. Moroni 10:3 .
26. Moroni’s plea is a bookend to Nephi’s statement at the very beginning of the Book of Mormon, where he states his own purpose in writing on the plates: “Behold, I, Nephi, will show unto you that the tender mercies of the Lord are over all those whom he hath chosen, because of their faith, to make them mighty even unto the power of deliverance” (1 Nephi 1:20).
27. Moroni 10:4 .
28. See Mormon 9:13 .
29. Alma 40:23 : “The soul shall be restored to the body, and the body to the soul; yea, and every limb and joint shall be restored to its body; yea, even a hair of the head shall not be lost; but all things shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame.”

30. Alma 34:16 . As we consider how merciful the Lord has been, we may be tempted to disconnect mercy from justice—to think that our Heavenly Father’s loving mercy alone can overcome justice. But as Alma taught, “The plan of mercy *could not be brought about* except an atonement should be made; therefore God himself atoneth for the sins of the world, to bring about the plan of mercy, to appease the demands of justice, that God might be a perfect, just God, and a merciful God also” (Alma 42:15 ; emphasis added).

All the Savior’s merciful love for us could not save us. Rather, it was His suffering the very real and painful demands of justice that saves us. This does not, of course, diminish the importance of His love. Surely it was His love for us—and His desire to do the will of the Father, who also loves us—that caused Him to be willing to suffer (see John 3:16 ; Doctrine and Covenants 34:3). But love alone could not work.

Sometimes we may focus so much on His love for us just the way we are that we lose sight of the fact that the way we are—as natural men and women whose behavior inevitably falls short of living the commandments—demands that justice be satisfied. If we misunderstand and view His love as doing away with the demands of justice, we diminish the gift of His atoning sacrifice and the suffering He did to pay the terrible price of justice. It would be discouragingly ironic if His love for us were understood to make unnecessary His atoning sacrifice. How much better it is to look squarely at the full demands of justice and to then be grateful that He loved us enough to bear those very real demands on our behalf.

31. Alma 7:11–12 .
32. Mosiah 3:11 .
33. 2 Nephi 2:25 .
34. Mosiah 14:5 .
35. Moroni 10:4 .
36. Moroni 10:3 .
37. President M. Russell Ballard encouraged us “to bear testimony of what you *know* and *believe* and what you *feel* ” (“ Remember What Matters Most ,” *Liahona* , May 2023, 107).
38. In offering this suggestion, I do not intend to offer a substitute “formula” for a testimony of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon or the gospel. As Elder David A. Bednar has taught, revelation can come like “a light turned on in a dark room,”

where the revelation is received “quickly, completely and all at once.” It can also come like the “gradual increase of light radiating from the rising sun, ... ‘line upon line, precept upon precept’ (2 Nephi 28:30). ... Such communications from Heavenly Father gradually and gently ‘distil upon [our souls] as the dews from heaven’ [Doctrine and Covenants 121:45]. This pattern of revelation tends to be more common than rare” (“ The Spirit of Revelation ,” *Ensign* or *Liahona* , May 2011, 88).

Our Heavenly Guidance System

By Elder Sergio R. Vargas
Of the Seventy
April 2025

As we focus our lives on Jesus Christ, we will find our way home, enduring to the end and rejoicing to the end.

Jesus Christ changed my life when I was baptized at the age of 26 in my beloved Frutillar, Chile. At that time, my job took me across the ocean, rivers, and lakes of the beautiful Chilean Patagonia. ¹ After my baptism, I saw my work and my life in a new and different way, recognizing that truly “all things denote there is a God.” ²

In nature, salmon are born in the source of the rivers. At some point in their lives, they need to swim downriver to reach the ocean, where they find the nourishment and conditions necessary for their development.

But the ocean is also a dangerous place where predators lurk and where fishers try to catch the salmon with flashy hooks that imitate food but do not nourish them. If the salmon can survive these threats, they will be ready to use their powerful guidance system to return upriver to the same place where they were born, facing new and some familiar challenges. Scientists have studied their migratory behavior for years and have discovered that they use a type of magnetic map, similar to GPS, to guide them to their final destination with incredible precision. ³

We can all return one day to the heavenly home from where we came. And like the salmon, we have our own magnetic map, or Light of Christ, to guide us there. Jesus taught His disciples, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” ⁴

As we focus our lives on Jesus Christ, we will find our way home, enduring to the end and rejoicing to the end. President Russell M. Nelson taught that “the joy we feel has little to do with the circumstances of our lives and everything to do with the focus of our lives.” ⁵

Our Divine Nature and Destiny

From the family proclamation, we read that “each [of us] is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. ... In the premortal realm, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshipped God as their Eternal Father and accepted His plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize their divine destiny as heirs of eternal life.” ⁶

Before His birth in mortality, Jesus Christ appeared to Moses and spoke to him on behalf of the Father. He told Moses He had a great work for him to do. During that meeting, the Lord called him “my son” several times.

After that experience, Satan came tempting him, saying, “Moses, son of man, worship me.”

Moses responded to the temptation by remembering his divine nature, saying, “Who art thou? For behold, I am a son of God.”⁷ The truth freed Moses from an attack by the adversary.

Brothers and sisters, the hooks of mortality are real. They are often enticing, but they seek only one target: to pull us out of the course of living waters that lead to the Father and eternal life.

I know how real the hooks of mortality can be. One Sunday, as a new convert, I was teaching a priesthood class when an unsettling conversation arose. I struggled to finish my lesson. I took offense and felt that I was the victim. Without saying a word, I headed for the exit with the idea that I would not return to church for a while.

At that very moment, a concerned priesthood holder stood in front of me. He lovingly invited me to focus on Christ and not on the situation we had experienced in class. As I looked back on the experience with him, he shared with me that he heard a voice tell him, “Go after him; he is important to me.”



My dear friends, we are *all* important to Him. President Nelson taught that “because of our covenant with God, He will never tire in His efforts to help us, and we will never exhaust His merciful patience with us.”⁸ Our divine nature and covenant relationship with God entitle us to receive divine help.

The Need of Nourishment

Just as salmon need to be nourished in the ocean to grow, we also need to nourish ourselves spiritually to avoid dying of spiritual malnutrition.⁹ Prayer, the scriptures, the temple, and our regular attendance at Sunday meetings are vital in our spiritual menu.

In November 1956, Ricardo García entered the waters of baptism in Chile, becoming the first member of the Church in my country.¹⁰ Just one day before he died, he declared before his family and friends, “Many years ago, missionaries invited me to be happy along with my family. I am a happy man. Tell everyone in Chile the gospel is happiness.”¹¹

After having been nourished with the gospel of Jesus Christ, Ricardo dedicated his entire life to serving God and his neighbor with love. His example of discipleship has blessed generations, including me. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that “a man filled with the love of God, is not content with blessing his family alone, but ranges through the whole world, anxious to bless the whole human race.”¹²

Return to Our Heavenly Home

Deep inside each of us is a desire to return to our heavenly home, and Jesus Christ is our heavenly guidance system. He is the way. His atoning sacrifice makes it possible for us to make sacred covenants with God. Once we make covenants, we will at times find ourselves swimming against the current. Danger, disappointment, temptation, and affliction will test our faith and spiritual strength. Ask for help. Jesus Christ understands and is always eager to share our burdens.

Remember that He is known as “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.”¹³ The Savior taught, “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”¹⁴ His atoning sacrifice allows our sins to be forgiven to the point that He no longer remembers them.¹⁵

We may not totally forget our sins as part of our mortal learning so we will remember not to repeat them.¹⁶ Instead, we will remember Him as we take the sacrament at church every Sunday. This ordinance is an essential part of worship and spiritual development.¹⁷ Joy comes when we understand that this is not just another day. “The sabbath was made for man”¹⁸ with the intention of giving us rest from the world and renewing our body and spirit.

We also remember Him when we go to the temple—the house of the Lord. Temples give us a deeper knowledge of Jesus Christ as the center of the covenant that leads us to eternal life,¹⁹ “the greatest of ... the gifts of God.”²⁰

Attending the temple has given me comfort and great hope about our eternal destiny. I have experienced heavenly connections with people on both sides of the veil. I've seen healing miracles in the lives of my young children, two of whom live with unseen illnesses that require daily care for the rest of this life.

Our family rejoices as we share about the plan of happiness. My children's faces light up when they hear that, thanks to Jesus Christ, their "afflictions shall be but a small moment."²¹ We love our children deeply, and we know that someday, as President Jeffrey R. Holland taught, they "will stand before us glorified and grand, breathtakingly perfect in body and mind."²² Our covenants bring us closer to God to the point of making the impossible possible, filling every space of darkness and doubt with light and peace.

Thanks to Jesus Christ, there are hope and well-founded reasons to continue loving, praying, and supporting those we care about.

I know He lives. He knows us and He loves us. He is the way, the truth, and the life of the world.

I invite all of us today to center our lives on Jesus Christ and His teachings. Doing so will help us avoid biting the hooks of temptation, offense, and self-pity. We will stand as temples—holy, firm, and constant. We will weather the storms, and we will make it home, enduring to the end and rejoicing to the end.²³ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. I worked as an engineer for more than 20 years developing aquaculture in Chile.
2. Alma 30:44 .
3. See Steve Lundeborg, "Magnetic Pulses Alter Salmon's Orientation, Suggesting They Navigate via Magnetite in Their Tissue," Oregon State University Newsroom, May 2, 2020, oregonstate.edu.
4. John 14:6 .
5. Russell M. Nelson, " Joy and Spiritual Survival ," *Ensign* or *Liahona* , Nov. 2016, 82.
6. " The Family: A Proclamation to the World ," Gospel Library.
7. See Moses 1:4–13 .
8. Russell M. Nelson, " The Everlasting Covenant ," *Liahona* , Oct. 2022, 6.
9. See Dallin H. Oaks, " Nourishing the Spirit ," *Ensign* , Dec. 1998, 6–13; *Liahona* , Aug. 2001, 10–19.

10. See Trent Toone, “Builders and Blessings: How Early Latter-day Saint Pioneers Shaped the Growth of the Church in Chile,” *Church News* , Feb. 18, 2025, thechurchnews.com.
11. Personal interview with Perla García, daughter of Ricardo García.
12. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 426.
13. Isaiah 53:3 .
14. John 16:33 .
15. See Doctrine and Covenants 58:42 .
16. See Neil L. Andersen, “ Repent ... That I May Heal You ,” *Ensign* or *Liahona* , Nov. 2009, 40–43.
17. See Topics and Questions, “ Sacrament ,” Gospel Library.
18. Mark 2:27 .
19. See Russell M. Nelson, “ The Everlasting Covenant ,” 4–11.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 14:7 .
21. Doctrine and Covenants 121:7 .
22. Jeffrey R. Holland, “ Like a Broken Vessel ,” *Ensign* or *Liahona* , Nov. 2013, 42.
23. See Hebrews 3:6 .

Worship

By Elder D. Todd Christofferson
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles
April 2025

What does worshipping God mean for you and me?

“Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,

“Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to *worship him*.” ¹

The Magi, as they are sometimes called, were wise in seeking to find and worship the Messiah. For them, worshipping meant falling down before Him and offering Him gifts of gold and precious, fragrant spices. ²

What does worshipping God mean for you and me?

When we think of worship, our thoughts typically turn to the ways we show religious devotion both privately and in Church services. As I have considered the matter of worshipping our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son, our Savior, four concepts have come to mind: *first*, the actions that constitute our worship; *second*, the attitudes and feelings that figure into our worship; *third*, the exclusivity of our worship; and *fourth*, the need to emulate the Holy Beings that we worship.

First, the Actions That Constitute Our Worship

One of the most common and important forms of worship is to gather in a consecrated space to perform acts of devotion. The Lord says, “And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day.” ³ This is, of course, our primary motivation in building chapels. But, if necessary, a non-dedicated space will do if we can invest it with some degree of sanctity.



Most important is what we do when we gather on the Lord's day. Of course, we dress as best we can according to our means—not extravagantly but modestly in a way to signal our respect and reverence for Deity. Our conduct is similarly reverent and respectful. We worship by joining in prayer; we worship by singing hymns (not just listening to but singing the hymns); we worship by instructing and learning from one another. Jesus says, "Remember that on this, the Lord's day, thou shalt offer thine oblations [meaning thine 'offerings ... of time, talents, or means, in service of God and fellowman'⁴] and thy sacraments unto the Most High, confessing thy sins unto thy brethren, and before the Lord."⁵ We come together not to entertain or be entertained—as by a band, for instance—but to remember Him and be "instructed more perfectly" in His gospel.⁶

At the most recent general conference, Elder Patrick Kearon reminded us that "we do not gather on the Sabbath simply to attend sacrament meeting and check it off the list. We come together to worship. There is a significant difference between the two. To *attend* means to be present at. But to *worship* is to intentionally praise and adore our God in a way that transforms us!"⁷

Devoting our Sabbaths to the Lord and His purposes is itself an act of worship. Some years ago, then-Elder Russell M. Nelson observed: "How do we *hallow* the Sabbath day? In my much younger years, I studied the work of others who had compiled lists of things to do and things *not* to do on the Sabbath. It wasn't until later that I learned from the scriptures that my conduct and my attitude on the Sabbath constituted a *sign* between me and my Heavenly Father [see Exodus 31:13 ; Ezekiel 20:12, 20]. With that understanding, I no longer needed lists of dos and don'ts. When I had to make a decision whether or not an activity was appropriate for the Sabbath, I simply asked myself, 'What *sign* do I want to give to God?'"⁸

Worship on the Lord's day is marked by a particular focus on the great atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. We appropriately and specially celebrate His Resurrection at Easter but also *every* week as we partake of the sacramental emblems of His Atonement, including His Resurrection. For the penitent, partaking of the sacrament is the highlight of Sabbath worship.

Worshipping together as “the body of Christ”⁹ has unique power and benefits as we teach, serve, and sustain one another. Interestingly, one recent study found that those who view their spiritual lives as *entirely private* are less likely to prioritize spiritual growth, or to say their faith is very important, or to have regular devotional time with God.¹⁰ As a community of Saints, we strengthen each other in worship and in faith.

Even so, we cannot forget the daily acts of worship that we engage in individually and at home. The Savior reminds us, “Nevertheless thy vows shall be offered up in righteousness on all days and at all times.”¹¹ One sister wisely observed, “I cannot think of a more profound way to worship God than to welcome His little ones into our lives and care for them and teach them His plan for them.”

Alma and Amulek taught the Zoramites who had been banned from their synagogues to worship God not merely once a week but always and “in whatsoever place ye may be in.”¹² They spoke about prayer as worship:

“Ye must pour out your souls in your closets, and your secret places, and in your wilderness.

“Yea, and when you do not cry unto the Lord, let your hearts be full, drawn out in prayer unto him continually.”¹³

They also spoke of searching the scriptures, bearing testimony of Christ, performing charitable acts and service, receiving the Holy Ghost, and living in thanksgiving daily.¹⁴ Consider that thought: “living in thanksgiving daily.” It speaks to my second concept:

The Attitudes and Feelings Inherent in Worship

Feeling and expressing gratitude to God are, in fact, what infuses worship with a sense of joyful renewal as opposed to seeing it as just one more duty.

True worship means loving God and yielding our will to Him—the most precious gift we can offer. When asked which was the great commandment in all the law, Jesus replied, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.”¹⁵ He also called this the first commandment.

This was the pattern of Jesus’s own worship of the Father. His life and His atoning sacrifice were dedicated to the glory of the Father. Poignantly we remember Jesus’s heartrending plea in the midst of unimaginable suffering and anguish: “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me,” but then His submissive “nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.”¹⁶



Worship is striving to follow this perfect example.¹⁷ We will not attain perfection in this course overnight, but if each day we “offer for a sacrifice unto [Him] a broken heart and a contrite spirit,” He will again baptize us with His Spirit and fill us with His grace.¹⁸

Third, the Exclusivity of Our Worship

In the first section of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord pronounces this indictment of the world:

“They have strayed from mine ordinances, and have broken mine everlasting covenant;

“They seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god, whose image is in the likeness of the world.”¹⁹

It is good for us to remember the example of the three Jewish young men Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, carried captive to Babylon not long after Lehi and his family left Jerusalem. A Babylonian officer renamed them Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Later, when these three refused to worship an image set up by King Nebuchadnezzar, he commanded that they be thrown into a burning fiery furnace, saying to them, “And who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?”²⁰

You will recall their bold answer:

“Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.

“But if not, be it known unto thee ... that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.”²¹



The furnace was so hot that it killed those who threw them into it, but Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were unharmed. “Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who hath ... delivered his servants that trusted in him, ... and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.”²² They trusted in Jehovah for deliverance, “but if not,” that is, even if God in His wisdom did not prevent their death, yet they would remain true to Him.

Whatever takes precedence over worship of the Father and the Son becomes an idol. Those who reject God as the source of truth, or disavow any accountability to Him, in effect substitute *themselves* as their god. One who places loyalty to a party or cause ahead of divine direction worships a false god. Even those who purport to worship God but do not keep His commandments are walking in their own way: “They draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.”²³ The object of our worship is exclusively “the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom [He] hast sent.”²⁴

Finally, the Need to Emulate the Father and the Son

Ultimately, how we live may be the best, most genuine form of worship. Showing our devotion means emulating the Father and the Son—cultivating Their attributes and character in ourselves. If, as the saying goes, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, then we might say with respect to Deity, emulation is the sincerest form of veneration. This suggests an active, sustained effort on our part to seek holiness. But becoming more Christlike is also the natural outcome of our acts of worship. Elder Kearon’s phrase cited earlier about worshipping, “in a way that transforms us,” is significant. True worship is transformative.

This is the beauty of the covenant path—the path of worship, love, and loyalty to God. We enter that path by baptism, pledging to take upon us the name of Christ and to keep His commandments. We receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, the messenger of the Savior’s grace that redeems and cleanses us from sin as we repent.²⁵ We could even say that in repenting we are worshipping Him.

There follow additional priesthood ordinances and covenants made in the house of the Lord that further sanctify us. The ceremonies and ordinances of the temple constitute an elevated form of worship.

President Russell M. Nelson has emphasized that “every man and every woman who participates in priesthood ordinances and who makes and keeps covenants with God has direct access to the power of God.”²⁶ This is not only a power we draw upon to serve and to bless. It is also the divine power that works in us to refine and purify us. As we walk the covenant path, the sanctifying “power of godliness is manifest”²⁷ in us.

May we, as the ancient Nephites and Lamanites, “fall down at the feet of Jesus, and ... worship him.”²⁸ May we, as commanded by Jesus, “fall down and worship the Father in [the] name [of the Son].”²⁹ May we receive the Holy Spirit and yield our hearts to God, have no other gods before Him, and as disciples of Jesus Christ, emulate His character in our own lives. I testify that as we do, we will experience joy in worship. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. Matthew 2:1–2 ; emphasis added.
2. See Matthew 2:11 .
3. Doctrine and Covenants 59:9 .
4. Doctrine and Covenants 59:12 , footnote *b* .
5. Doctrine and Covenants 59:12 .
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:78 .
7. Patrick Kearon, “ Welcome to the Church of Joy ,” *Liahona* , Nov. 2024, 36.
8. Russell M. Nelson, “ The Sabbath Is a Delight ,” *Liahona* , May 2015, 130.
9. See, for example, 1 Corinthians 12:12–27 .
10. See “Stats for Sermons: Most Christians Have Entirely Private Spiritual Lives,” Barna Group, Feb. 21, 2025, [barna.com/trends/stat-download-spiritual-lives](https://www.barna.com/trends/stat-download-spiritual-lives).
11. Doctrine and Covenants 59:11 .
12. Alma 34:38 ; see also Alma 32:10–11 .
13. Alma 34:26–27 ; see also Alma 33:3–11 .
14. See Alma 33:12–23 ; 34:8, 28–39 .
15. See Matthew 22:36–38 ; Mark 12:28–30 . Jesus was not asked what the second commandment was, but He volunteered, “And

the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matthew 22:39 ; see also Mark 12:31).

16. Matthew 26:39 ; see also Mark 14:36 ; Luke 22:42 .
17. Jesus says simply, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15).
18. See 3 Nephi 9:20 .
19. Doctrine and Covenants 1:15–16 .
20. Daniel 3:15 .
21. Daniel 3:17–18 .
22. Daniel 3:28 .
23. Joseph Smith—History 1:19 ; see also Isaiah 29:13 ; Luke 6:46 .
24. John 17:3 ; see also Exodus 20:2–3 ; Mosiah 12:33–35 ; Doctrine and Covenants 20:17–19 .
25. See 2 Nephi 31:17 .
26. Russell M. Nelson, “ The Everlasting Covenant ,” *Liahona* , Oct. 2022, 10.
27. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:19–21 .
28. 3 Nephi 11:17 .
29. Doctrine and Covenants 18:40 .

Sunday Morning Session

The Times of Restitution of All Things

(Acts 3:21)

By Elder David A. Bednar
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles
April 2025

The most important and glorious “good news” is the message that the Lord Jesus Christ has restored His gospel and Church in the latter days.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized 195 years ago today, on April 6, 1830.

A small congregation of believers and friends gathered for this momentous and joyous occasion. A great outpouring of the Spirit blessed all in attendance as the ordinance of the sacrament was administered, the gift of the Holy Ghost was conferred, priesthood ordinations were performed, and truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ were preached.

In reestablishing His Church, the Lord designated by revelation 24-year-old Joseph Smith as its earthly leader: “a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of the church through the will of God the Father, and the grace of your Lord Jesus Christ.” ¹

I earnestly pray for the help of the Holy Ghost as we consider the importance and ongoing impact of this singular event in the history of the world. ²

The First Vision

The formal organization of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was the culmination of a sequence of miraculous experiences. The first of these experiences occurred 10 years earlier in upstate New York.

In the spring of 1820, a young boy named Joseph Smith went into the woods near his home to pray. He had questions regarding the salvation of his soul, and he yearned “to know which of all the [churches] was right, that [he] might know which to join.” ³ Joseph trusted that God would answer his prayer and direct him. ⁴

Please note that Joseph did not pray merely to know what was right. Rather, he prayed to know what was right so he could do what was right. Joseph asked in faith ⁵ and was determined to act in accordance with the answers he received.

“In [response] to his [sincere] prayer, God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to Joseph and inaugurated the ‘restitution of all things’ (Acts 3:21) as foretold in the Bible. In this vision, he learned that following the death of the

original Apostles, Christ's New Testament Church was lost from the earth.”⁶ Joseph Smith would be instrumental in restoring once again the doctrine, the authority, and the covenants and ordinances of the Savior's ancient Church.



Joseph affirmed: “I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other— *This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*”⁷

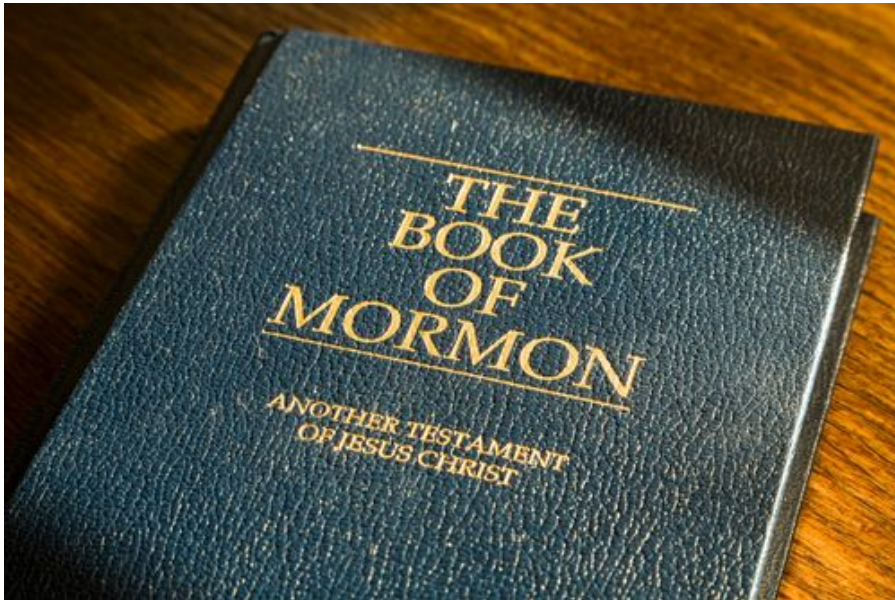
Through this vision and subsequent supernal experiences, Joseph Smith came to understand that God and Jesus Christ knew him as an individual, cared about his eternal salvation, and had a mission for him to perform. He also learned vital lessons about the attributes, character, and perfections of the Godhead—and that the Father and the Son are separate and distinct Beings. Jesus Christ is the literal Son of God in spirit and in the flesh.⁸

Joseph Smith declared that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ are corporeal beings. He said, “The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit.”⁹

I testify the visitation of the Father and the Son to Joseph Smith was the initiating event in the grand “restoration of all things spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began.”¹⁰

The Book of Mormon

The second in the sequence of miraculous experiences that led to the formal organization of the Savior's restored Church was the translation and coming forth of the Book of Mormon.



“Joseph Smith was given the gift and power of God to translate an ancient record: the Book of Mormon—Another Testament of Jesus Christ. ... This sacred text include[s] an account of the personal ministry of Jesus Christ among people in the Western Hemisphere soon after His Resurrection. [The Book of Mormon] teaches of life’s purpose and explains the doctrine of Christ, which is central to that purpose. As a companion scripture to the Bible, the Book of Mormon testifies that all human beings are sons and daughters of a loving Father in Heaven, that He has a divine plan for our lives, and that His Son, Jesus Christ, speaks today as well as in days of old.” ¹¹

As members of the Savior’s restored Church, “We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.” ¹² The Book of Mormon is another testament of Jesus Christ, confirms the truthfulness of the Bible, and restores plain and precious truths that were lost from the Bible. ¹³

Priesthood Restored

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints teaches that the original Church established by the Savior, with its divine authority, doctrine, and covenants and ordinances, was lost from the earth. As part of the prophesied restoration of all things in the latter days, ancient prophets and apostles personally conferred priesthood authority upon Joseph Smith and committed priesthood keys to him. This was the third in the sequence of miraculous experiences that led to the formal organization of the Savior’s restored Church.

Priesthood authority allows God’s servants to “represent [Him] and act in His name.” ¹⁴ “Priesthood keys are the authority to direct the use of the priesthood on behalf of God’s children.” ¹⁵



Under the direction of the Father and the Son, the resurrected John the Baptist restored, in 1829, the authority to baptize by immersion for the remission of sins. ¹⁶ In that same year, ¹⁷ three of the original Twelve Apostles—Peter, James, and John—restored the apostleship and additional priesthood authority and keys. ¹⁸

Six years after the formal organization of the Church, in the Kirtland Temple, Moses, Elias, and Elijah committed to Joseph the additional authority necessary to accomplish God’s work in the latter days. ¹⁹

Moses committed the keys of the gathering of Israel. ²⁰

Elias committed the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham, including the restoration of the Abrahamic covenant. ²¹

Elijah committed the keys of the sealing power, providing the authority that allows ordinances performed on earth to be binding in eternity, such as joining families together in eternal relationships that transcend death. ²²

The Church of Jesus Christ Is Organized

As Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon, he received revelations indicating that the Church of Jesus Christ would be reestablished. But the Lord instructed Joseph not to organize His Church immediately. Rather, “by the spirit of prophecy and revelation,” the Lord revealed to Joseph “the precise day ... [he] should proceed to organize His Church once [again] upon the earth.” ²³

The Church was organized in proper sequence only after the restoration of the priesthood and the publication of the Book of Mormon. The first copies of the Book of Mormon became available on March 26, 1830, and the Church was formally organized on April 6.



“The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ... is Christ’s New Testament Church restored. This Church is anchored in the perfect life of its chief cornerstone, Jesus Christ, and in His infinite Atonement and literal Resurrection. Jesus Christ has once again called Apostles and has given them priesthood authority. He invites all of us to come unto Him and His Church, to receive the Holy Ghost, the ordinances of salvation, and to gain enduring joy.” ²⁴

The Dispensation of the Fulness of Times

The appearance of the Father and the Son to Joseph Smith, the translation and coming forth of the Book of Mormon, and the restoration of priesthood authority and keys were necessary prerequisites to the organization of the Lord’s restored Church 195 years ago today.

In the Old Testament, the prophet Daniel interpreted a dream about a stone that would be cut out of a mountain without hands and fill the entire earth. ²⁵ One year after the organization of the Church, the Lord instructed Joseph Smith that the keys of the kingdom of God had again been “committed unto man on the earth” and the “gospel [of Jesus Christ would] roll forth unto the ends of the earth, as the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands.” ²⁶

I testify: The Lord is fulfilling His promise. The Savior's restored Church is being established throughout the world and is the instrument by which God will "gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him." ²⁷

The Lord's latter-day work "is a cause that has interested the people of God in every age; it is a theme upon which prophets, priests and kings have dwelt with peculiar delight; they have looked forward with joyful anticipation to the day in which we live; and fired with heavenly and joyful anticipations they have sung and written and prophesied of this our day." ²⁸

In this greatest and last of all gospel dispensations, "a whole and complete and perfect union, and welding together of dispensations, and keys, and powers, and glories should take place, and be revealed from the days of Adam even to the present time. And not only this, but those things which never have been revealed from the foundation of the world ... shall be revealed ... in this, the dispensation of the fulness of times." ²⁹

The Prophet Joseph further explained, "All the ordinances and duties that ever have been required by the Priesthood, under the directions and commandments of the Almighty in any of the dispensations, shall all be had in the last dispensation, ... bringing to pass the restoration spoken of by the mouth of all the Holy Prophets." ³⁰

Promises and Testimony

I have attempted to summarize basic elements of the most important and glorious "good news" ³¹ any person anywhere in the world can ever receive—the message that the Lord Jesus Christ has restored His gospel and Church in the latter days.

I invite all to learn about and prove this message. I promise that individuals "who prayerfully study the message of the Restoration and act in faith will be blessed [through the power of the Holy Ghost] to gain their own witness of its divinity and of its purpose to prepare the world for the promised Second Coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ." ³² As you pray earnestly with the expectation to both receive and act upon an answer from God, as did young Joseph Smith, your capacity to recognize and respond to that divine witness will be increased.

I witness that God, the Eternal Father, is our Father. I testify and witness that Jesus Christ is the Father's Beloved Son and His Only Begotten in the flesh. He is our Savior and Redeemer.

And I joyfully witness that the Father and the Son appeared to the boy Joseph Smith, thus initiating the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the latter days. The Book of Mormon is another testament of Jesus Christ and contains the word of God. Priesthood authority to represent the Savior and act in His name again is found on the earth. And The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is Christ's New Testament Church restored. I bear my sure witness that all of these things are true in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. Doctrine and Covenants 21:1 ; see also *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 8–9.
2. In preparing this message, I have relied extensively on the teachings set forth in the 1980 and 2020 proclamations issued by the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: “Proclamation,” *Ensign*, May 1980, 52–53; “The Restoration of the Fulness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ: A Bicentennial Proclamation to the World,” Gospel Library.
3. Joseph Smith—History 1:18 .
4. See “The Restoration of the Fulness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ,” Gospel Library.
5. See Joseph Smith—History 1:11–13 ; David A. Bednar, “Ask in Faith,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2008, 94–97.
6. “The Restoration of the Fulness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ,” Gospel Library.
7. Joseph Smith—History 1:17 .
8. See 1 Nephi 11:18–21 ; Doctrine and Covenants 93:11–14, 21 .
9. Doctrine and Covenants 130:22 .
10. Doctrine and Covenants 27:6 .
11. “The Restoration of the Fulness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ,” Gospel Library.
12. Articles of Faith 1:8 .
13. See 1 Nephi 13:40 .
14. *General Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 3.4 , Gospel Library.
15. *General Handbook*, 3.4.1 .
16. See Doctrine and Covenants 13:1 .
17. See Doctrine and Covenants 18:9 ; 27:12–13 ; see also Revelation Book 1, 24, josephsmithpapers.org .
18. See Doctrine and Covenants 27:12–13 .
19. See Doctrine and Covenants 110:11–16 .
20. See Doctrine and Covenants 110:11 .
21. See Abraham 2:9–11 .
22. See Doctrine and Covenants 128:9–10 .

23. Doctrine and Covenants 20, section heading .
24. “ The Restoration of the Fulness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ ,”
Gospel Library.
25. See Daniel 2:28, 35, 44 ; see also verses 1–45 .
26. Doctrine and Covenants 65:2 .
27. Ephesians 1:10 .
28. *Teachings: Joseph Smith* , 186.
29. Doctrine and Covenants 128:18 .
30. *Teachings: Joseph Smith* , 511.
31. Bible Dictionary, “ Gospels .”
32. “ The Restoration of the Fulness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ ,”
Gospel Library.

Participate to Prepare for Christ's Return

By Elder Steven D. Shumway
Of the Seventy
April 2025

Callings and other ways we embark in God's work uniquely prepare us to meet the Savior.

A few months ago, I was standing in a hall when Elder Neil L. Andersen walked by. I had just been called as a new General Authority. Likely sensing my feelings of inadequacy, he smiled and said, "Well, there looks like a man who has no idea what he is doing."

And I thought, "There is a true prophet and seer."

Elder Andersen then whispered, "Don't worry, Elder Shumway. It gets better—in five or six years."

Have you ever wondered why we are asked to do things in God's kingdom that feel beyond our reach? With life's demands, have you asked why we even need callings in the Church? Well, I have.

And I got an answer in general conference when President Russell M. Nelson said, "Now is the time for you and for me to prepare for the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ."¹ When President Nelson said this, the Spirit taught me that as we participate in God's work, we prepare ourselves and others for Christ's return. The Lord's promise is compelling that callings, ministering, temple worship, following promptings, and other ways we embark in God's work uniquely prepare us to meet the Savior.²

God Is Pleased When We Engage in His Work

In "the majesty of this moment,"³ as God's kingdom expands and temples dot the earth, there is a growing need for willing souls to engage in God's work. Selflessly serving is the very essence of Christlike discipleship. But serving is rarely convenient. This is why I admire you covenant-keeping disciples, including our dear missionaries, who set aside your desires and challenges to serve God by serving His children. God "delights to honor [you for serving Him] in righteousness." He promises, "Great shall be [your] reward and eternal shall be [your] glory."⁴ When we say yes to serving, we are saying yes to Jesus Christ. And when we say yes to Christ, we are saying yes to the most abundant life possible.⁵

I learned this lesson while working and studying chemical engineering in college. I was asked to be the activities planner for a singles ward. This was my nightmare calling. Still, I accepted, and at first it was drudgery. Then at one activity a beautiful girl was smitten by the way I served the ice cream. She

returned three times, hoping to catch my attention. We fell in love, and she proposed to me just two weeks later. Well, maybe it wasn't quite that fast, and I was the one who proposed, but the truth is this: I shudder to think of missing out on Heidi had I said no to that calling.

Our Participation Is Preparation for Christ's Return

We engage in God's work not because God needs us but because we need God and His mighty blessings. He promises, "For, behold, I will bless all those who labor in my vineyard with a mighty blessing."⁶ Let me share three principles that teach how our participation in God's work blesses and helps us prepare to meet the Savior.

First, as we participate, we progress toward "the measure of [our] creation."⁷

We learn this pattern in the account of the Creation. After each day of labor, God acknowledged the progress made by saying, "It was good."⁸ He did not say the work was finished nor that it was perfect. But what He did say was that there was progress, and in God's eyes, that is good!⁹

Callings do not determine or validate a person's worth or worthiness. Rather, as we labor with God in whatever way He asks, we grow into the measure of our own creation.¹⁰

God rejoices in our progress, and so should we, even when we still have work to do. At times we may lack the strength or the means to serve in a calling.¹¹ Still, we can engage in the work and protect our testimonies through meaningful ways like prayer and scripture study. Our loving Heavenly Father does not condemn us when we are willing but unable to serve.¹²

Second, serving elevates our homes and churches into holy places where we can practice covenant living.

For example, our covenant to always remember Christ is made individually, but this covenant is lived as we serve others.¹³ Callings surround us with opportunities to "bear ... one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

¹⁴ When we serve because we love God and want to live our covenants, service that seems dutiful and draining becomes joyful and transformative.¹⁵

Ordinances don't save us because they fulfill a heavenly checklist. Rather, when we live the covenants connected with these ordinances, we become the kind of person who wants to be in God's presence. This understanding overcomes hesitations to serve or preferences not to serve. Our preparation to meet Jesus Christ accelerates when we stop asking what God will permit and start asking what God would prefer.¹⁶

Third, participating in God's work helps us receive God's gift of grace and feel His greater love.

We do not receive financial compensation for serving. Instead, scripture teaches that for our "labor [we are] to receive the grace of God, that [we] might wax strong in the Spirit, [have] the knowledge of God, [and] teach with power and authority from God."¹⁷ That is a very good trade!

Because of God's grace, our abilities or inabilities are not the principal basis for extending or accepting a calling. God does not expect perfect performance or exceptional talent to participate in His work. If so, Queen Esther would not have saved her nation, Peter would not have led the early Church, and Joseph Smith would not be the Prophet of the Restoration.¹⁸

As we act in faith to do something beyond our abilities, our weakness is exposed. This is never comfortable, but it is necessary for us to "know that it is by [God's] grace ... that we have power to do these things."¹⁹

We will fall many times as we engage in God's work. But in our effort, Jesus Christ catches us. He gradually lifts us to experience salvation from failure and fear and from feeling like we will never be enough.²⁰ When we consecrate our meager but best effort, God magnifies it.²¹ When we sacrifice for Jesus Christ, He sanctifies us.²² This is the transformative power of God's grace. As we serve, we grow in grace until we are prepared to "be lifted up by the Father, to stand before [Jesus Christ]."²³

Help Others Receive and Rejoice in the Gift of Callings

I do not know all the Savior will ask me when I stand before Him, but perhaps one question will be "Who did you bring with you?"²⁴ Callings are sacred gifts from a loving Heavenly Father to help bring others with us to Jesus Christ.²⁵ So I invite leaders and each of us to more intentionally seek those without callings. Encourage and help them engage in God's work to help them prepare for Christ's return.

John was not active in the Church when his bishop visited and told him that the Lord had a work for him to do. He invited John to quit smoking. Although John had tried many times to stop, this time he felt an unseen power helping him.²⁶

Just three weeks later, the stake president visited John. He called him to serve in the bishopric. John was shocked. He told the stake president he had just quit smoking. If this meant he would have to abandon his tradition of attending professional football games on Sunday, well, that was just too much to ask. The stake president's inspired response was simple: "John, I am not asking you; the Lord is."

To which John replied, "Well, if that is the case, I will serve."

John told me that these sacrifices to serve were the spiritual turning points for him and for his family.²⁷

I wonder if we have a blind spot, failing to extend callings to individuals who, to our mortal view, appear unlikely or unworthy. Or we may be more concerned with a culture of performance than with the doctrine of progression, neglecting to see how the Savior increases capacity in the unlikely and the unproven by giving them opportunities to serve.²⁸

Elder David A. Bednar teaches the importance of the scriptural mandate to "*let every [woman and] man learn [their] duty, and to act.*"²⁹ Do we do this? When

leaders and parents let others learn and act for themselves, they blossom and flourish.³⁰ While the easier path may be to give faithful members a second calling, the more excellent way is to invite the unlikely to serve and let them learn and grow.

If Christ were physically here, He would visit the sick, teach the Sunday School class, sit with the heartbroken young woman, and bless the children. He can do His own work.³¹ But He lives this principle of letting us act and learn, so He sends us in His place.

With participation in God's work comes "the right, privilege, and responsibility to represent the Lord [Jesus Christ]." ³² When we serve to magnify Christ and not ourselves, ³³ our service becomes joyful. When others leave our class, meeting, ministering visit, or activity remembering Christ more than they remember us, the work is energizing.

In earnestly seeking to represent the Savior, we become more like Him. ³⁴ That is the best preparation for the sacred moment when each of us will kneel and confess that Jesus is the Christ, which I witness that He is and that President Russell M. Nelson is His "voice ... unto the ends of the earth" to help us "prepare ... for that which is to come." ³⁵ In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. Russell M. Nelson, "The Lord Jesus Christ Will Come Again," *Liahona*, Nov. 2024, 121.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 4:2–4.
3. Russell M. Nelson, "The Lord Jesus Christ Will Come Again," 121.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 76:5–6.
5. See John 10:10.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 21:9.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 88:19.
8. See Genesis 1.
9. In the Savior's parable of the talents, the Master gives responsibility over "a few things" to each servant. The Master was more focused on each servant's progress toward becoming masters "over many things" and less concerned with the return of His goods. The one servant who was afraid and unwilling to labor was left condemned and without progression. (See Matthew 25:14–28.)
10. See Luke 21:19. Elder David A. Bednar teaches that "righteous work is a necessity for spiritual progress" ("Things as They

Really Are 2.0 ” [worldwide devotional for young adults, Nov. 3, 2024], Gospel Library).

11. See Doctrine and Covenants 10:4 .
12. See Mosiah 4:24 .
13. See Russell M. Nelson, “ What We Are Learning and Will Never Forget ,” *Liahona* , May 2021, 79: “God wants us to work together and help each other. That is why He sends us to earth in families and organizes us into wards and stakes. That is why He asks us to serve and minister to each other. ... We can accomplish so much more together than we can alone. God’s plan of happiness would be frustrated if His children remained isolated one from another.”
14. Galatians 6:2 ; see also Mosiah 18:8–9 .
15. President Henry B. Eyring taught: “To be called to serve is a call to come to love the Master we serve. It is a call to have our natures changed” (“ As a Child ,” *Ensign* or *Liahona* , May 2006, 17).
16. See Henry B. Eyring, “ Should a Latter-day Saint Sell a Product When Its Use Violates the Word of Wisdom? ,” *Ensign* , Apr. 1977, 30.
17. Mosiah 18:26 ; see also Mosiah 27:5 .
18. See 2 Nephi 3:13, 24 .
19. Jacob 4:7 .
20. See Isaiah 40:29–31 ; 2 Corinthians 12:9 .
21. See Matthew 14:15–21 . Even though a meager five loaves of bread and two fishes were offered to feed the massive multitude of people, the Savior gratefully took that offering and magnified it to even more than what was needed. One of the great lessons of this miracle is that what the Savior offers us is always more than enough!
22. The Latin root of the word *sacrifice* is *sacer* , meaning sacred or holy, and *facere* , meaning to make. As we sacrifice for God, He makes us holy (see Helaman 3:35 ; Doctrine and Covenants 132:50).
23. 3 Nephi 27:14 .
24. See Doctrine and Covenants 15:6 ; 16:6; 18:10–16 .
25. See Moroni 7:2 ; *General Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* , 4.1 , Gospel Library.

26. See “Let Us All Press On,” *Hymns* , no. 243.
27. Personal experience and correspondence, Jan. 4, 2025; name has been changed.
28. See Matthew 10:5–8 ; Luke 10:1–9 ; *General Handbook* , 4.2.6 .
29. Doctrine and Covenants 107:99 ; emphasis added; from a conversation with Elder David A. Bednar, Dec. 2024.
30. See Joseph Smith—History 1:20 . Our youth are not just future leaders in the Church. They can lead in substantive ways now. I saw this truth serving with 744 of the most remarkable disciples of Jesus Christ in the Illinois Chicago Mission from 2019–2022. During COVID, these young but powerful disciples of Christ led God’s work forward to unseen heights in remarkable and innovative ways.
31. See 2 Nephi 27:20–21 .
32. *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ* (2023), 3.
33. In Jacob 1:17, 19 , Jacob’s errand was the Lord’s errand. He did not magnify his office unto himself but unto the Lord so that he could teach God’s word and thus “be found spotless at the last day.”
34. See 3 Nephi 27:27 .
35. Doctrine and Covenants 1:11–12 .

Your Repentance Doesn't Burden Jesus Christ; It Brightens His Joy

By Sister Tamara W. Runia

First Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency

April 2025

The invitation to repent is an expression of God's love. Saying yes to that invitation is an expression of ours.

Several years ago on a trip to Florida, I sat outside reading a book. Its title suggested that we can still make it to heaven, even though we're not perfect now. A woman walking by asked, "Do you think it's possible?"

I looked up, confused, and then realized she was talking about the book I was reading. I said something ridiculous like, "Well, I'm not that far into it, but I'll let you know how it ends."

Oh, how I wish I could travel back in time! I'd tell her, "Yes, it's possible! Because heaven isn't for people who've been perfect; it's for people who've been forgiven, who choose Christ again and again."

Today I want to speak to those of us who sometimes feel, "Repentance and forgiveness seem to be working for everyone but me." Those who privately wonder, "Since I keep making the same mistakes, maybe this is the way I am." Those who, like me, have days when the covenant path feels so steep, it's almost a covenant hike!

A wonderful missionary in Australia, Elder QaQa ¹ from Fiji, shared a similar feeling in his departing testimony: "I know that God loves me, but sometimes I wonder, 'Does God know that I love Him?' Because I'm not perfect, and I still make mistakes."

In that one tender, haunting question, Elder QaQa summed up exactly what I've often worried about. Maybe you're wondering too, thinking, "I'm trying so hard, but does God know I'm really trying? When I keep falling short, does God know I still love Him?"

It saddens me to admit this, but I used to measure my relationship with the Savior by how perfectly I was living. I thought an obedient life meant I would never need to repent. And when I made mistakes, which was every single day, I distanced myself from God, thinking, "He must be so disappointed in me."

That's just not true.

I've learned that if you wait until you're clean enough or perfect enough to go to the Savior, you've missed the whole point!

What if we thought about commandments and obedience in a different way?

I testify that while God cares about our mistakes, He cares more about what happens *after* we make a mistake. Are we going to turn to Him again and again? Are we going to stay in this covenant relationship?

Maybe you hear the Lord's words "If [you] love me, keep my commandments" ² and feel deflated because you haven't kept all the commandments. Let me remind you that it is also a commandment to repent! In fact, it might be the most repeated commandment in the scriptures.

In Alma's soliloquy, "O that I were an angel, and could have the wish of [my] heart ... and cry repentance," ³ he wasn't trying to shame us by pointing out our mistakes. He wanted to cry repentance so that you and I could avoid suffering in the world. ⁴ One reason Alma hated sin is because it causes us pain. ⁵

Sometimes I have to remember, like a Post-it note on my forehead, that the commandments are the path away from pain. And repentance is too. ⁶ Our prophet said, "The Savior loves us always but *especially* when we repent." ⁷

So when the Lord says, "Repent ye, repent ye," ⁸ what if you imagined Him saying, "I love you. I love you." ⁹ Picture Him pleading with you to leave behind the behavior causing you pain, inviting you to step out of darkness and turn to His light.

In my daughter Carly's ward, a new priest knelt to bless the sacrament, and instead of saying, "That they may do it in remembrance of the blood of thy Son," ¹⁰ he inadvertently said, "That they may do it in remembrance of the *love* of thy Son." Tears filled Carly's eyes as the truth of those words sank in.

Our Savior was willing to suffer the pain of His Atonement because He loves you. In fact, you are "the joy that was set before him" while He suffered. ¹¹

The invitation to repent is an expression of God's love.

Saying yes to that invitation is an expression of ours.

Picture your favorite image of Christ. Now imagine Him smiling brightly with joy each time you use His gift, because He is the "perfect brightness of hope." ¹²

Yes, your repentance doesn't *burden* Jesus Christ; it *brightens* His joy! ¹³

Let's teach that!

Because repentance is our best news!

We don't stay on the covenant path by never making a mistake. We stay on the path by repenting every day.

And when we're repenting, God forgives without shaming us, comparing us to anyone else, or scolding us because this is the same thing we were repenting of last week.

He's excited every time He sees us on our knees. ¹⁴ He delights to forgive us because to Him we are delightful! ¹⁵

Don't you just feel that's true?

Then why is it so hard for us to believe?!

Satan, the great accuser¹⁶ and deceiver, uses shame to keep us from God. Shame is a darkness so heavy it feels that if you took it out of your body, it would have an actual weight or heft to it.

Shame is the voice that beats you up, saying, “What were you thinking?” “Do you ever get anything right?”

Shame doesn’t tell us we *made* a mistake; it tells us we *are* our mistakes. You may even hear, “Hide.” The adversary does everything in his power to keep the heaviness inside, telling us the cost is too high, that it will be easier if this stays in darkness, removing all hope.

Satan is the thief of hope.

And you need to hear this, so I’ll say these words out loud: You are not the voice in your head or the mistakes you have made. You may need to say that out loud too. Tell Satan, “Not today.” Put him behind you.¹⁷

Feel that pull, the godly sorrow that turns you *toward* your Savior, and watch His grace enter into your life and the lives of those you love. I promise that the minute we bring a broken heart courageously toward Him, He is immediately there.¹⁸

If you saw someone drowning, wouldn’t you reach your hand out and rescue them? Can you imagine your Savior rejecting your outstretched hand? I imagine Him diving into the water, descending below all things¹⁹ to lift us up so we can take a fresh breath! No one can sink lower than the light of Christ shines.²⁰

The Savior is forever brighter than the darkness of shame. He would never attack your worth. So watch closely.

- Imagine that this hand represents worth.
- This hand represents obedience. Maybe you woke up this morning, said a meaningful prayer, and searched the scriptures to hear God’s voice. You’ve made good decisions and are treating the people around you with Christlikeness. You’re listening to general conference! Your obedience is here!
- Or maybe things haven’t gone so well. You’ve struggled lately to do those small, simple things to connect to heaven. You’ve made some decisions you aren’t proud of.
- Where is your worth? Has this hand moved at all?

Your worth isn’t tied to obedience. Your worth is constant; it never changes. It was given to you by God, and there’s nothing you or anyone else can do to change it. Obedience brings blessings; that is true. But worth isn’t one of them. Your worth is always “great in the sight of God,”²¹ no matter where your decisions have taken you.

While I make mistakes, I want to *stay* in covenant relationship with Christ, and I’ll tell you why.

I grew up taking diving lessons and learned that when judges score a dive, they watch the execution. Was the entry perfectly vertical, with toes pointed and a

small splash? Then they do something extraordinary. They factor in the degree of difficulty.

Everyone is diving with their own degree of difficulty. And your Savior is the only one who truly knows the difficulty you are diving with. ²² I want a relationship with the one person who gets me, who knows my heart and how hard I'm trying!

He knows the mists of darkness are descending on all of us travelers and that our journey passes by the river of filth—so even when we're holding to the iron rod, we're going to get splashed. ²³

Coming unto Christ is saying, "Will you help me?" with hope, a revealed assurance that His arms are extended to you always. I believe this fresh view of repentance means that even though we don't have perfect obedience *yet*, we try affectionate obedience *now*, choosing to stay, again and again, because we love Him.

Remember King Benjamin's people, who had no more disposition to do evil but only to do good continually? ²⁴ Do you think they packed up their tents, went home, and never made another mistake? Of course not! The difference is they no longer *wanted* to sin. They had affectionate obedience! Their hearts were turned and tuned to God *while* they struggled!

Once, at the beach, I saw a bird flying into the wind, flapping its wings so hard, almost frenetically, but staying in the same place. Then I noticed another bird, higher up. It had caught an updraft and was floating easily, unburdened in the wind. That's the difference between trying to do this by ourselves and turning to our Savior, letting Him lift us, with "healing in his wings." ²⁵

As mission leaders in Australia, during our last visit with each missionary, we talked about 3 Nephi 17, where the people were close to the Savior and could hear Him praying for them. We asked, "If you could hear the Savior praying for *you*, what do you think He would say?" ²⁶

To hear their answers was one of the most Spirit-filled experiences of my life. Every one of those missionaries would pause, and tears would fill their eyes as we reminded them, "Your Savior knows the degree of difficulty you're experiencing. He's felt it!"

This is what those missionaries quietly and tenderly shared: One sister said, "Jesus would tell the Father, 'She's doing her very best. I know how hard she is trying.'" An elder said, "With everything that's happened in his life, I'm so proud of him."

Let's try this. Tonight, before you pray, imagine Jesus Christ close by. He is your Advocate with the Father. Ask yourself, "What would my Savior say to the Father about me?"

And then become silent.

Listen for that voice that says *good* things about you—the voice of the Savior, your finest friend, and your Father in Heaven, who is really there. Remember, *Their* love and *your* worth are always great, no matter what!

I stand here to witness that Jesus Christ gives light to those who sit in darkness.
²⁷ So, on those days when you feel that voice telling you to hide, that you *should* hide in a dark room all by yourself, I invite you to be brave and believe Christ! Walk over and turn on the Light—our Perfect Brightness of Hope.

Bathed in His light, you'll see people all around you who have felt alone too, but now, with the light on, *you* and *they* will wonder, "Why were we so afraid in the dark? And why did we stay there so long?"

"May the Lord of Lights wrap you in His arms and console and love you continually." ²⁸ May we love *Him* continually and choose Him, again and again. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. Pronounced "Gahngah."
2. John 14:15 .
3. Alma 29:1 .
4. See Alma 29:2 .
5. See Alma 37:32 .
6. This idea came from a conversation with my daughter Carly Runia Red.
7. Russell M. Nelson, " The Power of Spiritual Momentum ," *Liahona* , May 2022, 98.
8. Helaman 7:17 .
9. Conversation with Sister Kathryn Reynolds of the Young Women general advisory council.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 20:79 .
11. Hebrews 12:2 .
12. 2 Nephi 31:20 .
13. This thought was shared with me by Anthony Sweat; see also Doctrine and Covenants 18:13 ; Dale G. Renlund, " Repentance: A Joyful Choice ," *Ensign* or *Liahona* , Nov. 2016, 123.
14. "Prayer is the contrite sinner's voice, returning from his ways, while angels in their songs rejoice and cry, 'Behold, he prays!'" ("Prayer Is the Soul's Sincere Desire," *Hymns* , no. 145).
15. See Doctrine and Covenants 18:10 .
16. See Revelation 12:10 .

17. See Matthew 4:10 ; Moses 1:20 . President Russell M. Nelson urged us: “Please do not fear or delay repenting. Satan delights in your misery. Cut it short. Cast his influence out of your life!” (“ The Power of Spiritual Momentum ,” 98).
18. See Alma 34:31 ; Doctrine and Covenants 88:63 .
19. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:6 .
20. “It is not possible for you to sink lower than the infinite light of Christ’s Atonement shines” (Jeffrey R. Holland, “ The Laborers in the Vineyard ,” *Ensign* or *Liahona* , May 2012, 33).
21. Doctrine and Covenants 18:10 .
22. See Stephen E. Robinson, *Following Christ: The Parable of the Divers and More Good News* (1995), 34–38.
23. See 1 Nephi 12:16–17 .
24. See Mosiah 5:1–5 .
25. Malachi 4:2 .
26. See Tom Christofferson, “What Would It Be Like to Hear the Savior Pray for You?,” *LDS Living* , Jan. 19, 2021, [lds-living.com](https://www.lds.org/lds-living).
27. See Isaiah 9:2 ; Doctrine and Covenants 11:11 .
28. From a personal letter from Vincent Alma Wood, my father, while I was attending Brigham Young University in 1979.

Compensating Blessings

By Bishop Gérard Caussé

Presiding Bishop

April 2025

While many circumstances in life may be beyond our control, none of us is beyond the reach of the Lord's infinite blessings.

Serving in the Presiding Bishopric, I have had the privilege of meeting Latter-day Saints around the world in a variety of places and cultures. I have been continually inspired by your abiding faith and devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet I have also been moved by the diverse and often difficult circumstances many of you face—challenges such as illness, disability, limited resources, fewer opportunities for marriage or education, abuse by others, and other limitations or constraints. At times, these trials may seem to hinder your progress and challenge your genuine efforts to live the gospel fully, making it more difficult to serve, worship, and fulfill sacred duties.

My dear friends, if you ever feel limited or disadvantaged by the circumstances of your life, I want you to know this: The Lord loves you personally. He knows your circumstances, and the door to His blessings remains wide open to you no matter the challenges you face.

I have learned this truth through a personal experience that, though seemingly insignificant, left a lasting impression on me. At the age of 22, while serving in the French Air Force in Paris, I was thrilled to learn that Elder Neal A. Maxwell, an Apostle of the Lord, would be speaking at a conference on the Champs-Élysées. However, just before the event, I received orders to drive a senior officer to the airport at the exact time the conference was set to take place.

I was disappointed. But determined to attend, I dropped the officer off and rushed to the conference. After finding a parking spot, I sprinted down the Champs-Élysées to the meeting place and arrived breathless with only five minutes left before the meeting ended. Just as I entered, I heard Elder Maxwell say, “I will now give you an apostolic blessing.” In that instant, I had a beautiful, unforgettable spiritual experience. I was overcome by the Spirit, and the words of the blessing seemed to penetrate every fiber of my soul as though they were meant just for me.

What I experienced that day was a small yet powerful manifestation of a comforting aspect of God’s plan for His children: When circumstances beyond our control prevent us from fulfilling the righteous desires of our hearts, the Lord will compensate in ways that allow us to receive His promised blessings. ¹

This reassuring truth is grounded in three key principles found in the restored gospel of Jesus Christ:

1. **God loves each of us perfectly.** “He inviteth [us] all to come unto him and partake of his goodness.” ² His plan of redemption ensures that

everyone, without exception, will be granted a just opportunity to one day receive the blessings of salvation and exaltation.

2. **Because God is both just and merciful and His plan is perfect,** He will not hold us accountable for things beyond our control. Elder Neal A. Maxwell explained that “God ... takes into merciful account not only our desires and our performance, but also the degrees of difficulty which our varied circumstances impose upon us.” ³
3. **Through Jesus Christ and His Atonement, we can find the strength to endure and ultimately overcome all of life’s challenges.** As Alma taught, the Savior took upon Himself not only the sins of the repentant but also “the pains and the sicknesses of his people” and “their infirmities.” ⁴ Thus, beyond redeeming us from our mistakes, the Lord’s mercy and grace sustain us through injustices, deficiencies, and limitations imposed by our mortal experience.

Receiving these compensating blessings comes with certain conditions. The Lord asks us to do “all we can” ⁵ and to “offer [our] whole souls as an offering unto him.” ⁶ This requires a deep desire, a sincere and faithful heart, and our utmost diligence in keeping His commandments and aligning our will with His. ⁷

When our earnest efforts fall short of our aspirations due to circumstances beyond our control, the Lord still accepts the desires of our hearts as a worthy offering. President Dallin H. Oaks taught, “We will be blessed for the righteous desires of our hearts even though some outside circumstance has made it impossible for us to carry those desires into action.” ⁸

As the Prophet Joseph Smith worried about his brother Alvin, who had died without receiving essential gospel ordinances, he received this comforting revelation: “All that shall die henceforth without a knowledge of [the gospel], who would have received it with all their hearts, shall be heirs of [the celestial kingdom of God].” ⁹ The Lord then added, “For I, the Lord, will judge all men according to their works, according to the desire of their hearts.” ¹⁰

What matters to the Lord is not merely whether we are *able* but whether we are *willing* to do all we can to follow Him as our Savior.

A friend once comforted a young missionary grieving over his early release due to health reasons, despite his sincere prayers and earnest desire to serve. This friend shared a scripture in which the Lord declared that when His children “go with all their might” and “cease not their diligence” to fulfill His commandments, “and their enemies [which may include adverse circumstances in our lives] hinder them from performing that work, behold, it behooveth me to require that work no more at the hands of those [people], but to *accept of their offerings*.” ¹¹

My friend testified to this young man that God knew he had given his very best in answering the call to serve. He assured him that the Lord had accepted his offering and that the blessings promised to all faithful missionaries would not be withheld.

The Lord's compensating blessings often come through the kindness and service of others who help us accomplish what we cannot do on our own. I remember a time when, living far from one of our daughters in France, we felt helpless to assist her after a difficult delivery. That same week our ward in Utah sought help for a mother who had just given birth to twins. My wife, Valérie, volunteered to bring a meal for her, with a prayer in her heart for both this new mother and our daughter in need. Soon after, we learned that the sisters in our daughter's ward in France had organized to provide meals for her family. To us, God had answered our prayers, sending His angels to bring comfort when we couldn't.

When facing limitations and challenges, may we recognize our *own* blessings—our gifts, resources, and time—and use them to serve those in need. In doing so, we will not only bless others but invite healing and compensation into our own lives.

One of the most powerful ways we may contribute to God's compensating blessings is through the vicarious work we do for our ancestors in the house of the Lord. As we perform ordinances on their behalf, we actively participate in the Lord's great work of salvation, using our gifts and abilities to provide blessings to those who did not have the opportunity to receive them during their mortal lives.

The loving service we offer in holy temples reminds us that the Savior's grace extends beyond this life. In the life to come, we may be given new opportunities to accomplish what we could not do in this mortal life. Speaking to sisters who had not yet found an eternal companion, President Lorenzo Snow lovingly said: "There is no Latter-day Saint who dies after having lived a faithful life who will lose anything because of having failed to do certain things when opportunities were not furnished him or her. ... They will have all the blessings, exaltation and glory that any man or woman will have who had this opportunity." ¹²

This message of hope and comfort is for all of us, children of God. None of us can escape the challenges and limitations of mortality. After all, we are all born with an inherent incapacity to save ourselves. Yet we have a loving Savior, and "we know that it is by [His] grace that we are saved, after all we can do." ¹³

I testify that while many circumstances in life may be beyond our control, none of us is beyond the reach of the Lord's infinite blessings. Through His atoning sacrifice, the Savior will compensate for every inability and injustice if we offer our whole souls to Him. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. See Alma 29:4 .
2. 2 Nephi 26:33 .
3. Neal A. Maxwell, "According to the Desires of [Our] Hearts," *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 21.
4. Alma 7:11, 12 .
5. 2 Nephi 25:23 .

6. Omni 1:26 .
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 64:34 .
8. Dallin H. Oaks, “ The Desires of Our Hearts ” (Brigham Young University devotional, Oct. 8, 1985), 6, speeches.byu.edu.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 137:8 .
10. Doctrine and Covenants 137:9 . “That judgment will consider not only your actions, but also your innermost intent and heartfelt desires. ... The Lord knows the desires of our hearts. At the time of judgment, surely the special yearnings of single sisters and childless couples, for example, will be given compassionate consideration by Him” (Russell M. Nelson, “ Choices ,” *Ensign* , Nov. 1990, 75).
11. Doctrine and Covenants 124:49 ; emphasis added.
12. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Lorenzo Snow* (2012), 130.
13. 2 Nephi 25:23 .

Eternity's Great Gifts: Jesus Christ's Atonement, Resurrection, Restoration

By Elder Gerrit W. Gong
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles
April 2025

We find in Easter in Jesus Christ peace, becoming, and belonging—that which is enduringly real and joyful, happy and forever.

Years ago, our early-morning gospel class memorized Bible verses. Naturally I was drawn to short passages. This included John 11:35 —the shortest verse in scripture, only two words—“Jesus wept.”

For me now, that Jesus weeps in sorrow and joy testifies of the miraculous reality: the divine Son of God came into physical mortality and learned according to the flesh how always to be with and bless us. ¹

When we cry out in grief or joy, Jesus Christ understands perfectly. He can be present in the moments when we most need eternity's great gifts: Jesus Christ's Atonement, Resurrection, restoration.



Mary and Martha weep for their brother Lazarus, who has died. Moved with compassion, Jesus weeps. He raises Lazarus to life. ²

Jesus beholds Jerusalem on the eve of the Passover. He weeps, unable to gather His people as a hen would her chicks. ³ Today His Atonement gives us hope when we sorrow for what could have been.

The Lord of the vineyard weeps as He asks His servants, which could include us as ministering brothers and sisters, “What could I have done more for my vineyard?”⁴

Mary stands bereft at the sepulchre. Jesus gently asks, “Why weepest thou?”⁵ He knows “weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.”⁶ Resurrection brings dawn for all.

In Book of Mormon lands, as the faithful multitude arises to Him, Jesus’s joy is full. He weeps.

“And he took their little children, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them.

“And when he had done this he wept again.”⁷

This is Easter in Jesus Christ: He answers the longings of our hearts and the questions of our souls.⁸ He wipes away our tears,⁹ except our tears of joy.

When our tears flow, we sometimes apologize, embarrassed. But knowing that Jesus Christ understands life’s pains and joys can give us strength beyond our own¹⁰ as we navigate bitter and sweet.

In South America, a father sobs. A sparkle in his life, his young daughter, has died. “I would give anything to see her again,” he cries in my arms. I cry too.



At the Puebla Mexico Temple dedication, tears of happiness wet the face of a dear sister. Her features radiate faith and sacrifice. She says, “*Todos mis hijos están aquí en el templo hoy*”—“All my children are here in the temple today.” Generations gathered in the house of the Lord bring tears of joy and gratitude.

In cruel civil war, families and neighbors did unspeakable things to each other. Bitter tears are slowly giving way to hope. Her voice trembling, a woman in a small village says, “Neighbor, before I go to my grave, I want you to know where to find your missing family members.”

A radiant bride and handsome groom are being sealed in the house of the Lord. She is 70 years old, as is he. A beautiful bride, she has worthily waited for this day. She shyly swishes her bridal dress this way, then that way. We shed joyful tears. God's promises are fulfilled. His covenants bring blessings.

While home teaching a widowed sister, a young Boyd K. Packer learned a tender lesson. Following a disagreement with her husband, the sister had called out a final hurtful remark. An unexpected accident took her husband's life that day. "For fifty years," the widow sobbed, "I've lived in hell knowing that the last words he heard from my lips were that biting, spiteful remark." ¹¹

Easter in Jesus Christ helps us mend, reconcile, make right our relationships, on both sides of the veil. Jesus can heal grief; He can enable forgiveness. He can free us and others from things we or they have said or done that otherwise bind us captive.

Easter in Jesus Christ lets us feel God's approbation. This world tells us we are too tall, too short, too wide, too narrow—not smart, pretty, or spiritual enough. Through spiritual transformation in Jesus Christ, we can escape debilitating perfectionism.

With Easter joy, we sing, "Death is conquered; man is free. Christ has won the victory." ¹² Christ's Resurrection frees us from death, from time's frailties and physicality's imperfections. Jesus Christ's Atonement also restores us spiritually. He bled from every pore, weeping blood as it were, to provide us escape from sin and separation. He reunites us, whole and holy, with each other and God. In all good things, Jesus Christ restores abundantly—not only what was but also what can be.

Jesus's life and light testify of God's love for all His children. Because God our Father loves all His children in every age and land, we find His loving invitation to come find peace and joy in Him in many traditions and cultures. Wherever, whenever, whoever we are, we share divine identity as children of the same Creator. In similar spirit, followers of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity share religious heritage in Father Abraham and covenant connection through events in ancient Egypt.

Father Abraham came to Egypt and was blessed.

Joseph, sold into servitude in Egypt, knew Pharaoh's dream meant seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine. Joseph saved his family and his people. ¹³ Joseph wept when he saw God's larger plan, ¹⁴ where all things work together for good for those who keep their covenants. ¹⁵

Moses, raised in Egypt in Pharaoh's household, received and later restored the keys for the gathering of God's children. ¹⁶



Fulfilling prophecy, Joseph, Mary, and the infant Christ child sought refuge in Egypt. ¹⁷ In Cairo, a devout Muslim believer reverently says: “The Quran teaches that Joseph, Mary, and the baby Jesus found safety and sanctuary in my country. In my country, Jesus as a toddler ate our food, took His first steps, said His first words. Here in my country, we believe trees bent low to give Him and His family fruit. His being in my country blessed our people and land.”

God’s plan of moral and mortal agency allows us to learn by our own experience. Some of our greatest life lessons come from things we would never choose. In love, Jesus Christ descended below and ascended above all things. ¹⁸ He rejoices in our divine capacities for creativity and delight, kindness without hope for reward, faith unto repentance and forgiveness. And He weeps in sorrow at the enormity of our human suffering, cruelty, unfairness—often brought by human choice—as do the heavens and the God of heaven with them. ¹⁹

Each Easter spring season testifies that spiritual sequence and convergence are both part of the divine pattern of atonement, resurrection, and restoration through Jesus Christ. ²⁰ This sacred and symbolic convergence comes not by accident or coincidence. Palm Sunday, Holy Week, and Easter celebrate Christ’s Atonement and Resurrection. As today, every April 6 we commemorate the establishment and organization of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. ²¹ This Restoration is a reason we gather the first Sunday each April in general conference. ²²

Restoration also came as the resurrected Jesus Christ, Moses, Elias, and Elijah returned priesthood keys and authority at the newly dedicated Kirtland Temple on Easter Sunday, 1836. ²³ In that setting on that day to the restored Church of Jesus Christ came God’s authority and blessings to gather His children, prepare His children to return to Him, and unite families for eternity. Restoration that day fulfilled prophecy by occurring both on Easter and Passover.



Including the Kirtland Temple, I recently visited sacred places in Ohio where the Prophet Joseph and others saw in vision God our Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. The Prophet Joseph saw what heaven is like. In heaven, Heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, “saves all the works of his hands” ²⁴ in a kingdom of glory. ²⁵ The only exceptions are those who willfully “deny the Son after the Father has revealed him.” ²⁶

As His mortal ministry began, Jesus declared His mission to bless us each with all we are willing to receive—in every time, every land, every circumstance. After fasting 40 days, Jesus went into the synagogue and read, “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 brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.” ²⁷

Poor, brokenhearted, captive, blind, bruised—that’s each of us.

The book of Isaiah continues the Messianic promise of hope, deliverance, assurance: “Appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, ... give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.” ²⁸

Thus, we cry out, “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness.” ²⁹

Each Easter season, we celebrate, as a symbolic whole, eternity’s great gifts through Jesus Christ: His Atonement; His (and the promise of our) literal Resurrection; Restoration of His latter-day Church with priesthood keys and authority to bless all God’s children. We rejoice in the garments of salvation and the robe of righteousness. We shout, “Hosanna to God and the Lamb!” ³⁰

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” ³¹

May we each find in Jesus Christ atonement, resurrection, and restoration—peace, becoming, and belonging—that which is enduringly real and joyful, happy and forever, I pray in His holy name, Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. See Alma 7:11–12 . Note also the covenantal promise in the sacrament ordinance: We take upon us the name of Jesus Christ, “always remember him and keep his commandments ... ; that [we] may always have his Spirit to be with [us]” (Doctrine and Covenants 20:77).
2. See John 11:33–35, 39–44 .
3. See Luke 19:41–44 ; see also Matthew 23:37 ; Luke 13:34 .
4. Jacob 5:41 .
5. John 20:15 .
6. Psalm 30:5 .
7. 3 Nephi 17:21–22 .
8. See Psalm 107:9 ; Jeremiah 33:3 .
9. See Isaiah 25:8 .
10. See Alma 26:12 .
11. See Boyd K. Packer, “ The Saints Securely Dwell ,” *Ensign* , Jan. 1973, 89–90.
12. “He Is Risen!,” *Hymns* , no. 199, echoes the glad tidings of 2 Nephi 9:10 : Jesus Christ “prepareth a way for our escape from the grasp of this awful monster; yea, that monster, death and hell, ... the death of the body, and also the death of the spirit.”
13. See Genesis 37–47 . Joseph’s bringing his father, Jacob, and his family to Egypt represents the tender reuniting of a long-separated son and father. It also becomes the means by which Jacob’s family and covenant posterity, who will include Lehi and his family, are preserved. (See 1 Nephi 5:14–15 ; 6:2 .)
14. See Genesis 45:1–8 .
15. See Romans 8:28 ; Doctrine and Covenants 90:24 ; 98:3 .
16. See Doctrine and Covenants 110:11 ; see also Mark 9:2–10 ; Luke 9:28–36 .
17. See Matthew 2:13–15 .
18. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:6 ; 122:8 .

19. See Moses 7:28 .
20. We speak of the Easter spring season, recognizing that Easter can come in March or April and that spring in the northern hemisphere generally comes in March or April. Regardless of the specific date of Easter, the Easter season reminds us of eternity's great gifts through Jesus Christ.
21. See Doctrine and Covenants 21:3 ; 115:4 .
22. The sacred anniversaries that occur each Easter season sometimes exactly coincide. For example, Easter and general conference occur on the same Sunday in 2026 and 2029. Palm Sunday and general conference occur on the same Sunday in 2031 and 2034. Passover occurs near to Easter and during general conference in 2026 and 2029. Regardless of whether or not these anniversaries coincide exactly, we understand that their convergent proximity is not by coincidence or accident; it is sacred and symbolic.
23. See Doctrine and Covenants 110 .
24. Doctrine and Covenants 76:43 ; also see verse 42 .
25. President Dallin H. Oaks teaches, "The purpose of this restored Church is to prepare God's children for salvation in the celestial glory and, more particularly, for exaltation in its highest degree" (" Kingdoms of Glory ," *Liahona* , Nov. 2023, 27).
26. Doctrine and Covenants 76:43 .
27. Luke 4:18 ; see also Isaiah 61:1 .
28. Isaiah 61:3 .
29. Isaiah 61:10 .
30. Doctrine and Covenants 109:79 .
31. John 3:16 .

Joy Through Covenant Discipleship

By Elder John A. McCune

Of the Seventy

April 2025

As we bind ourselves to act as covenant disciples, our relationship with the Father and Son is enriched, our joy enhanced, and our eternal perspective expanded.

One day in 2023, Uyanga Altansukh was at work in the northern Mongolian city of Darkhan when the Mongolian mission president entered her workplace. In her words:

“I saw him and thought he had this bright light in his countenance. He was very kind and fun to those around him, and I felt warmth. Before he left, I asked him some questions. A few days later, he came into my work again and asked if I could attend his church. I thought it might be helpful. I was worried for my children’s future, as society seemed to be full of stress and darkness. I wanted my children to be like this man with a light in their countenance, spreading joy to others around them.

“One day the missionaries taught us the law of tithing. My children said with excitement, ‘We must pay our tithing, Mom.’ I could see my children’s faith at that moment. Before I joined the Church, I watched general conference and listened to President Russell M. Nelson speak. He announced new temples all over the world and said that a new temple would be built in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. I rejoiced and shed tears, even though I did not understand why. With this joy, I could tell that my faith and testimony were growing.”

Uyanga, like millions of others, is part of the great gathering of Israel in preparation for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. She has begun her journey along the covenant path and has become a disciple of Christ. What does it mean to be a disciple of Christ? I appreciate the Japanese word for disciple— *deshi* — *de* meaning younger brother, and *shi* meaning child.

Jesus Christ declared, “I was in the beginning with the Father, and am the Firstborn.” ¹ Because of *who* He is and *what* He has *done*, we worship Him, we revere Him, we give glory to Him, and we follow Him. Christ has redeemed us, ² and we are forever grateful for His infinite and atoning sacrifice.

We have a Heavenly Father, who loves us as His children. His love for us is perfect. Jesus Christ and His mission illustrate God’s love for us. As John wrote, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” ³

In our quest to understand what we do not know, we might sometimes rely on our familiar mortal experiences, or things we *do* know. For example, we can learn somewhat of God the Father through our own parenthood and mortal family relationships. However, we should be careful in applying these comparisons too far in our attempt to understand our Heavenly Father. The

attributes of God the Father transcend any *less-than-perfect* attributes of a fallen man. God the Father is the perfect Father. He is perfectly loving, kind, patient, and understanding and is perfectly glorious. We can trust Him perfectly. The love of Christ reflects the love of God the Father and is a representation of that love.

Jesus Christ is both the example and the means. *In* Christ, we can understand better the perfect attributes of the Father and His plan. *Through* Christ, we are given the enabling power to overcome the tendencies of natural men and women so that we might become more like the Father.

Just like our Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ is perfectly merciful and just. These divine attributes of justice and mercy are not in opposition. They are complementary. Both justice and mercy illustrate God's perfect love for His children. We can trust God the Father and Jesus Christ because They are just and fair with all of us.

God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, are perfectly aligned in purpose and love. Because God and Jesus Christ love us, we are given the opportunity and privilege as true disciples to make covenants with Them. By our doing so, our relationship with Christ is expanded: "And now, because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters." ⁴

As disciples, when we make and keep sacred covenants, we are blessed with spiritual power. We are connected to Christ and God the Father in a special relationship and can experience Their love and joy in a measure reserved for those who have made and kept covenants. ⁵ Our ability to sense a full measure of God's love, or to continue in His love, is contingent upon our righteous desires and actions. ⁶

In John chapter 15, verse 9, we read, "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you." And *then* we are given an invitation: "Continue ye in my love."

In the next verse, we are given the way to continue in His love: "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love."

We then see the purpose of keeping the commandments in verse 11: "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." ⁷

Through true covenant discipleship, we can begin to understand better the nature of God and the joy that He wants all of His children to experience. We can also begin to understand some principles that at first might seem confusing. For example, how can God have a fulness of joy when some of His children are suffering so much? The answer lies in God's perfect perspective and in His perfect plan. He sees us from the beginning to our glorious potential future. He has provided a way, through His Son, Jesus Christ, for all of us, His children, to overcome the pains, suffering, sins, guilt, and loneliness of our mortality. ⁸ God has provided for us the way and the choice.

Examples of those who have experienced joy through discipleship might help us to better understand this concept. Perhaps you have heard the phrase that we are only as happy as our most unhappy child. I have seen that this does not need to be the case. My 94-year-old mother has over 200 living descendants. At any given point, at least one of the 200 is going to be unhappy. If this statement were true, my mother would be in a perpetual state of unhappiness, which she isn't. Those who know her know how joyful she is.

I now would like to share another experience. In January of 2019, my wife, Debbie, and I were invited into the office of President Nelson. He had positioned a chair close to us, and we sat almost knee to knee. After extending to us our current calling, President Nelson turned to Debbie and focused on her. He was kind, loving, gentle, and full of joy, like the perfect father or grandfather. He held Debbie's hand and patted it, reassuring her that it would be OK and that our family would be blessed. It seemed to us at that moment that we were the most important people to him and that he had all the time in the world for us. We left his office that Friday afternoon feeling reassured, loved, and joyful.

On Monday we saw the news. During that same day that President Nelson had spent with us, one of his daughters had passed away from cancer. We were stunned. Our hearts were full as we mourned for him and his family. Our hearts were also full of gratitude for his Christlike attention to us while mourning for his daughter who was suffering.

As we pondered this experience, we asked ourselves, "How could he be so kind, loving, and even joyful at such a difficult time?" The answer is because *he knows*. He knows that Christ has been victorious. He knows he will be with his daughter again and will spend an eternity with her. Joy and eternal perspective come through being bound to the Savior by making and keeping covenants and through Christlike discipleship.

President Nelson has taught: "Just as the Savior offers peace that 'passeth all understanding' [Philippians 4:7], He also offers an intensity, depth, and breadth of joy that defy human logic or mortal comprehension. For example, it doesn't seem possible to feel joy when your child suffers with an incurable illness or when you lose your job or when your spouse betrays you. Yet that is precisely the joy the Savior offers." ⁹

As we make and keep covenants, we will naturally turn outward and have a desire to help others feel the measure of joy and love we feel in our covenantal relationships. We can be part of the greatest cause on the earth today—the gathering of Israel. ¹⁰ We can help to bring God's children to Christ. As the prophet Jacob taught, "And blessed art thou; for because ye have been diligent in laboring with me in my vineyard, and have kept my commandments, and have brought unto me again the natural fruit, ... ye shall have joy with me because of the fruit of my vineyard." ¹¹

As we bind ourselves to act as covenant disciples, in whatever our level of capacity, our relationship with the Father and the Son is enriched, our joy enhanced, and our eternal perspective expanded. We then are endowed with power and can feel joy in a measure reserved for God's true covenant disciples.

¹² In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. Doctrine and Covenants 93:21 .
2. See Matthew 1:21 ; 2 Nephi 2:6 .
3. John 3:16 .
4. Mosiah 5:7 .
5. See Russell M. Nelson, “ The Everlasting Covenant ,” *Liahona* , Oct. 2022, 4–11.
6. See Dale G. Renlund, “ Experience God’s Love ” (Brigham Young University devotional, Dec. 3, 2019), speeches.byu.edu.
7. John 15:9–11 .
8. See Alma 7:11–13 .
9. Russell M. Nelson, “ Joy and Spiritual Survival ,” *Ensign* or *Liahona* , Nov. 2016, 82.
10. See Russell M. Nelson, “ Hope of Israel ” (worldwide youth devotional, June 3, 2018), Gospel Library.
11. Jacob 5:75 .
12. See “ *Hesed* , God’s Covenant Love, Is the Reason We Build Temples and Perform Ordinances: Instruction from President Russell M. Nelson ,” general conference leadership meeting, Oct. 2024, Gospel Library.

Divine Helps for Mortality

By President Dallin H. Oaks

First Counselor in the First Presidency

April 2025

Our Heavenly Father's plan provides helps to guide us through our mortal journeys.

I.

Through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord revealed a few things about our pre-earth life. There we existed as spirit children of God.¹ Because God desired to help His children progress, He decided to create an earth on which we could receive a body, learn through experience, develop divine attributes, and be proven to see if we would keep God's commandments.² Those who qualified would "have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever" (Abraham 3:26).

To establish the conditions of this divine plan, God chose His Only Begotten Son to be our Savior. Lucifer, whose suggested alternative would destroy the agency of man, became Satan and was "cast down."³ Banished to the earth and denied the privilege of mortal life, Satan was permitted to attempt "to deceive and to blind men, and to lead them captive at his will, even as many as would not hearken unto [God's] voice" (Moses 4:4).

Essential to God's great plan for the mortal growth of His children was for them to experience "opposition in all things" (2 Nephi 2:11). Just as our physical muscles cannot be developed or maintained without straining against the law of gravity, so mortal growth requires us to strain against Satan's temptations and other mortal opposition. Most important for spiritual growth is the requirement to choose between good and evil.⁴ Those who choose good would progress toward their eternal destiny. Those who choose evil—as all would do in the various temptations of mortality—would need saving help, which a loving God designed to provide.

II.

By far, God's strongest mortal help was His provision of a Savior, Jesus Christ, who would suffer to pay the price and provide forgiveness for repented sins. That merciful and glorious Atonement explains why faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the first principle of the gospel. His Atonement "bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead" (Alma 42:23), and it "atone[s] for the sins of the world" (Alma 34:8), erasing all of our repented sins and giving our Savior power to succor us in our mortal infirmities.⁵



Beyond that glorious erasing of sins committed and being forgiven, the plan of a loving Father in Heaven provides many other gifts to protect us, including protecting us from sinning in the first place. Our mortal life always *begins* with a father and a mother. Ideally, both are present, with different gifts to guide our growth. If not, their absence is part of the opposition we must overcome.

III.

Our Heavenly Father's plan provides other helps to guide us through our mortal journeys. I will speak of four of these. Please don't hold me to my number of *four*, because these helps are overlapping. Moreover, there are other merciful protections in addition to these.

First, I speak of the Light or Spirit of Christ. In his great teaching in the book of Moroni, Moroni quotes his father that "the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil" (Moroni 7:16). We read this same teaching in modern revelations:

"And the Spirit giveth light to every man that cometh into the world; and the Spirit enlighteneth every man through the world, that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit" (Doctrine and Covenants 84:46).

Again: "For my Spirit is sent forth into the world to enlighten the humble and contrite, and to the condemnation of the ungodly" (Doctrine and Covenants 136:33).

President Joseph Fielding Smith explained these scriptures: "The Lord has not left men (when they are born into this world) helpless, groping to find the light and truth, but every man ... is born with the right to receive the guidance, the instruction, the counsel of the Spirit of Christ, or Light of Truth." ⁶



The *second* of the great assistances provided by the Lord to help us choose what is right is a cluster of divine directions in the scriptures as part of the plan of salvation (plan of happiness). These directions are commandments, ordinances, and covenants.

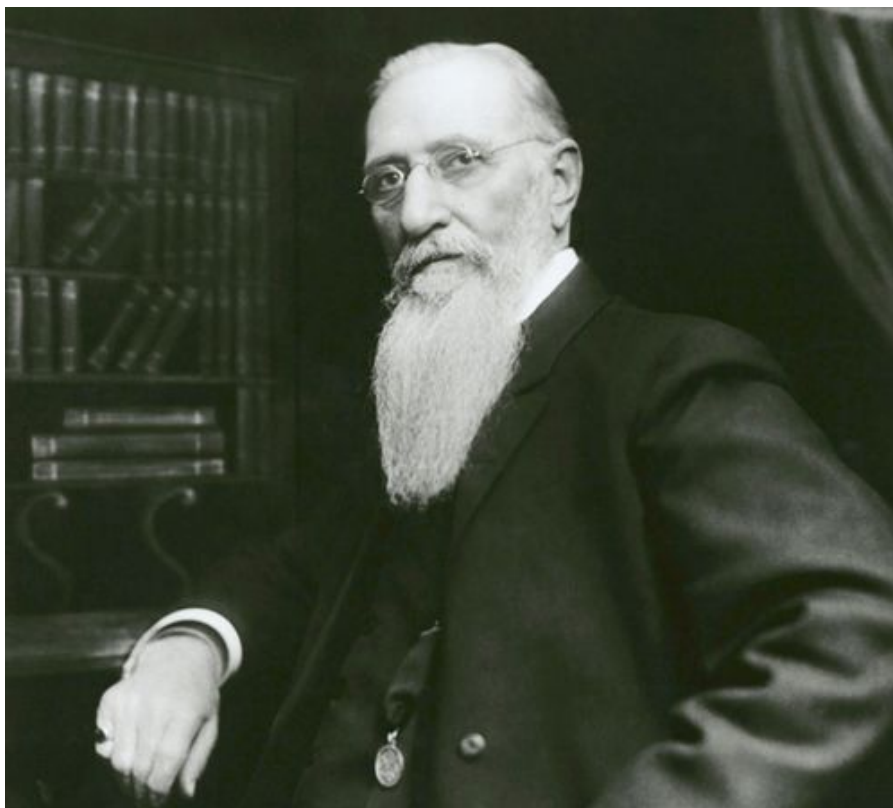
Commandments define the path our Heavenly Father has marked out for us to progress toward eternal life. People who imagine commandments as the way God decides who to punish fail to understand this purpose of God's loving plan of happiness. On that path, we can gradually achieve the needed relationship with our Savior and qualify for an increase of His power to help us on our way to the destination He desires for all of us. Our Heavenly Father desires all of His children to return to the celestial kingdom, where God and our Savior reside, and to have the kind of life of those who reside in that celestial glory.

Ordinances and *covenants* are part of the law that defines the path to eternal life. Ordinances, and the sacred covenants we make with God through them, are required steps and essential guardrails along that path. I like to think of the role of covenants as demonstrating that under God's plan, His highest blessings are given to those who promise in advance to keep certain commandments and who keep those promises.

Other God-given helps for making right choices are the *manifestations* of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is the third member of the Godhead. His function, defined in scripture, is to testify of the Father and the Son, to teach us, to bring all things to our remembrance, and to guide us into all truth.⁷ The scriptures include many descriptions of the manifestations of the Holy Ghost, such as a spiritual witness in response to an inquiry about the truth of the Book of Mormon.⁸ A manifestation is not to be confused with the gift of the Holy Ghost, which is conferred following baptism.

One of the most significant of God's helps for His faithful children is the gift of the Holy Ghost. The importance of this gift is evident in the fact that it is formally conferred after repentance and baptism by water, "and then [the scriptures explain] cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost" (2 Nephi 31:17). Persons who have this remission of sins—and then

regularly renew their cleansing by daily repentance and living according to the covenants they make through the ordinance of the sacrament—qualify for the promise that the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of the Lord, “may always ... be with them” (Doctrine and Covenants 20:77).



Thus, President Joseph F. Smith taught that the Holy Ghost will “enlighten the minds of the people with regard to the things of God, to convince them at the time of their conversion of their having done the will of the Father, and to be in them an abiding testimony as a companion through life, acting as the sure and safe guide into all truth and filling them day by day with joy and gladness, with a disposition to do good to all men, to suffer wrong rather than to do wrong, to be kind and merciful, long suffering and charitable. All who possess this inestimable gift, this pearl of great price, have a continual thirst after righteousness. Without the aid of the Holy Spirit,” President Smith concluded, “no mortal can walk in the straight and narrow way.”⁹

IV.

With so many powerful helps to guide us in our mortal journeys, it is disappointing that so many remain unprepared for their appointed meeting with our Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ. His parable of the ten virgins, spoken of so frequently in this conference, suggests that of those invited to meet Him, only half will be prepared.¹⁰



We all know examples of the unprepared: returned missionaries who have interrupted their spiritual growth by periods of inactivity, youth who have jeopardized their spiritual growth by separating themselves from Church teaching and activities, men who have postponed their ordination to the Melchizedek Priesthood, men and women—sometimes the posterity of noble pioneers or worthy parents—who have departed the covenant path short of making and keeping covenants in the holy temple.



Many of such deviations occur when members fail to follow the fundamental spiritual maintenance plan of personal prayer, regular scripture study, and frequent repentance. In contrast, some neglect weekly renewal of covenants by not partaking of the sacrament. Some say the Church is not meeting their needs; those substitute what they perceive as their future needs ahead of what the Lord has provided in His many teachings and opportunities for our essential service to others.

Humility and trust in the Lord are the remedies for such deviations. As the Book of Mormon teaches, the Lord “doth bless and prosper those who put their trust in him” (Helaman 12:1). Trusting in the Lord is a particular need for all who wrongly measure the commandments of God and the teachings of His prophets against the latest findings and wisdom of man.

I have spoken of the many mortal helps our loving Father in Heaven has given to help His children return to Him. Our part in this divine plan is to trust in God and seek and use these divine helps, most notably the Atonement of His Beloved Son, our Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ. I pray that we will teach and live these principles, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. See Abraham 3:22 .
2. See Abraham 3:24–25 .
3. See Moses 4:1–4 .
4. See 2 Nephi 2:11, 15–16 .
5. See Alma 7:11–14 .
6. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation* , comp. Bruce R. McConkie (1954), 1:51. President Smith adds that this light is the power of God, “which is in all things” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:13 ; see *Doctrines of Salvation* , 1:52).
7. See John 14:26 ; 16:13 ; 2 Nephi 31:18 .
8. See Moroni 10:4, 8 ; see also 2 Nephi 26:13 ; Doctrine and Covenants 18:18 ; 1 Corinthians 12:7 .
9. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* (1998), 70.
10. See Matthew 25:1–2 .

Sunday Afternoon Session

Reverence for Sacred Things

By Elder Ulisses Soares

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

April 2025

Reverence for the sacred fosters genuine gratitude, expands true happiness, leads our minds to revelation, and brings greater joy to our lives.

In the book of Exodus, we travel with Moses to the slopes of Mount Horeb as he turned aside from his daily cares—something we all should be willing to do—to see the burning bush that was not consumed. As he approached, “God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. And [God] said, ... put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.”¹ In great reverence, humility, and wonder, Moses removed his shoes and prepared himself to hear the word of the Lord and to experience His holy presence.

That sacred mountain epiphany was an experience filled with awe-inspiring reverence, connected Moses to his divine identity, and was, in fact, a key element of his transformation from a humble shepherd to a powerful prophet, leading him to walk a new path in life. Similarly, each of us can transform our discipleship into a higher pattern of spirituality by making the virtue of reverence a sacred part of our spiritual character.

The word *reverence* can be traced to the Latin verb *revereri*, which means to “stand in awe of.”² In the gospel sense, this definition mingles with a feeling or attitude of profound respect, love, and gratitude. Such expression for the sacred by those who have a contrite heart and deep devotion to God and Jesus Christ fosters increased joy in their souls.

Reverence for sacred things is the greatest manifestation of a vital spiritual quality; it is a by-product of our connection to holiness and reflects our love for and proximity to our Heavenly Father and our Savior, Jesus Christ. It is also one of the most elevated experiences of the soul. Such virtue directs our thoughts, hearts, and lives toward Deity. In fact, reverence is not just an aspect of spirituality; it is the essence of it—the foundation upon which spirituality is built, creating a personal connection to the divine, as taught by our children when they sing, “When I am rev’rent, I know in my heart Heav’nly Father and Jesus are near.”³

As disciples of Jesus Christ, we are invited to cultivate the gift of reverence in our lives in order to open ourselves to a deeper communion with God and His Son, Jesus Christ, simultaneously strengthening our spiritual character. Had we more of such feelings in our hearts, there would be undoubtedly greater joy and delight in our lives, and there would be less room for sorrow and sadness.⁴ We must remember that showing reverence for sacred things gives meaning to much

of what we do every day and strengthens our feeling of gratitude—inspiring awe, respect, and love for higher and holier things.⁵

Unfortunately, we live in a world where showing reverence for sacred things is becoming increasingly uncommon. In fact, the world celebrates the irreverent, as any perusal of a tabloid magazine, television program, or the internet attests. The absence of respect for the sacred produces an increasing casualness in attitude and carelessness in conduct, which can rapidly spiral one generation into apathy and catapult the next generation into misery.

Irreverence can also lead us away from the bonds that covenants with God provide and diminish our sense of accountability before Deity. Consequently, we run the risk of caring only about our own comfort; satisfying our uncontrolled appetites; and ultimately arriving to the unholy place of despising sacred things, even God, and consequently our divine nature as children of Heavenly Father. Irreverence toward sacred things furthers the adversary's aims by disrupting our sensitive channels of revelation, which are crucial for our spiritual survival in our day.⁶

The meaning and importance of reverence for what is sacred is well outlined throughout the scriptures. One instance in the Doctrine and Covenants would seem to indicate that reverence toward our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, is an essential virtue for those who attain the celestial kingdom.⁷

As a church we strive to hold the Father and the Son in the utmost sacredness and respect in every aspect, including how we depict Their images. The guidance of the Holy Ghost is a crucial component in determining how these images should reflect the sacred nature, character, and godly attributes of the Father and of the Son. We are very careful to avoid portraying elements that could distract from our primary focus on our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, and Their teachings, including how we apply advanced tools offered by technology, such as using artificial intelligence (AI) to generate content and images.

This same principle is applied to any source of information available through the official communication channels of the Church. Every lesson, book, manual, and message is carefully developed and approved under the direction of the Spirit to make sure we maintain the sacred virtue, values, and standards of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In a recent message for the young adults of the Church, Elder David A. Bednar taught, “To navigate the complex intersection of spirituality and technology, Latter-day Saints should humbly and prayerfully (1) identify gospel principles that can guide their use of artificial intelligence and (2) strive sincerely for the companionship of the Holy Ghost and the spiritual gift of revelation.”⁸

My dear brothers and sisters, as sophisticated as modern technology has become, it simply cannot simulate the wonder, awe, and amazement found in the kind of reverence born from the influence of the Holy Ghost. As followers of Christ, we need to be careful not to weaken our connection with God and His Son by using AI-generated content and images inappropriately. We should remember that relying on a modern technological “arm of flesh” is an inadequate and disrespectful substitute for the inspiration, edification, and witness that can be received only through the power of the Holy Ghost. As Nephi

declared: “O Lord, I have trusted in thee, and I will trust in thee forever. I will not put my trust in the arm of flesh.”⁹

In another revelation, the Prophet Joseph Smith was instructed that temples erected unto the Lord should be a place of reverence to Him.¹⁰ Throughout his ministry, our dear prophet, President Russell M. Nelson, has strongly emphasized our worship in reverence in the sacred temple.¹¹ In the house of the Lord, we are taught about entering into the holy presence of the Father and the Son. I have always found it instructive and even inspiring that one of the first things we do upon entering the temple and preparing ourselves to participate in the sacred ordinances there is to remove our shoes and change into our white clothing. Like Moses, if we are intentional, we can recognize that taking off our worldly shoes is the beginning of stepping onto holy ground and being transformed in higher and holier ways.

Brothers and sisters, we do not need to climb to the top of a mountain, like Moses did, to discover reverence for sacred things and convert our discipleship into a deeper level of spirituality and devotion. We can find it, for example, as we strive to protect our home environment from worldly influences. This can be accomplished by sincerely and fervently praying before our Heavenly Father in the name of Jesus Christ and seeking to better know our Savior through our diligent study of the word of God found in the scriptures and in the teachings of our prophets. Additionally, such spiritual transformation can come as we strive to honor the covenants we have made with the Lord by living in obedience to the commandments. These efforts can bring a quiet and certain stillness to our hearts. Focusing on such actions can surely help transform our homes into reverent places of spiritual refuge—personal sanctuaries of faith where the Spirit resides,¹² much like the mountain experience of Moses.

We can also experience such spiritual transformation as we faithfully participate in the Church’s worship service, including tuning our hearts to the Lord through our sincere singing of sacred hymns.¹³ Turning aside—like Moses—from worldly distractions, especially our cell phones or anything not in harmony with this sacred moment, enables us to turn our full attention to partaking of the sacrament, with our minds and hearts focused on the Savior and His atoning sacrifice along with our own covenants. Such sacramental focus will foster a reverently renewing moment of our communion with the Savior and will make the Sabbath a delight and transform our life.

Ultimately, we can experience this spiritual change in our discipleship as we regularly worship in the mountain of the Lord’s house—our holy temples—and strive to live with covenant confidence, especially when we face the trials of mortal life.

My wife and I have personally experienced some sacred mountain moments in reverence as we have strived to apply these principles in our life, which has caused a meaningful transformation in our discipleship. I remember like it was yesterday walking through the cemetery before burying our second child, who was born prematurely and did not survive, while my wife was still recovering in the hospital. I recall praying to God with great fervency and reverence, asking for help to cope with that challenging trial. In that instant, I received a clear and powerful spiritual assurance in my heart: Everything will be fine in our lives if my wife and I endure, holding on to the joy that comes from living the gospel of

Jesus Christ. What seemed like an overwhelming, sorrowful challenge at the time turned into a sacred, reverent experience, a capstone that has helped sustain our faith and has given us confidence in the covenants we have made with the Lord and in His promises for me and my family.

My brothers and sisters, reverence for the sacred fosters genuine gratitude, expands true happiness, leads our minds to revelation, and brings greater joy to our lives. It places our feet on holy ground and lifts our hearts to Deity.

I testify to you that as we strive to incorporate such virtue into our daily lives, we will be able to increase our humility, expand our understanding of God's will for us, and strengthen our confidence in the promises of the covenants we have made with the Lord. I witness that as we embrace this gift of reverence for sacred things—whether in the mountain of the Lord's house, in a meetinghouse, or in our own homes—we will be filled with astounding amazement and awe as we connect to the perfect love of our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. I reverently witness these truths in the sacred name of our Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. Exodus 3:4–5 .
2. See latin-dictionary.net, “revereri.”
3. “Reverence Is Love,” *Children’s Songbook* , 31.
4. See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: David O. McKay* (2003), 31.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 63:64 .
6. See Boyd K. Packer, “ Reverence Invites Revelation ,” *Ensign* , Nov. 1991, 22; Russell M. Nelson, “ Joy and Spiritual Survival ,” *Ensign* or *Liahona* , Nov. 2016, 81–84.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 76:92–95 .
8. David A. Bednar, “ Things as They Really Are 2.0 ” (worldwide devotional for young adults, Nov. 3, 2024), Gospel Library; see also Gerrit W. Gong and John C. Pingree Jr., “Principles for Church Use of Artificial Intelligence” (Leadership Enrichment Series, Mar. 13, 2024); Gerrit W. Gong, “Artificial Intelligence—Opportunities, Cautions, Church Guiding Principles” (general conference leadership meeting, Apr. 5, 2024).
9. 2 Nephi 4:34 .
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 109:13, 16–21 .
11. See Russell M. Nelson, “ Becoming Exemplary Latter-day Saints ,” *Ensign* or *Liahona* , Nov. 2018, 114; “ The Temple and Your Spiritual Foundation ,” *Liahona* , Nov. 2021, 96.

12. See Russell M. Nelson, “ Embrace the Future with Faith ,”
Ensign or *Liahona* , Nov. 2020, 74–75.
13. See Doctrine and Covenants 136:28 .

Charity—a Sign of True Discipleship

By Elder Michael B. Strong

Of the Seventy

April 2025

The real destination of discipleship is literally to become as Jesus Christ is.

President Russell M. Nelson recently invited us to “make our discipleship our highest priority.”¹ That powerful invitation has stirred me to ponder deeply about my personal discipleship of Jesus Christ.

Discipleship Is Deliberate

A disciple is a follower or student of another.² Disciples are “apprentices” who devote their lives to becoming like their teacher. Thus, being a disciple of Jesus Christ implies more than believing His teachings and doctrine. It even implies more than acknowledging His divinity and accepting Him as our Savior and Redeemer, as vitally important as that is.

President Dallin H. Oaks explained: “Following Christ is not a casual or occasional practice. It is a continuous commitment and way of life that should guide us at all times and in all places.”³ Discipleship is a deliberate journey that we take to become transformed through the Lord’s atoning sacrifice and His enabling power. The real destination of discipleship is literally to become as Jesus Christ is—even to the point where we receive “his image in [our] countenances.”⁴

To be the Lord’s disciples, we must intentionally imitate His thoughts and actions every day—for example, His obedience, humility, and patience. As we gradually incorporate these attributes into our own identities, we become “partakers of [His] divine nature.”⁵ This emulation of the Savior’s character is at the heart of worshipping Him. As President Nelson taught, “Our adoration of Jesus is best expressed by our emulation of Jesus.”⁶

The Sign of True Discipleship

Of all the many divine attributes of Jesus Christ we are to emulate, one stands preeminent and embodies all others. That attribute is His pure love, or charity. Both the prophet Mormon and the Apostle Paul remind us that without charity, “[we] are nothing.”⁷ Or, as revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith, without “charity, [we] can *do* nothing.”⁸

The Savior Himself identified love as a mark or sign by which His true disciples would be recognized when He declared:

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

“By *this shall all men know that ye are my disciples* , if ye have love one to another.”⁹

Charity is a rich concept that can be difficult to define but is easily perceived by all who are touched by it. *Preach My Gospel* teaches that “charity, like faith, leads to action.”¹⁰ Indeed, charity may be described as “love in action.” This description provides great insight into the summary statement of the Savior’s life—He “went about doing good.”¹¹

As followers of Jesus Christ, we should seek to emulate the way our Master demonstrated His pure love for others. Although the Savior manifests charity in many ways, I would like to call attention to three particular patterns of His charity that are readily seen in His true disciples.

Charity Is Showing Compassion

First, the Savior showed charity by being compassionate. During His ministry among the Nephites, as recorded in the Book of Mormon, the Lord invited the people to return home and ponder on the things He had taught and to prepare for His return the following day.¹² The record then states:

“They were in tears, and did look steadfastly upon him as if they would ask him to tarry a little longer with them.

“And he said unto them: Behold, my bowels are filled with compassion towards you.”¹³

Compassion is the portion of charity that seeks to alleviate suffering.¹⁴ Filled with compassion, the Lord healed the sick and afflicted among the people. Afterward, He blessed their children while angels descended from heaven and surrounded them.¹⁵ He performed these tender, loving acts, and many more, because He was “moved with compassion.”¹⁶

While serving as a young missionary in South America, I likewise benefited from the compassion of a dear friend. One evening while I was driving with my companion to the home of our mission president, a young man on a bicycle turned suddenly in front of the vehicle. It happened so quickly that I could not avoid the collision. Tragically, this young man was killed by the impact. I was devastated over the loss of his life. Terrified and in shock as the awful reality of what had just occurred crashed down upon me, I was taken to jail and locked up.¹⁷ I have never felt more frightened and alone. I was filled with despair and fear that I would be imprisoned for the rest of my life.

A fellow missionary, Elder Brian Kochevar, learned of the accident and was moved by compassion. He came to the jail and pled with the officers to be allowed to stay with me in the cell so that I would not be alone. Miraculously, they agreed. To this day, I feel profound gratitude for this disciple’s act of Christlike love, which calmed, comforted, and consoled me during the greatest moment of distress in my life.¹⁸ His charitable compassion was a telling sign of his discipleship. As President Nelson observed, “One of the easiest ways to

identify a *true follower* of Jesus Christ is how compassionately that person treats other people.” ¹⁹

Charity Is Ministering to Unspoken Needs

Another example of how the Savior demonstrates His love is through His observance of and ministry to the unspoken needs of others. To the man who had been lame for 38 years with no one to help him, the Lord made him whole and encouraged him to live righteously. ²⁰ To the woman caught in adultery, He offered hope and comfort rather than condemnation. ²¹ For the man with paralysis who was lowered from the roof, the Lord offered forgiveness of sins, not just healing of body. ²²

When I was called to serve as a bishop, our six young children made sacrament meetings challenging for my wife, Cristin, who had to manage them alone while I sat on the stand. As you may imagine, our children were often less than reverent. Noticing her situation, two members of our ward, John and Debbie Benich, began sitting with her each Sunday to help. Their kindness continued for years, and they became surrogate grandparents to our family. Like the Lord, these disciples had noticed the unspoken need and acted in love—a prominent sign of their discipleship.

Charity Is Helping Others Along the Covenant Path

Lastly, the Savior’s perfect love is focused on enabling all of God’s children to fulfill our divine potential that we may “partake of his salvation, and the power of his redemption.” ²³ As we become more like our Master, our desire to help our brothers and sisters along the covenant path will naturally increase.

For instance, we can uplift and befriend those who feel offended or forgotten, help those who are new to our congregation feel welcome, or invite friends to worship with us at sacrament meeting—perhaps this coming Easter. There are countless ways to encourage and assist others in their progression if we deliberately and prayerfully seek heaven’s help to have eyes to see ²⁴ and a heart to feel how Jesus Christ sees and feels for them. ²⁵

Helping others along their covenant path may take the form of an unconventional act of service. As an example, during my current assignment in the Philippines, I learned of the Agamata family. They were baptized in 2023, and then they eagerly set a date to be sealed as a family in the nearby Urdaneta Philippines Temple. However, just before the family’s appointment, several typhoons struck the region. Brother Agamata, a rice farmer, was unable to plant his crops during the harsh storms. When the tempests finally passed, he needed to quickly plant the rice while the ground was soaked with water—ideal conditions for planting. Sadly, the temple trip would have to be postponed.



Two disciples, Elder and Sister Cauilan, along with three young service missionaries, heard of the Agamata family's struggle and offered help despite having no farming experience. Working under the blistering sun, they helped plant the seedlings, allowing the Agamatas to complete their task and attend their temple sealing as scheduled. Elder Cauilan observed that "[the Agamatas'] countenances glowed as we saw them dressed in white in the house of the Lord. The joy we felt ministering to the one is a joy beyond compare!" ²⁶



The Agamatas now enjoy the rich blessings of being sealed as an eternal family because a few fellow disciples who were filled with charity—a sign of their discipleship—determined to help their brothers and sisters forward along their covenant path.

Brothers and sisters, discipleship of Jesus Christ is the only way to obtain enduring happiness. It is a path filled with deliberate and purposeful acts of love toward others. While the path of discipleship may be difficult and challenging, and while at times we may struggle and fall short, we can take comfort that God is mindful of us and yearns to help us every time we try. Isaiah reminds us that “God will hold [our] hand, saying ... , Fear not; I will help thee.”²⁷

With this assurance from our Father in Heaven in mind, I earnestly pray that we may follow President Nelson’s invitation to prioritize our discipleship. May we “pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart” to “be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; ... that when he shall appear we shall be like him”²⁸ because we will carry a sign of true discipleship, which is “charity ... the pure love of Christ.”²⁹

I testify that Jesus Christ is our living, glorious Savior, Redeemer, Exemplar, and Friend. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. Russell M. Nelson, “ The Lord Jesus Christ Will Come Again ,” *Liahona* , Nov. 2024, 121.
2. See *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary* , “disciple.”
3. Dallin H. Oaks, “ Following Christ ,” *Liahona* , Nov. 2024, 23.
4. Alma 5:14 ; see also Alma 5:19 .
5. See 2 Peter 1:3–8 .
6. Russell M. Nelson, “ Perfection Pending ,” *Ensign* , Nov. 1995, 87.
7. Moroni 7:46 ; see also 1 Corinthians 13:3 .
8. Doctrine and Covenants 18:19 ; emphasis added.
9. John 13:34–35 ; emphasis added.
10. *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ* (2023), 127.
11. Acts 10:38 .
12. See 3 Nephi 17:3 .
13. 3 Nephi 17:5–6 .
14. See *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary* , “compassion.”
15. See 3 Nephi 17:7–25 .
16. Matthew 9:36 ; 14:14 ; Mark 1:41 ; 6:34 .
17. The police officers put me in jail as part of their standard procedure for an accident resulting in a fatality. They separated me from my companion because I was the driver. I was in the jail for two days. During the police investigation, they discovered that this young man was intoxicated at the time of the accident and that this likely contributed to his sudden turn in front of our moving vehicle. I appeared before a judge for a formal hearing, where it was determined that there was no evidence of fault or negligence but rather that this was simply an unfortunate and tragic accident.
18. See Matthew 25:31–40 , especially verse 36 .
19. Russell M. Nelson, “ Peacemakers Needed ,” *Liahona* , May 2023, 98.
20. See John 5:2–9, 14 .
21. See John 8:1–11 .

22. See Mark 2:1–12 .
23. Omni 1:26 .
24. See Doctrine and Covenants 76:12 .
25. See 2 Nephi 26:24 .
26. Personal communication with Darwin Serrano Caulan, Dec. 1, 2024.
27. Isaiah 41:13 .
28. Moroni 7:48 .
29. Moroni 7:47 .

Beware the Second Temptation

By Elder Scott D. Whiting
Of the Seventy
April 2025

Don't hide from those who will love and support you; rather, run to them.

A couple of years ago, when I turned 12, I was invited to attend my first Aaronic Priesthood quorum overnight camp. This was a long-awaited invitation, as my father was a quorum leader and often went camping with the boys in the ward, while I was left at home.

When the day came, I was excited. And I must admit that I desperately wanted to fit in with the older boys. I was determined to prove myself. In that effort it wasn't long before I was tested to see if I would play along and be part of the group.

My assigned task was to get my father's car keys so a prank could be pulled on the leaders. I don't remember exactly what I said to convince my dad, but I soon ran to the group of boys with keys in hand, proud of my accomplishment.

Then came the next assignment. I was to unlock the car door and wedge a stick between the driver's seat-back and the car horn. And I was to lock the door so the horn would blare into the evening without any way for the leaders to access the car to remove the crude device.

Now, this is where the story turns painfully embarrassing for me. Once I secured the stick in place, I locked the door and ran as fast as I could to hide in a nearby patch of bushes. As I crouched down to the ground, I felt a searing pain. In the darkness and in my haste, I had sat upon a prickly pear cactus.



My screams of pain were drowned out by the blaring horn, and I had no recourse other than gingerly hobbling back to the car, confessing my “sins,” and seeking rudimentary and embarrassing medical attention.

The remainder of that night, I lay on my stomach in a tent while my father, using pliers, removed the cactus spines from my ... well, let me just say that I did not sit comfortably for several days afterward.

I have reflected on that experience many times. I can now laugh at the folly of my youth, even as some underlying principles have become clear to me.

Many patterns in human behavior seem to be common in the natural man—the desire to fit in, the desire to prove oneself, the fear of missing out, and the compelling need to hide so we avoid consequences. It is this final behavior I will focus on today—hiding after we do something that we should not.

Now, I am not equating my childish prank with grievous sin, but we can draw some parallels that may prove useful as we are tested in our mortal sojourn.

In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve had an idyllic circumstance—an abundance of food, the incomparable beauty of the garden—not only a garden of beauty but a garden with neither weeds nor prickly pears.

However, we also know that garden life limited their needed progression. The garden was not a final destination but a test, the first of many that would prove, prepare, and allow them to progress to their final destination of returning to the presence of the Father and the Son.

You will remember that there was opposition in the garden. Lucifer was allowed to try Adam and Eve. He first tempted Adam to partake of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Remembering the commandment not to partake thereof, Adam resisted. Then came blessed Eve, who chose to partake of the fruit, convincing Adam to do likewise.

Later, Adam and Eve declared that this decision was necessary to fulfill Heavenly Father’s plan. ¹ But by partaking of the fruit, they had transgressed the law—a law given them directly from the Father. The resulting and crushing understanding of good and evil must have left them in anguish when they heard the voice of the Father announcing His return to the garden. They realized they were naked, for they were indeed without clothing, having lived in a state of innocence. ² But perhaps more painful than their being without clothing in that moment, they were now exposed for their transgression. They were defenseless and vulnerable. They were naked in every sense of the word.

Ever the opportunist, Lucifer, knowing their exposed and weakened state, tempted them yet again—this time to hide from God.

This temptation—I will call it the “second temptation”—is the temptation that may bring the greatest consequence if we succumb. Surely, to avoid all first temptations to break God’s law is optimal, but we know that all will succumb to a variety of first temptations here on earth. As we progress in our maturity and understanding, we hope that our strength to avoid first temptations will continually improve as we strive to become more like our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Some might attempt to hide from God because they don’t want to be discovered or exposed, and they feel shame or guilt. However, numerous scriptures teach us that hiding from God is impossible. I’ll share just a few.

The Lord teaches Jeremiah through the following questions: “Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth?” ³

And Job is taught:

“For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings.

“There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.” ⁴

The psalmist David most poetically exclaims:

“O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me.

“Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. ...

“For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. ...

“Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

“If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.” ⁵

New Converts

For those who have recently joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the second temptation may seem particularly challenging. Through your baptism you have covenanted to take upon yourself the name of Jesus Christ, which for many includes a needed change of lifestyle. Changing one’s lifestyle is not easy. Often it requires you to change habits and practices and even associations to progress toward your loving Heavenly Father.

The adversary knows that you may be vulnerable to his subtle attacks. He will make your past life, which left you unsatisfied in so many ways, now seem unrealistically attractive. The accuser, as he is called in the book of Revelation, ⁶ will tempt you with thoughts that sound like this: “You aren’t strong enough to change your life; you can’t do this; you don’t belong with these people; they will never accept you; you are too weak.”

If these thoughts seem to ring true to you who are newly planted on the covenant path, we plead with you not to heed the accuser’s voice. We love you; you can do it; we accept you; and with the Savior, you will have strength to do all. At a time when you need our love and support the most, don’t be deceived into thinking that we will reject you if you take a step back into your prior lifestyle. Through the matchless power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, you can be made whole again. But if you hide from Him and distance yourself from your newfound faith community, you distance yourself from the very source that can and will give you the strength to overcome.

A dear friend of mine, a recent convert, shared how difficult it is to sustain faith in isolation. There is great strength in becoming and remaining part of a supportive community—all stumbling yet progressing while blessed by the love of Jesus Christ.

President Russell M. Nelson has taught that “overcoming the world is not an event that happens in a day or two. It happens over a lifetime as we repeatedly embrace the doctrine of Christ. We cultivate faith in Jesus Christ by repenting daily and keeping covenants that endow us with power. We stay on the covenant path and are blessed with spiritual strength, personal revelation, increasing faith, and the ministering of angels.”⁷

If you incur a physical injury, your condition will deteriorate and may become life-threatening if you don’t seek proper medical attention. That is true for spiritual wounds as well. Only, untreated spiritual wounds may threaten your eternal salvation. Don’t hide from those who will love and support you; rather, run to them. Good bishops, branch presidents, and leaders can help you access the healing power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

To those who may be in hiding, we implore you to come back. You need what the gospel and the Atonement of Jesus Christ offer, and we need what you offer. God knows your sins; you cannot hide from Him. Reconcile yourself before Him.

As His Saints, each of us must foster a culture of belonging in the Church that is loving, accepting, and encouraging of all who desire to progress along His path.

Beware this second temptation! Follow the counsel of prophets both ancient and modern and know that you cannot hide from a loving Father.

Instead, avail yourself of the miraculous healing power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. This is the very purpose of our existence—to obtain a weakened and mortal body that is “subject to all manner of infirmities”⁸ and that will succumb to, sadly, many first temptations; to progress even when we fall to these temptations; and to seek divine help after doing so, that we might become more like our Savior and our Father in Heaven.⁹ It is His way. It is the only way. Of these truths I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. See Moses 5:10–11 .
2. See Moses 4:13–17 .
3. Jeremiah 23:24 .
4. Job 34:21–22 .
5. Psalm 139:1–2, 4, 7–8 .
6. See Revelation 12:10 .
7. Russell M. Nelson, “Overcome the World and Find Rest,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2022, 97.
8. Mosiah 2:11 .
9. See 2 Peter 1:2–4 .

Harden Not Your Heart

By Elder Christopher H. Kim

Of the Seventy

April 2025

If we sincerely repent, humble ourselves, and trust and rely on the Lord, our hearts will be softened.

The Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ began when God the Father and His Beloved Son appeared to the young Joseph Smith, answering his humble prayer. As part of the Restoration, Joseph Smith translated an ancient record by the gift and the power of God. This record contains “God’s dealings with ancient inhabitants of the Americas and contains the fulness of the everlasting gospel.”

1

When I was a young boy, as I read the Book of Mormon, I often wondered why Laman and Lemuel did not believe the truths that were given to them, even when an angel of the Lord appeared and spoke to them directly. Why couldn’t Laman and Lemuel be more humble and obedient to the teachings of their father, Lehi, and their younger brother Nephi?

I found one of the answers to this question in 1 Nephi, which states that Nephi was “grieved because of the hardness of their hearts.”² Nephi asked his older brothers, “How is it that ye are so hard in your hearts, and so blind in your minds?”³

What does it mean to have a hardness of heart?

The Korean translation of “hardness” in the Book of Mormon is 완악 (Wan-Aak: 頑惡). This phrase uses the Chinese character “Wan” (頑), meaning “stubborn,” and “Aak” (惡), meaning “wicked.” When we harden our hearts, we are blinded, and good things cannot come into our hearts or our minds. We become stubborn and begin to place more focus on worldly desires, closing our hearts to the things of God. We choose to focus solely on our own thoughts while not accepting the opinions and guidance of others. We choose to not open our hearts to the things of God but instead to the influence of the things of the world and the adversary. When our hearts are hardened, we resist the influence of the Holy Ghost. We are “slow to remember the Lord,” and over time we become “past feeling” His words.⁴

Alma taught the people in Ammonihah that some “would reject the Spirit of God on account of the hardness of their hearts.”⁵ He also taught that “they that will harden their hearts, to them is given the lesser portion of the word until they know nothing concerning his mysteries.”⁶ Eventually, the Spirit withdraws,⁷ and the Lord “will take away [His] word”⁸ from those who have hardened their hearts just like Laman and Lemuel. Because Laman and Lemuel continually hardened their hearts, resisted the feelings of the Holy Ghost, and chose not to

accept the words and teachings of their father and Nephi, they ultimately rejected eternal truths from God.

In contrast to Laman and Lemuel, Nephi continually humbled himself, seeking guidance from the Spirit of the Lord. In return, the Lord softened Nephi's heart. Nephi shares that he "did cry unto the Lord; and behold he did visit me, and did soften my heart that I did believe all the words which had been spoken by my father."⁹ The Lord helped Nephi to accept, understand, and believe all the mysteries of God and His words. Nephi was able to have the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost.

What can we do to not harden our hearts?

First, we can practice daily repentance.

Our Savior taught, "Whoso repenteth and cometh unto me as a little child, him will I receive."¹⁰ Our beloved prophet, President Russell M. Nelson, taught:

"Repenting is the *key* to progress. Pure faith keeps us moving forward on the covenant path.

"Please do not fear or delay repenting. Satan delights in your misery. ... Start today to experience the joy of putting off the natural man. The Savior loves us always but *especially* when we repent."¹¹

As we experience the joy of softening our hearts and coming to the Lord, we become "as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father."¹²

Second, we can practice humility.

Daily repentance will bring humility to our hearts. We want to become humble before the Lord, like a little child who obeys their father. We will then always have the Holy Spirit with us, and our hearts will soften.

My wife, Sue, and I have known a wonderful couple for the last four years. When we initially met them, the husband was a new member of the Church, and his wife was meeting with the missionaries to study the gospel. Many missionaries met with her to help her come unto Christ. We felt that she had a vibrant testimony of the gospel and knew that the Church was true. She felt the Spirit often during our visits and actively participated in all the meetings. She loved to interact with the wonderful members of the ward. However, she found it difficult to commit herself to enter the waters of baptism. One day she was reading Moroni 7:43–44, which reads:

"And again, behold I say unto you that he cannot have faith and hope, save he shall be meek, and lowly of heart.

"If so, [your] faith and hope is vain, for none is acceptable before God, save the meek and lowly in heart."

After reading these verses, she realized what she needed to do. She thought that she had understood the meaning of being meek and humble. However, her understanding was not sufficient enough to have faith and hope to obey the commandments of God. She had to let go of her stubbornness and her own wisdom. She started to humble herself through sincere repentance. She began to

understand humility in the perspective of God's eyes. She relied on Heavenly Father and prayed to soften her own heart. Through these prayers, she felt the Spirit witness to her that Heavenly Father wanted her to be baptized.

Both husband and wife shared that the more they became humble, the more they could understand the words of God, and their hearts were softened to follow the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Third, we can trust and rely on our Savior.

Nephi was a great example of allowing his heart to be softened by trusting in the Lord. He taught, "I have trusted in thee, and I will trust in thee forever. I will not put my trust in the arm of flesh."¹³ Similarly, in a revelation given to the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord said, "Put your trust in that Spirit which leadeth to do good—yea, to do justly, to walk humbly."¹⁴ When we put our trust in the Lord and rely on Him, He will soften our hearts, and we will be supported in our trials, troubles, and afflictions.¹⁵

If we sincerely repent, humble ourselves, and trust and rely on the Lord, our hearts will be softened. He will then pour out His Spirit and show us the mysteries of heaven. We will believe all the words that He has taught, and our understanding will deepen.

Our Savior, Jesus Christ, was the ultimate example of meekness. In 2 Nephi 31:7, we read, "But notwithstanding he being holy, he showeth unto the children of men that, according to the flesh he humbleth himself before the Father, and witnesseth unto the Father that he would be obedient unto him in keeping his commandments." Even though He was holy and perfect, He humbled Himself before the Father and was obedient to Him by being baptized.

At the end of His mortal life, Jesus Christ submitted His own will to His Father by partaking of the bitter cup. This suffering caused Him "to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit." The Savior asked that He "might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink." "Nevertheless," He said, "glory be to the Father, and [He] partook and finished [His] preparations unto the children of men."¹⁶

Brothers and sisters, we've been given moral agency. We can choose to harden our hearts, or we can choose to soften our hearts. In our daily lives, we can choose to do the things that invite the Lord's Spirit to come into and dwell in our hearts. I know that in these choices, there is peace and joy.

Let us follow the example of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who followed the will of the Father. As we do so, the Lord has promised us, "For, behold, I will gather them as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, if they will not harden their hearts."¹⁷ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. Introduction to the Book of Mormon .
2. 1 Nephi 2:18 .

3. 1 Nephi 7:8 .
4. 1 Nephi 17:45 .
5. Alma 13:4 .
6. Alma 12:11 .
7. See Helaman 6:35 .
8. Helaman 13:8 .
9. 1 Nephi 2:16 .
10. 3 Nephi 9:22 .
11. Russell M. Nelson, “ The Power of Spiritual Momentum ,”
Liahona , May 2022, 98.
12. Mosiah 3:19 .
13. 2 Nephi 4:34 .
14. Doctrine and Covenants 11:12 .
15. See Alma 36:3 .
16. Doctrine and Covenants 19:18–19 .
17. Doctrine and Covenants 10:65 .

Receive His Gift

By Elder Patrick Kearon

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

April 2025

You are a beloved daughter of God, you are a cherished son of God, and He has gifted you His perfect, holy Son.

Gift Giving

Gift giving is a social custom that spans all cultures, civilisations, and millennia. Throughout time, people have given gifts to each other to strengthen relationships, express love and gratitude, and mark important events like weddings, birthdays, and holidays. And humans are not the only ones of God's creations to give gifts to each other! Among many other examples we could point to, penguins are known to give shiny pebbles to their prospective mates, and bonobos (cousins of the chimpanzee) give fruit to expand their circle of friendship.





What gifts have you given? Think of a time when you found—or made—the perfect gift for someone you love. You just knew the gift was exactly what this loved one wanted and something they would treasure. What was the gift? Was it for your mother? a friend? your child? a teacher? your grandfather? How did you feel when you found this gift? How did you feel when you thought about this person you love opening the gift? Similarly, when did someone give *you* the perfect gift, and what was it like to receive it?

My Father's Gift to Me

When I was about seven years old, living with my parents in Arabia, a children's film called *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* was released. The film is about a magical car that can drive itself, float on water, and even fly! I knew that back home in England they made a miniature toy car just like Chitty Chitty Bang Bang, and oh, how I wanted one! You could pull a lever, and the toy car's wings would pop out! My father went on a business trip to England and asked if I wanted him to bring anything back for me, and I told him how very much I would like to have one of those Chitty Chitty Bang Bang cars.

He came back from his trip, and no car appeared. I was very sad and thought he must have forgotten. But about 10 days later was my birthday, and a little package, beautifully wrapped, was waiting for me. With great anticipation, and hardly daring to hope too much, I opened the gift and found my car. I was so happy that I cried. I pulled the lever, and the wings popped out, just like the car in the film! How I thanked my father for this most treasured gift. I played with that car for years and kept it for many more. I think my dad loved giving me that car at least as much as I loved receiving it.

Giving, Accepting and Opening, and Receiving

We can think of gift giving as having three parts to it:

1. The *giving* of the gift, where the giver selects, makes, or prepares the gift and presents it to the loved one. This involves thoughtful intention on the part of the giver to give something meaningful.
2. The *accepting* and *opening* of the gift, when the recipient accepts the gift from the giver—often with expressions of surprise, gratitude, and excitement—before opening it, sometimes untying a bow and unwrapping the package to discover what the gift is.
3. And then there is perhaps the most important part, the *receiving* of the gift. To receive a gift sincerely given is so much more than accepting and then opening it. It is more, even, than recognising the worth of the gift and expressing gratitude to the giver. To truly receive a gift, we come to value it for ourselves, put it to full use in our lives, and then remember with thankfulness the giver.

Receiving a gift is not passive but an intentional and meaningful process that goes far beyond merely opening a package. To receive is to appreciate and connect with both the gift and the heart of the giver in a way that strengthens the bonds between the giver and receiver. Thinking of that toy car brings back a host of golden memories, as I feel once again my father's deep love and care for me, represented by that gift and countless other generous acts.

Our Heavenly Father's Gifts

Our *Heavenly* Father has innumerable gifts of light and truth prepared to shower down on each of us, His treasured children. They flow from our Bounteous Giver like a wellspring in the wilderness from His benevolent heart.

¹ “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights.” ² In our covenant bond with the Father, He is ever the Giver and we the humble recipient.

The Greatest of All the Father's Gifts, Through Which All Others Flow

But we could receive nothing without the greatest of all the Father's gifts, His beloved Lamb, His Son, Jesus Christ. All of our Father's gifts flow from and are activated by the Saviour's willing offering in Gethsemane and on the cross and His triumphant Resurrection. ³ Jesus Christ, our merciful Redeemer, is the supreme gift from our Father of lights. “In the gift of his Son hath God prepared [for us] a more excellent way.” ⁴

One All-Encompassing Gift of Eternal Truth

I would like to talk about one all-encompassing gift of eternal truth that underpins our ability to receive all else our Father desires to endow us with—a vital gift of knowledge that, when fully accepted and received deep in the soul,

contextualises the joys and hardships of life and our unanswered questions: It is that *we really are God's children*.⁵ That truth is breathtaking! Stunning! And it is not figurative.⁶

Imagine you are hearing this for the first time! You really are His cherished daughter. You really are His precious son. And the path you are on is His plan of happiness. With His omniscient love, He knows exactly who you were before you were sent to earth⁷ and what you have experienced so far in your mortal life, and He has mercifully planned for your every tomorrow. And oh, how He yearns to one day have you return to Him, to receive the supreme intent of all His beautiful gifts, eternal life with Him.⁸

The question is not whether this gift of truth is real but whether we will discover and receive it. The gift has already been bestowed upon us by the Father. The price for the ultimate purpose of this gift has already been paid by the Saviour. But if you have been taught this, said this, and sung this truth for years, maybe the *awesome wonder* of it has long since faded and you no longer feel its power and peace.

If this priceless gift of understanding—and all the goodness, peace, and hope that flow from it—is left unaccepted, unopened, and unreceived, what a terrible loss for us! What a sadness for the Giver! “For what doth it profit a man if a gift is bestowed upon him, and he receive not the gift? Behold, he rejoices not in that which is given unto him, neither rejoices in him who is the giver of the gift.”⁹

I invite you to receive, either for the first time or to a greater extent than ever before, the magnificent realisation that you truly are God's beloved child. You must undo the bow, tear off the wrapping paper, open the box, and actively receive with grateful humility a true, pure understanding of this foundational truth. The Holy Spirit can bear witness to your heart that you are indeed a child of the Most High.¹⁰

When you welcome this majestic reality into your very soul and feel both the comfort and the thrill of it, your entire paradigm shifts! You can feel His love, hear His voice, and recognise His hand, no matter what is happening, or not happening, in your life.¹¹ You can redefine how you see yourself and others. Your covenant bond with your Saviour becomes even stronger, and through the lens of this sweet gift, life takes on new brilliance, beauty, and hope.¹²

Please, will you pray to understand if you are truly receiving this transformative knowledge deep in your soul? Will you please accept the gift? Will you do so more deeply, more freely, more abundantly than you ever have before—and in so doing be showered with all of those other gifts that come with it?

Receiving This Gift of Eternal Truth

You may be wondering, “What do I have to *do* to receive this gift from God?” Well, actually, nothing. It is a gift from the Giver. It is simply a fact. Just let it in. You *are* His child. You are beloved of Him. Do not complicate it. Do not block the receiving of this gift with thoughts that you are somehow undeserving. The reality is none of us is “deserving”—all the Father's gifts are received only through the merits, mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah,¹³ but how His

generous heart longs for each of His children to receive them! Then, as your new or renewed understanding dawns on you, rejoice in thanking the Giver of this gift.

Since finding my faith in my mid-20s, I have awakened to the realisation that I truly am a son of God. The more fully I internalise this gift, the more keenly I know who I am and how completely I am loved. Some things that have helped me grow in understanding are the words of scripture, my patriarchal blessing, temple worship, serving others, expressing gratitude, and sacred prayer with my Father. I marvel at how earlier sorrow, pain, and grief in my life would have been reframed, soothed, and much of it overcome had I known this beautiful truth.

Come unto Christ and Receive

Moroni exhorts us to “deny not the gifts of God” but to “come unto Christ, and lay hold upon every good gift.” ¹⁴ You can come to Christ with confidence in His loving-kindness and receive all His gifts of joy, peace, hope, light, truth, revelation, knowledge, and wisdom—with your head held high, your arms outstretched, and your hands open, ready to receive. And you can receive these gifts because you are secure and grounded in the knowledge that you are a beloved daughter of God, you are a cherished son of God, and He has gifted you His perfect, holy Son to redeem you, justify you, and sanctify you. ¹⁵

You *are* a child of God. This is not just a nice song we sing. ¹⁶ Will you please accept, open, and receive this gift of knowledge and understanding from Him? Will you hold it close as the precious treasure it is? Re-receive this gift, or perhaps truly receive it for the very first time, and let it transform every aspect of your life. This is the more excellent way God has prepared for you through the gift of His Son. ¹⁷ You really are that you might have joy! ¹⁸ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. See Isaiah 43:18–20.
2. James 1:17.
3. See John 3:16.
4. Ether 12:11.
5. See Romans 8:16 ; 1 Nephi 11:17 .
6. See John 3:16–17; 1 Nephi 17:36 ; 3 Nephi 14:9–11.
7. See Jeremiah 1:5 .
8. See Romans 6:23 ; 1 John 5:7, 11, 14 ; 3 Nephi 9:14 ; Doctrine and Covenants 14:7 ; 66:12 .
9. Doctrine and Covenants 88:33 .

10. See Psalm 82:6 .
11. See Russell M. Nelson, “ Joy and Spiritual Survival ,” *Ensign* or *Liahona* , Nov. 2016, 82.
12. “The way you think about who you really are affects almost every decision you will ever make” (Russell M. Nelson, “ Choices for Eternity ” [worldwide devotional for young adults, May 15, 2022], Gospel Library).
13. See 2 Nephi 2:8 .
14. Moroni 10:8, 30.
15. See Moses 6:57–62.
16. See “I Am a Child of God,” *Hymns* , no. 301.
17. See Ether 12:11.
18. See 2 Nephi 2:25.

The Love of God

By Elder Benjamin M. Z. Tai

Of the Seventy

April 2025

I joyfully witness that the Savior Jesus Christ is the love of God. His love for us is perfect, personal, and perpetual.

One summer while traveling in a remote area, our family spent an evening sleeping outdoors under a cloudless sky. Clearly visible above us was the magnificent Milky Way, filled with innumerable stars and the occasional shooting star. While we marveled at the majesty of God's creation, we felt a reverent connection to Him. ¹ Our young children, who had grown up in Hong Kong, had never experienced anything like this before. They innocently asked if we lived under the same sky back home. I tried to explain to them that it was the same sky, but air and light pollution where we lived prevented us from seeing these stars even though they were there.

The scriptures teach us that "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." ² While disorienting distractions and terrestrial temptations cloud our spiritual vision, when we exercise faith in God and His Son, Jesus Christ, we receive clear assurance of Their reality and of Their concern for us. ³

In the Book of Mormon, the prophet Lehi saw "a tree, whose fruit was desirable to make one happy" and was the "most sweet, above all." When he tasted the fruit, his soul was filled with great joy, and he wanted his family to taste it also. ⁴ We learn that this tree represents "the love of God," and like Lehi, we too can receive a joyful witness of God when we invite Him into our lives. ⁵

Jesus Christ embodies Heavenly Father's love for us. ⁶ Through His atoning sacrifice, He took upon Himself our sins and was bruised for our iniquities. He has personally borne our griefs, carried our sorrows, and taken upon Himself our pains and sicknesses. ⁷ He sends the Holy Ghost to comfort us, and the fruits of the Spirit include joy, peace, and faith, which fill us with hope and love. ⁸

While the love of God is accessible to all, many search earnestly for it, while others desire to feel God's love but do not believe that they deserve it. Some others are desperately trying to hang on to it. ⁹ The scriptures and the Lord's prophet teach us that we can consistently experience God's love when, through the grace of Jesus Christ, we repeatedly repent, frankly forgive, strive to keep His commandments, and selflessly serve others. ¹⁰ We feel God's love when we do things that draw us closer to Him, such as conversing with Him daily through prayer and scripture study, and stop doing things that distance us from Him, such as being prideful, contentious, and rebellious. ¹¹

President Russell M. Nelson has invited us to “remove, with the Savior’s help, the old debris in our lives” ¹² and to “lay aside bitterness.” ¹³ He has encouraged us to “bolster our spiritual foundations” through “centering our lives on [the Savior] and on the ordinances and covenants of His temple.” ¹⁴ He promised that “as we keep our temple covenants, we gain greater access to the Lord’s strengthening power. ... We experience the pure love of Jesus Christ and our Heavenly Father in great abundance!” ¹⁵

I have a friend who was blessed with a beautiful family and a promising career. This changed when an illness left him unable to work, which was followed by a divorce. The years since have been difficult, but his love for his children and the covenants he has made with God have sustained him. One day he learned that his former spouse had remarried and had requested a cancellation of their temple sealing. He was troubled and confused. He sought peace and understanding in the house of the Lord. The day after his visit, I received the following message from him:

“I had an amazing experience in the temple last night. I think it was obvious that I still held quite a bit of resentment. ... I knew that I must change, and I have been praying all week to do so. ... Last night in the temple I literally felt the Spirit remove the resentment from my heart. ... It was such a relief to be freed from it. ... An ominous physical burden bearing down on me has been lifted.”

While he still has his challenges, my friend treasures that experience in the house of the Lord, where the liberating power of the love of God has helped him to feel closer to God, more optimistic about life, and less anxious about his future.

When we experience the love of God, we can bear up our burdens with ease and submit patiently and cheerfully to His will. We have confidence that God will remember His covenants with us, visit us in our afflictions, and deliver us from bondage. ¹⁶ We will also desire to share the joy we feel with our family and loved ones. ¹⁷ As with Lehi’s family, each person has agency to choose whether to partake of the fruit or not, but our opportunity is to love, share, and invite in such a way that those we love can feel the love of God.

To help others feel God’s love, we need to cultivate in ourselves Christlike attributes such as humility, charity, compassion, and patience and help turn others towards the Savior through following the two great commandments of loving God and loving our fellow men. ¹⁸

One of our sons struggled with fitting in and self-esteem during his teenage years. My wife and I prayed to know how to help him, and we were willing to do whatever the Lord would have us do. One day I felt prompted to ask my elders quorum president if he knew of anyone in need who I could visit together with my son. After some thought, he asked us to visit a woman with significant health challenges and, with permission from the branch president, to bring the sacrament to her each week. I was elated but also concerned about how my son would react to this weekly commitment.

On our first visit, our hearts ached for this dear woman, as she was in constant pain. She was very grateful for the sacrament, and we enjoyed visiting with her and her husband. After a few visits, one Sunday I was away and could not accompany my son, but I reminded him of our assignment. When I got home, I

couldn't wait to hear how the visit went. My son replied that he didn't think his classmates got to do cool things like this. And he elaborated by saying that he brought his brother with him to help and that the sacrament went smoothly, but this dear sister had been sad during the week because she had invited friends to her home to watch movies, but her video player would not work. My son said he searched online, found the problem, and fixed it for her on the spot. He felt useful, happy, and trusted to do something that brightened her day. He felt God's love for him.

If despite your best efforts life is overcast, if you feel that your prayers are not heard, or if you can't feel God's love, please know that your every effort matters and, as certain as the stars above us, that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ know, hear, and love you.

On one occasion, when His disciples were in a boat being "tossed [by the] waves," the Savior walked towards them on the water and assured them, saying, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid." When Peter wanted to walk to the Savior on the water, Jesus beckoned to him, saying, "Come." And when Peter lost his focus and began to sink, the Savior immediately reached out His hand to catch him and led him to safety while saying, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" ¹⁹

When the winds are against us in our lives, are we willing to be cheerful and courageous? ²⁰ How can we remember that the Savior does not forsake us and that He is near us, perhaps in ways we don't yet recognize? ²¹ Are we willing to go to Him in faith, especially when the path before us seems impossible? ²² And in what ways does He lift us to safety when we flounder? ²³ How can we faithfully look unto Him in every thought, without doubt or fear? ²⁴

If you would like to feel the love of God more abundantly in your life, may I invite you to consider the following:

- First, *pause frequently* to remember that you are a child of God and think of the things you are grateful for. ²⁵
- Second, *pray daily*, asking Heavenly Father to help you know who around you needs to feel His love.
- Third, *ask sincerely* what you can do to help that individual to feel the love of God.
- And fourth, *act promptly* on the inspiration you receive.

If we consistently pray and ask on the behalf of others, God will show us the people we can help. And if we act promptly, we can become the means through which He answers their prayers. By doing so, in time, we will receive answers to our prayers and we will feel God's love in our own lives.



A few months ago while traveling in Vietnam, my wife and I were on a flight that took off in a heavy storm. The turbulence was severe, and dark clouds, heavy rain, and lightning could be seen from our window. After a long and volatile ascent, our airplane finally rose above the storm clouds and emerged to this glorious vista. We were reminded once again of our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and felt Their great love for us.

Dear friends, as one who has experienced God's love, I joyfully witness that the Savior Jesus Christ is the love of God. His love for us is perfect, personal, and perpetual. As we faithfully follow Him, may we be filled with His love and may we be a lighthouse that guides others to His love. ²⁶ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. See Psalm 19:1 ; Isaiah 40:26 ; Alma 30:44 .
2. Hebrews 11:1 .
3. See John 10:14 ; 1 Corinthians 8:3 ; Ether 12:6, 12 .
4. See 1 Nephi 8:10–12 .
5. See 1 Nephi 11:21–22, 25 .
6. See John 3:16 ; 1 John 4:9–10 .
7. See Isaiah 53:4–5 ; Alma 7:11–13 .
8. See John 14:26 ; Galatians 5:22–23 ; Mosiah 3:19 ; Moroni 8:26 .
9. See 2 Nephi 26:33 .
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 6:20 .

11. See Proverbs 13:10 ; 28:25 ; James 4:8 ; 1 Peter 5:5 ; 2 Nephi 12:11 ; Mosiah 18:21–22 ; Doctrine and Covenants 38:27 .
12. Russell M. Nelson, “ Welcome Message ,” *Liahona* , May 2021, 7.
13. Russell M. Nelson, “ Peacemakers Needed ,” *Liahona* , May 2023, 101.
14. Russell M. Nelson, “ The Temple and Your Spiritual Foundation ,” *Liahona* , Nov. 2021, 95.
15. Russell M. Nelson, “ The Lord Jesus Christ Will Come Again ,” *Liahona* , Nov. 2024, 121.
16. See Mosiah 24:13–16 .
17. See 1 Nephi 8:12 ; Enos 1:8–9 ; Mosiah 4:11–12 .
18. See Matthew 22:37–40 ; John 13:34–35 ; 1 John 4:11 .
19. See Matthew 14:22–32 ; Mark 6:45–51 ; John 6:15–21 .
20. See Deuteronomy 31:6 ; Joshua 1:9 .
21. See Isaiah 41:10 ; Luke 24:13–35 ; Hebrews 13:5 .
22. See Luke 1:37 .
23. See Psalm 30:1 ; 40:2 ; 113:5–8 ; 145:14 .
24. See Doctrine and Covenants 6:36 .
25. See Psalm 46:10 ; Acts 17:29 ; Alma 34:38 ; Moses 1:4, 6–7 .
26. See Psalm 40:11 ; John 15:4–12 ; 1 John 4:16 .

Confidence in the Presence of God

By President Russell M. Nelson

President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

April 2025

As we diligently seek to have charity and virtue fill our lives, our confidence in approaching God will increase.

My dear brothers and sisters, I am grateful to speak to you today in this important general conference. My eyes continue to get older. Thank you for your understanding as I deliver my message.

We live in a day of great momentum in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I am filled with joy as I see progress in so many areas. ¹

I am especially inspired by our youth. They are giving service in large numbers. They are seeking their ancestors and performing ordinances in the temple. Our young men and women are submitting applications for missionary service in record numbers. The rising generation is *rising up* as stalwart followers of Jesus Christ.



Recently I met a new great-granddaughter. When I contemplate the challenges she will experience in her life, I feel a great desire to help her build faith in Jesus Christ. Living His gospel is essential for her future happiness.

She, like each of us, will face challenges. We all will experience illness, disappointment, temptation, and loss. These challenges can knock our self-

confidence. However, disciples of Jesus Christ have access to a different kind of confidence.

When we make and keep covenants with God, we can have confidence that is born of the Spirit. The Lord told the Prophet Joseph Smith that our confidence can “wax strong in the presence of God.”² Imagine the comfort of having confidence in the presence of God!

When I speak of having confidence before God, I am referring to having confidence in approaching God *right now* ! I am referring to praying with confidence that Heavenly Father hears us, that He understands our needs better than we do. I am referring to having confidence that He loves us more than we can comprehend, that He sends angels to be with us and with those we love.³ I am referring to having confidence that He yearns to help each of us reach our highest potential.

Now, how do we gain such confidence? The Lord answers this question with these words: “Let thy bowels ... be full of charity towards all men, ... and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; *then* shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God.”⁴

There’s the key! In the Lord’s own words, charity and virtue open the way to having confidence before God! Brothers and sisters, we can do this! Our confidence can truly wax strong in the presence of God, right now!

Let’s consider both charity and virtue.

First, charity. Two years ago, I called upon us, as covenant followers of Jesus Christ, to be peacemakers. I repeat what I said then: “Anger never persuades. Hostility builds no one. Contention never leads to inspired solutions.”⁵

True charity towards all men is the hallmark of peacemakers! It is imperative that we have charity in our discourse, both public and private. I thank those of you who took my previous counsel to heart. But we can still do better.

The present hostility in public dialogue and on social media is alarming. hateful words are deadly weapons. Contention prevents the Holy Ghost from being our constant companion.⁶

As followers of Jesus Christ, we should lead the way as peacemakers. As charity becomes part of our nature, we will lose the impulse to demean others. We will stop judging others. We will have charity for those from all walks of life.⁷ Charity towards all men is essential to our progress. Charity is the foundation of a godly character.

Let us plead with our Heavenly Father to fill our hearts with greater charity—especially for those who are difficult to love⁸—for charity is a gift from our Heavenly Father for true followers of Jesus Christ.⁹ The Savior is the Prince of Peace.¹⁰ We are to be His instruments for peace.

Now, let us speak of virtue. The Lord tells us to garnish our thoughts *unceasingly* with virtue. Imagine the boost you will receive to any positive thought when you enhance it with virtue. Virtue makes everything better and happier! On the other hand, imagine what will happen when you add virtue to

an impure thought, a cruel thought, or a depressing thought. Virtue will drive away *those* thoughts. Virtue will free you from anxious, troublesome thoughts.

Brothers and sisters, as the world grows more wicked, we need to grow increasingly pure. Our thoughts, words, and actions need to be unfailingly virtuous and filled with the pure love of Jesus Christ towards all men. The great opportunity before us is to become the people God needs us to be. ¹¹

Regular worship in the house of the Lord increases our capacity for both virtue and charity. Thus, time in the temple increases our confidence before the Lord. Increased time in the temple will help us prepare for the Second Coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ. We do not know the day or the hour of His coming. ¹² But I do know that the Lord is prompting me to urge us to get ready for that “great and dreadful day.” ¹³

As we diligently seek to have charity and virtue fill our lives, our confidence in approaching God will increase. I invite you to take intentional steps to grow in *your* confidence before the Lord. ¹⁴ Then, as we go to our Heavenly Father with increasing confidence, we will be filled with more joy, and your faith in Jesus Christ will increase. ¹⁵ We will begin to experience spiritual power that exceeds our greatest hopes.

We are grateful to the Lord for the acceleration of temple-building in recent years. Under His direction, today we announce plans to construct a temple in each of these 15 locations:

- Reynosa, Mexico
- Chorrillos, Peru
- Rivera, Uruguay
- Campo Grande, Brazil
- Porto, Portugal
- Uyo, Nigeria
- San Jose del Monte, Philippines
- Nouméa, New Caledonia
- Liverpool, Australia
- Caldwell, Idaho
- Flagstaff, Arizona
- Rapid City, South Dakota
- Greenville, South Carolina
- Norfolk, Virginia
- Spanish Fork, Utah

I testify that Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of Israel, leads this, His Church. He is preparing to come again. May we likewise prepare to receive Him. For this I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. The little stone that the prophet Daniel saw in his dream of the latter days is rolling forth to fill the world (see Daniel 2:31–45 ; Doctrine and Covenants 65:2) .
2. Doctrine and Covenants 121:45 .
3. “For I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up” (Doctrine and Covenants 84:88).
4. Doctrine and Covenants 121:45 , emphasis added; see also verse 46 .
5. Russell M. Nelson, “ Peacemakers Needed ,” *Liahona* , May 2023, 98.
6. Choosing to contend with others is choosing to live without the guidance of the Holy Ghost.
7. We are to have charity “towards all men, and to the household of faith” (Doctrine and Covenants 121:45).
8. This means praying “with all the energy of heart” (Moroni 7:48).
9. See Moroni 7:48 .
10. See Isaiah 9:6 .
11. As Joseph Smith taught, “If [we] wish to go where God is, [we] must be like God, or possess the principles which God possesses” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 72). Likewise, the Apostle Paul gave the admonition that we should “come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).
12. See Matthew 24:36–37 .
13. Malachi 4:5 ; see also Zephaniah 1:14–18 .
14. The Lord has told us to “remember faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, godliness, charity, humility, [and] diligence” (Doctrine and Covenants 4:6). When we do, our confidence will increase, and then, in His own words, when we ask, we shall receive. And when we knock, it shall be opened unto us. (See Doctrine and Covenants 4:7 .)
15. We may experience what King Benjamin’s people did: “They were filled with joy, having received a remission of their sins,

and having peace of conscience, because of the exceeding faith which they had in Jesus Christ” (Mosiah 4:3).