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APRIL 2023

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# General Conference

*A wide margin compilation  
for note-taking and personal study*

*Inklings*  
INSTITUTE



WE ARE THOSE WOMEN

# Inklings Anthem

In all generations of time there have been women with Esther courage, Deborah prophecy, Abish conviction.

*Our time is no different.*

All around us there are women who are righteous, articulate, distinct and different. Women of strength, conversion, conviction, leadership, and wisdom.

You are one of those women.

God needs you. He needs your voice. He knows you are a woman with spiritual power to change the world. Heroic. Able to carry on, despite difficult circumstance.

*The hope of Israel.*

Here now, because He knew your capacity for negotiating these latter days.

He sees you. Your desire to develop a bedrock understanding of the doctrine of Christ. How you are learning to access the power of God.

How you call upon the powers of heaven to protect and strengthen. He knows your longing to become a converted covenant-keeping woman.

He knows how the Spirit will magnify your influence in an unprecedented way.

His prophet calls to each of us:

Rise to your full stature.  
Fulfill the measure of your creation.  
Prepare the world for the  
Second Coming of the Lord.

Not overnight.

*Every day better.*

We are learning that leaning into the inklings will help us discover the hint of something more. Stalwart strength gathered over time.

*There is a place for you here.*

When others are walking away,  
we are a community who is choosing  
to stay, to run the race set before us.  
You will not run this last leg alone.

You belong here among the fulfillers  
of prophecy. Esther, Deborah, Abish.

*We are those women.*  
*This is our time.*

HOW IT WORKS

# Sprinkles

We are not a bakery, but we do love cupcakes at Inklings, and here is why:

Sometimes you have time to sit down and enjoy a whole cupcake. But most times, you are the one running the entire party. On those days, you might only have time to swipe your finger across the top to get a little frosting and a lot of sprinkles. Here's the amazing thing... you still experienced sweetness, even if you didn't have time for the entire cupcake.

The same is true around here. Some weeks you might have time to dive into the entire institute class on Thursday mornings. But most weeks there is a good chance you are running the party in your world. So, if you only have time for a quick glance at the Sunday Instagram post, with a word a phrase and a quote, and you don't listen to the class that week, or even if you miss an entire week altogether, that's ok. It's to be expected. We don't play catch up here. You just get all the sweetness you can, whenever you can. We believe in sprinkles.

In fact, we keep a list of sprinklings. Small bits of goodness from each week's lesson. So, if you miss a week you can go back and find those "sprinklings" on our Thursday Instagram posts.

And if you are taking a break from social media, you can find all of this on our APP—the videos, the workbooks, the pdfs and even the sprinklings.

There's a podcast there as well.

To learn more visit [www.goodnewsbrandco.com/collections/inklings](http://www.goodnewsbrandco.com/collections/inklings)



FROM EMILY AND RIO

# Welcome Letter

Charity often shows up unexpectedly, sometimes in the middle of a journey, meeting us there on the road. I turn to scripture and think about the roads where love showed up. The road to Jericho, a road full of pain and suffering until love showed up to bind the wounds, take care, sit through the darkest hours of the night. I consider the road to Damascus, a place full of hate and threatening, until love showed up offering a change of heart, a change of belief, a second chance. The road to Emmaus, a road filled with grief and sorrow, until love showed up bringing hope and Him.

Walking roads like this will require something of you, it will require each of us to learn what love looks like along the harder paths. Our hearts were drawn to the call of a prophet this past conference weekend. He reminded us that the easiest way to identify a follower of Christ is how compassionately that person treats other people. He told us that charity is the principal characteristic of a true follower of Christ, how charity defines a peacemaker. He promised us that if we would follow his counsel, we would arise as a spiritually strong woman of Christ. And then he told us the best is yet to come for those who spend their lives building up others.

The prophet invited us to examine our discipleship, to make adjustments so that our behavior would be representative of a true follower of Jesus Christ. To live and interact with others in a higher, holier way. "I invite you to remember Jesus Christ. Pray to have the courage and wisdom to say or do what He would."

For the next six months, we plan to accept this invitation. Maybe, as you prepare to begin, you could spend a few minutes pondering 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.

## IN APRIL AND MAY

We will learn to UNDERSTAND HIS LOVE as we study the life and attributes of the PEACE GIVER.

## IN JUNE AND JULY

We will study how to FEEL HIS LOVE as we find ways to experience PERSONAL PEACE.

## IN AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER

We will discover how to SHARE HIS LOVE as we learn how to become PEACEMAKERS.

Love gives second chances. Love asks, How can I help? Love is the welcoming in. Love doesn't stand higher, but meets people where they are. Love is never too good for someone. Love is full of grace. Love does not call attention to self. Love has an understanding heart. Love assumes the best. Love will not stand for injustice, helps carry the burden, creates trust, has high hopes and expectations. Love doesn't leave when things get tough.

Love never fails.

We look forward to spending the next six months with you!

With Love,

*Emily + Rio*

FROM THE PROPHET

# A Blessing

As you demonstrate the *charity* that true followers of Jesus Christ manifest, the Lord will *magnify your efforts* beyond your loftiest imagination.

My dear brothers and sisters, *the best is yet to come* for those who spend their lives building up others.

I bless you to make any adjustments that may be needed so that your behavior is *ennobling, respectful, and representative* of a true follower of Jesus Christ.



HOW IT WORKS

# Study Overview

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## *Sundays*

All of the readings will be posted to the Inklings APP and the Inklings Instagram account on Sundays. These readings will include the scripture verses and general conference talks that we will be studying that week.

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## *Mondays*

On Mondays, a reflection question focused on each week's theme will be posted to Instagram and the Inklings APP for you to ponder throughout the week.

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## *Thursdays*

A live institute class will be held on Instagram at 9:00 am MST on Thursdays. Following the live session, the class will be saved to the feed, uploaded to the APP, and published on the Inklings podcast.

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## *Fridays*

A weekly recap will be sent via email with links to the Institute class and an affirmation print.



*Scan the QR code for other helpful tools and resources to enhance your study, including suggestions for how to join a small group in your area, or begin your own!*

# Study Schedule

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## *Understand His Love*

PEACE GIVER

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|        |                    |   |    |
|--------|--------------------|---|----|
| APR 9  | Russell M. Nelson  | The Answer Is Always Jesus Christ                   | 11 |
|        | Dallin H. Oaks     | The Teachings of Jesus Christ                       | 12 |
| APR 16 | Neil L. Andersen   | My Mind Caught Hold Upon This Thought               | 17 |
| APR 23 | Ronald A. Rasband  | Hosanna to the Most High God                        | 22 |
| APR 30 | Ahmad S. Corbitt   | Do You Know Why I As a Christian Believe in Christ? | 28 |
| MAY 7  | Ulisses Soares     | Followers of the Prince of Peace                    | 34 |
| MAY 14 | Camille N. Johnson | Jesus Christ Is Relief                              | 39 |
| MAY 21 | W. Mark Bassett    | After the Fourth Day                                | 45 |

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## *Feel His Love*

PERSONAL PEACE

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|        |                      |  |    |
|--------|----------------------|--|----|
| MAY 28 | Henry B. Eyring      | Finding Personal Peace                             | 51 |
| JUN 4  | David A. Bednar      | Abide in Me, and I in You; Therefore, Walk With Me | 56 |
| JUN 11 | Carl B. Cook         | Just Keep Going — With Faith                       | 62 |
| JUN 18 | Dale G. Renlund      | Accessing God's Power Through Covenants            | 67 |
| JUN 25 | Randall K. Bennett   | Your Patriarchal Blessing — Inspired Direction...  | 73 |
| JUL 2  | Craig C. Christensen | There Can Be Nothing So Exquisite and Sweet As...  | 77 |
| JUL 9  | K. Brett Nattress    | Have I Truly Been Forgiven?                        | 82 |
| JUL 16 | Vern P. Stanfill     | The Imperfect Harvest                              | 87 |
| JUL 23 | Elder Mark A. Bragg  | Christlike Poise                                   | 92 |



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*Share His Love*

PEACEMAKER

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|        |                        |  |     |
|--------|------------------------|--|-----|
| JUL 30 | Russell M. Nelson      | Peacemakers Needed                           | 97  |
| AUG 6  | Gerrit W. Gong         | Ministering                                  | 102 |
| AUG 13 | Dieter F. Uchtdorf     | Jesus Christ Is the Strength of Parents      | 108 |
| AUG 20 | Quentin L. Cook        | Safely Gathered Home                         | 114 |
| AUG 27 | Bonnie H. Cordon       | Never Give Up an Opportunity to Testify...   | 120 |
| SEP 3  | Juan A. Uceda          | The Lord Jesus Christ Teaches Us To Minister | 125 |
| SEP 10 | M. Russell Ballard     | Remember What Matters Most                   | 129 |
| SEP 17 | D. Todd Christofferson | One in Christ                                | 134 |

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*Remaining Talks*

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|                    |  |     |
|--------------------|--|-----|
| Gary E. Stevenson  | The Greatest Easter Story Ever Told          | 141 |
| Allen D. Haynie    | A Living Prophet for the Latter Days         | 145 |
| Peter F. Meurs     | He Could Heal Me!                            | 149 |
| Evan A. Schmutz    | Trusting the Doctrine of Christ              | 151 |
| Benjamin De Hoyos  | The Work of the Temple and Family History... | 155 |
| Milton Camargo     | Focus on Jesus Christ                        | 157 |
| Kazuhiko Yamashita | When to Receive Your Patriarchal Blessing    | 161 |
| Kevin R. Duncan    | A Voice of Gladness!                         | 163 |



# The Answer Is Always Jesus Christ

PRESIDENT RUSSELL M. NELSON

*Whatever questions or problems you have, the answer is always found in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.*

- 1 My dear brothers and sisters, we have been spiritually fed during these last two days. The choir music was superb. Those who have spoken have been instruments for the Lord. I pray that you will seek for the Holy Ghost to guide you in your study as you contemplate the truths taught from this pulpit. They have truly been heaven sent.
- 2 One week from today is Easter Sunday. It is the most important religious observance for followers of Jesus Christ. The main reason we celebrate Christmas is because of Easter. The Come, Follow Me lesson this week will prompt you to study the Savior's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, His cleansing of the temple, His suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane, His Crucifixion, His glorious Resurrection, and His subsequent appearances to His followers.<sup>1</sup>
- 3 Savor these sacred verses and find every way you can to thank our Heavenly Father for sending us His Only Begotten Son.<sup>2</sup> Because of Jesus Christ, we can repent and be forgiven of our sins. Because of Him, each of us will be resurrected.
- 4 I also invite you to study again the account of the Savior's appearance to the Nephites in the Americas, as recorded in 3 Nephi. Not long before that appearance, His voice was heard among the people, including these words of supplication:
- 5 "Will ye not now return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you?"
- 6 "... Behold, mine arm of mercy is extended towards you, and whosoever will come, him will I receive."<sup>3</sup>
- 7 Dear brothers and sisters, Jesus Christ extends that same invitation to you today. I plead with you to come unto Him so that He can heal you! He will heal you from sin as you repent. He will heal you from sadness and fear. He will heal you from the wounds of this world.
- 8 Whatever questions or problems you have, the answer is always found in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Learn more about His Atonement, His love, His mercy, His doctrine, and His restored gospel of healing and progression. Turn to Him! Follow Him!
- 9 Jesus Christ is the reason we build temples. Each is His holy house. Making covenants and receiving essential ordinances in the temple, as well as seeking to draw closer to Him there, will bless your life in ways no other kind of worship can. For this reason, we are doing all within our power to make the blessings of the temple more accessible to our members around the world. Today, I am grateful to announce our plans to build a new temple in each of the following locations:
  - 10 Retalhuleu, Guatemala  
Iquitos, Peru  
Teresina, Brazil  
Natal, Brazil  
Tuguegarao City, Philippines  
Iloilo, Philippines  
Jakarta, Indonesia  
Hamburg, Germany  
Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada  
San Jose, California  
Bakersfield, California  
Springfield, Missouri  
Charlotte, North Carolina  
Winchester, Virginia  
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania
- 11 My dear brothers and sisters, I bear witness that Jesus Christ directs the affairs of His Church. I testify that following Him is the only way to enduring happiness. I know that His power is descending upon His covenant-keeping people, who are "armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory."<sup>4</sup> I so testify, with my love and blessing for each of you, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.
  1. See *Come, Follow Me—For Individuals and Families: New Testament 2023*, 57–60.
  2. See *John 3:16*.
  3. *3 Nephi 9:13–14*.
  4. *1 Nephi 14:14*.

# The Teachings of Jesus Christ

PRESIDENT DALLIN H. OAKS

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*We are given the scriptures to direct our lives. My message today consists of a selection of the words of our Savior—what He said.*

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- 1 We believe in Christ. As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we worship Him and follow His teachings in the scriptures.
- 2 Before the Fall, our Heavenly Father spoke directly to Adam and Eve. Thereafter, the Father introduced His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, as our Savior and Redeemer and gave us the command to “hear Him.”<sup>1</sup> From this direction we conclude that the scriptural records of words spoken by “God” or the “Lord” are almost always the words of Jehovah, our risen Lord, Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup>
- 3 We are given the scriptures to direct our lives. As the prophet Nephi taught us, we should “feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do.”<sup>3</sup> Most of the scriptures reporting Jesus’s mortal ministries are descriptions of what He did. My message today consists of a selection of the words of our Savior—what He said. These are words recorded in the New Testament (including the inspired additions of Joseph Smith) and in the Book of Mormon. Most of these selections are in the sequence in which our Savior spoke them.
- 4 “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”<sup>4</sup>
- 5 “Blessed are ... they [which] do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled with the Holy Ghost.”<sup>5</sup>
- 6 “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.”<sup>6</sup>
- 7 “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:
- 8 “But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”<sup>7</sup>
- 9 “Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.
- 10 “But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;
- 11 “That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.”<sup>8</sup>
- 12 “If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:
- 13 “But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”<sup>9</sup>
- 14 “If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.”<sup>10</sup>
- 15 “Wherefore, seek not the things of this world but seek ye first to build up the kingdom of God, and to establish his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”<sup>11</sup>
- 16 “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.”<sup>12</sup>
- 17 “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.
- 18 “Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?
- 19 “Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.”<sup>13</sup>
- 20 “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of

- heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."14
- 21 "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
- 22 "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.
- 23 "For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."15
- 24 "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.
- 25 "And now for a man to take up his cross, is to deny himself all ungodliness, and every worldly lust, and keep my commandments."16
- 26 "Therefore, forsake the world, and save your souls; for what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"17
- 27 "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."18
- 28 "And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.
- 29 "For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."19
- 30 "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."20
- 31 "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:
- 32 "And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."21
- 33 "[The great commandment in the law is this:] Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.
- 34 "This is the first and great commandment.
- 35 "And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.
- 36 "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."22
- 37 "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him."23
- 38 "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."24
- 39 "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you."25
- 40 "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have."26
- 41 "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:
- 42 "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."27
- 43 After His ministry in the Holy Land, Jesus Christ appeared to the righteous on the American continent. These are some of the words He spoke there:
- 44 "Behold, I am Jesus Christ the Son of God. I created the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are. I was with the Father from the beginning. I am in the Father, and the Father in me; and in me hath the Father glorified his name."28
- 45 "I am the light and the life of the world. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.
- 46 "And ye shall offer up unto me no more the shedding of blood; yea, your sacrifices and your burnt offerings shall be done away, for I will accept none of your sacrifices and your burnt offerings.
- 47 "And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit. And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost. ...
- 48 "Behold, I have come unto the world to bring redemption unto the world, to save the world from sin."29
- 49 "And again I say unto you, ye must

repent, and be baptized in my name, and become as a little child, or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God.”<sup>30</sup>

<sup>50</sup> “Therefore I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect.”<sup>31</sup>

<sup>51</sup> “Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye must watch and pray always, lest ye be tempted by the devil, and ye be led away captive by him.”<sup>32</sup>

<sup>52</sup> “Therefore ye must always pray unto the Father in my name.”<sup>33</sup>

<sup>53</sup> “Therefore, whatsoever ye shall do, ye shall do it in my name; therefore ye shall call the church in my name.”<sup>34</sup>

<sup>54</sup> “Behold I have given unto you my gospel, and this is the gospel which I have given unto you—that I came into the world to do the will of my Father, because my Father sent me.

<sup>55</sup> “And my Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross; and after that I had been lifted up upon the cross, that I might draw all men unto me ... to be judged of their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil.”<sup>35</sup>

<sup>56</sup> “Now this is the commandment: Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day.”<sup>36</sup>

<sup>57</sup> We believe in Christ. I conclude with what He said about how we should know and follow His teachings:

<sup>58</sup> “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”<sup>37</sup>

<sup>59</sup> I affirm the truth of these teachings in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. See Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 3:46 (in the Bible appendix); Matthew 17:5; Mark 9:7; 3 Nephi 11:7; Joseph Smith—History 1:17.
2. See “The Father and the Son: A Doctrinal Exposition by the First Presidency and the Twelve,” *Improvement Era*, Aug. 1916, 934, 939.
3. 2 Nephi 32:3.
4. John 3:5.
5. 3 Nephi 12:6; emphasis added.
6. Matthew 5:9.
7. Matthew 5:27–28.
8. Matthew 5:43–45.
9. Matthew 6:14–15.
10. John 15:19.
11. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:38 (in the Bible appendix).
12. Matthew 7:12.
13. Matthew 7:15–17.
14. Matthew 7:21.
15. Matthew 11:28–30.
16. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 16:25–26 (in the Bible appendix).
17. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 16:29 (in the Bible appendix).
18. John 7:17.
19. Luke 11:9–10.
20. John 10:16.
21. John 11:25–26.
22. Matthew 22:37–40.
23. John 14:21.
24. John 14:27.
25. John 15:12.
26. Luke 24:39.
27. Matthew 28:19–20.
28. 3 Nephi 9:15.
29. 3 Nephi 9:18–21.
30. 3 Nephi 11:38.
31. 3 Nephi 12:48; emphasis added.
32. 3 Nephi 18:15; emphasis added.
33. 3 Nephi 18:19.
34. 3 Nephi 27:7.
35. 3 Nephi 27:13–14.
36. 3 Nephi 27:20.
37. John 14:26.

WEEK

TALK

SCRIPTURE(S)

WORD

AFFIRMATION

PHRASE

SPRINKLES

MY WHAT

MY WHY

## This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



# “My Mind Caught Hold upon This Thought”

ELDER NEIL L. ANDERSEN

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*As you continue to attentively catch hold of the thought of Jesus Christ, I promise you not only heavenly guidance but heavenly power.*

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1 In this beautiful Easter season, I echo the prayer of this powerful hymn, “Guide us, O thou great Jehovah.”<sup>1</sup>

2 A remarkable story in the Book of Mormon tells of a young man, from a prominent family, named Alma, whom the scriptures describe as an idolatrous unbeliever.<sup>2</sup> He was articulate and convincing, using flattery to persuade others to follow him. Astonishingly, an angel appeared to Alma and his friends. Alma fell to the earth and was so weak that he was carried helplessly to his father’s home. He remained in a seemingly comatose state for three days.<sup>3</sup> Later, he explained that while he appeared unconscious to those around him, his mind was very active as his soul grieved, thinking about his life of disregarding the commandments of God. He described his mind as being “harrowed up by the memory of [his] many sins”<sup>4</sup> and “racked with eternal torment.”<sup>5</sup>

3 In his deep despair, he remembered being taught in his youth about “the coming of one Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone for the sins of the world.”<sup>6</sup> Next he made this very compelling statement: “As my mind caught hold upon this thought, I cried within my heart: O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me.”<sup>7</sup> As he appealed for the divine power of the Savior, something miraculous happened: “When I thought this,” he said, “I could remember my pains no more.”<sup>8</sup> Suddenly he felt peace and light. “Nothing [was] so exquisite and sweet as was my joy,”<sup>9</sup> he declared.

4 Alma “caught hold upon” the truth of Jesus Christ. If we were using the words “caught hold upon” in a physical sense, we might say, “He caught hold upon the guardrail just as he was falling,” meaning he reached out suddenly and tightly seized something solidly cemented to a secure foundation.

5 In Alma’s case, it was his mind that reached out and secured this powerful

truth of Jesus Christ’s atoning sacrifice. Acting in faith on that truth, and by the power and grace of God, he was rescued from despair and filled with hope.

6 While our experiences may not be as dramatic as Alma’s, they are nonetheless as eternally significant. Our minds have also “caught hold upon this thought” of Jesus Christ and His merciful sacrifice, and our souls have felt the light and joy that follow.

## 7 **Securing the Thought of Jesus Christ**

8 My prayer at this Easter season is that we will more consciously shape, strengthen, and secure this preeminent thought of Jesus Christ in the chambers of our soul,<sup>10</sup> allowing it to eagerly flow into our mind, guide us in what we think and do, and continually bring the sweet joy of the Savior’s love.<sup>11</sup>

9 Filling our mind with the power of Jesus Christ does not mean that He is the only thought we have. But it does mean that all our thoughts are circumscribed in His love, His life and teachings, and His atoning sacrifice and glorious Resurrection. Jesus is never in a forgotten corner, because our thoughts of Him are always present and “all that is in [us adores] him!”<sup>12</sup> We pray and rehearse in our mind experiences that have brought us closer to Him. We welcome into our mind divine images, holy scriptures, and inspired hymns to gently cushion the countless daily thoughts rushing through our busy lives. Our love for Him does not shield us from the sadness and sorrow in this mortal life, but it allows us to walk through the challenges with a strength far beyond our own.

10 *Jesus, the very thought of thee  
With sweetness fills my breast;  
But sweeter far thy face to see  
And in thy presence rest.*<sup>13</sup>

11 Remember, you are a spirit child of Heavenly Father. As the Apostle Paul explains, we are “the offspring of

God.”<sup>14</sup> You have lived with your own individual identity long before coming to earth. Our Father created a perfect plan for us to come to earth, learn, and return to Him. He sent His Beloved Son that through the power of His infinite Atonement and Resurrection, we live beyond the grave; and as we are willing to exercise faith in Him and repent of our sins,<sup>15</sup> we are forgiven and receive the hope of eternal life.<sup>16</sup>

## 12 Giving Our Mind and Spirit Exceptional Attention

<sup>13</sup> In this mortal life, our mind and spirit need exceptional attention.<sup>17</sup> Our mind allows us to live, to choose, and to discern good and evil.<sup>18</sup> Our spirit receives the confirming witness that God is our Father, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that Their teachings are our guide to happiness here and eternal life beyond the grave.

<sup>14</sup> The mind of Alma caught hold upon this thought of Jesus Christ. It changed his life. General conference is a time to understand what the Lord would have us do and become. It is also a time to reflect on our progress. As my assignments have taken me throughout the world, I have observed an increasing spiritual strength in the righteous, devoted members of the Church.

<sup>15</sup> Five years ago, we were asked to place the Savior more prominently in all we do by using the true name of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.<sup>19</sup> We are speaking His name more earnestly.

<sup>16</sup> Four years ago, by reducing the time of our sacrament meeting, we increased our focus on partaking of the Lord’s sacrament. We are thinking more of Jesus Christ and are more serious in our promise to always remember Him.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> With the isolation of the worldwide pandemic and the help of Come, Follow Me, the teachings of the Savior are becoming more prominent in our homes, helping our worship of the Savior during the week.

<sup>18</sup> By following President Russell M. Nelson’s counsel to “hear Him,”<sup>21</sup> we are refining our ability to recognize the whisperings of the Holy Ghost and to see the hand of the Lord in our lives.

<sup>19</sup> With the announcement and completion

of dozens of temples, we are more frequently entering the house of the Lord and receiving His promised blessings. We are feeling more powerfully the transcendent beauty of our Savior and Redeemer.

<sup>20</sup> President Nelson said: “There is nothing easy or automatic about becoming [a] powerful [disciple]. Our focus must be riveted on the Savior and His gospel. It is mentally rigorous to strive to look unto Him in every thought.”<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> By focusing our attention on Jesus Christ, all else around us—while still present—is viewed through our love for Him. Less important distractions fade, and we remove those things that are not in keeping with His light and character. As you continue to attentively catch hold of this thought of Jesus Christ, trust in Him, and keep His commandments, I promise you not only heavenly guidance but heavenly power—power that brings strength to your covenants, peace to your difficulties, and joy to your blessings.

## 22 Remembering Jesus Christ

<sup>23</sup> A few weeks ago, Kathy and I visited the home of Matt and Sarah Johnson. On the wall was a picture of their precious family, a beautiful image of the Savior, and an illustration of the temple.

<sup>24</sup> Their four daughters, Maddy, Ruby, Claire, and June, spoke happily about how much they loved their mother.

<sup>25</sup> For over a year Sarah had regularly scheduled Saturday appointments for the family to attend the temple together so that the girls could participate in baptisms for family members who lived previously.

<sup>26</sup> In November of last year, Sarah scheduled a family temple appointment for the last week in December on Thursday instead of Saturday. “I hope you’re OK with that,” she said to Matt.

<sup>27</sup> Sarah had been diagnosed with cancer, but the doctors anticipated she would live two or three more years. During a sacrament meeting, Sarah had shared her powerful testimony, saying that whatever the outcome for her, she loved the Savior with all her heart and that “the victory had already been won” by Him. As December progressed, unexpectedly

Sarah's health rapidly declined, and she was admitted to the hospital. In the early morning of Thursday, December 29, she quietly completed her mortality. Matt had been by Sarah's side all through the night.

28 With his heart breaking, and completely exhausted physically and emotionally, he arrived home, sorrowing with his daughters. As Matt glanced at his phone, he noticed the reminder of the unusual Thursday temple appointment Sarah had scheduled for later that day. Matt said, "When I first saw it, I thought, This just isn't going to work."

29 But then Matt's mind caught hold upon this thought: "The Savior lives. There is no place we would rather be as a family than in His holy house."

30 Matt, Maddy, Ruby, Claire, and June arrived at the temple for the appointment Sarah had scheduled for them. With tears streaming down his cheeks, Matt performed the baptisms with his daughters. They deeply felt their love and eternal bond with Sarah, and they felt the immense love and comforting peace of the Savior. Matt tenderly shared, "While I feel deep sorrow and grief, I am shouting for joy, knowing my Father's wonderful plan of salvation."

31 In this Easter season, I witness the complete and absolute truth of the Savior's incomparable atoning sacrifice and of His glorious Resurrection. As your mind remains firmly and forever upon the thought of Jesus Christ, and as you continue to focus your life more fully on the Savior, I promise you that you will feel His hope, His peace, and His love. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah," Hymns, no. 83.
2. See Mosiah 27:8.
3. See Alma 36:10.
4. Alma 36:17.
5. Alma 36:12.
6. Alma 36:17.
7. Alma 36:18. The other time "caught hold" is used in the Book of Mormon is speaking of those who "caught hold of the end of the rod of iron" (1 Nephi 8:24, 30).
8. Alma 36:19.
9. Alma 36:21.
10. "The greatest battle of life is fought within the silent chambers of your own

soul" (David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Apr. 1967, 84).

11. "[Thoughts] sponsor all action. Our thoughts are the switchboard, the control panel governing our actions" (Boyd K. Packer, *That All May Be Edified* [1982], 33).  
President Dallin H. Oaks taught: "We can suppress evil desires and substitute righteous ones. This involves education and practice. President Joseph F. Smith taught that the 'education ... of our desires is one of far-reaching importance'" (Pure in Heart [1988], 149).
12. "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty," Hymns, no. 72.
13. "Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee," Hymns, no. 141.
14. Acts 17:29.
15. See Doctrine and Covenants 58:42–43.
16. See Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
17. "There is none else save God that knowest thy thoughts and the intents of thy heart" (Doctrine and Covenants 6:16).
18. "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh" (Luke 6:45).
19. See Russell M. Nelson, "The Correct Name of the Church," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 87–89.
20. Our covenant each week in the sacrament prayer is that we will "always remember him" (Moroni 4:3; Doctrine and Covenants 20:77). The Book of Mormon encourages us by using the word twice, one after another: "remember, remember" (Mosiah 2:41; Alma 37:13; Helaman 5:9). Spiritually remembering comes through the power of the Holy Ghost: "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance" (John 14:26).
21. Russell M. Nelson, "Hear Him," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2020, 90.
22. Russell M. Nelson, "Drawing the Power of Jesus Christ into Our Lives," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2017, 41. President Nelson also said, "The joy [Latter-day Saints] feel has little to do with the circumstances of our lives and everything to do with the focus of our lives" ("Joy and Spiritual Survival," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 82).

WEEK

TALK

SCRIPTURE(S)

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MY WHAT

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# Hosanna to the Most High God

ELDER RONALD A. RASBAND

*Jesus Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem and the events of the week that followed exemplify doctrine we can apply in our lives today.*

- 1 Today, as has been said, we join with Christians around the world to honor Jesus Christ on this Palm Sunday. Nearly 2,000 years ago, Palm Sunday marked the beginning of the last week of the mortal ministry of Jesus Christ. It was the most important week in human history.
- 2 What began with the heralding of Jesus as the promised Messiah in His triumphant entry into Jerusalem closed with His Crucifixion and Resurrection.<sup>1</sup> By divine design, His atoning sacrifice concluded His mortal ministry, making it possible for us to live with our Heavenly Father for eternity.
- 3 Scriptures tell us that the week began with throngs standing at the gates of the city to see "Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee."<sup>2</sup> They "took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried: Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord."<sup>3</sup>
- 4 That biblical account of so long ago reminds me of being on a Church assignment in Takoradi, Ghana. Remarkably, I was there on Palm Sunday.
- 5 I was to divide the Takoradi Ghana Stake to create the Mpintsin Ghana Stake. Today, there are over 100,000 members of the Church in Ghana.<sup>4</sup> (We welcome the Ga Mantse, His Majesty King Nii Tackie Teiko Tsuru II of Accra, Ghana, who is with us today.) Meeting with these Saints, I felt their profound love and devotion to the Lord. I expressed my great love for them and that the President of the Church loved them. I referred to the Savior's words recorded by John: "That ye love one another, as I have loved you."<sup>5</sup> They deemed it the "I love you conference."<sup>6</sup>
- 6 As I looked up and down the rows of those dear brothers and sisters and their families in the chapel, I could see in their faces the glow of testimony and faith in Jesus Christ. I felt their desire to be counted as part of His far-reaching Church. And when the choir sang, they sang like angels.
- 7 Like on Palm Sunday of old, these were disciples of Jesus Christ gathered to pay tribute to Him as did those at the gates of Jerusalem who, with palms in their hands, exclaimed, "Hosanna ... : Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."<sup>7</sup>
- 8 Even the parishioners in a church nearby were honoring Palm Sunday. As I was speaking from the pulpit, I noticed out the window they were joyfully walking down the street waving palms in their hands, much like those in this photo. It was a sight I will never forget—all of us that day worshipping the King of kings.
- 9 President Russell M. Nelson has admonished us to make Palm Sunday "truly holy by remembering, not just the palms that were waved to honor the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem, but by remembering the palms of His hands." Then President Nelson referred to Isaiah, who spoke of the Savior's promising, "I will never forget you," with these words: "Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands."<sup>8</sup>
- 10 The Lord knows firsthand that mortality is hard. His wounds remind us that He "descended below ... all"<sup>9</sup> that He might succor us when we suffer and be our example to "hold on thy way,"<sup>10</sup> His way, that "God shall be with [us] forever and ever."<sup>11</sup>
- 11 Palm Sunday was not just an event, another page in history with a date, time, and place. Jesus Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem and the events of the week that followed exemplify doctrine we can apply in our lives today.
- 12 Let us look at some of the eternal doctrine that weaves through His ministry concluding in Jerusalem.
- 13 First, prophecy. For example, Old Testament prophet Zechariah

prophesied of Jesus Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, even describing He would ride on a donkey.<sup>12</sup> Jesus foretold His Resurrection as He prepared to enter the city, saying:

14 "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death,

15 "And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again."<sup>13</sup>

16 Second, the companionship of the Holy Ghost. Joseph Smith taught, "No man can know that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."<sup>14</sup> The Savior promised His disciples<sup>15</sup> at the Last Supper<sup>16</sup> in the upper room,<sup>17</sup> "I will not leave you comfortless."<sup>18</sup> They would not be alone to carry the truths of the gospel forward but would have the consummate gift of the Holy Ghost to guide them. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you," He promised; "not as the world giveth, give I unto you."<sup>19</sup> With the gift of the Holy Ghost, we have that same assurance—that we "may always have his Spirit to be with [us]"<sup>20</sup> and "by the power of the Holy Ghost [we] may know the truth of all things."<sup>21</sup>

17 Third, discipleship. True discipleship is unfailing commitment, obedience to eternal laws, and love of God, first and foremost. Nothing wavering. The multitude who paid tribute with palms hailed Him as the Messiah. That was exactly who He was. They were drawn to Him, His miracles, and His teachings. But the adulation for many did not last. Some who earlier had shouted, "Hosanna,"<sup>22</sup> soon turned and cried, "Crucify him."<sup>23</sup>

18 Fourth, the Atonement of Jesus Christ.<sup>24</sup> In His final days, following Palm Sunday, He carried out His remarkable Atonement, from the agony of Gethsemane to the mockery of His trial, His torture on the cross, and His burial in a borrowed tomb. But it did not stop there. With the majesty of His calling as the Redeemer of all of Heavenly Father's children, three days later He stepped forth from that tomb, resurrected,<sup>25</sup> as He had prophesied.

19 Are we continually grateful for the incomparable Atonement of Jesus

Christ? Do we feel its purifying power, right now? That is why Jesus Christ, the Author and Finisher of our salvation, went to Jerusalem, to save us all. Do these words in Alma strike a chord: "If ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, can ye feel so now?"<sup>26</sup> I can truly say, the choir in Takoradi that Palm Sunday sang "the song of redeeming love."

20 That last fateful week of His mortal ministry, Jesus Christ gave the parable of the ten virgins.<sup>27</sup> He was teaching of His return to those prepared to receive Him, not with palms in their hands but with the light of the gospel within them. He used the image of lamps lit and burning, with extra oil to fuel the flame, as a description of a willingness to live His ways, embrace His truths, and share His light.

21 You know the story. The ten virgins represent members of the Church, and the bridegroom represents Jesus Christ.

22 The ten virgins took their lamps and "went forth to meet the bridegroom."<sup>28</sup> Five were wise, prepared with oil in their lamps and some to spare, and five were foolish, lamps dark with no oil in reserve. When the call came, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him,"<sup>29</sup> the five who were "wise and [had] received the truth, and [had] taken the Holy Spirit for their guide"<sup>30</sup> were ready for "their king and their lawgiver,"<sup>31</sup> that "his glory [would] be upon them."<sup>32</sup> The other five were frantically trying to find oil. But it was too late. The procession went forward without them. When they knocked and pleaded for entrance, the Lord responded, "I know you not."<sup>33</sup>

23 How would we feel if He said to us, "I know you not!"

24 We, like the ten virgins, have lamps; but do we have oil? I fear there are some who are just getting by on a thin skiff of oil, too busy with worldly pressures to properly prepare. Oil comes from believing and acting on prophecy and the words of living prophets, President Nelson in particular, his counselors, and the Twelve Apostles. Oil fills our souls when we hear and feel the Holy Ghost and act on that divine guidance. Oil pours into our hearts when our choices show we love the Lord and we love what



He loves. Oil comes from repenting and seeking the healing of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

- 25 If some of you are looking to fill what some call “a bucket list,” this is it: fill your bucket with oil in the form of the living water of Jesus Christ,<sup>34</sup> which is a representation of His life and teachings. In contrast, checking off a far-off place or a spectacular event will never leave your soul feeling whole or satisfied; living the doctrine taught by Jesus Christ will. I mentioned examples earlier: embrace prophecy and prophetic teachings, act on promptings of the Holy Ghost, become a true disciple, and seek the healing power of our Lord’s Atonement. That bucket list will take you somewhere you want to go—back to your Father in Heaven.
- 26 That Palm Sunday in Takoradi was a very special experience for me because I shared it with a faithful congregation of brothers and sisters. So it has been on continents and islands all around the world. My heart and soul, like yours, longs to shout, “Hosanna to the Most High God.”<sup>35</sup>
- 27 Though we do not stand at the gates of Jerusalem today with palms in our hands, the time will come when, as prophesied in Revelation, “a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, [will stand] before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.”<sup>36</sup>
- 28 I leave with you my blessing as an Apostle of Jesus Christ that you will diligently strive to live righteously and be among those who, with palms in their hands, will herald the Son of God, the great Redeemer of us all. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. All four of the Gospels—Matthew 21–28; Mark 11–16; Luke 19–24; and John 12–21—describe the last days of Jesus Christ’s ministry in mortality, which was divinely designed to make the blessings of salvation and exaltation available to all of God’s children. At times the authors differ in what they include but not in the Savior’s teachings and actions.
2. See Matthew 21:10–11.
3. John 12:13.
4. Per Membership and Statistical Records, there are 102,592 members in Ghana.

5. John 15:12.
6. Every time I spoke with members, they would say to me, “Elder Rasband, our dear Apostle, I love you.” These people are so filled with the Spirit and the love of God that they share that love easily.
7. Matthew 21:9.
8. See Russell M. Nelson, “The Peace and Hope of Easter” (video), Apr. 2021, [ChurchofJesusChrist.org/media](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/media); Isaiah 49:16.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 122:8. In December 1838 the Prophet Joseph and a handful of other Church leaders were unjustly imprisoned in Liberty Jail. The conditions were dreadful. After months in wretched circumstances, he wrote to the members in March of 1839, including prayers where he had petitioned the Lord to have compassion on his situation and the “suffering saints.” He also shared the Lord’s response to those prayers as recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 121–23.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 122:9. The Lord’s encouragement to Joseph Smith in Liberty Jail brought him comfort and spiritual understanding that adversity and trials can strengthen us, teach patience, and foster self-mastery. The Lord called for him to “hold on thy way,” which was the way of the Lord, enduring unjust treatment as had “the Son of [God, who] hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he?” (Doctrine and Covenants 122:8).
11. Doctrine and Covenants 122:9. The pledge that God “shall be with you” is a sure promise for those who hold fast to their faith and trust in the Lord.
12. See Zechariah 9:9.
13. Matthew 20:18–19. James E. Talmage writes in *Jesus the Christ*: “It is ... an astounding fact that the Twelve failed to comprehend His meaning. ... To them there was some dreadful incongruity, some dire inconsistency or inexplicable contradiction in the sayings of their beloved Master. They knew Him to be the Christ, the Son of the living God; and how could such a One be brought into subjection and be slain?” ([1916], 502–3).
14. Joseph Smith made this declaration to the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo, April 28, 1842, as quoted in “History of Joseph Smith,” *Deseret News*, Sept. 19, 1855, 218. Referring to the twelfth chapter of 1 Corinthians, he clarified the third verse, “No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost,” revising it to say, “No man can know that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” (See *The First Fifty Years of Relief Society: Key Documents in Latter-*



- day Saint Women's History [2016], 2.2, churchhistorianspress.org.)
15. Jesus shared the Last Supper with His disciples (see Mark 14:12–18). The Twelve included Peter, Andrew, James, John, Matthew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, James (son of Alphaeus), Judas Iscariot, Judas (brother of James), and Simon (see Luke 6:13–16).
  16. Jesus instituted the sacrament with His disciples at the Last Supper (see Matthew 26:26–29; Mark 14:22–25; Luke 22:19–20).
  17. The specific day/night in which Jesus instituted the sacrament in the “upper room” is actually disputed because of seeming discrepancies between Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Matthew, Mark, and Luke suggest that the Last Supper took place on “the first day of the feast of unleavened bread,” or the Passover meal (see Matthew 26:17; Mark 14:12; Luke 22:1, 7). John, however, suggests that Jesus was arrested before the Passover meal (see John 18:28), meaning that the Last Supper would have taken place one day earlier than the Passover meal. The Church’s curriculum materials and Latter-day Saint scholarship seem to agree that Jesus held the Last Supper with His disciples in the upper room on the evening before He was crucified. Christians who celebrate Holy Week recognize Thursday as the day of the Last Supper, Friday as the day of the Crucifixion, and Sunday as the day of Resurrection—according to the Gregorian calendar.
  18. John 14:18.
  19. John 14:27.
  20. Doctrine and Covenants 20:77.
  21. Moroni 10:5.
  22. The Bible Dictionary explains, *hosanna* means “save now.” The word is taken from Psalm 118:25. “The chanting of this psalm was connected at the Feast of the Tabernacles with the waving of palm branches; hence the use of the word by the multitudes at our Lord’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem” (Bible Dictionary, “Hosanna”). See Matthew 21:9, 15; Mark 11:9–10; John 12:13.
  23. Mark 15:14; Luke 23:21.
  24. The centerpiece of our Heavenly Father’s plan of salvation was an infinite atonement that would ensure immortality for all His children and exaltation for those worthy to receive that blessing. When the Father said, “Whom shall I send?” Jesus Christ stepped forward: “Here am I, send me” (Abraham 3:27). President Russell M. Nelson has taught: “[Jesus Christ’s] mission was the Atonement. That mission was uniquely His. Born of a mortal mother and an immortal Father, He was the only one who could voluntarily lay down His life and take it up again (see John 10:14–18). The glorious consequences of His Atonement were infinite and eternal. He took the sting out of death and made temporary the grief of the grave (see 1 Corinthians 15:54–55). His responsibility for the Atonement was known even before the Creation and the Fall. Not only was it to provide for the resurrection and immortality of all humankind, but it was also to enable us to be forgiven of our sins—upon conditions established by Him. Thus His Atonement opened the way by which we could be united with Him and with our families eternally” (“The Mission and Ministry of Jesus Christ,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2013, 34; *Liahona*, Apr. 2013, 20).
  25. Resurrection consists of reuniting the body and the spirit in an immortal state, the body and spirit being inseparable and no longer bound to maladies of mortality or death (see Alma 11:45; 40:23).
  26. Alma 5:26; see also Alma 5:14.
  27. The parable of the ten virgins is found in Matthew 25:1–12; Doctrine and Covenants 45:56–59. The surrounding chapters of Matthew 25 suggest that Jesus taught this parable during His last week, after entering Jerusalem in Matthew 21 and just before the Last Supper and His arrest in Matthew 26. In addition to the parable of the ten virgins given that last week, Jesus gave the parable of the fig tree (see Matthew 21:17–21; 24:32–33), parable of the two sons (see Matthew 21:28–32), and parable of the wicked husbandman (see Matthew 21:33–46).
  28. Matthew 25:1.
  29. Matthew 25:6.
  30. Doctrine and Covenants 45:57.
  31. Doctrine and Covenants 45:59.
  32. Doctrine and Covenants 45:59.
  33. Matthew 25:12. In the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord refers to those who presume to have “done many wonderful works,” saying, as suggested in the account of the five foolish virgins, “I know you not” (see Matthew 7:22–23).
  34. Just as water is critical to mortal life, Jesus Christ and His teachings (living water) are critical for eternal life (see Guide to the Scriptures, “Living Water,” scriptures.ChurchofJesusChrist.org; see also Isaiah 12:3; Jeremiah 2:13; John 4:6–15; 7:37; 1 Nephi 11:25; Doctrine and Covenants 10:66; 63:23).
  35. 3 Nephi 4:32.
  36. Revelation 7:9.

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# Do You Know Why I as a Christian Believe in Christ?

ELDER AHMAD S. CORBITT

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*Jesus Christ had to suffer, die, and rise again to redeem all humanity from physical death and to give eternal life with God.*

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- 1 One evening after work, years ago, I boarded my usual bus home to New Jersey from New York City. The woman I happened to sit next to noticed what I was writing on my computer and asked, "You believe in ... Christ?" I said, "Yes, I do!" As we talked, I learned she had just moved to the area from her beautiful Asian country to work in New York's highly competitive information technology sector.
- 2 Naturally, I asked her, "Do you know why I as a Christian believe in Jesus Christ?" She too responded normally and invited me to tell her. But as I went to speak, I had one of those moments where many thoughts flood your mind. This was the first time I would explain the "why" of Christianity to someone very unfamiliar with it and highly intelligent. I couldn't simply say, "I follow Jesus Christ because He willingly suffered and died for my sins." She might wonder, "Did Jesus have to die? Couldn't God simply forgive and cleanse us of our sins if we asked Him to?"
- 3 How would you have responded in a few minutes? How would you explain this to a friend? Children and youth: would you please ask your parents or a leader later on, "Why did Jesus have to die?" And, brothers and sisters, I have a confession to make: despite all I thought I knew about Church doctrine, history, policy, and so on, the answer to this central question to our faith did not come so easily. That day I decided to focus more on what matters most to eternal life.
- 4 Well, I informed my new friend<sup>1</sup> that we have a spirit in addition to a body and that God is the Father of our spirits.<sup>2</sup> I told her we lived with our Heavenly Father before our births into this mortal world.<sup>3</sup> Because He loves her and all His children, He made a plan for us to receive a body in the image of His glorified body,<sup>4</sup> be part of a family,<sup>5</sup> and return to His loving presence to enjoy eternal life with our families<sup>6</sup> like He does with His.<sup>7</sup> But, I said, we would face two main obstacles in this necessarily fallen world:<sup>8</sup> (1) physical death—the separation of our bodies from our spirits. Of course, she knew we would all die. And (2) spiritual death—our separation from God because our sins, mistakes, and flaws as mortals distance us from His holy presence.<sup>9</sup> She related to this too.
- 5 I informed her that this was an effect of the law of justice. This eternal law demands that an eternal penalty be paid for every one of our sins, or violations of God's laws or truth, or we could never return to live in His holy presence.<sup>10</sup> It would be unjust, and God "cannot deny justice."<sup>11</sup> She understood this but easily grasped that God is also merciful, loving, and eager to bring to pass our eternal life.<sup>12</sup> I informed my friend that we would also have a cunning, powerful adversary—the source of evil and lies—opposing us.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, someone with infinite godly power to overcome all such opposition and obstacles would need to save us.<sup>14</sup>
- 6 I then shared with her the good news—the "good tidings of great joy ... to all people"<sup>15</sup>—that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."<sup>16</sup> I testified to my friend, and I witness to you, that Jesus Christ is that Savior, that He had to suffer, die, and rise again—His infinite Atonement—to redeem all humanity from physical death<sup>17</sup> and to give eternal life with God and our families<sup>18</sup> to all who would follow Him. The Book of Mormon declares, "Thus God ... gained the victory over death; giving the Son power to make intercession for the children of men ... ; being filled with [mercy and] compassion ... ; having broken the bands of death, taken upon himself their iniquity and their transgressions, having redeemed them, and satisfied the demands of justice."<sup>19</sup>
- 7 The steps God revealed we must take

to follow Jesus and receive eternal life are called the doctrine of Christ. They include “faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement, repentance, baptism [into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints], receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end.”<sup>20</sup> I shared these steps with my friend, but here are some ways in which prophets and apostles have recently taught how the doctrine of Christ can bless all God’s children.

8 President Russell M. Nelson instructed: “The pure doctrine of Christ is powerful. It changes the life of everyone who understands it and seeks to implement it in his or her life.”<sup>21</sup>

9 Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf taught, “[The] For the Strength of Youth [guide] is bold in declaring the doctrine of ... Christ [and] inviting you [youth] to make choices based on [it].”<sup>22</sup>

10 Elder Dale G. Renlund taught, “We invite missionaries to do what they ask those they teach to do: ... apply the doctrine of Christ in their lives [and] get on and stay on the covenant path.”<sup>23</sup>

11 The doctrine of Christ empowers those who are struggling or feel they don’t belong in the Church because it helps them, as Elder D. Todd Christofferson stated, “affirm: Jesus Christ died for me ... [and] loves me.”<sup>24</sup>

12 Parents, if your child struggles with a gospel principle or prophetic teaching, please resist any type of evil speaking<sup>25</sup> or activism toward the Church or its leaders. These lesser, secular approaches are beneath you and can be lethal to the long-term faithfulness of your child.<sup>26</sup> It speaks so well of you that you would protect or advocate for your precious child or show signs of solidarity with him or her. But my wife, Jayne, and I know from personal experience that teaching your beloved child why we all desperately need Jesus Christ and how to apply His joyful doctrine is what will strengthen and heal him or her. Let us turn them to Jesus, who is their true advocate with the Father. The Apostle John taught, “Whosoever ... abideth in the doctrine of Christ ... hath both the Father and the Son.” He then warns us to beware “if there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine.”<sup>27</sup>

13 Jayne and I recently visited the wilderness

where Moses held up a serpent of brass before the wandering children of Israel. The Lord had promised to heal all who were bitten by poisonous snakes if they would simply look upon it.<sup>28</sup> In holding up the doctrine of Christ before us, the Lord’s prophet is doing the same, “that he should heal the nations.”<sup>29</sup> Whatever the bites or poison or struggles we experience in this mortal wilderness, let us not be as those who, anciently and presently, could have been healed but, sadly, “would not look ... because they did not believe that it would heal them.”<sup>30</sup> The Book of Mormon affirms: “Behold, ... this is the way; and there is none other way nor name given under heaven whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God. And now, behold, this is the doctrine of Christ.”<sup>31</sup>

14 That evening in New Jersey, sharing why we need Jesus Christ and His doctrine gave me a new sister and her a new brother. We felt the peaceful, confirming witness of the Holy Ghost. Naturally, I invited her to share her contact information and continue the conversation with our missionaries. She was happy to do so.

15 “Wherefore, how great the importance to make these things known unto the inhabitants of the earth,” the Book of Mormon declares—to love, share, and invite<sup>32</sup> as we gather Israel in all our communities and families—“that they may know that there is no flesh that can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the merits, and mercy, and grace [and doctrine] of the Holy Messiah.”<sup>33</sup> In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. *I have chosen not to publicize my friend’s name or to use a fictitious name.*
2. *See Romans 8:15–17; Hebrews 12:9; Doctrine and Covenants 88:15.*
3. *See Jeremiah 1:4–5; Doctrine and Covenants 138:55–56; Abraham 3:22–23, 26; Guide to the Scriptures, “Premortal Life,” scriptures. ChurchofJesusChrist.org; “Lesson 2: The Plan of Salvation,” Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service (2019), 48.*
4. *See “Lesson 2: The Plan of Salvation,” Preach My Gospel, 48.*
5. *The Father’s perfect plan—called the great plan of happiness, the plan of salvation, and the plan of redemption, among other*

references—is organized such that everyone who comes into mortality necessarily does so into a family, and everyone is part of a family. Of course, not all family circumstances are ideal or accord with our Father's loving vision for all His children, and some circumstances are tragic. However, as we live the doctrine of Christ, Jesus Christ helps us receive all the blessings the Father has for His children through His merciful and comprehensive plan. See also endnote 6.

6. One of the greatest promises God has made to His children is also the greatest of all His gifts to us: exaltation, or eternal life, which is to live eternally “in God’s presence and to continue as families” (Gospel Topics, “Eternal Life,” topics. ChurchofJesusChrist.org; see also Doctrine and Covenants 14:7). “Families” include husband, wife, and children, as well as our living and deceased relatives who accept and live the doctrine of Christ. Already-deceased family members in the spirit world who were not able to embrace the doctrine of Christ in this life can do so in the spirit world as ordinances like baptism, receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, and others that help us endure to the end are lovingly performed vicariously by living relatives in temples of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Additionally, the promise of eternal life is not just to those who are married in this life. President M. Russell Ballard taught, “Scriptures and latter-day prophets confirm that everyone who is faithful in keeping gospel covenants will have the opportunity for exaltation” (“Hope in Christ,” *Liahona*, May 2021, 55; emphasis added). Citing President Russell M. Nelson and President Dallin H. Oaks, President Ballard continued, “The precise time and manner in which the blessings of exaltation are bestowed have not all been revealed, but they are nonetheless assured” (“Hope in Christ,” 55; emphasis added). President Nelson taught: “In the Lord’s own way and time, no [blessing] will be withheld from His faithful Saints. The Lord will judge and reward each individual according to heartfelt desire as well as deed” (“Celestial Marriage,” *Ensign* or
- Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 94). And President Oaks explained, “Many of the most important deprivations of mortality will be set right in the Millennium, which is the time for fulfilling all that is incomplete in the great plan of happiness for all of our Father’s worthy children” (“The Great Plan of Happiness,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 75). See also endnote 5.
7. See Guide to the Scriptures, “Plan of Redemption,” scriptures. ChurchofJesusChrist.org; see also Gospel Topics, “Plan of Salvation,” topics.ChurchofJesusChrist.org; “Lesson 2: The Plan of Salvation,” *Preach My Gospel*, 48–50, 53.
8. See “Lesson 2: The Plan of Salvation,” *Preach My Gospel*, 49.
9. See “Lesson 2: The Plan of Salvation,” *Preach My Gospel*, 47–50.
10. See “Lesson 2: The Plan of Salvation,” *Preach My Gospel*, 47–50.
11. Mosiah 15:27. References to eternal justice or God’s justice abound in the scriptures, but see particularly Alma 41:2–8 and Alma 42.
12. See Alma 42:14–24; Moses 1:39.
13. See “Lesson 2: The Plan of Salvation,” *Preach My Gospel*, 47–50.
14. See Alma 34:9–13; see also Mosiah 13:28, 34–35; 15:1–9; Alma 42:15.
15. Luke 2:10.
16. John 3:16.
17. See Helaman 14:15–17; Mormon 9:12–14.
18. See endnotes 5 and 6.
19. Mosiah 15:8–9.
20. “What Is My Purpose as a Missionary?,” *Preach My Gospel*, 1; see also “Lesson 3: The Gospel of Jesus Christ,” *Preach My Gospel*, 63.
21. Russell M. Nelson, “Pure Truth, Pure Doctrine, and Pure Revelation,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2021, 6; emphasis added.
22. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Jesus Christ Is the Strength of Youth,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2022, 11; see also *For the Strength of Youth: A Guide for Making Choices* (2022), 4.
23. Dale G. Renlund, “Lifelong Conversion of Missionaries” (address given at the mission leadership seminar, June 25, 2021), 1, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.
24. D. Todd Christofferson, “The Doctrine of Belonging,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2022, 56; see also D. Todd Christofferson, “The Joy of the Saints,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2019, 15–18.

25. See James 4:11; Doctrine and Covenants 20:54; Guide to the Scriptures, “Evil Speaking,” scriptures.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
26. See Ahmad S. Corbitt, “Activism vs. Discipleship: Protecting the Valiant” (address given at the chaplains’ seminar, Oct. 2022), cdn.vox-cdn.com/uploads/chorus\_asset/file/24159863/Brother\_Corbitt\_Chaplain\_seminar.pdf; video: media2.lidscdn.org/assets/general-authority-features/2022-chaplain-training-seminar/2022-10-1000-activism-vs-discipleship-1080p-eng.mp4.
27. 2 John 1:9–10.
28. See Numbers 21:5–9.
29. 2 Nephi 25:20.
30. Alma 33:20.
31. 2 Nephi 31:21.
32. See “2021 Broadcast: Principles of Love, Share, and Invite,” broadcasts.ChurchofJesusChrist.org; see also Gary E. Stevenson, “Love, Share, Invite,” *Liahona*, May 2022, 84–87.
33. 2 Nephi 2:8.

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## This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# Followers of the Prince of Peace

ELDER ULISSES SOARES

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*As we strive to develop attributes like the Savior's, we can become instruments of His peace in the world.*

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- 1 In fulfillment of the prophecy given to Zechariah,<sup>1</sup> Jesus triumphantly entered the Holy City riding upon a donkey, which was considered in literature an "ancient symbol of Jewish royalty,"<sup>2</sup> as indeed befitted the King of kings and Prince of Peace.<sup>3</sup> He was surrounded by a multitude of jubilant disciples who spread out their garments, palm leaves, and other foliage along the path where Jesus passed. They praised God, saying with a loud voice, "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest."<sup>4</sup> And again, "Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest."<sup>5</sup> This majestic event, which we celebrate on this day known as Palm Sunday, was a joyful prelude to the excruciating events that would occur during that fateful week culminating in the Savior's selfless sacrifice and the magnificent miracle of the empty tomb.
- 2 As His followers, we are His peculiar people, called to proclaim His virtues,<sup>6</sup> promoters of the peace so generously offered through Him and His atoning sacrifice. This peace is a gift promised to all who turn their hearts to the Savior and live righteously; such peace gives us the strength to enjoy mortal life and enables us to endure the painful trials of our journey.
- 3 In 1847, the Lord gave specific instructions to the pioneer Saints, who needed peace to remain calm and united as they faced unexpected difficulties on their westward journey. Among other things, the Lord instructed the Saints to "cease to contend one with another; cease to speak evil one of another."<sup>7</sup> The scriptures affirm that those who practice works of righteousness and strive to walk in the meekness of the Spirit of the Lord are promised the peace they need to survive the days of commotion in which we live today.<sup>8</sup>
- 4 As disciples of the Prince of Peace,
- 5 Let us consider these principles in view of Christ's pure love for us that we, as His followers, seek to have for one another. The scriptures define this kind of love as charity.<sup>12</sup> When we think of charity, our minds usually turn to generous acts and donations to relieve the suffering of those who are experiencing physical, material, or emotional difficulties. Still, charity is not only related to something we donate to someone, but it's an attribute of the Savior and can become part of our character. It is not surprising that the Lord instructed us to clothe ourselves "with the bond of charity, ... which is the bond of perfectness and peace."<sup>13</sup> Without charity, we are nothing<sup>14</sup> and we cannot inherit the place the Lord has prepared for us in the mansions of our Heavenly Father.<sup>15</sup>
- 6 Jesus perfectly exemplified what it means to own this bond of perfection and peace, especially when facing the agonizing events that preceded His martyrdom. Think for a moment about what Jesus must have felt as He humbly washed His disciples' feet, knowing that one of them would betray Him that very night.<sup>16</sup> Or when Jesus, hours later, mercifully healed the ear of one of the men who had accompanied Judas, His betrayer, to arrest Him.<sup>17</sup> Or even when the Savior, standing in front of Pilate, was unfairly accused by the chief priests and elders, and not a word He uttered against the false charges against Him, and He left the Roman governor marveling.<sup>18</sup>
- 7 Through these three tragic incidents,

we have been instructed to live with "hearts knit together in unity and in love one towards another."<sup>9</sup> Our beloved prophet, President Russell M. Nelson, recently stated, "Contention violates everything the Savior stood for and taught."<sup>10</sup> Our prophet also implored that we do all we can to end personal conflicts that are currently raging in our hearts and in our lives.<sup>11</sup>

the Savior, despite being burdened with excessive sadness and stress, taught us by His example that “charity suffereth long, and is kind; ... envieth not; ... vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, [and] thinketh no evil.”<sup>19</sup>

- 8 Another important aspect to emphasize, and one that has direct implications on our discipleship and how we promote the peace of the Savior, is the manner in which we treat each other. During His earthly ministry, the Savior’s teachings focused—not only, but particularly—on the virtues of love, charity, patience, humility, and compassion—fundamental attributes to those who want to become closer to Him and promote His peace. Such attributes are gifts from God, and as we strive to develop them, we will begin to see our neighbor’s differences and weaknesses with more empathy, sensitivity, respect, and tolerance. One of the most evident signs that we are drawing closer to the Savior and becoming more like Him is the loving, patient, and kind way with which we treat our fellow beings, whatever the circumstances.
- 9 We often see people who engage in negative and even derogatory comments about the perceived characteristics, weaknesses, and opinions of others, mainly when such characteristics and opinions differ or contradict how they act and think. It is very common to see these people passing on such comments to others, who repeat what they heard without truly knowing all the circumstances surrounding a situation. Unfortunately, social media encourages this kind of behavior in the name of relative truths and transparency. Without restraint, digital conversation often leads people to personal attacks and heated disputes, creating disappointments, wounding hearts, and spreading flaming hostility.
- 10 Nephi prophesied that in the latter days, the enemy would rage and stir up people to anger against what is good.<sup>20</sup> The scriptures teach that “every thing which inviteth and enticeth to do good, and to love God, and to serve him, is inspired of God.”<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, “that which is evil cometh of the devil; for the devil is an enemy unto God, and fighteth against him continually, and

inviteth and enticeth to sin, and to do that which is evil continually.”<sup>22</sup>

- 11 Considering this prophetic teaching, it is not surprising that one of the adversary’s tactics is to stir up enmity and hate in the hearts of God’s children. He rejoices when he sees people criticizing, ridiculing, and slandering one another. This behavior can destroy a person’s character, reputation, and self-esteem, particularly when the person is judged unfairly. It is critical to point out that when we allow this type of attitude in our lives, we make room in our hearts for the enemy to plant the seed of discord among us, risking falling into his voracious trap.
- 12 If we are not careful with our thoughts, words, and actions, we may end up being entangled by the cunning tricks of the enemy, destroying our relationships with the people around us and our loved ones.
- 13 Brothers and sisters, as the Lord’s peculiar people and promoters of His peace, we cannot afford to allow these tricks of the evil one to take place in our hearts. We cannot carry such a corrosive burden that destroys feelings, relationships, and even lives. The gospel represents good tidings of great joy.
- 14 Of course, none of us is perfect, and certainly there are times when we are beguiled into this type of behavior. In His perfect love and omniscient knowledge of our human tendencies, the Savior always tries to warn us of such dangers. He taught us, “For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.”<sup>23</sup>
- 15 My dear brothers and sisters, as we strive to develop attributes like the Savior’s, we can become instruments of His peace in the world according to the pattern that He Himself established. I invite you to consider ways we can transform ourselves into uplifting and supportive people, people who have an understanding and forgiving heart, people who look for the best in others, always remembering that “if there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.”<sup>24</sup>
- 16 I promise you that as we pursue and develop these attributes, we will become

more and more cordial and sensitive to the needs of our fellow beings<sup>25</sup> and will experience joy, peace, and spiritual growth.<sup>26</sup> Undoubtedly, the Lord will recognize our efforts and give us the gifts we need to be more tolerant and patient with one another's differences, weaknesses, and imperfections. Furthermore, we will be better able to resist the urge to take offense or offend those who hurt us. Our desire to forgive, as the Savior did, those who mistreat us or speak evil about us will surely increase and will become part of our character.

- 17 May we today, on this Palm Sunday, spread out our robes of love and palm leaves of charity, walking in the footsteps of the Prince of Peace as we prepare to celebrate, this coming Sunday, the miracle of the empty tomb. As brothers and sisters in Christ, let us joyfully proclaim, "Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest."<sup>27</sup>
  - 18 I testify that Jesus Christ lives and that His perfect love, expressed through His atoning sacrifice, is extended to all who desire to walk with Him and enjoy His peace in this world and in the world to come. I say these things in the holy name of the Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, amen.
1. See Zechariah 9:9.
  2. In James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* (1916), 517.
  3. See Joseph Smith Translation, Psalm 24:9 (in the Bible appendix); Isaiah

9:6; 1 Timothy 6:15; Revelation 17:14; 19:16; 2 Nephi 19:6.

4. Luke 19:38.
5. Matthew 21:9; see also Mark 11:8–10; John 12:12–14.
6. See 1 Peter 2:9.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 136:23.
8. See Philippians 4:7; 3 Nephi 11:29; Doctrine and Covenants 19:23; 59:23.
9. Mosiah 18:21.
10. Russell M. Nelson, "Preaching the Gospel of Peace," *Liahona*, May 2022, 6.
11. See Russell M. Nelson, "The Power of Spiritual Momentum," *Liahona*, May 2022, 97, 100.
12. See 2 Nephi 26:30; 33:7–9; Ether 12:33–34; Moroni 7:47.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 88:125.
14. See 2 Nephi 26:30; Moroni 7:44–47.
15. See Ether 12:34; Moroni 10:20–21.
16. See John 13:14–18.
17. See Luke 22:50–51; John 18:10–12.
18. See Matthew 27:12–14.
19. 1 Corinthians 13:4–5; see also Moroni 7:45–47.
20. See 2 Nephi 28:20.
21. Moroni 7:13.
22. Moroni 7:12.
23. Matthew 7:2; see also Topical Guide, "Judge."
24. Articles of Faith 1:13.
25. See Mosiah 2:17.
26. See "How Do I Develop Christlike Attributes?," *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2019), 121–32.
27. Matthew 21:9.

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# Jesus Christ Is Relief

PRESIDENT CAMILLE N. JOHNSON

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*We can partner with the Savior to help provide temporal and spiritual relief for those in need—and in the process find our own relief.*

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- 1 With faith in Jesus Christ and hope in what they had heard of His miracles, the caregivers of a man with palsy brought him to Jesus. They were innovative in getting him there—uncovering the roof and lowering the man, on his bed, to the place where Jesus was teaching. When Jesus “saw their faith, he said [to the man with palsy], thy sins are forgiven thee.”<sup>1</sup> And then, “Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.”<sup>2</sup> And immediately the man with palsy arose and took his bed and departed for home, “glorifying God.”<sup>3</sup>
- 2 What more do we know of the friends who provided care for the man with palsy? We know that the Savior recognized their faith. And having seen and heard the Savior and being a witness to His miracles, they were “amazed” and “glorified God.”<sup>4</sup>
- 3 Jesus Christ had provided the hoped-for healing—physical relief from pain and the crippling consequences of chronic disease. Significantly, the Savior also provided spiritual relief in cleansing the man from sin.
- 4 And the friends—in their efforts to care for one in need, they found the source of relief; they found Jesus Christ.
- 5 I testify that Jesus Christ is relief. Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, we may be relieved of the burden and consequences of sin and be succored in our infirmities.
- 6 And because we love God and have covenanted to serve Him, we can partner with the Savior to help provide temporal and spiritual relief for those in need—and in the process find our own relief in Jesus Christ.<sup>5</sup>
- 7 Our beloved prophet, President Russell M. Nelson, invited us to overcome the world and find rest.<sup>6</sup> He defined “true rest” as “relief and peace.”
- President Nelson said, “Because the Savior, through His infinite Atonement, redeemed each of us from weakness, mistakes, and sin, and because He experienced every pain, worry, and burden you have ever had, then as you truly repent and seek His help, you can rise above this present precarious world.”<sup>7</sup> That is the relief Jesus Christ offers us!
- 8 Each of us is carrying a metaphorical backpack. It may be a basket balanced on your head or a satchel or a bundle of things wrapped in cloth and thrown over your shoulder. But for our thinking, let’s call it a backpack.
- 9 This metaphorical backpack is where we carry the burdens of living in a fallen world. Our burdens are like rocks in the backpack. Generally, there are three kinds:
  - 10 Rocks there of our own doing because of sin.
  - 11 Rocks in our backpack because of the poor decisions, misconduct, and unkindness of others.
  - 12 And rocks we carry because we are living in a fallen condition. These include the rocks of disease, pain, chronic illness, grief, disappointment, loneliness, and the effects of natural disasters.
- 13 I joyfully declare that our mortal burdens, these rocks in our figurative backpack, need not feel heavy.
- 14 Jesus Christ can lighten our load.
- 15 Jesus Christ can lift our burdens.
- 16 Jesus Christ provides a way for us to be relieved of the weight of sin.
- 17 Jesus Christ is our relief.
- 18 He said:

- 19 "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest [that is, relief and peace].
- 20 "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.
- 21 "For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."<sup>8</sup>
- 22 That the yoke is easy and the burden is light presumes we get in the yoke with the Savior, that we share our burdens with Him, that we let Him lift our load. That means entering into a covenant relationship with God and keeping that covenant, which, as President Nelson has explained, "makes everything about life easier." He said, "Yoking yourself with the Savior means you have access to His strength and redeeming power."<sup>9</sup>
- 23 So why are we stingy with our rocks? Why would a weary baseball pitcher refuse to leave the mound when a reliever is there ready to complete the game? Why would I insist on maintaining my post alone when the Reliever stands ready to keep it with me?
- 24 President Nelson has taught, "Jesus Christ ... stands with open arms, hoping and willing to heal, forgive, cleanse, strengthen, purify, and sanctify us."<sup>10</sup>
- 25 So why do we insist on carrying our rocks alone?
- 26 It is intended as a personal question for each of you to consider.
- 27 For me, it is the age-old vice of pride. "I've got this," I say. "No worries; I'll get it done." It's the great deceiver who wants me to hide from God, to turn away from Him, to go at it alone.
- 28 Brothers and sisters, I can't go at it alone, and I don't need to, and I won't. Choosing to be bound to my Savior, Jesus Christ, through the covenants I have made with God, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."<sup>11</sup>
- 29 Covenant keepers are blessed with the Savior's relief.
- 30 Consider this example in the Book of Mormon: The people of Alma were persecuted with "tasks upon them, and ... task-masters over them."<sup>12</sup> Forbidden to pray vocally, they "did pour out their hearts to [God]; and he did know the thoughts of their hearts."<sup>13</sup>
- 31 And "the voice of the Lord came to them in their afflictions, saying: Lift up your heads and be of good comfort, for I know of the covenant which ye have made unto me; and I will covenant with my people and deliver them out of bondage.
- 32 "And I will also ease the burdens which are put upon your shoulders, that even you cannot feel them upon your backs."<sup>14</sup>
- 33 And their burdens "were made light," and "the Lord did strengthen them that they could bear up their burdens with ease, and they did submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord."<sup>15</sup>
- 34 Those covenant keepers received relief in the form of comfort, increased patience and cheerfulness, an ease in their burdens so that they felt light, and ultimately deliverance.<sup>16</sup>
- 35 Now let's return to our own metaphorical backpack.
- 36 Repentance, through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, is what relieves us of the weight of the rocks of sin. And by this exquisite gift, God's mercy relieves us from the heavy and otherwise insurmountable demands of justice.<sup>17</sup>
- 37 The Atonement of Jesus Christ also makes it possible for us to receive strength to forgive, which allows us to unload the weight we carry because of mistreatment by others.<sup>18</sup>
- 38 So how does the Savior relieve us of the burdens of living in a fallen world with mortal bodies subject to grief and pain?
- 39 Often, He performs that kind of relief through us! As covenant members of His Church, we promise "to mourn with those that mourn" and "comfort those that stand in need of comfort."<sup>19</sup> Because we are "come into the fold of God" and are "called his people," we "are willing to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light."<sup>20</sup>
- 40 Our covenantal blessing is to partner with Jesus Christ in providing relief, both temporal and spiritual, to all of God's children. We are a conduit through which He provides relief.<sup>21</sup>



41 And so, like the friends of the man with palsy, we “succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees.”<sup>22</sup> We “bear ... one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”<sup>23</sup> As we do, we come to know Him, become like Him, and find His relief.<sup>24</sup>

42 What is relief?

43 It is the removal or lightening of something painful, troubling, or burdensome, or the strength to endure it. It refers to a person who takes the place of another. It is the legal correction of a wrong.<sup>25</sup> The Anglo-French word comes from Old French, the word *relevier*, or “to raise up,” and from the Latin *relevare*, or “raise again.”<sup>26</sup>

44 Brothers and sisters, Jesus Christ is relief. I testify that He did rise again on the third day and, having fulfilled the loving and infinite Atonement, stands with open arms, offering to us the opportunity to rise again, be saved, and be exalted and become like Him. The relief He offers us is everlasting.

45 Like the women visited by the angel on that first Easter morning, I wish to “go quickly” and with “great joy” to bring the word that He is risen.<sup>27</sup> In the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

1. Luke 5:20.

2. Mark 2:11.

3. Luke 5:25.

4. Luke 5:26.

5. See D. Todd Christofferson, “The First Commandment First” (Brigham Young University devotional, Mar. 22, 2022), 2, [speeches.byu.edu](https://speeches.byu.edu): “Our love of God elevates our ability to love others more fully and perfectly because we in essence partner with God in the care of His children” (emphasis added).

6. See Russell M. Nelson, “Overcome the World and Find Rest,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2022, 95–98.

7. Russell M. Nelson, “Overcome the World and Find Rest,” 96.

8. Matthew 11:28–30.

9. Russell M. Nelson, “Overcome the World and Find Rest,” 97.

10. Russell M. Nelson, “We Can Do Better and Be Better,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2019, 67.

11. Philippians 4:13.

12. Mosiah 24:9.

13. Mosiah 24:12.

14. Mosiah 24:13–14; emphasis added.

15. Mosiah 24:15.

16. See Mosiah 24:13–14.

17. See Alma 34:14–16; see also Mosiah 15:8–9.

18. See Russell M. Nelson, “Four Gifts That Jesus Christ Offers to You” (First Presidency Christmas devotional, Dec. 2, 2018), broadcasts.

*ChurchofJesusChrist.org*: “A second gift the Savior offers you is the ability to forgive. Through His infinite Atonement, you can forgive those who have hurt you and who may never accept responsibility for their cruelty to you.

“It is usually easy to forgive one who sincerely and humbly seeks your forgiveness. But the Savior will grant you the ability to forgive anyone who has mistreated you in any way. Then their hurtful acts can no longer canker your soul.”

19. Mosiah 18:9.

20. Mosiah 18:8.

21. Relief Society, the women’s organization of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, was organized by the Prophet Joseph Smith on March 17, 1842, as “a divinely established appendage to the priesthood” (Dallin H. Oaks, “The Keys and Authority of the Priesthood,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2014, 51). In selecting a name for the new organization, the word benevolent was considered, but relief was favored by the women. Emma Smith, the organization’s first president, and Eliza R. Snow, its secretary who later served as the second president of the Relief Society, explained that benevolent was a popular word—popular with the institutions of the day—but that popular “should not be our guide.” Emma expounded that the word relief better described their mission. “We are going to do something extraordinary ... we expect extraordinary occasions and pressing calls” (Emma Smith, in *Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book*, Mar. 17, 1842, 12, [josephsmithpapers.org](https://josephsmithpapers.org)). Indeed, the mandate of Relief Society has always been to provide temporal and spiritual relief. Joseph Smith taught, “The Society is not only to relieve the poor, but to save souls” (in *Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book*, June 9, 1842, 63, [josephsmithpapers.org](https://josephsmithpapers.org)). And so the Relief Society continues

to provide relief: "Relief of poverty, relief of illness; relief of doubt, relief of ignorance—relief of all that hinders the joy and progress of woman" (John A. Widtsoe, *Evidences and Reconciliations*, arr. G. Homer Durham, 3 vols. in 1 [1960], 308).

22. Doctrine and Covenants 81:5; see also Hebrews 12:12.

23. Galatians 6:2.

24. In one of the early meetings of the newly organized Relief Society, Lucy Mack Smith, the mother of the Prophet Joseph Smith, said, "We

must cherish one another, watch over one another, comfort one another and gain instruction, that we may all sit down in heaven together."

Historian Jennifer Reeder wrote of this, "In a united cause to provide relief, the women partnered with Christ, and in so doing, they found His relief" (*First: The Life and Faith of Emma Smith* [2021], 130).

25. See Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, "relief."

26. See Dictionary.com, "relief."

27. See Matthew 28:1–8.

WEEK

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MY WHY



# After the Fourth Day

ELDER W. MARK BASSETT

---

*As we move forward with faith in Jesus Christ, the fourth day will always come. He will always come to our aid.*

---

- 1 As we have been reminded this morning, today is Palm Sunday, marking the Savior's triumphal entry into Jerusalem and the beginning of that holy week preceding His great Atonement, which would include His suffering, Crucifixion, and Resurrection.
- 2 Not long before His prophesied entry into the city, Jesus Christ was fully engaged in His ministry when He received word from His dear friends Mary and Martha that their brother Lazarus was sick.<sup>1</sup>
- 3 Although Lazarus's illness was serious, the Lord "abode two days still in the same place where he was. Then after that saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judea again."<sup>2</sup> Before beginning the journey to His friends' home in Bethany, "said Jesus unto [His disciples] plainly, Lazarus is dead."<sup>3</sup>
- 4 When Jesus came into Bethany and met first Martha and then Mary, perhaps out of frustration for His late arrival, they each greeted Him saying, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died."<sup>4</sup> Martha further exclaimed, "By this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days."<sup>5</sup>
- 5 These four days were significant to Mary and Martha. According to some rabbinic schools of thought, it was believed that the spirit of someone who died would remain with the body for three days, offering hope that life was still possible. However, by the fourth day that hope was lost, perhaps because the body would begin to decay and "stinketh."<sup>6</sup>
- 6 Mary and Martha were in a state of despair. "When Jesus therefore saw [Mary] weeping, ... he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled,
- 7 "And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see."<sup>7</sup>
- 8 It is at this moment that we see one of the great miracles during the Savior's mortal ministry. First the Lord said, "Take ye away the stone."<sup>8</sup> Then, after thanking His Father, "he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.
- 9 "And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go."<sup>9</sup>
- 10 Like Mary and Martha, we have the opportunity to experience all of mortality, even sorrow<sup>10</sup> and weakness.<sup>11</sup> Each of us will experience the heartache that accompanies the loss of someone we love. Our mortal journey might include personal illness or the debilitating illness of a loved one; depression, anxiety, or other mental health challenges; financial hardship; betrayal; sin. And sometimes these are accompanied by feelings of hopelessness. I am no different. Like you, I have experienced a myriad of challenges that are expected in this life. I am drawn to this account about the Savior and what it teaches me about our relationship with Him.
- 11 During our greatest worries, we, like Mary and Martha, seek the Savior or ask the Father for His divine intervention. The story of Lazarus teaches us principles that can be applied to our own lives as we face our individual challenges.
- 12 When the Savior arrived in Bethany, all had lost hope that Lazarus could be saved—it had been four days, and he was gone. Sometimes during our own challenges, we might feel like Christ is too late, and our hope and faith might even feel challenged. My witness and testimony are that as we move forward with faith in Jesus Christ, the fourth day will always come. He will always come to our aid or to raise our hopes back to life. He has promised:
- 13 "Let not your heart be troubled."<sup>12</sup>
- 14 "I will not leave you comfortless: I will

come to you.”<sup>13</sup>

- <sup>15</sup> Sometimes it may seem like He doesn’t come to us until the figurative fourth day, after all hope seems lost. But why so late? President Thomas S. Monson taught, “Our Heavenly Father, who gives us so much to delight in, also knows that we learn and grow and become stronger as we face and survive the trials through which we must pass.”<sup>14</sup>
- <sup>16</sup> Even the Prophet Joseph Smith faced an enormous fourth-day experience. Remember his pleading? “O God, where art thou? And where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place?”<sup>15</sup> As we trust in Him, we can expect a like answer: “My son [or daughter], peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment.”<sup>16</sup>
- <sup>17</sup> Another message we can learn from the story of Lazarus is what our own role might be in the divine intervention we seek. When Jesus approached the tomb, He *first* said to those who were there, “Take ye away the stone.”<sup>17</sup> With the power that the Savior had, could not He have miraculously moved the stone without effort? This would have been impressive to see and an unforgettable experience, yet He said to the others, “Take ye away the stone.”
- <sup>18</sup> *Second*, the Lord “cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.”<sup>18</sup> Wouldn’t it have been more impressive if the Lord had Himself miraculously placed Lazarus at the opening so he would be immediately visible to the crowd when the stone was removed?
- <sup>19</sup> *Third*, when Lazarus did come forth, he was “bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.”<sup>19</sup> I’m sure the Lord was capable of having Lazarus standing at the opening, already clean and approachable, with his graveclothes nicely folded.
- <sup>20</sup> What is the point of highlighting these aspects? Each of these three things had something in common—none required the use of Christ’s divine power. That which His disciples could do, He instructed *them* to do. The disciples were certainly capable of moving the stone themselves; Lazarus, after being raised, had the capacity to stand and present himself at the opening of the cave; and those who loved Lazarus could absolutely help him remove the graveclothes.
- <sup>21</sup> However, it was only the Christ who had the power and authority to raise Lazarus from the dead. My impression is that the Savior expects us to do all we can do, and He will do what *only He* can do.<sup>20</sup>
- <sup>22</sup> We know that “faith [in the Lord Jesus Christ] is a principle of action”<sup>21</sup> and “miracles do not produce faith, but strong faith is developed by obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ. In other words, faith comes by righteousness.”<sup>22</sup> As we strive to act righteously by making and keeping sacred covenants and applying the doctrine of Christ in our lives, our faith will not only be sufficient to carry us to the fourth day, but with the Lord’s help we will also be capable of moving stones that are in our path, arising from despair, and loosening ourselves of all that binds us. While the Lord expects us to “do all things that lie in our power,”<sup>23</sup> remember that He will provide needed help in all these things as we trust in Him.
- <sup>23</sup> How can we move stones and build upon His rock?<sup>24</sup> We can abide by the counsel of prophets.
- <sup>24</sup> For example, last October, President Russell M. Nelson pleaded with us to take charge of our own testimonies of the Savior and His gospel, to work for them and nurture them, to feed them truth, and to avoid polluting them with false philosophies of unbelievers. He promised each of us, “As you make the continual strengthening of your testimony of Jesus Christ your highest priority, watch for miracles to happen in your life.”<sup>25</sup>
- <sup>25</sup> *We can do this!*
- <sup>26</sup> How can we figuratively arise and come forth? We can joyfully repent and choose to obey commandments. The Lord said, “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.”<sup>26</sup> We can strive to repent daily and joyfully move forward with a willing heart full of love for the Lord.
- <sup>27</sup> *We can do this!*

28 How can we, with the Lord's help, loose ourselves of all that binds us? We can intentionally bind ourselves first and foremost to our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, through covenants. Elder D. Todd Christofferson taught: "What is the source of [our] moral and spiritual power, and how do we obtain it? The source is God. Our access to that power is through our covenants with Him. ... In these divine agreements, God binds Himself to sustain, sanctify, and exalt us in return for our commitment to serve Him and keep His commandments."<sup>27</sup> We can make and keep sacred covenants.

29 *We can do this!*

30 "Take ye away the stone." "Come forth." "Loose him, and let him go."

31 Counsels, commandments, and covenants. *We can do this!*

32 Elder Jeffrey R. Holland promised, "Some blessings come soon, some come late, and some don't come until heaven; but for those who embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ, they come."<sup>28</sup>

33 And finally, "Wherefore, be of good cheer, and do not fear, for I the Lord am with you, and will stand by you."<sup>29</sup>

34 This is my witness and testimony, in the sacred name of Him who will always come, even Jesus Christ, amen.

1. See John 11:3.
2. John 11:6–7.
3. John 11:14.
4. John 11:21, 32.
5. John 11:39.
6. "The soul, according to Jewish belief, lingered in the vicinity of the body three days after death. According to Jewish conviction, consequently, a resurrection of one who had died was impossible on the fourth day, since the soul would not enter again into the body that had altered its position. It was all the more impressive for the witnesses of the miracle that Jesus raised Lazarus on the fourth day. The fourth day thus has a special meaning here and is taken over deliberately by the narrator for use in connection with the greatest of all possible resurrection miracles" (Ernst Haenchen, *John 2: A Commentary on the Gospel of John, Chapters 7–21*,

ed. Robert W. Funk and Ulrich Busse, trans. Robert W. Funk [1984], 60–61).

7. John 11:33–34.
8. John 11:39.
9. John 11:43–44.
10. See Moses 4:22–25.
11. See Ether 12:27.
12. John 14:1.
13. John 14:18.
14. Thomas S. Monson, "I Will Not Fail Thee, nor Forsake Thee," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 87. President Monson further explained: "We know that there are times when we will experience heartbreaking sorrow, when we will grieve, and when we may be tested to our limits. However, such difficulties allow us to change for the better, to rebuild our lives in the way our Heavenly Father teaches us, and to become something different from what we were—better than we were, more understanding than we were, more empathetic than we were, with stronger testimonies than we had before" ("I Will Not Fail Thee, Nor Forsake Thee," 87). See also *Doctrine and Covenants* 84:119: "For I, the Lord, have put forth my hand to exert the powers of heaven; ye cannot see it now, yet a little while and ye shall see it, and know that I am, and that I will come." See also *Mosiah* 23:21–24: "Nevertheless the Lord seeth fit to chasten his people; yea, he trieth their patience and their faith. "Nevertheless—whosoever putteth his trust in him the same shall be lifted up at the last day. Yea, and thus it was with this people. "For behold, I will show unto you that they were brought into bondage, and none could deliver them but the Lord their God, yea, even the God of Abraham and Isaac and of Jacob. "And it came to pass that he did deliver them, and he did show forth his mighty power unto them, and great were their rejoicings."
15. *Doctrine and Covenants* 121:1.
16. *Doctrine and Covenants* 121:7.
17. John 11:39.
18. John 11:43.
19. John 11:44.
20. President Russell M. Nelson remarked: "Often, my counselors and I have watched through tear-brimmed eyes as He has interceded in extremely challenging circumstances after we had done our best and could do no more. We do indeed stand

all amazed" ("Welcome Message," *Liahona*, May 2021, 6).

21. Bible Dictionary, "Faith."

22. Guide to the Scriptures, "Faith," [scriptures.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://scriptures.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

23. Doctrine and Covenants 123:17.

24. See 3 Nephi 11:32–39.

25. Russell M. Nelson, "Overcome the World and Find Rest," *Liahona*, Nov. 2022, 97.

26. John 14:21.

27. D. Todd Christofferson, "The Power of Covenants," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2009, 20.

28. Jeffrey R. Holland, "An High Priest of Good Things to Come," *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 38; *Liahona*, Jan. 2000, 45.

29. Doctrine and Covenants 68:6.



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# Finding Personal Peace

PRESIDENT HENRY B. EYRING

---

*I pray that you may find peace, help many others to find it, and pass it along.*

---

- 1 My dear brothers and sisters, we have been blessed by the inspired teachings and the beautiful music that have touched us in this opening session of general conference. We thank you for your participation and for your faith.
- 2 Today I will speak on what I have learned about the miracle of finding personal peace, whatever our circumstances. The Savior knows that all of Heavenly Father's children yearn for peace, and He said that He could give it to us. You remember the words of Jesus Christ recorded in the book of John: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."<sup>1</sup>
- 3 What He means by peace and how He can give it are revealed by the circumstances of those who heard Him speak those words. Listen to the account in John of the culmination of Christ's ministry. Fierce forces of evil were bearing down on Him and would soon come upon His disciples.
- 4 Here are the Savior's words:
- 5 "If ye love me, keep my commandments.
- 6 "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;
- 7 "Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.
- 8 "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.
- 9 "Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.
- 10 "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.
- 11 "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.
- 12 "Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?
- 13 "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.
- 14 "He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.
- 15 "These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you.
- 16 "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.
- 17 "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."<sup>2</sup>
- 18 I have learned at least five truths from that teaching of the Savior.
- 19 First, the gift of peace is given after we have the faith to keep His commandments. For those who are covenant members of the Lord's Church, obedience is what we have already promised to do.
- 20 Second, the Holy Ghost will come and abide with us. The Lord says that as we continue to be faithful, the Holy Ghost will dwell in us. That is the promise in the sacramental prayer that the Spirit will be our companion and that we will feel, in our hearts and minds, His comfort.
- 21 Third, the Savior promises that as we keep our covenants, we can feel the love of the Father and the Son for each other and for us. We can feel Their closeness

in our mortal lives, just as we will when we are blessed to be with Them forever.

- 22 Fourth, keeping the Lord's commandments requires more than obedience. We are to love God with all our heart, might, mind, and soul.<sup>3</sup>
- 23 Those who do not love Him do not keep His commandments. And so they will not have the gift of peace in this life and in the world to come.
- 24 Fifth, it is clear that the Lord loved us enough to pay the price of our sins so that we can—through our faith in Him and our repentance, through the effects of His Atonement—have the gift of the peace that “passeth all understanding,”<sup>4</sup> in this life and with Him eternally.
- 25 Some of you, perhaps many, are not feeling the peace the Lord promised. You may have prayed for personal peace and spiritual comfort. Yet you may feel that the heavens are silent to your pleading for peace.
- 26 There is an enemy of your soul who does not want you and those you love to find peace. He cannot enjoy it. He works to prevent you from even wanting to find the peace the Savior and our Heavenly Father desire you to have.
- 27 Satan's efforts to sow hatred and contention all around us seem to be increasing. We see evidence of it happening among nations and cities, in neighborhoods, in electronic media, and all across the world.
- 28 Yet there is reason for optimism: it is that the Light of Christ is placed in every newborn child. With that universal gift comes a sense of what is right, a desire to love and be loved. There is an inborn sense of justice and truth in every child of God as he or she comes into mortality.
- 29 Our optimism for personal peace for those children lies in the people who care for them. If those who rear them and serve them have worked to receive the gift of peace from the Savior, they will, by personal example and effort, encourage the faith of the child to qualify for the supernal gift of peace.
- 30 That is what the scripture promises: “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”<sup>5</sup> It will require the one charged

with the child's care and nurturing to be worthy of the gift of peace.

- 31 Sadly, we all have felt the pain when children raised by inspired parents—sometimes one parent alone—choose, after a lifetime of faith and peace, to take the path of sorrow.
- 32 Even when that sadness occurs, my optimism rests in another gift from the Lord. It is this: that He raises up many peacemakers among His trusted disciples. They have felt the peace and the love of God. They have the Holy Ghost in their hearts, and the Lord can guide them to reach out to the wandering sheep.
- 33 I have seen it over my lifetime and across the world. You have seen it as well. At times, when you are being led to the rescue, it may seem accidental.
- 34 Once, I simply asked someone I met on a trip, “Would you tell me a little about your family?” The conversation led me to ask to see a picture of her adult daughter, who she said was struggling. I was struck with the goodness in the face of that girl in the picture. I felt impressed to ask if I could have her email address. The daughter was at that moment lost and wondering if God had any message for her. He did. It was this: “The Lord loves you. He always has. The Lord wants you to come back. Your promised blessings are still in place.”
- 35 Members across the Church have felt the Lord's gift of personal peace. He is encouraging everyone to help others have opportunities to come unto Him and qualify for that same peace themselves. They, in turn, will choose to seek inspiration to know how they can pass that gift along to others.
- 36 The rising generation will become the nurturers of the generation to follow. The multiplier effect will produce a miracle. It will spread and grow over time, and the Lord's kingdom on earth will be prepared and ready to greet Him with shouts of hosanna. There will be peace on earth.
- 37 I bear my sure witness the Savior lives and that He leads this Church. I have felt His love in my life and His love and concern for all of Heavenly Father's children. The Savior's invitation to come to Him is an offer of peace.

- 38 President Russell M. Nelson is the living prophet of God in all the earth. He has said, “I give you my assurance that regardless of the world’s condition and your personal circumstances, you can face the future with optimism and joy.”<sup>6</sup>
- 39 I express my love to you. Your great faith and love are reaching people and allowing the Lord to change hearts and so gain a desire to offer others the gift of peace that passes all understanding.
- 40 I pray that you may find peace, help many others to find it, and pass it along. There will be a wonderful thousand years of peace when the Lord comes again. I so testify in joy and in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. *John 14:27.*
2. *John 14:15–27.*
3. *See Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 22:37; Moroni 10:32.*
4. *Philippians 4:7.*
5. *Proverbs 22:6.*
6. Russell M. Nelson, “Look Forward to the Future with Faith,” *New Era*, June 2018, 5.

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# “Abide in Me, and I in You; Therefore Walk with Me”

ELDER DAVID A. BEDNAR

---

*The Savior’s promise to abide in us is true and available to every covenant-keeping member of His restored Church.*

---

- 1 The ancient prophet Enoch, described in the Old Testament, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price,<sup>1</sup> was instrumental in establishing the city of Zion.
- 2 The scriptural account of Enoch’s call to serve indicates that “he heard a voice from heaven, saying: Enoch, my son, prophesy unto this people, and say unto them—Repent, ... for their hearts have waxed hard, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes cannot see afar off.”<sup>2</sup>
- 3 “And when Enoch had heard these words, he bowed himself to the earth ... and spake before the Lord, saying: Why is it that I have found favor in thy sight, and am but a lad, and all the people hate me; for I am slow of speech; wherefore am I thy servant?”<sup>3</sup>
- 4 Please notice that at the time of Enoch’s call to serve, he became acutely aware of his personal inadequacies and limitations. And I suspect all of us at one time or another in our Church service have felt much like Enoch. But I believe the Lord’s response to Enoch’s pleading question is instructive and applies to each of us today.
- 5 “And the Lord said unto Enoch: Go forth and do as I have commanded thee, and no man shall pierce thee. Open thy mouth, and it shall be filled, and I will give thee utterance. ...
- 6 “Behold my Spirit is upon you, wherefore all thy words will I justify; and the mountains shall flee before you, and the rivers shall turn from their course; and thou shalt abide in me, and I in you; therefore walk with me.”<sup>4</sup>
- 7 Enoch ultimately became a mighty prophet and a tool in God’s hands to accomplish a great work, but he did not start his ministry that way! Rather, his capacity over time was magnified as he learned to abide in and walk with the Son of God.
- 8 I earnestly pray for the help of the Holy Ghost as we consider together the counsel given to Enoch by the Lord and what it can mean for you and me today.
- 9 **Thou Shalt Abide in Me**
- 10 The Lord Jesus Christ extends to each of us the invitation to abide in Him.<sup>5</sup> But how do we actually learn and come to abide in Him?
- 11 The word abide denotes remaining fixed or stable and enduring without yielding. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland explained that “abiding” as an action means “[to] stay—but [to] stay forever.” That is the call of the gospel message to ... everyone ... in the world. Come, but come to remain. Come with conviction and endurance. Come permanently, for your sake and the sake of all the generations who must follow you.”<sup>6</sup> Thus, we abide in Christ as we are firm and steadfast in our devotion to the Redeemer and His holy purposes, in times both good and bad.<sup>7</sup>
- 12 We begin to abide in the Lord by exercising our moral agency to take upon ourselves His yoke<sup>8</sup> through the covenants and ordinances of the restored gospel. The covenant connection we have with our Heavenly Father and His resurrected and living Son is the supernal source of perspective, hope, power, peace, and enduring joy; it also is the rock-solid foundation<sup>9</sup> upon which we should build our lives.
- 13 We abide in Him by striving continually to strengthen our individual covenant bond with the Father and the Son. For example, praying sincerely to the Eternal Father in the name of His Beloved Son deepens and fortifies our covenant connection with Them.
- 14 We abide in Him by truly feasting upon the words of Christ. The Savior’s doctrine draws us, as children of the covenant, closer to Him<sup>10</sup> and will tell us all things what we should do.<sup>11</sup>



- 15 We abide in Him by preparing earnestly to participate in the ordinance of the sacrament, reviewing and reflecting on our covenant promises, and repenting sincerely. Worthily partaking of the sacrament is a witness to God that we are willing to take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ and strive to “always remember him”<sup>12</sup> after the brief period of time required to participate in that sacred ordinance.
- 16 And we abide in Him by serving God as we serve His children and minister to our brothers and sisters.<sup>13</sup>
- 17 The Savior said, “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.”<sup>14</sup>
- 18 I briefly have described several of the many ways we can abide in the Savior. And I now invite each of us as His disciples to ask, seek, knock, and learn for ourselves by the power of the Holy Ghost other meaningful ways we can make Christ the center of our lives in all that we do.
- 19 **And I in You**
- 20 The Savior’s promise to His followers is twofold: if we abide in Him, He will abide in us. But is it indeed possible for Christ to abide in you and me—individually and personally? The answer to this question is a resounding yes!
- 21 In the Book of Mormon, we learn about Alma’s teaching and testifying to the poor whose afflictions had compelled them to be humble. In his instruction, he compared the word to a seed that must be planted and nourished, and he described “the word” as the life, mission, and atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ.
- 22 Alma said, “Begin to believe in the Son of God, that he will come to redeem his people, and that he shall suffer and die to atone for their sins; and that he shall rise again from the dead, which shall bring to pass the resurrection, that all men shall stand before him, to be judged at the last and judgment day, according to their works.”<sup>15</sup>
- 23 Given this description of “the word” by Alma, please consider the inspiring connection he then identifies.
- 24 “And now ... I desire that ye shall plant this word in your hearts, and as it beginneth to swell even so nourish it by your faith. And behold, it will become a tree, springing up in you unto everlasting life. And then may God grant unto you that your burdens may be light, through the joy of his Son. And even all this can ye do if ye will.”<sup>16</sup>
- 25 The seed we should strive to plant in our hearts is the word—even the life, mission, and doctrine of Jesus Christ. And as the word is nourished by faith, it can become a tree springing up in us unto everlasting life.<sup>17</sup>
- 26 What was the symbolism of the tree in Lehi’s vision? The tree can be considered as a representation of Jesus Christ.<sup>18</sup>
- 27 My beloved brothers and sisters, is the Word in us? Are the truths of the Savior’s gospel written in the fleshy tables of our hearts?<sup>19</sup> Are we coming unto and gradually becoming more like Him? Is the tree of Christ growing in us? Are we striving to become “new [creatures]”<sup>20</sup> in Him?<sup>21</sup>
- 28 Perhaps this miraculous potential inspired Alma to ask: “Have ye spiritually been born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances? Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts?”<sup>22</sup>
- 29 We should always remember the Lord’s instruction to Enoch: “Thou shalt abide in me, and I in you.”<sup>23</sup> And I testify the Savior’s promise to abide in us is true and available to every covenant-keeping member of His restored Church.
- 30 **Therefore Walk with Me**
- 31 The Apostle Paul admonished believers who had received the Lord: “So walk ye in him.”<sup>24</sup>
- 32 Walking in and with the Savior highlights two vital aspects of discipleship: (1) obeying God’s commandments, and (2) remembering and honoring the sacred covenants that connect us to the Father and the Son.
- 33 John declared:
- 34 “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.
- 35 “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the

truth is not in him.

36 “But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.

37 “He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.”<sup>25</sup>

38 Jesus beckons to each of us, “Come, follow me”<sup>26</sup> and “walk with me.”<sup>27</sup>

39 I testify that as we press forward in faith and walk in the meekness of the Lord’s Spirit,<sup>28</sup> we are blessed with power, guidance, protection, and peace.

#### 40 **Testimony and Promise**

41 Alma describes a loving entreaty from the Lord to all living souls:

42 “Behold, he sendeth an invitation unto all men, for the arms of mercy are extended towards them, and he saith: Repent, and I will receive you.

43 “... Come unto me and ye shall partake of the fruit of the tree of life; yea, ye shall eat and drink of the bread and the waters of life freely.”<sup>29</sup>

44 I emphasize the absolute comprehensiveness of the Savior’s plea. He yearns to bless with His grace and mercy every single person who now lives, who has ever lived, and who will yet live upon the earth.

45 Some Church members accept as true the doctrine, principles, and testimonies proclaimed repeatedly from this pulpit in the Conference Center and in local congregations around the world—and yet may struggle to believe these eternal truths apply specifically in their lives and to their circumstances. They believe sincerely and serve dutifully, but their covenant connection with the Father and His redeeming Son has not yet become a living and transforming reality in their lives.

46 I promise that by the power of the Holy Ghost, you can know and feel the gospel truths I have attempted to describe are for you—for you individually and personally.

47 I joyfully witness that Jesus Christ is our loving and living Savior and Redeemer.

If we abide in Him, He will abide in us.<sup>30</sup> And as we walk in and with Him, we will be blessed to bring forth much fruit. I so testify in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

1. See Genesis 5:18–24; Doctrine and Covenants 107:48–57; Moses 6–7.

2. Moses 6:27.

3. Moses 6:31.

4. Moses 6:32, 34; emphasis added.

5. See John 15:4–9.

6. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Abide in Me,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2004, 32.

7. See John 15:10.

8. See Matthew 11:29–30.

9. See Helaman 5:12.

10. See 3 Nephi 27:14–15.

11. See 2 Nephi 32:3.

12. Moroni 4:3; 5:2.

13. See Mosiah 2:17.

14. John 15:10.

15. Alma 33:22.

16. Alma 33:23; emphasis added.

17. See Alma 26:13.

18. I explained this principle in a devotional in 2017:

“Alma ... ‘began to preach the word of God unto the people, entering into their synagogues, and into their houses; yea, and even they did preach the word in their streets’ [Alma 31:1; emphasis added]. He also compared the word of God to a seed.

“‘Now, if ye give place, that a seed may be planted in your heart, behold, if it be a true seed, or a good seed, if ye do not cast it out by your unbelief, that ye will resist the Spirit of the Lord, behold, it will begin to swell within your breasts; and when you feel these swelling motions, ye will begin to say within yourselves—It must needs be that this is a good seed, or that the word is good, for it beginneth to enlarge my soul; yea, it beginneth to enlighten my understanding, yea, it beginneth to be delicious to me’ [Alma 32:28; emphasis added].

“Interestingly, a good seed becomes a tree as it is planted in the heart and begins to swell, sprout, and grow.

“‘And behold, as the tree beginneth to grow, ye will say: Let us nourish it with great care, that it may get root, that it may grow up, and bring forth fruit unto us. And now behold, if ye nourish it with much care it will get

root, and grow up, and bring forth fruit.

“But if ye neglect the tree, and take no thought for its nourishment, behold it will not get any root; and when the heat of the sun cometh and scorcheth it, because it hath no root it withers away, and ye pluck it up and cast it out.

“Now, this is not because the seed was not good, neither is it because the fruit thereof would not be desirable; but it is because your ground is barren, and ye will not nourish the tree, therefore ye cannot have the fruit thereof.

“And thus, if ye will not nourish the word, looking forward with an eye of faith to the fruit thereof, ye can never pluck of the fruit of the tree of life.

“But if ye will nourish the word, yea, nourish the tree as it beginneth to grow, by your faith with great diligence, and with patience, looking forward to the fruit thereof, it shall take root; and behold it shall be a tree springing up unto everlasting life” [Alma 32:37–41; emphasis added].

“... The central feature in Lehi’s dream is the tree of life—a representation of ‘the love of God’ [1 Nephi 11:21–22].

“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” [John 3:16].

“The birth, life, and atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ are the greatest manifestations of God’s love for His children. As Nephi testified, this love was ‘most desirable above all things’ and ‘most joyous to the

soul’ [1 Nephi 11:22–23; see also 1 Nephi 8:12, 15]. Chapter 11 of 1 Nephi presents a detailed description of the tree of life as a symbol for the life, ministry, and sacrifice of the Savior—the ‘condescension of God’ [1 Nephi 11:16]. The tree can be considered as a representation of Christ.

“One way of thinking about the fruit on the tree is as a symbol for the blessings of the Savior’s Atonement. The fruit is described as ‘desirable to make one happy’ [1 Nephi 8:10] and produces great joy and the desire to share that joy with others.

“Significantly, the overarching theme of the Book of Mormon, inviting all to come unto Christ [see Moroni 10:32], is paramount in Lehi’s vision [see 1 Nephi 8:19]” (“The Power of His Word Which Is in Us” [address given at seminar for new mission leaders, June 27, 2017], 4–5).

19. See 2 Corinthians 3:3.

20. 2 Corinthians 5:17.

21. Alma’s analogy teaches us that the desire to believe plants the seed in our hearts, nourishing the seed by our faith sprouts the tree of life, and nourishing the tree produces fruit of the tree, which is “sweet above all that is sweet” (Alma 32:42) and is “the greatest of all the gifts of God” (1 Nephi 15:36).

22. Alma 5:14.

23. Moses 6:34; emphasis added.

24. Colossians 2:6.

25. 1 John 2:3–6; emphasis added.

26. Luke 18:22.

27. Moses 6:34.

28. See Doctrine and Covenants 19:23.

29. Alma 5:33–34; emphasis added.

30. See John 15:5.

WEEK

TALK

SCRIPTURE(S)

WORD

AFFIRMATION

PHRASE

SPRINKLES

MY WHAT

MY WHY

[illegible]

# Just Keep Going—with Faith

ELDER CARL B. COOK

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*Exercising faith in our Savior, Jesus Christ, helps us overcome discouragement no matter what obstacles we encounter.*

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- 1 Elder George A. Smith, an Apostle, received counsel from the Prophet Joseph Smith at a time of great difficulty: “He told me I should never get discouraged, whatever difficulties might surround me. If I was sunk in the lowest pit of Nova Scotia and all the Rocky Mountains piled on top of me, I ought not to be discouraged but hang on, exercise faith, and keep up good courage and I should come out on the top of the heap at last.”<sup>1</sup>
- 2 How could the Prophet Joseph say that—to someone who was suffering? Because he knew it was true. He lived it. Joseph repeatedly experienced severe difficulties in his life. However, as he exercised faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement and just kept going, he overcame seemingly insurmountable obstacles.<sup>2</sup>
- 3 Today I would like to renew Joseph’s plea not to let discouragement overwhelm us when we face disappointment, painful experiences, our own inadequacies, or other challenges.
- 4 When I say discouragement, I’m not talking about the more debilitating challenges of clinical depression, anxiety disorders, or other illnesses that require special treatment.<sup>3</sup> I’m just talking about plain old discouragement that comes with the ups and downs of life.
- 5 I am inspired by my heroes who just keep going—with faith—no matter what.<sup>4</sup> In the Book of Mormon, we read of Zoram, the servant of Laban. When Nephi obtained the brass plates, Zoram was faced with the choice to follow Nephi and his brothers into the wilderness or possibly lose his life.
- 6 What a choice! Zoram’s first inclination was to run, but Nephi held him and made an oath that if he would go with them, he would be free and have a place with their family. Zoram took courage and went with them.<sup>5</sup>
- 7 Zoram suffered many afflictions in his new life, yet he pressed forward with faith. We have no indication that Zoram clung to his past or harbored resentment toward God or others.<sup>6</sup> He was a true friend to Nephi, a prophet, and he and his seed dwelt in freedom and prosperity in the promised land. What had been a huge obstacle in Zoram’s path eventually led to rich blessings, due to his faithfulness and willingness to just keep going—with faith.<sup>7</sup>
- 8 Recently I listened to a courageous sister share how she persevered through difficulties.<sup>8</sup> She had some challenges, and one Sunday she was sitting in Relief Society, listening to a teacher who she thought lived a picture-perfect life—totally different from her own. She was tired and discouraged. She felt like she didn’t measure up—or even belong—so she got up and left, planning to never return to church again. Walking to her car, she felt a distinct impression: “Go into the chapel and listen to the sacrament meeting speaker.” She questioned the prompting but felt it again strongly, so she went into the meeting.
- 9 The message was exactly what she needed. She felt the Spirit. She knew the Lord wanted her to stay with Him, to be His disciple, and to attend church, so she did.
- 10 Do you know what she was grateful for? That she didn’t give up. She just kept going—with faith in Jesus Christ, even when it stretched her, and she and her family are being abundantly blessed as she presses forward.
- 11 The God of heaven and earth will help us overcome discouragement and whatever obstacles we encounter if we look to Him, follow the promptings of the Holy Ghost,<sup>9</sup> and just keep going—with faith.
- 12 Thankfully, when we are weak or incapable, the Lord can strengthen our faith. He can increase our capacity

- beyond our own. I have experienced that. More than 20 years ago, I was unexpectedly called as an Area Seventy, and I felt very inadequate. Following my training assignments, I was to preside at my first stake conference.<sup>10</sup> The stake president and I meticulously planned every detail. Shortly before the conference, President Boyd K. Packer, then-Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, called to see if he could accompany me. I was surprised and, of course, agreed. I asked how he would like to proceed since he would preside. He suggested that we undo the plans and prepare to follow the Spirit. Thankfully, I still had 10 days to study, pray, and prepare.
- 13 With an open agenda, we were on the stand 20 minutes before the leadership meeting began. I leaned over to the stake president and whispered, "This is a wonderful stake."
- 14 President Packer elbowed me gently and said, "No talking."
- 15 I stopped talking, and his general conference talk "Reverence Invites Revelation"<sup>11</sup> came to mind. I observed that President Packer was writing down scripture references. The Spirit confirmed to me that he was receiving impressions for the meeting. My learning experience had just begun.
- 16 President Packer spoke for the first 15 minutes and emphasized the importance of conducting all meetings as guided by the Holy Spirit.<sup>12</sup> He then said, "We will now hear from Elder Cook."
- 17 On my way to the pulpit, I asked how long he would like me to take and if there was a topic he would like me to address. He said, "Take 15 minutes and carry on as you feel inspired." I took about 14 minutes and shared everything I had on my mind.
- 18 President Packer stood again and spoke for another 15 minutes. He shared this scripture:
- 19 "Speak the thoughts that I shall put into your hearts, and you shall not be confounded before men;
- 20 "For it shall be given you ... in the very moment, what ye shall say."<sup>13</sup>
- 21 Then he said, "We will now hear from Elder Cook."
- 22 I was shocked. I had never considered the possibility that I would be asked to speak twice in one meeting. I didn't have anything in mind to say. Praying fervently and relying on the Lord for help, somehow, I was blessed with a thought, a scripture, and I was able to speak for another 15 minutes. I sat down totally exhausted.
- 23 President Packer spoke again for 15 minutes about following the Spirit and shared Paul's teachings that we should not speak "words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth."<sup>14</sup> As you can imagine, I was overwhelmed when he was impressed to say for the third time, "We will now hear from Elder Cook."
- 24 I was empty. I had nothing. I knew it was time to exercise more faith. Slowly, I made my way to the pulpit, pleading to God for help. As I stepped up to the microphone, the Lord miraculously blessed me to somehow give another 15-minute message.<sup>15</sup>
- 25 The meeting finally ended, but I quickly realized that the adult session would start in one hour. Oh, no! Like Zoram, I sincerely wanted to run, but just as Nephi caught him, I knew President Packer would catch me. The adult meeting followed the very same pattern. I spoke three more times. The next day during the general session, I spoke once.
- 26 After the conference, President Packer said with affection, "Let's do it again sometime." I love President Boyd K. Packer and appreciate all that I learned.
- 27 Do you know what I am grateful for? That I didn't give up—or resist. If I had given in to my desperate desire to escape from those meetings, I would have missed an opportunity to increase my faith and receive a rich outpouring of love and support from my Heavenly Father. I learned of His mercy, the miraculous enabling power of Jesus Christ and His Atonement, and the powerful influence of the Holy Ghost. In spite of my weakness,<sup>16</sup> I learned that I can serve; I can contribute when the Lord is by my side if I just keep going—with faith.
- 28 Regardless of the size, scope, and seriousness of the challenges we face in life, we all have times when we feel like stopping, leaving, escaping, or

possibly giving up. But exercising faith in our Savior, Jesus Christ, helps us overcome discouragement no matter what obstacles we encounter.

29 Just as the Savior finished the work He was given to do, He has the power to help us finish the work we have been given.<sup>17</sup> We can be blessed to move forward along the covenant path, no matter how rocky it becomes, and eventually receive eternal life.<sup>18</sup>

30 As the Prophet Joseph Smith said, “Stand fast, ye Saints of God, hold on a little while longer, and the storm of life will be past, and you will be rewarded by that God whose servants you are.”<sup>19</sup> In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. George A. Smith, in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2011), 235.
2. See *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 227–36.
3. When I speak of discouragement, I am not suggesting that to “just keep going with faith in Christ” is the only effort needed for people experiencing clinical depression, anxiety disorders, or other illnesses. For these friends, family members, and others listening, I echo the counsel of our Church leaders to please seek medical, psychological, and spiritual care while trusting in the Lord. My heart goes out to each of you wrestling with these unique challenges. We sincerely pray for you.
4. Some of my heroes in the scriptures include Caleb (see Numbers 14:6–9, 24), Job (see Job 19:25–26), and Nephi (see 1 Nephi 3:7), in addition to my modern-day heroes.
5. See 1 Nephi 4:20, 30–35, 38.
6. See Dale G. Renlund, “Infuriating Unfairness,” *Liahona*, May 2021, 41–45.
7. See 2 Nephi 1:30–32. “Although [Zoram] had to endure a little rough handling, the trap he was caught in was the very situation through which God had determined to bless him. Though he had to give up his homeland, God was preparing a better one” (David B. Paxman, “Zoram and I: Getting Our Stories Straight” [Brigham Young University devotional, July 27, 2010], 8, [speeches.byu.edu](https://speeches.byu.edu)).
8. I heard this sister’s testimony in a ward in the Riverdale Utah Stake on December 11, 2022. The experience she shared occurred in a previous ward.
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 11:12–13.
10. My assignment was in the Benson Utah Stake on November 3–4, 2001. President Jerry Toombs was the stake president.
11. See Boyd K. Packer, “Reverence Invites Revelation,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 21–23.
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 46:2.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 100:5–6; see also verses 7–8.
14. 1 Corinthians 2:13.
15. President Russell M. Nelson has said, “When you spiritually stretch beyond anything you have ever done before, then [the Savior’s] power will flow into you” (“Drawing the Power of Jesus Christ into Our Lives,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2017, 42).
16. See Ether 12:27.
17. See John 17:4.
18. See 2 Nephi 31:20; Mosiah 2:41; Alma 36:3.
19. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 235.



WEEK

TALK

SCRIPTURE(S)

WORD

AFFIRMATION

PHRASE

SPRINKLES

MY WHAT

MY WHY

## This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# Accessing God's Power through Covenants

ELDER DALE G. RENLUND

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*As you walk the covenant path, from baptism to the temple and throughout life, I promise you power to go against the natural worldly flow.*

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- 1 Last November, I had the privilege of dedicating the Belém Brazil Temple. It was a joy to be with the consecrated members of the Church in northern Brazil. At that time, I learned that Belém is the gateway to the region that includes the most powerful river in the world, the Amazon River.
- 2 Despite the river's strength, twice a year something seemingly unnatural happens. When the sun, moon, and earth are aligned just so, a powerful tidal wave flows up the river, against the natural flow of the water. Waves up to 6 meters high<sup>1</sup> traveling as far as 50 kilometers<sup>2</sup> upstream have been documented. This phenomenon, known generally as a tidal bore, is referred to locally as pororoca, or "great roar," because of the loud noise it makes. We can correctly conclude that even the mighty Amazon must yield to heavenly powers.
- 3 Like the Amazon, we have a natural flow to our lives; we tend to do what comes naturally. Like the Amazon, with heavenly help we can do seemingly unnatural things. After all, it is not natural for us to be humble, meek, or willing to submit our wills to God. Yet only by doing so can we be transformed, return to live in the presence of God, and achieve our eternal destiny.
- 4 Unlike the Amazon, we can choose whether we yield to heavenly powers or "go with the flow."<sup>3</sup> Going against the flow may be difficult. But when we yield "to the enticings of the Holy Spirit" and put off the selfish tendencies of the natural man or woman,<sup>4</sup> we can receive the Savior's transforming power in our lives, the power to do difficult things.
- 5 President Russell M. Nelson taught us how to do this. He promised, "Each person who makes covenants in baptismal fonts and in temples—and keeps them—has increased access to the power of Jesus Christ ... [to lift] us above the pull of this fallen world."<sup>5</sup> In other words, we can access the power of God, but only when we connect with Him through sacred covenants.
- 6 Before the earth was created, God established covenants as the mechanism by which we, His children, could unite ourselves to Him. Based on eternal, unchanging law, He specified the nonnegotiable conditions whereby we are transformed, saved, and exalted. In this life, we make these covenants by participating in priesthood ordinances and promising to do what God asks us to do, and in return, God promises us certain blessings.<sup>6</sup>
- 7 A covenant is a pledge that we should prepare for, clearly understand, and absolutely honor.<sup>7</sup> Making a covenant with God is different than casually making a promise. First, priesthood authority is required. Second, a feeble promise does not have the connecting strength to lift us above the pull of the natural flow. We make a covenant only when we intend to commit ourselves quite exceptionally to fulfilling it.<sup>8</sup> We become covenant children of God and inheritors of His kingdom, especially when we identify ourselves completely with the covenant.
- 8 The term covenant path refers to a series of covenants whereby we come to Christ and connect to Him. Through this covenant bond, we have access to His eternal power. The path begins with faith in Jesus Christ and repentance, followed by baptism and receiving the Holy Ghost.<sup>9</sup> Jesus Christ showed us how to enter the path when He was baptized.<sup>10</sup> According to the New Testament Gospel accounts in Mark and Luke, Heavenly Father spoke directly to Jesus at His baptism, saying, "Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased." When we embark on the covenant path through baptism, I can imagine Heavenly Father saying a similar thing to each of us: "Thou art my dear

child in whom I delight. Keep going.”<sup>11</sup>

- <sup>9</sup> At baptism and when we partake of the sacrament,<sup>12</sup> we witness that we are willing to take on ourselves the name of Jesus Christ.<sup>13</sup> In this context, let us be mindful of the Old Testament commandment, “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.”<sup>14</sup> To our modern ears, this sounds like a prohibition against irreverently using the Lord’s name. The commandment includes that, but its injunction is even more profound. The Hebrew word translated as “take” means to “lift up” or “carry,” as one would a banner that identifies oneself with an individual or group.<sup>15</sup> The word translated as “vain” means “empty” or “deceptive.”<sup>16</sup> The commandment to not take the Lord’s name in vain can thus mean, “You should not identify yourself as a disciple of Jesus Christ unless you intend to represent Him well.”
- <sup>10</sup> We become His disciples and represent Him well when we intentionally and incrementally take on ourselves the name of Jesus Christ through covenants. Our covenants give us power to stay on the covenant path because our relationship with Jesus Christ and our Heavenly Father is changed. We are connected to Them by a covenantal bond.
- <sup>11</sup> The covenant path leads to the ordinances of the temple, such as the temple endowment.<sup>17</sup> The endowment is God’s gift of sacred covenants that connect us more fully to Him. In the endowment, we covenant, first, to strive to keep the commandments of God; second, to repent with a broken heart and contrite spirit; third, to live the gospel of Jesus Christ. We do this by exercising faith in Him, making covenants with God as we receive the ordinances of salvation and exaltation, keeping those covenants throughout our lives, and striving to live the two great commandments to love God and neighbor. We covenant, fourth, to keep the law of chastity and, fifth, to dedicate ourselves and everything the Lord blesses us with to build up His Church.<sup>18</sup>
- <sup>12</sup> By making and keeping temple covenants, we learn more about the Lord’s purposes and receive a fulness of the Holy Ghost.<sup>19</sup> We receive direction for our lives. We mature in our discipleship so that we do not remain

perpetual, unknowing children.<sup>20</sup> Rather, we live with an eternal perspective and are more motivated to serve God and others. We receive increased capacity to fulfill our purposes in mortality. We are protected from evil,<sup>21</sup> and we gain greater power to resist temptation and to repent when we stumble.<sup>22</sup> When we falter, the memory of our covenants with God helps us return to the path. By connecting to God’s power, we become our own pororoca, able to go against the flow of the world, throughout our lives and into the eternities. Ultimately, our destinies are changed because the covenant path leads to exaltation and eternal life.<sup>23</sup>

- <sup>13</sup> Keeping covenants made in baptismal fonts and in temples also provides us with strength to withstand mortality’s trials and heartaches.<sup>24</sup> The doctrine associated with these covenants eases our way and provides hope, comfort, and peace.
- <sup>14</sup> My grandparents Lena Sofia and Matts Leander Renlund received God’s power through their baptismal covenant when they joined the Church in 1912 in Finland. They were happy to be part of the first branch of the Church in Finland.
- <sup>15</sup> Leander died from tuberculosis five years later when Lena was pregnant with their tenth child. That child, my father, was born two months after Leander’s death. Lena eventually buried not just her husband but also seven of her ten children. As an impoverished widow, she struggled. For 20 years she did not get a good night’s rest. During the day, she scrambled to provide food for her family. At night, she took care of dying family members. It is hard to imagine how she coped.
- <sup>16</sup> Lena persevered because she knew that her deceased husband and children could be hers through the eternities. The doctrine of temple blessings, including that of eternal families, brought her peace because she trusted in the sealing power. While in mortality, she neither received her endowment nor was she sealed to Leander, but Leander remained a vital influence in her life and part of her great hope for the future.
- <sup>17</sup> In 1938, Lena submitted records so that temple ordinances could be performed for her deceased family members, some of the earliest submitted from Finland.

After she died, temple ordinances were performed by others for her, Leander, and her deceased children. By proxy, she was endowed, Lena and Leander were sealed to each other, and their deceased children and my father were sealed to them. Like others, Lena “died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, ... [was] persuaded of them, and embraced them.”<sup>25</sup>

18 Lena lived as though she had already made these covenants in her life. She knew that her baptismal and sacramental covenants connected her to the Savior. She “let the sweet longing for [the Redeemer’s] holy place bring hope to [her] desolate heart.”<sup>26</sup> Lena considered it one of God’s great mercies that she learned about eternal families before experiencing the tragedies in her life. Through covenant, she received the power of God to endure and rise above the depressive pull of her challenges and hardships.

19 As you walk the covenant path, from baptism to the temple and throughout life, I promise you power to go against the natural worldly flow—power to learn, power to repent and be sanctified, and power to find hope, comfort, and even joy as you face life’s challenges. I promise you and your family protection against the influence of the adversary, especially when you make the temple a major focus in your life.

20 As you come to Christ and are connected to Him and our Heavenly Father by covenant, something seemingly unnatural happens. You are transformed and become perfected in Jesus Christ.<sup>27</sup> You become a covenant child of God and an inheritor in His kingdom.<sup>28</sup> I can imagine Him saying to you, “Thou art my dear child in whom I delight. Welcome home.” In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. Approximately 20 feet.
2. Approximately 30 miles.
3. We have a choice because God has given us the privilege to choose and act for ourselves. See *Guide to the Scriptures*, “Agency,” scriptures. [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org); 2 Nephi 2:27; Moses 7:32.
4. See Mosiah 3:19.
5. Russell M. Nelson, “Overcome the World and Find Rest,” *Liahona*, Nov.

2022, 96, 97.

6. See *Guide to the Scriptures*, “Covenant,” scriptures. [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org).
7. Everyone stumbles on occasion, but God is patient with our stumbles and has given us the gift of repentance even after breaking a covenant. As Elder Richard G. Scott taught, “The Lord sees weaknesses differently than He [sees] rebellion ... [because] when the Lord speaks of weaknesses, it is always with mercy” (“Personal Strength through the Atonement of Jesus Christ,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 83). Thus, we should not doubt the Savior’s ability to help us with our weaknesses. However, consciously breaking a covenant with the callous plan to repent afterwards—in other words, preplanned sin and repentance—is repugnant to the Lord (see Hebrews 6:4–6).
8. See Robert Bolt, *A Man for All Seasons: A Play in Two Acts* (1990), xiii–xiv, 140.
9. See 2 Nephi 31:17–18.
10. See 2 Nephi 31:4–15.
11. Luke records, “And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased” (Luke 3:22). Mark records, “And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mark 1:11). William Tyndale’s translation is even more vivid and intimate than the King James Version. In his translation, the voice of Heavenly Father says, “Thou arte my dear Son in whom I delyghte” (in Brian Moynahan, *God’s Bestseller: William Tyndale, Thomas More, and the Writing of the English Bible—A Story of Martyrdom and Betrayal* [2002], 58). Only Matthew reports that the voice was more generally directed, saying, “And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17). The Gospel of John reports only of the baptism by John the Baptist: “And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God” (John 1:34).
12. See 2 Nephi 31:13; *Doctrine and Covenants* 20:77.
13. President Dallin H. Oaks explained the importance of the term “willing” as we renew our baptismal

covenant with the sacrament: "It is significant that when we partake of the sacrament we do not witness that we take upon us the name of Jesus Christ. We witness that we are willing to do so. [See Doctrine and Covenants 20:77.] The fact that we only witness to our willingness suggests that something else must happen before we actually take that sacred name upon us in the most important sense" ("Taking upon Us the Name of Jesus Christ," *Ensign*, May 1985, 81). The "something else" refers to temple blessings and future exaltation.

14. Exodus 20:7.
15. See James Strong, *The New Strong's Expanded Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (2010), Hebrew dictionary section, page 192, number 5375.
16. See Strong, *The New Strong's Expanded Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, Hebrew dictionary section, page 273, number 7723.
17. Elder David A. Bednar taught: "The baptismal covenant clearly contemplates a future event or events and looks forward to the temple. ... The process of taking upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ that is commenced in the waters of baptism is continued and enlarged in the house of the Lord. As we stand in the waters of baptism, we look to the temple. As we partake of the sacrament, we look to the temple. We pledge to always remember the Savior and to keep His commandments as preparation to participate in the sacred ordinances of the temple and receive the highest blessings available through the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, in the ordinances of the holy temple we more completely and fully take upon us the name of Jesus Christ" ("Honorably Hold a Name and Standing," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2009, 98). The process is probably not complete until "we shall be like him" (Moroni 7:48), when we have fully been transformed.
18. As explained in the General Handbook: *Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 27.2 (ChurchofJesusChrist.org), the covenants are to live the law of obedience, obey the law of sacrifice, obey the law of the gospel of Jesus Christ, keep the law of chastity, and keep the law of consecration; see also David A. Bednar, "Let This House Be Built unto My Name," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2020, 84–87.
19. See Doctrine and Covenants 109:14–15. Elder D. Todd Christofferson taught, "The 'fulness of the Holy Ghost' includes what Jesus described as 'the promise which I give unto you of eternal life, even the glory of the celestial kingdom; which glory is that of the church of the Firstborn, even of God, the holiest of all, through Jesus Christ his Son' (D&C 88:4–5)" ("The Power of Covenants," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2009, 23, note 5).
20. See Doctrine and Covenants 109:15.
21. See Doctrine and Covenants 109:22, 25–26.
22. See Doctrine and Covenants 109:21.
23. See Doctrine and Covenants 109:15, 22; Russell M. Nelson, "The Power of Spiritual Momentum," *Liahona*, May 2022, 98.
24. See Russell M. Nelson, "Overcome the World and Find Rest," 96; Doctrine and Covenants 84:20. Notably, President Nelson said, "Each time you seek for and follow the promptings of the Spirit, each time you do anything good—things that 'the natural man' would not do—you are overcoming the world" ("Overcome the World and Find Rest," 97).
25. Hebrews 11:13.
26. "Redeemer of Israel," *Hymns*, no. 6, verse 5. This was Lena Sofia Renlund's favorite hymn.
27. See Moroni 10:30–33.
28. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:19–20.

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# Your Patriarchal Blessing—Inspired Direction from Heavenly Father

ELDER RANDALL K. BENNETT

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*My patriarchal blessing helped me understand my true eternal identity—who I really was and who I could become.*

---

<sup>1</sup> I was raised by wonderful parents who loved and faithfully taught us, their children, the gospel. Sadly, my beloved parents struggled in their marriage for years. I was a Primary child when I was told that they would likely divorce someday and my siblings and I would need to choose which parent to live with. As a result, for years I experienced significant anxiety; however, a gift from my Heavenly Father ultimately helped change everything for me—my patriarchal blessing.

<sup>2</sup> At age 11, increasingly worried about my parents' relationship, I deeply desired my patriarchal blessing. I knew that my Heavenly Father knew me perfectly and knew my specific circumstances. And I also knew I would receive direction from Him. Immediately after my 12th birthday, I received my patriarchal blessing. That was more than half a century ago, but I vividly remember the details of that sacred experience.

<sup>3</sup> Gratefully, we have inspired direction about patriarchal blessings in the Church's General Handbook:

<sup>4</sup> "Every worthy, baptized member is entitled to receive a patriarchal blessing, which provides inspired direction from Heavenly Father."

<sup>5</sup> A member should be "mature enough to understand the significance and sacred nature of the blessing" and "understand the basic doctrine of the gospel."

<sup>6</sup> "Ideally the member should be young enough that many important decisions in life are still ahead. ... Priesthood leaders should not establish a minimum age for a member to receive a patriarchal blessing. ...

<sup>7</sup> "Each patriarchal blessing is sacred, confidential, and personal. ...

<sup>8</sup> "A person who receives a patriarchal blessing should treasure its words, ponder them, and live to be worthy to receive the promised blessings in this life and in eternity."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Our beloved President Russell M.

Nelson has repeatedly taught about the importance of a patriarchal blessing,<sup>2</sup> that it gives each recipient "a declaration of lineage back to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob"<sup>3</sup> and that each blessing "is personal scripture to you."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>10</sup> My patriarchal blessing was critically important to me when I was young for numerous reasons. First, through the power of the Holy Ghost, my patriarchal blessing helped me understand my true eternal identity—who I really was and who I could become. It helped me know, as President Nelson has taught, that I was "a son of God," "a [child] of the covenant," and "a disciple of Jesus Christ."<sup>5</sup> I knew that I was known and loved by my Heavenly Father and my Savior and that They were personally involved in my life. This helped me desire to draw closer to Them and increase my faith and trust in Them.

<sup>11</sup> A dear friend who joined the Church as a young adult shared: "When the patriarch placed his hands on my head and spoke my name, everything changed, ... not just then but for the rest of my life. I immediately sensed that—through the power by which he spoke—I was known intimately and deeply. The words he spoke penetrated my entire being. I knew that Heavenly Father knew me, inside and out."

<sup>12</sup> Knowing who I really was helped me understand and desire to do what God expected of me.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>13</sup> This led me to study the covenants I had made and the promised blessings in God's covenant with Abraham.<sup>7</sup> It gave me an eternal perspective that inspired me to more fully keep my covenants.

<sup>14</sup> I studied my patriarchal blessing frequently and, as a youth, often daily, which helped me feel the comforting, guiding influence of the Holy Ghost, who helped reduce my anxiety as I followed His promptings. This increased my desire to actively invite light, truth, and the Holy Ghost by studying my scriptures and praying daily and trying to more diligently study and follow the

teachings of God's prophet and apostles. My patriarchal blessing also helped me desire to be more submissive to the will of my Heavenly Father, and that focus helped me experience great joy, despite my personal circumstances.<sup>8</sup>

15 I received spiritual strength each time I studied my patriarchal blessing. When my parents finally did divorce, my patriarchal blessing, as President Thomas S. Monson taught, had for me become "a precious and priceless personal treasure," even "a personal Liahona."<sup>9</sup>

16 Now, please don't misunderstand. I wasn't perfect. I made all sorts of mistakes. My eternal companion would confirm that I still do. But my patriarchal blessing helped me and continues to help me desire to do better and be better.<sup>10</sup> Frequently studying my patriarchal blessing increased my desire to withstand temptation. It helped me have the desire and courage to repent, and repentance increasingly became a joyful process.

17 It was vital for me to receive my patriarchal blessing while I was young and while my testimony was still growing. And I am forever grateful that my parents and bishop understood that my desire indicated I was ready.

18 When I was 12, the world was far less confusing and distracting than the world today. President Nelson has described today as "a most complicated time in the history of the world," a world that is "sin-saturated" and "self-centered."<sup>11</sup> Fortunately our youth today are much more mature than I was at 12, and they too have critically important decisions to make while they are young! They also need to know who they really are and that God loves them and is perfectly aware of them!

19 Not everyone will desire their patriarchal blessing when I did. But I pray that members who have not yet received their patriarchal blessing will prayerfully seek to know when they are ready. I promise that if you prepare spiritually, your experience, like mine, will be sacred to you. I also pray that those who have already received their patriarchal blessing will study it and treasure it. Cherishing my patriarchal blessing while I was young blessed me with courage when I was discouraged, comfort when I was fearful, peace when I felt anxious, hope when I felt hopeless, and joy when I needed it most. My patriarchal blessing helped increase my faith and trust in my Heavenly Father and

my Savior. It also increased my love for Them—and it still does.<sup>12</sup>

20 I testify that patriarchal blessings do provide inspired direction from Heavenly Father. I bear my witness of the living reality of our Father in Heaven and His Son—our Savior, Jesus Christ—who know us, love us, and desire to bless us. I also know with certainty that President Russell M. Nelson is God's prophet on the earth today. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. *General Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 18:17, 18:17.1, [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org).
2. See Russell M. Nelson, "Thanks for the Covenant" (Brigham Young University devotional, Nov. 22, 1988), [speeches.byu.edu](http://speeches.byu.edu); "A More Excellent Hope" (Brigham Young University devotional, Jan. 8, 1995), [speeches.byu.edu](http://speeches.byu.edu); "Identity, Priority, and Blessings" (Brigham Young University devotional, Sept. 10, 2000), [speeches.byu.edu](http://speeches.byu.edu); "Roots and Branches," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2004, 27–29; "Covenants," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 86–89; "Youth of the Noble Birthright: What Will You Choose?" (Brigham Young University–Hawaii devotional, Sept. 6, 2013), [broadcasts.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://broadcasts.ChurchofJesusChrist.org); "The Book of Mormon, the Gathering of Israel, and the Second Coming," *Ensign*, July 2014, 26–31; *Liahona*, July 2014, 24–29; "Let God Prevail," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2020, 92–95; "The Everlasting Covenant," *Liahona*, Oct. 2022, 1–6.
3. Russell M. Nelson, "Covenants," 88.
4. Russell M. Nelson, "Thanks for the Covenant," [speeches.byu.edu](http://speeches.byu.edu).
5. Russell M. Nelson, "Choices for Eternity" (worldwide devotional for young adults, May 12, 2022), [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org); emphasis added.
6. See Russell M. Nelson, "Covenants," 86–89.
7. See Genesis 17:1–10; see also Russell M. Nelson, "Children of the Covenant," *Ensign*, May 1995, 32–34.
8. See Russell M. Nelson, "Joy and Spiritual Survival," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 81–84.
9. Thomas S. Monson, "Your Patriarchal Blessing: A Liahona of Light," *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 65–66.
10. See Russell M. Nelson, "We Can Do Better and Be Better," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2019, 67–69.
11. Russell M. Nelson, "Overcome the World and Find Rest," *Liahona*, Nov. 2022, 95–96.
12. Inspired by James E. Faust, "Priesthood Blessings," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 62–64.

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# “There Can Be Nothing So Exquisite and Sweet as Was My Joy”

ELDER CRAIG C. CHRISTENSEN

*Repenting daily and coming unto Jesus Christ is the way to experience joy—joy beyond our imagination.*

- 1 Throughout His mortal ministry, the Savior showed great compassion for all of God’s children—especially for those who were suffering or had fallen away. When criticized by the Pharisees for associating with and eating among sinners, Jesus responded by teaching three familiar parables.<sup>1</sup> In each of these parables, He emphasized the importance of seeking out those who had strayed and the joy that is felt when they return. For example, in the parable of the lost sheep, He said, “[Great] joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.”<sup>2</sup>
- 2 My desire today is to strengthen the connection between joy and repentance—more specifically, the joy that comes when we repent and the feelings of joy we experience as we invite others to come unto Christ and receive His atoning sacrifice in their lives.
- 3 **We Are That We Might Have Joy**
- 4 In the scriptures, the word joy typically means much more than passing moments of contentment or even feelings of happiness. Joy in this context is a godly attribute, found in its fulness when we return to dwell in the presence of God.<sup>3</sup> It is more profound, elevating, enduring, and life-changing than any pleasure or comfort this world can offer.
- 5 We were created to have joy. It is our intended destiny as children of a loving Heavenly Father. He wants to share His joy with us. The prophet Lehi taught that God’s plan for each of us is that we “might have joy.”<sup>4</sup> Because we live in a fallen world, enduring joy or everlasting joy often seems beyond our reach. Yet in the very next verse, Lehi continues by explaining that “the Messiah [came to] ... redeem [us] from the fall.”<sup>5</sup> Redemption, by and through the Savior Jesus Christ, makes joy possible.
- 6 The gospel message is a message of hope, of “good tidings of great joy,”<sup>6</sup> and the means whereby all can experience peace and occasions of joy in this life and receive a fulness of joy in the life to come.<sup>7</sup>
- 7 The joy we speak of is a gift for the faithful, yet it comes with a price. Joy is not cheap or casually given. Rather, it is bought “with the precious blood of [Jesus] Christ.”<sup>8</sup> If we really understood the value of true, godly joy, we would not hesitate to sacrifice any worldly possession or make any necessary life changes to receive it.
- 8 A powerful but humble king in the Book of Mormon understood this. “What shall I do,” he asked, “that I may be born of God, having this wicked spirit rooted out of my breast, and receive his Spirit, that I may be filled with joy ... ? Behold, said he, I will give up all that I possess, yea, I will forsake my kingdom, that I may receive this great joy.”<sup>9</sup>
- 9 In response to the king’s question, the missionary Aaron said, “If thou desirest this thing, ... bow down before God ... [and] repent of all thy sins.”<sup>10</sup> Repentance is the pathway to joy<sup>11</sup> because it is the pathway that leads to the Savior Jesus Christ.<sup>12</sup>
- 10 **Joy Comes through Sincere Repentance**
- 11 For some, to think of repentance as the pathway to joy might seem contradictory. Repentance, at times, can be painful and difficult. It requires admitting that some of our thoughts and actions—even some of our beliefs—have been wrong. Repentance also requires change, which, at times, can be uncomfortable. But joy and comfort are not the same thing. Sin—including the sin of complacency—limits our joy.
- 12 As stated by the psalmist, “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.”<sup>13</sup> As we repent of our sins, we must focus on the great joy that follows. The nights may seem long, but the morning does come, and oh, how

exquisite is the peace and resplendent joy we feel as the Savior's Atonement frees us from sin and suffering.

### 13 **There Can Be Nothing So Exquisite and Sweet**

14 Consider the experience of Alma in the Book of Mormon. He was "racked with eternal torment," and his soul was "harrowed up" because of his sins. But once he turned to the Savior for mercy, he "could remember [his] pains no more."<sup>14</sup>

15 "And oh, what joy," he declared, "and what marvelous light I did behold; yea, ... there can be nothing so exquisite and sweet as was my joy."<sup>15</sup>

16 This is the kind of joy available to those who come unto Jesus Christ through repentance.<sup>16</sup> As President Russell M. Nelson has taught:

17 "Repentance opens our access to the power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. ...

18 "When we choose to repent, we choose to change! We allow the Savior to transform us into the best version of ourselves. We choose to grow spiritually and receive joy—the joy of redemption in Him. When we choose to repent, we choose to become more like Jesus Christ!"<sup>17</sup>

19 Repentance brings joy because it prepares our hearts to receive the influence of the Holy Ghost. To be filled with the Holy Ghost means to be filled with joy. And to be filled with joy means to be filled with the Holy Ghost.<sup>18</sup> Our joy increases as we work daily to bring the Spirit into our lives. As taught by the prophet Mormon, "Nevertheless they did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in [their] faith [in] Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation."<sup>19</sup> The Lord promises all who work to follow Him, "I will impart unto you ... my Spirit, which shall enlighten your mind, which shall fill your soul with joy."<sup>20</sup>

### 20 **The Joy of Helping Others Repent**

21 After we have felt the joy that comes from sincere repentance, we quite naturally want to share that joy with others. As we do, our joy multiplies. That's exactly what happened to Alma.

22 "This is my glory," he said, "that perhaps I may be an instrument in the hands of God to bring some soul to repentance; and this is my joy.

23 "And behold, when I see many of my brethren truly penitent, and coming to the Lord their God, then is my soul filled with joy; then do I remember what the Lord has done for me, ... yea, then do I remember his merciful arm which he extended [to] me."<sup>21</sup>

24 Helping others repent is a natural expression of our gratitude toward the Savior, and it is a source of great joy. The Lord has promised:

25 "If it so be that you should ... bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!

26 "And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me ... , how great will be your joy if you should bring many souls unto me!"<sup>22</sup>

### 27 **How Great Is His Joy in the Soul That Repenteth**

28 I find it helpful to try to imagine the joy the Savior must feel each time we receive the blessings of His atoning sacrifice in our lives.<sup>23</sup> As cited by President Nelson,<sup>24</sup> the Apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews shared this tender insight: "Lay aside every ... sin which doth so easily beset us, ... looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross ... and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."<sup>25</sup> We speak often of the pain and suffering of Gethsemane and Calvary, but seldom do we speak of the great joy the Savior must have anticipated as He offered His life for us. Clearly, His pain and His suffering were for us, that we might experience the joy of returning with Him to the presence of God.

29 After teaching the people in ancient America, the Savior expressed His great love for them by saying:

30 "Now, behold, my joy is great, even unto fulness, because of you ... ; yea, and even the Father rejoiceth, and also all the holy angels. ...

31 "... In [you] I have [a] fulness of joy."<sup>26</sup>

### 32 **Come unto Christ and Receive His Joy**

33 Brothers and sisters, I conclude by sharing my personal witness, which I consider a sacred gift. I testify that Jesus Christ is the Savior and Redeemer of the world. I know that He loves each of us. His singular focus, His “work and [His] glory,”<sup>27</sup> is to help us receive a fulness of joy in Him. I am a personal witness that repenting daily and coming unto Jesus Christ is the way to experience joy—joy beyond our imagination.<sup>28</sup> That is why we are here on earth. That is why God prepared His great plan of happiness for us. Jesus Christ truly is “the way, the truth, and the life”<sup>29</sup> and the only “name given under heaven whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God.”<sup>30</sup> I so testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. See Luke 15.

2. Luke 15:7.

3. See Psalm 16:11.

4. 2 Nephi 2:25.

5. 2 Nephi 2:26.

6. Luke 2:10.

7. See Mosiah 3:13–19.

8. 1 Peter 1:19.

9. Alma 22:15.

10. Alma 22:16.

11. In recent years, several prophets and apostles have emphasized the joy of repentance. See, for example, Russell M. Nelson, “We Can Do Better and Be Better,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2019, 67–69; Dallin H. Oaks, “Cleansed by Repentance,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2019, 91–94; Dale G. Renlund, “Repentance: A Joyful Choice,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 121–24; D. Todd Christofferson, “The Divine Gift of Repentance,” *Ensign or Liahona*,

Nov. 2011, 38–41.

12. President Nelson taught: “Joy comes from and because of [Jesus Christ]. He is the source of all joy. ... For Latter-day Saints, Jesus Christ is joy!” (“Joy and Spiritual Survival,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 82).

13. Psalm 30:5.

14. Alma 36:12, 19.

15. Alma 36:20–21; see also verses 12–19.

16. See Alma 27:18.

17. Russell M. Nelson, “We Can Do Better and Be Better,” 67.

18. See Acts 13:52; Mosiah 4:3.

19. Helaman 3:35.

20. Doctrine and Covenants 11:13.

21. Alma 29:9–10.

22. Doctrine and Covenants 18:15–16.

23. Doctrine and Covenants 18:13.

24. See Russell M. Nelson, “Joy and Spiritual Survival,” 83.

25. Hebrews 12:1–2; emphasis added.

26. 3 Nephi 27:30–31. Three of the Savior’s Nephite disciples desired to remain in mortality with the sole purpose of bringing souls to Him. To these loyal disciples, Jesus said, “For this cause ye shall have fulness of joy; and ye shall sit down in the kingdom of my Father; yea, your joy shall be full, even as the Father hath given me fulness of joy; and ye shall be even as I am” (3 Nephi 28:10).

27. Moses 1:39.

28. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9).

29. John 14:6.

30. 2 Nephi 31:21.

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## This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# Have I Truly Been Forgiven?

ELDER K. BRETT NATTRESS

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*The promise of complete and perfect forgiveness is made to everyone—in and through the infinite Atonement of Jesus Christ.*

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- 1 Several years ago, Sister Nattress and I moved to Idaho, where we opened a new business. There were long days and nights at the office. Thankfully, we lived just a few blocks away from work. Each week, Shawna and our three daughters—all under the age of six—would come to the office to share lunch together.
- 2 On one such day after our family lunch, I noticed that our five-year-old daughter, Michelle, had left me a personal message, written on a Post-it Note and attached to my office telephone.
- 3 It simply read, “Dad, remember to love me. Love, Michelle.” This was a powerful reminder to a young father about those things that matter most.
- 4 Brothers and sisters, I testify that our Heavenly Father always remembers us and that He loves us perfectly. My question is this: Do we remember Him? And do we love Him?
- 5 Years ago, I served as a local Church leader. One of our young men, Danny, was outstanding in every way. He was obedient, kind, good, and had a great heart. However, when he graduated from high school, he started to associate with a rough crowd. He got involved in drugs, specifically methamphetamine, and traveled down the slippery slope of addiction and destruction. Before long, his appearance completely changed. He was hardly recognizable. The most significant change was in his eyes—the light in his eyes had dimmed. Several times I reached out to him, but to no avail. He wasn’t interested.
- 6 It was difficult to see this incredible young man suffer and live a life that was not him! He was capable of so much more.
- 7 Then one day, his miracle began.
- 8 He attended a sacrament meeting where his younger brother shared his testimony prior to departing for a mission. During the meeting, Danny felt something he had not felt for a long time. He felt the love of the Lord. He finally had hope.
- 9 Although he had a desire to change, it was difficult for Danny. His addictions and the accompanying guilt were almost more than he could bear.
- 10 One particular afternoon, when I was out mowing our lawn, Danny pulled up in his car unannounced. He was struggling terribly. I turned off the mower, and we sat down together in the shade of the front porch. It was then that he shared the feelings of his heart. He truly wanted to come back. However, turning away from his addictions and lifestyle was extremely difficult. Adding to this, he felt so guilty, so ashamed for falling so far. He asked, “Can I really be forgiven? Is there really a way back?”
- 11 After he poured out his heart with these concerns, we read Alma chapter 36 together:
- 12 “Yea, I did remember all my sins and iniquities. ...
- 13 “Yea, ... the very thought of coming into the presence of my God did rack my soul with inexpressible horror” (verses 13–14).
- 14 After those verses, Danny said, “This is exactly how I feel!”
- 15 We continued:
- 16 “While I was harrowed up by the memory of my many sins, behold, I remembered also to have heard my father prophesy unto the people concerning the coming of one Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone for the sins of the world. ...
- 17 “And oh, what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold” (verses 17, 20).
- 18 As we read these passages, tears began to flow. Alma’s joy was the joy he had

been searching for!

- 19 We discussed that Alma had been exceptionally wicked. However, once he repented, he never looked back. He became a devoted disciple of Jesus Christ. He became a prophet! Danny's eyes widened. "A prophet?" he said.
- 20 I simply responded, "Yes, a prophet. No pressure on you!"
- 21 We discussed that while his sins did not rise to the level of Alma's, the same promise of complete and perfect forgiveness is made to everyone—in and through the infinite Atonement of Jesus Christ.
- 22 Danny now understood. He knew what he needed to do: he needed to begin his journey by trusting in the Lord and forgiving himself!
- 23 Danny's mighty change of heart was nothing short of a miracle. Over time, his countenance changed, and the brightness in his eyes returned. He became temple worthy! He was finally back!
- 24 After several months, I asked Danny if he would like to submit an application to serve a full-time mission. His response was one of shock and awe.
- 25 He said, "I would love to serve a mission, but you know where I have been and the things I have done! I thought I was disqualified."
- 26 I responded, "You may be right. However, there is nothing precluding us from making a request. If you are excused, at least you will know that you expressed a sincere desire to serve the Lord." His eyes lit up. He was thrilled with this idea. To him this was a long shot, but it was a chance he was willing to take.
- 27 A few weeks later, and to his amazement, another miracle occurred. Danny received a call to serve a full-time mission.
- 28 A few months after Danny arrived in the mission field, I received a telephone call. His president simply said, "What is it with this young man? He is the most incredible missionary I have ever seen!" You see, this president had received a modern-day Alma the Younger.
- 29 Two years later, Danny returned home with honor, having served the Lord with all his heart, might, mind, and strength.
- 30 Following his missionary report in sacrament meeting, I returned home, only to hear a knock at the front door. There stood Danny with tears welling in his eyes. He said, "Can we talk for a minute?" We went outside to the same porch step.
- 31 He said, "President, do you think I have truly been forgiven?"
- 32 Now my tears accompanied his. Before me stood a devoted disciple of Jesus Christ who had given his all to teaching and testifying about the Savior. He was the embodiment of the healing and strengthening power of the Savior's Atonement.
- 33 I said, "Danny! Have you looked in the mirror? Have you seen your eyes? They are filled with light, and you are beaming with the Spirit of the Lord. Of course you have been forgiven! You are amazing! Now what you need to do is move forward with your life. Don't look back! Look forward with faith to the next ordinance."
- 34 Danny's miracle continues today. He married in the temple and returned to school, where he received a master's degree. He continues to serve the Lord with honor and dignity in his callings. More important, he has become an incredible husband and a faithful father. He is a devoted disciple of Jesus Christ.
- 35 President Russell M. Nelson taught, "Without the [Savior's] infinite Atonement, all mankind would be irretrievably lost."<sup>1</sup> Danny wasn't lost, and neither are we to the Lord. He stands at the door to lift us, to strengthen us, and to forgive us. He always remembers to love us!
- 36 An incredible demonstration of the Savior's love for God's children is recorded in the Book of Mormon: "When Jesus had thus spoken, he cast his eyes round about again on the multitude, and beheld they were in tears, and did look steadfastly upon him as if they would ask him to tarry a little longer with them" (3 Nephi 17:5).
- 37 The Savior had already spent a full day ministering to the people. Yet He had

more to do—He was to visit His other sheep; He was to go to His Father.

38 Notwithstanding these obligations, He discerned that the people desired for Him to tarry a little longer. Then, with the Savior's heart full of compassion, one of the greatest miracles in the history of the world occurred:

39 He stayed.

40 He blessed them.

41 He ministered to their children one by one.

42 He prayed for them; He wept with them.

43 And He healed them. (See 3 Nephi 17.)

44 His promise is eternal: He will heal us.

45 To those who have strayed from the

covenant path, please know there is always hope, there is always healing, and there is always a way back.

46 His eternal message of hope is the healing balm for all who live in a troubled world. The Savior said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).

47 Brothers and sisters, let us remember to seek Him, to love Him, and to always remember Him.

48 I testify that God lives and that He loves us. I further testify that Jesus Christ is the Savior and Redeemer of the world. He is the mighty healer. I know that my Redeemer lives! In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. Russell M. Nelson, "Prepare for Blessings of the Temple," *Ensign*, Mar. 2002, 21.

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# The Imperfect Harvest

ELDER VERN P. STANFILL

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*The Savior stands ready to accept our humble offerings and perfect them through His grace. With Christ, there is no imperfect harvest.*

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- 1 As a young boy, I learned to love the dramatic changes in the seasons of the year in southwest Montana, where I grew up. My favorite season was fall—the time of the harvest. Our family hoped and prayed that our months of hard work would be rewarded with a bountiful harvest. My parents worried over the weather, the health of animals and crops, and many other things over which they had little control.
- 2 As I grew, I became even more aware of the urgency involved. Our livelihood depended upon the harvest. My father taught me about the equipment we used to harvest grain. I watched as he would move the machinery into the field, cut a small swath of grain, and then check behind the combine to make sure that as much grain as possible landed in the holding tank and was not thrown out with the chaff. He repeated this exercise several times, adjusting the machine each time. I ran alongside and pawed through the chaff with him and pretended that I knew what I was doing.
- 3 After he was satisfied with the adjustments to the machine, I found some kernels of grain in the chaff on the ground and presented them to him with a critical look. I will not forget what my father said to me: “It is good enough and the best that this machine can do.” Not really satisfied with his explanation, I pondered the imperfections of this harvest.
- 4 A short time later, when the weather turned cold in the evenings, I watched thousands of migrating swans, geese, and ducks descend onto the fields to nourish themselves on their long journey south. They ate the leftover grain from our imperfect harvest. God had perfected it. And not a kernel was lost.
- 5 It is often a temptation in our world and even within the culture of the Church to obsess about perfection. Social media, unrealistic expectations, and often our own self-criticism create feelings of inadequacy—that we are not good enough and never will be. Some even misunderstand the invitation of the Savior to “be ye therefore perfect.”<sup>1</sup>
- 6 Remember that perfectionism is not the same as being perfected in Christ.<sup>2</sup> Perfectionism requires an impossible, self-inflicted standard that compares us to others. This causes guilt and anxiety and can make us want to withdraw and isolate ourselves.
- 7 Becoming perfected in Christ is another matter. It is the process—lovingly guided by the Holy Ghost—of becoming more like the Savior. The standards are set by a kind and all-knowing Heavenly Father and clearly defined in the covenants we are invited to embrace. It relieves us of the burdens of guilt and inadequacy, always emphasizing who we are in the sight of God. While this process lifts us and pushes us to become better, we are measured by our personal devotion to God that we manifest in our efforts to follow Him in faith. As we accept the Savior’s invitation to come unto Him, we soon realize that our best is good enough and that the grace of a loving Savior will make up the difference in ways we cannot imagine.
- 8 We can see this principle in effect when the Savior fed the five thousand.
- 9 “When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? ...
- 10 “Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.
- 11 “One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, saith unto him,
- 12 “There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?”<sup>3</sup>

- 13 Do you ever wonder how the Savior must have felt about this young boy, who with the faith of a child offered what he must have known to be woefully inadequate in the face of the task at hand?
- 14 "And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.
- 15 "When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost."4
- 16 The Savior perfected the humble offering.
- 17 Shortly after this experience, Jesus sent His disciples ahead on a boat. They soon found themselves on a stormy sea in the middle of the night. They became frightened when they saw a ghostly figure walking toward them on the water.
- 18 "But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.
- 19 "And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.
- 20 "And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.
- 21 "But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.
- 22 "And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"5
- 23 Brothers and sisters, that may not have been the end of the conversation. I believe that as Peter and the Savior walked back to the ship arm in arm, Peter soaking wet and perhaps feeling very foolish, the Savior may have said something like this: "Oh, Peter, fear not and worry not. If you could see yourself as I see you, your doubt would fade and your faith increase. I love you, dear Peter; you got out of the boat. Your offering is acceptable, and even though you faltered, I will always be there to lift you from the depths, and your offering will be made perfect."
- 24 Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf taught:
- 25 "I believe the Savior Jesus Christ would want you to see, feel, and know that He is your strength. That with His help, there are no limits to what you can accomplish. That your potential is limitless. He would want you to see yourself the way He sees you. And that is very different from the way the world sees you. ...
- 26 "He gives power to the weary; and to those who feel powerless, He increases strength."6
- 27 We must remember that whatever our best-but-imperfect offering is, the Savior can make it perfect. No matter how insignificant our efforts may seem, we must never underestimate the Savior's power. A simple word of kindness, a brief but sincere ministering visit, or a Primary lesson lovingly taught can, with the Savior's help, provide comfort, soften hearts, and change eternal lives. Our clumsy efforts can lead to miracles, and in the process, we can participate in a perfect harvest.
- 28 Often we are placed in situations that will cause us to stretch. We may not feel up to the task. We may look at those we serve with and feel that we will never measure up. Brothers and sisters, if you feel this way, look at the extraordinary men and women seated behind me with whom I serve.
- 29 I feel your pain.
- 30 I have learned, however, that just as perfectionism is not the same as being perfected in Christ, self-comparison is not the same as emulation. When we compare ourselves to others, there can be only two results. Either we will see ourselves as better than others and become judgmental and critical of them, or we will see ourselves as less than others and become anxious, self-critical, and discouraged. Comparing ourselves to others is rarely productive, not uplifting, and sometimes downright depressing. In fact, these comparisons can be spiritually destructive, preventing us from receiving the spiritual help we need. On the other hand, emulating those we respect who demonstrate Christlike attributes can be instructive and uplifting and can help us become better disciples of Jesus Christ.
- 31 The Savior gave us a model to follow as He emulated the Father. He instructed His disciple Philip: "Have I been so long



time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?"<sup>7</sup>

32 And then He taught, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also."<sup>8</sup>

33 Regardless of how insignificant our efforts may seem, if we are sincere, the Savior will use us to accomplish His work. If we simply do the best we can and trust Him to make up the difference, we can become part of the miracles that surround us.

34 Elder Dale G. Renlund said, "You don't have to be perfect, but we need you, because everybody who's willing can do something."<sup>9</sup>

35 And President Russell M. Nelson teaches us, "The Lord loves effort."<sup>10</sup>

36 The Savior stands ready to accept our humble offerings and perfect them through His grace. With Christ, there is no imperfect harvest. We must have the courage to believe that His grace is for us—that He will help us, rescue us from the depths when we falter, and perfect our less-than-perfect efforts.

37 In the parable of the sower, the Savior describes the seeds that are planted in good ground. Some produce a hundredfold, some sixty, and others thirty. All are part of His perfect harvest.<sup>11</sup>

38 The prophet Moroni invited all, "Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, ... and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ."<sup>12</sup>

39 Brothers and sisters, I testify of Christ, who has the power to perfect even our most humble offering. Let us do our best, bring what we can, and, with faith, lay our imperfect offering at His feet. In the name of Him who is Master of the perfect harvest, even Jesus Christ, amen.

1. *Matthew 5:48.*
2. *See Moroni 10:32.*
3. *John 6:5, 7–9.*
4. *John 6:11–12.*
5. *Matthew 14:27–31.*
6. *Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Jesus Christ Is the Strength of Youth," Liahona, Nov. 2022, 9–10.*
7. *John 14:9.*
8. *John 14:12.*
9. *Dale G. Renlund, in Aubrey Eyre, "Elder Renlund Visits Caribbean Saints Preparing to Withstand 'Seismic Hits of Life,'" Church News, Mar. 4, 2020, ChurchofJesusChrist.org.*
10. *Russell M. Nelson, in Joy D. Jones, "An Especially Noble Calling," Ensign or Liahona, May 2020, 16.*
11. *See Matthew 13:1–23.*
12. *Moroni 10:32.*

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# Christlike Poise

ELDER MARK A. BRAGG

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*“And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm” (Mark 4:39).*

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- 1 The last time that I spoke in general conference, my son-in-law Ryan showed me a tweet that said, “Really? The guy’s name is Bragg”—meaning “to boast”—“and he doesn’t talk about humility? What a waste!” Sadly, the disappointment continues.
- 2 My wonderful father was an All-America basketball player for UCLA under legendary Coach John Wooden. They remained close throughout my father’s life, and occasionally Coach and Mrs. Wooden would come to our home for dinner. He was always happy to talk to me about basketball or anything else on my mind. Once I asked him what advice he had for me as I entered my senior year of high school. Always the teacher, he said, “Your father told me that you have joined the Church of Jesus Christ, so I know that you have faith in the Lord. With that faith be sure to have poise in every situation. Be a good man in a storm.”
- 3 Over the years, that conversation stuck with me. That counsel to be calm, cool, and collected in all situations, particularly in times of adversity and pressure, resonated with me. I could see how Coach Wooden’s teams played with poise and the great success that they experienced winning 10 national championships.
- 4 But poise is not spoken about much these days and practiced even less in turbulent and divisive times. It is often referenced in sports—a player with poise is unflappable in a close game, or a team unravels due to a lack of poise. But this wonderful quality goes way beyond sports. Poise has a much broader application to life and can bless parents, leaders, missionaries, teachers, students, and everyone else facing the storms of life.
- 5 Spiritual poise blesses us to stay calm and focused on what matters most, especially when we are under pressure. President Hugh B. Brown taught, “Faith in God and in the ultimate triumph of right contributes to mental and spiritual poise in the face of difficulties.”<sup>1</sup>
- 6 President Russell M. Nelson is a wonderful example of spiritual poise. One time, while then-Dr. Nelson was performing a quadruple coronary artery bypass, the patient’s blood pressure dropped suddenly. Dr. Nelson calmly assessed the situation and identified that a clamp was accidentally removed by one of the team members. It was replaced immediately, and Dr. Nelson comforted the team member, saying, “I still love you,” and then added jokingly, “Sometimes I love you more than other times!” He showed how an emergency should be handled—with poise, focused only on what matters most—addressing the emergency. President Nelson said: “It’s a matter of extreme self-discipline. Your natural reaction is, ‘Take me out, coach! I want to go home.’ But of course you can’t. A life is totally dependent on the whole surgical team. So you’ve got to stay just as calm and relaxed and sharp as you ever were.”<sup>2</sup>
- 7 Of course, the Savior is the ultimate example of poise.
- 8 In the Garden of Gethsemane, in unimaginable agony, as “he sweat as it were great drops of blood,”<sup>3</sup> He exemplified divine poise with the simple yet majestic statement “Not my will, but thine, be done.”<sup>4</sup> Under the immense pressure to enable the salvation of all humankind, Jesus demonstrated three important conditions that help us understand His great poise. First, He knew who He was and was true to His divine mission. Next, He knew that there was a great plan of happiness. And finally, He knew that through His infinite Atonement, all who faithfully yoke themselves to Him by making and keeping sacred covenants received through priesthood ordinances will be saved, as was so beautifully taught by Elder Dale G. Renlund today.

9 To contrast the difference between losing and maintaining poise, think about what happened as Christ and His Apostles left the Garden of Gethsemane. When confronted by soldiers seeking to arrest Jesus, Peter's reaction was to lose his poise and lash out violently by cutting off the ear of the high priest's servant, Malchus. Jesus Christ's reaction, on the other hand, was to keep His poise and to bring calm to a tense situation by healing Malchus.<sup>5</sup>

10 And for those of us who struggle with maintaining our poise and perhaps have grown discouraged, consider the rest of Peter's story. A short time after this incident and the heartbreak of denying his association with Christ,<sup>6</sup> Peter stood before the very same religious leaders who condemned the Savior, and with great poise under intense questioning, he bore eloquent testimony of the divinity of Jesus Christ.<sup>7</sup>

#### 11 **Know Who You Are and Be True to Your Divine Identity**

12 Let's consider elements of Christlike poise. To begin, knowing who we are and being true to our divine identity brings calm. Christlike poise requires that we avoid comparing ourselves to others or pretending to be someone we're not.<sup>8</sup> Joseph Smith taught, "If men do not comprehend the character of God, they do not comprehend themselves."<sup>9</sup> It is just not possible to have divine poise without knowing that we are divine sons and daughters of a loving Heavenly Father.

13 In his talk "Choices for Eternity," President Nelson taught these eternal truths about who we are: we are children of God, we are children of the covenant, and we are disciples of Christ. He then promised, "As you embrace these truths, our Heavenly Father will help you reach your ultimate goal of living eternally in His holy presence."<sup>10</sup> We truly are divine spiritual beings having a mortal experience. Knowing who we are and being true to that divine identity are foundational to the development of Christlike poise.

#### 14 **Know That There Is a Divine Plan**

15 Next, remembering that there is a grand plan engenders courage and poise in challenging conditions. Nephi could "go and do"<sup>11</sup> as the Lord commanded

"not knowing beforehand"<sup>12</sup> the things that he was to do because he knew that he would be led by the Spirit, in fulfillment of the eternal plan of a loving Heavenly Father. Poise comes when we see things from an eternal perspective. The Lord has counseled His disciples to "lift up your eyes"<sup>13</sup> and to "let the solemnities of eternity rest upon your minds."<sup>14</sup> By framing challenging times within an eternal plan, pressure becomes a privilege to love, serve, teach, and bless. An eternal view enables Christlike poise.

#### 16 **Know the Enabling Power of Jesus Christ and His Atonement**

17 And finally, the enabling power of Christ, made possible by His atoning sacrifice, gives us the strength to endure and prevail. Because of Jesus Christ we can covenant with God and be strengthened in keeping that covenant. We can be bound to the Savior in joy and calm, regardless of our temporal circumstances.<sup>15</sup> Alma chapter 7 teaches beautifully about Christ's enabling power. In addition to redeeming us from sin, the Savior can strengthen us in our weaknesses, fears, and challenges in this life.

18 As we focus on Christ, we can hush our fears, as Alma's people did in Helam.<sup>16</sup> As a threatening army gathered, those faithful disciples of Christ demonstrated poise. Elder David A. Bednar has taught: "Alma counseled the believers to remember the Lord and the deliverance only He could bestow (see 2 Nephi 2:8). And knowledge of the Savior's protecting watchcare enabled the people to hush their own fears."<sup>17</sup> This exemplifies poise.

#### 19 **The Great Man in a Storm**

20 Noah taught us much about patience in a storm, but the Savior was the greatest teacher on how to survive a storm. He is the great man in a storm. After a long day of teaching with His Apostles, the Savior needed some rest and suggested that they cross by boat to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. As the Savior rested, a severe storm arose. As the wind and waves threatened to sink the boat, the Apostles began to fear for their lives. And remember, several of those Apostles were fishermen who were very well acquainted with the storms on that sea! Yet, worried,<sup>18</sup> they woke the

Lord and asked, “[Lord], carest thou not that we perish?” Then, with exemplary poise, the Savior “arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was ... great calm.”<sup>19</sup>

<sup>21</sup> And then a great lesson in poise for His Apostles. He asked, “Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?”<sup>20</sup> He was reminding them that He was the Savior of the world and that He was sent by the Father to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of God’s children. Surely the Son of God would not perish on a boat. He exemplified divine poise because He knew of His divinity and He knew that there was a plan of salvation and exaltation and how essential His Atonement would be to the eternal success of that plan.

<sup>22</sup> It is through Christ and His Atonement that all good things come into our lives. As we remember who we are, knowing that there is a divine plan of mercy and drawing courage in the strength of the Lord, we can do all things. We will find calm. We will be good women and men in any storm.

<sup>23</sup> May we seek the blessings of Christlike poise, not only to help ourselves in challenging times but to bless others and help them through the storms in their lives. On this eve of Palm Sunday, I joyfully testify of Jesus Christ. He is risen. I testify of the peace, calm, and heavenly poise that only He brings to our lives and do so in His holy name, Jesus Christ, amen.

1. Hugh B. Brown, in *Conference Report*, Oct. 1969, 105.
2. See Sheri Dew, *Insights from a Prophet’s Life: Russell M. Nelson* (2019), 66–67.
3. Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 22:44 (in Luke 22:44, footnote b).
4. Luke 22:42.
5. See Luke 22:50–51; John 18:10–11.
6. See Matthew 26:34–35, 69–75.
7. See Acts 4:8–10; Neal A. Maxwell, “Content with the Things Allotted unto Us,” *Ensign*, May 2000, 74; *Liahona*, July 2000, 89: “When spiritually aligned, a poise can come, even when we do not know ‘the meaning of all things’ [1 Nephi 11:17].”
8. See John R. Wooden, *Wooden on Leadership* (2005), 50: “I define poise as being true to oneself, not getting rattled, thrown off, or unbalanced

regardless of the circumstance or situation. This may sound easy, but Poise can be a most elusive quality in challenging times. Leaders lacking Poise panic under pressure.

“Poise means holding fast to your beliefs and acting in accordance with them, regardless of how bad or good the situation may be. Poise means avoiding pose or pretense, comparing yourself to others, and acting like someone you’re not. Poise means having a brave heart in all circumstances.”

9. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 40.
10. Russell M. Nelson, “Choices for Eternity” (worldwide devotional for young adults, May 15, 2022), broadcasts.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
11. 1 Nephi 3:7.
12. 1 Nephi 4:6.
13. John 4:35.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 43:34; see also James E. Faust, “The Dignity of Self,” *Ensign*, May 1981, 10: “The dignity of self is greatly enhanced by looking upward in the search for holiness. Like the giant trees, we should reach up for the light. The most important source of light we can come to know is the gift of the Holy Ghost. It is the source of inner strength and peace.”
15. See Russell M. Nelson, “Joy and Spiritual Survival,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 82: “My dear brothers and sisters, the joy we feel has little to do with the circumstances of our lives and everything to do with the focus of our lives.”
16. See Mosiah 23:27–28.
17. David A. Bednar, “Therefore They Hushed Their Fears,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2015, 46–47.
18. See Jeffrey R. Holland, *Our Day Star Rising: Exploring the New Testament with Jeffrey R. Holland* (2022), 61–62: “Furthermore, these were experienced men on board with Him—eleven of the original Twelve were Galileans (only Judas Iscariot was a Judean). And six of those eleven were fishermen. They had lived on this lake. They had made their living by fishing on it. They had been there since they were children. Their fathers had them mending nets and making repairs on the boat when they were very young. They know this sea; they know the winds and the waves. They are experienced men—but they are terrified. And if they are afraid, this is a legitimate storm.”
19. See Mark 4:35–39.
20. Mark 4:40.

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# Peacemakers Needed

PRESIDENT RUSSELL M. NELSON

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*You have your agency to choose contention or reconciliation. I urge you to choose to be a peacemaker, now and always.*

---

- 1 My dear brothers and sisters, it is a joy to be with you. During these past six months, you have been constantly on my mind and in my prayers. I pray that the Holy Ghost will communicate what the Lord wants you to hear as I speak to you now.
- 2 During my surgical internship many years ago, I assisted a surgeon who was amputating a leg filled with highly infectious gangrene. The operation was difficult. Then, to add to the tension, one of the team performed a task poorly, and the surgeon erupted in anger. In the middle of his tantrum, he threw his scalpel loaded with germs. It landed in my forearm!
- 3 Everyone in the operating room—except the out-of-control surgeon—was horrified by this dangerous breach of surgical practice. Gratefully, I did not become infected. But this experience left a lasting impression on me. In that very hour, I promised myself that whatever happened in my operating room, I would never lose control of my emotions. I also vowed that day never to throw anything in anger—whether it be scalpels or words.
- 4 Even now, decades later, I find myself wondering if the contaminated scalpel that landed in my arm was any more toxic than the venomous contention that infects our civic dialogue and too many personal relationships today. Civility and decency seem to have disappeared during this era of polarization and passionate disagreements.
- 5 Vulgarity, faultfinding, and evil speaking of others are all too common. Too many pundits, politicians, entertainers, and other influencers throw insults constantly. I am greatly concerned that so many people seem to believe that it is completely acceptable to condemn, malign, and vilify anyone who does not agree with them. Many seem eager to damage another's reputation with pathetic and pithy barbs!
- 6 Anger never persuades. Hostility builds no one. Contention never leads to inspired solutions. Regrettably, we sometimes see contentious behavior even within our own ranks. We hear of those who belittle their spouses and children, of those who use angry outbursts to control others, and of those who punish family members with the "silent treatment." We hear of youth and children who bully and of employees who defame their colleagues.
- 7 My dear brothers and sisters, this should not be. As disciples of Jesus Christ, we are to be examples of how to interact with others—especially when we have differences of opinion. One of the easiest ways to identify a true follower of Jesus Christ is how compassionately that person treats other people.
- 8 The Savior made this clear in His sermons to followers in both hemispheres. "Blessed are the peacemakers," He said.<sup>1</sup> "Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."<sup>2</sup> And then, of course, He gave the admonition that challenges each of us: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you."<sup>3</sup>
- 9 Before His death, the Savior commanded His Twelve Apostles to love one another as He had loved them.<sup>4</sup> And then He added, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."<sup>5</sup>
- 10 The Savior's message is clear: His true disciples build, lift, encourage, persuade, and inspire—no matter how difficult the situation. True disciples of Jesus Christ are peacemakers.<sup>6</sup>
- 11 Today is Palm Sunday. We are preparing to commemorate the most important and transcendent event ever recorded on earth, which is the Atonement and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. One of the best ways we can honor the

Savior is to become a peacemaker.<sup>7</sup>

- 12 The Savior's Atonement made it possible for us to overcome all evil—including contention. Make no mistake about it: contention is evil! Jesus Christ declared that those who have "the spirit of contention" are not of Him but are "of the devil, who is the father of contention, and [the devil] stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another."<sup>8</sup> Those who foster contention are taking a page out of Satan's playbook, whether they realize it or not. "No man can serve two masters."<sup>9</sup> We cannot support Satan with our verbal assaults and then think that we can still serve God.
- 13 My dear brothers and sisters, how we treat each other really matters! How we speak to and about others at home, at church, at work, and online really matters. Today, I am asking us to interact with others in a higher, holier way. Please listen carefully. "If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy"<sup>10</sup> that we can say about another person—whether to his face or behind her back—that should be our standard of communication.
- 14 If a couple in your ward gets divorced, or a young missionary returns home early, or a teenager doubts his testimony, they do not need your judgment. They need to experience the pure love of Jesus Christ reflected in your words and actions.
- 15 If a friend on social media has strong political or social views that violate everything you believe in, an angry, cutting retort by you will not help. Building bridges of understanding will require much more of you, but that is exactly what your friend needs.
- 16 Contention drives away the Spirit—every time. Contention reinforces the false notion that confrontation is the way to resolve differences; but it never is. Contention is a choice. Peacemaking is a choice. You have your agency to choose contention or reconciliation. I urge you to choose to be a peacemaker, now and always.<sup>11</sup>
- 17 Brothers and sisters, we can literally change the world—one person and one interaction at a time. How? By modeling how to manage honest differences of opinion with mutual respect and dignified dialogue.
- 18 Differences of opinion are part of life. I work every day with dedicated servants of the Lord who do not always see an issue the same way. They know I want to hear their ideas and honest feelings about everything we discuss—especially sensitive issues.
- 19 My two noble counselors, President Dallin H. Oaks and President Henry B. Eyring, are exemplary in the way they express their feelings—especially when they may differ. They do so with pure love for each other. Neither suggests that he knows best and therefore must rigorously defend his position. Neither evidences the need to compete with the other. Because each is filled with charity, "the pure love of Christ,"<sup>12</sup> our deliberations can be guided by the Spirit of the Lord. How I love and honor these two great men!
- 20 Charity is the antidote to contention. Charity is the spiritual gift that helps us to cast off the natural man, who is selfish, defensive, prideful, and jealous. Charity is the principal characteristic of a true follower of Jesus Christ.<sup>13</sup> Charity defines a peacemaker.
- 21 When we humble ourselves before God and pray with all the energy of our hearts, God will grant us charity.<sup>14</sup>
- 22 Those blessed with this supernal gift are long-suffering and kind. They do not envy others and are not caught up in their own importance. They are not easily provoked and do not think evil of others.<sup>15</sup>
- 23 Brothers and sisters, the pure love of Christ is the answer to the contention that ails us today. Charity propels us "to bear one another's burdens"<sup>16</sup> rather than heap burdens upon each other. The pure love of Christ allows us "to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things"<sup>17</sup>—especially in tense situations. Charity allows us to demonstrate how men and women of Christ speak and act—especially when under fire.
- 24 Now, I am not talking about "peace at any price."<sup>18</sup> I am talking about treating others in ways that are consistent with keeping the covenant you make when you partake of the sacrament. You covenant to always remember

the Savior. In situations that are highly charged and filled with contention, I invite you to remember Jesus Christ. Pray to have the courage and wisdom to say or do what He would. As we follow the Prince of Peace, we will become His peacemakers.

25 At this point you may be thinking that this message would really help someone you know. Perhaps you are hoping that it will help him or her to be nicer to you. I hope it will! But I also hope that you will look deeply into your heart to see if there are shards of pride or jealousy that prevent you from becoming a peacemaker.<sup>19</sup>

26 If you are serious about helping to gather Israel and about building relationships that will last throughout the eternities, now is the time to lay aside bitterness. Now is the time to cease insisting that it is your way or no way. Now is the time to stop doing things that make others walk on eggshells for fear of upsetting you. Now is the time to bury your weapons of war.<sup>20</sup> If your verbal arsenal is filled with insults and accusations, now is the time to put them away.<sup>21</sup> You will arise as a spiritually strong man or woman of Christ.

27 The temple can help us in our quest. There we are endowed with God's power, giving us the ability to overcome Satan, the instigator of all contention.<sup>22</sup> Cast him out of your relationships! Note that we also rebuke the adversary every time we heal a misunderstanding or refuse to take offense. Instead, we can show the tender mercy that is characteristic of true disciples of Jesus Christ. Peacemakers thwart the adversary.

28 Let us as a people become a true light on the hill—a light that “cannot be hid.”<sup>23</sup> Let us show that there is a peaceful, respectful way to resolve complex issues and an enlightened way to work out disagreements. As you demonstrate the charity that true followers of Jesus Christ manifest, the Lord will magnify your efforts beyond your loftiest imagination.

29 The gospel net is the largest net in the world. God has invited all to come unto Him, “black and white, bond and free, male and female.”<sup>24</sup> There is room for everyone. However, there is no room for prejudice, condemnation, or contention of any kind.

30 My dear brothers and sisters, the best is yet to come for those who spend their lives building up others. Today I invite you to examine your discipleship within the context of the way you treat others. I bless you to make any adjustments that may be needed so that your behavior is ennobling, respectful, and representative of a true follower of Jesus Christ.

31 I bless you to replace belligerence with beseeching, animosity with understanding, and contention with peace.

32 God lives! Jesus is the Christ. He stands at the head of this Church. We are His servants. He will help us to become His peacemakers. I so testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. *Matthew 5:9; see also 3 Nephi 12:9. The Savior's promise to peacemakers is that they will “be called the children of God.”*
2. *Matthew 5:39; see also 3 Nephi 12:39.*
3. *Matthew 5:44; see also 3 Nephi 12:44.*
4. *See John 13:34.*
5. *John 13:35.*
6. *See Moroni 7:3–4.*
7. *See Mosiah 3:19.*
8. *3 Nephi 11:29. John the Revelator saw in vision that the devil would come to earth “having great wrath” (Revelation 12:12).*
9. *3 Nephi 13:24.*
10. *Articles of Faith 1:13.*
11. *See Moroni 7:3–4.*
12. *Moroni 7:47.*
13. *See Moroni 7:48.*
14. *See Moroni 7:48.*
15. *See Moroni 7:45; see also 1 Corinthians 13:4–5.*
16. *Mosiah 18:8.*
17. *Mosiah 18:9.*
18. *Being a peacemaker does not require us to agree with the ideas or beliefs of others.*
19. *See Helaman 3:33–36.*
20. *See Alma 24:19; 25:14.*
21. *See 1 Corinthians 13:11.*
22. *See Doctrine and Covenants 109:22, 26.*
23. *3 Nephi 12:14.*
24. *2 Nephi 26:33*

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# Ministering

ELDER GERRIT W. GONG

*Let us reach out and care as our Savior would, especially to those whom we are privileged by love and assignment to minister.*

- 1 Dear brothers and sisters, friends, welcome to general conference!
- 2 After general conference last October, Sister Gong and I walked through the Conference Center to say hello and to hear your gospel experiences.
- 3 Our members from Mexico said, “Hoy es el tiempo de México.”
- 4 We learned Gilly and Mary are friends from England. When Mary joined the Church, she lost her place to live. Gilly generously invited Mary to come live with her. Full of faith, Gilly says, “I’ve never doubted the Lord is with me.” At conference, Gilly also had a joyful reunion with the sister missionary who taught her 47 years ago.
- 5 Jeff and his wife, Melissa, were attending general conference for his first time. Jeff played professional baseball (he was a catcher) and is now a physician anesthesiologist. He told me, “Much to my surprise, I am moving toward baptism because it feels like the most authentic and honest way to live.”
- 6 Earlier, Melissa had apologized to Jeff’s assigned ministering brother, “Jeff does not want ‘white shirts’ in our house.” The ministering brother said, “I’ll find a way.” Now he and Jeff are good friends. At Jeff’s baptism, I met a congregation of Latter-day Saints whom Jeff, Melissa, and their daughter, Charlotte, love.
- 7 As followers of Jesus Christ, we seek to minister to others as He would because lives are waiting to change.
- 8 When Peggy told me her husband, John, after 31 years of marriage, was going to be baptized, I asked what had changed.
- 9 Peggy said, “John and I were studying the New Testament Come, Follow Me, and John asked about Church doctrine.”
- 10 Peggy said, “Let’s invite the missionaries.”
- 11 John said, “No missionaries—unless my friend can come.” Over 10 years, John’s ministering brother had become his trusted friend. (I thought, What if John’s ministering brother had stopped coming after one, two, or nine years?)
- 12 John listened. He read the Book of Mormon with real intent. When the missionaries invited John to be baptized, he said yes. Peggy said, “I fell off my chair and started to cry.”
- 13 John said, “I changed as I drew closer to the Lord.” Later, John and Peggy were sealed in the holy temple. Last December, John passed away at age 92. Peggy says, “John was always a good person, but he became different in a beautiful way after he was baptized.”
- 14 Sister Gong and I met Meb and Jenny by video during the COVID pandemic. (We met many wonderful couples and individuals by video during COVID, each prayerfully introduced by their stake president.)
- 15 Meb and Jenny humbly said concerns in their lives made them wonder if their temple marriage could be saved and, if so, how. They believed Jesus Christ’s Atonement and their covenant commitments could help them.
- 16 Imagine my joy when Meb and Jenny received new temple recommends and returned together to the house of the Lord. Later Meb almost died. What a blessing Meb and Jenny have restored covenant relationships with the Lord and each other and feel the ministering love of many around them.
- 17 Everywhere I go, I gratefully learn from those who minister and care as our Savior would.
- 18 In Peru, Sister Gong and I met Salvador and his siblings.<sup>1</sup> Salvador and his siblings are orphans. It was Salvador’s

birthday. The Church leaders and members who faithfully minister to this family inspire me. "Pure religion and undefiled ... is this, To visit the fatherless and widows,"<sup>2</sup> "succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, ... strengthen the feeble knees."<sup>3</sup>

19 In Hong Kong, an elders quorum president modestly shares how their quorum consistently conducts 100-percent ministering interviews. "We prayerfully organize companionships so everyone can care for someone and be cared for," he says. "We regularly ask each companionship about those for whom they minister. We do not check boxes; we minister to the ministers who care for our people."

20 In Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo, President Bokolo shares how he and his family joined the Church in France. One day, as he was reading his patriarchal blessing, the Spirit inspired Brother Bokolo to return with his family to the DR Congo. Brother Bokolo knew they would face many challenges if they returned. And their church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, was not yet established in Kinshasa.

21 Yet, in faith, as have many others, the Bokolos followed the Lord's Spirit. In Kinshasa, they ministered to and blessed those around them, overcame challenges, received spiritual and temporal blessings. Today, they rejoice in having a house of the Lord in their country.<sup>4</sup>

22 A convert was ministered to by personal example. As a young man, he said he spent his days lounging at the beach. One day, he said, "I saw an attractive girl in a modest swimsuit." Amazed, he went to ask why such an attractive girl would wear such a modest swimsuit. She was a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and asked with a smile, "Would you like to come to church Sunday?" He said yes.

23 Years ago, while we were on an assignment together, Elder L. Tom Perry shared how he and his companion regularly ministered to a sister who lived alone in a rough Boston neighborhood. When Elder Perry and his companion arrived, the sister cautiously directed, "Slide your temple recommends under the door." Only after seeing the temple recommends would she unbolt multiple

locks and open the door.<sup>5</sup> Of course, I am not saying ministering companionships need temple recommends. But I love the thought that as those who honor covenants minister, homes unlock and hearts open.

24 Elder Perry also offered practical advice. He said, "Give companionships a reasonable number of assignments, prayerfully chosen, clustered geographically where appropriate so travel time is used well." He would counsel, "Start with those who most need visits. Build from those most likely to welcome and respond well to visits." He concluded, "Faithful consistency brings miracles."

25 Higher and holier ministering<sup>6</sup> comes when we pray for "the pure love of Christ"<sup>7</sup> and follow the Spirit. It also comes as elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies, under the bishop's direction, oversee ministering efforts, including assigning ministering companionships. Please give our young men and young women needed opportunity to accompany and be mentored by experienced ministering brothers and sisters. And please let our young rising generation inspire ministering brother and sister companions.

26 In some places in the Church, we have a ministering gap. More say they are ministering than say they are being ministered to. We do not want checklist concern. But often we need more than a sincere hello in the hall or a casual "Can I help you?" in the parking lot. In many places, we can reach out, understand others where they are, and build relationships when we regularly visit members in their homes. Inspired invitations change lives. When invitations help us make and keep sacred covenants, we draw closer to the Lord and each other.

27 It is said that those who understand the true spirit of ministering do more than before, while those who do not understand do less. Let's do more, as our Savior would. As our hymn says, it is "a blessing of duty and love."<sup>8</sup>

28 Ward councils, elders quorums, and Relief Societies, please hearken to the Good Shepherd and help Him "seek that which was lost, ... bring again that which was driven away, ... bind up that

which was broken, ... strengthen that which was sick."<sup>9</sup> We may entertain "angels unawares"<sup>10</sup> as we make room in His inn for all.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Inspired ministering blesses families and individuals; it also strengthens wards and branches. Think of your ward or branch as a spiritual ecosystem. In the spirit of the Book of Mormon allegory of the olive trees, the Lord of the vineyard and his servants bring forth precious fruit and strengthen each tree by binding together the strengths and weaknesses of all the trees.<sup>12</sup> The Lord of the vineyard and his servants repeatedly ask, "What more can I do?"<sup>13</sup> Together, they bless hearts and homes, wards and branches, through inspired, consistent ministering.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Ministering—shepherding—makes our vineyard "one body"<sup>15</sup>—a sacred grove. Each tree in our grove is a living family tree. Roots and branches intertwine. Ministering blesses generations. When service is needed, wise bishops and elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies ask, "Who are the ministering brothers and sisters?" Ward councils and ministering interviews ask not only about challenges or problems but also look with eyes to see and rejoice in the Lord's many tender mercies in our lives as we minister as He would.

<sup>31</sup> Our Savior is our perfect example.<sup>16</sup> Because He is good, He can go about doing good.<sup>17</sup> He blesses the one and the 99. He is ministering personified. We become more like Jesus Christ when we do "unto ... the least of these" as we would unto Him,<sup>18</sup> when we love our neighbor as ourselves,<sup>19</sup> when we "love one another; as I have loved you,"<sup>20</sup> and when "whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister."<sup>21</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Jesus Christ ministers. Angels minister.<sup>22</sup> Followers of Jesus Christ "minister one to another,"<sup>23</sup> "rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep,"<sup>24</sup> "watch over [and] ... nourish [the people] with things pertaining to righteousness,"<sup>25</sup> "remember ... the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted,"<sup>26</sup> let His name be known through our ministry.<sup>27</sup> As we minister as He would, we witness His miracles, His blessings.<sup>28</sup> We obtain "a more excellent ministry."<sup>29</sup>

<sup>33</sup> We may tire physically. But in His service

we do "not weary in well-doing."<sup>30</sup> We diligently do our best, do not run faster than we have strength,<sup>31</sup> but trust, as the Apostle Paul teaches, that "God loveth a cheerful giver."<sup>32</sup> For God who "ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown."<sup>33</sup> In other words, God enriches "every thing to all bountifulness."<sup>34</sup> They "which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully."<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Wherever we are in this Easter season, let us reach out and care as our Savior would, especially to those whom we are privileged by love and assignment to minister. In so doing, may we draw closer to Jesus Christ and each other, becoming more like Him and the followers of Jesus Christ He would have us each be. In His sacred name, Jesus Christ, amen.

1. *Sister Gong and I joined together with Elder Enrique and Sister Ruth Falabella for this visit. Salvador and his siblings are now older than these earlier photos but are still part of a caring community of brothers and sisters who minister with faithful kindness.*
2. James 1:27.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 81:5.
4. *The photo of President Bokolo and his family dates to when Sister Gong and I met them.*
5. See L. Tom Perry, "Strive to Be Temple Worthy" (Ricks College devotional, Sept. 19, 1989), byui.edu/devotionalsandspeeches.
6. See Russell M. Nelson, "Ministering," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2018, 100.
7. See Moroni 7:47–48; see also verses 4–8.
8. "Have I Done Any Good?," Hymns, no. 223.
9. Ezekiel 34:16. In Ezekiel 34, the Lord also sternly warns the shepherds of Israel of the consequences when the sheep are not tended or fed.
10. Hebrews 13:2.
11. See Luke 2:7; 10:33–34.
12. This theme appears throughout Jacob 5, including in verses 17–18, 20, 24, 75. Verse 28 reminds us, "And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard and the servant of the Lord of the vineyard did nourish all the fruit of the vineyard" (emphasis added).
13. The Lord of the vineyard asks twice, "What could I have done more for my



- vineyard?" (Jacob 5:41, 49; emphasis added) and once, "What could I have done more in my vineyard?" (Jacob 5:47; emphasis added).
14. In the spirit of Mosiah 18:21 and Matthew 25:40.
  15. See Jacob 5:74: "And they became like unto one body; and the fruits were equal"; see also, for example, 1 Corinthians 12:12: "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ."
  16. The scriptures are replete with examples of how our Savior ministers. For example, amidst the pressing throng, He is present in the moment when the woman touches the hem of His garment, and He feels healing flow to her (see Mark 5:24–34). Or, with "no leisure so much as to eat" (Mark 6:31), Jesus and His disciples are physically tired and seeking a place to rest. Yet, seeing the multitude without a shepherd, our Savior heals, teaches, feeds them.
- He gathers basketfuls of loaves and fishes afterward (see Mark 6:31–44).
17. See Acts 10:38.
  18. See Matthew 25:35–40.
  19. See Mark 12:31.
  20. John 13:34.
  21. Matthew 20:26; see also Luke 22:26–27.
  22. See, for example, Matthew 4:11; Luke 22:42–44; Acts 10:1–7; 12:5–11; 2 Nephi 32:3; Moroni 7:22, 29–30.
  23. 3 Nephi 26:19.
  24. Romans 12:15; see also Mosiah 18:9.
  25. Mosiah 23:18.
  26. Doctrine and Covenants 52:40.
  27. See Abraham 1:19.
  28. Acts 26:16 speaks of becoming "a minister and a witness" of the things of the Lord.
  29. Hebrews 8:6.
  30. Doctrine and Covenants 64:33; see also Alma 37:34.
  31. See Mosiah 4:27.
  32. 2 Corinthians 9:7.
  33. 2 Corinthians 9:10.
  34. 2 Corinthians 9:11.
  35. 2 Corinthians 9:6.

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# Jesus Christ Is the Strength of Parents

ELDER DIETER F. UCHTDORF

*Help your children build faith in Jesus Christ, love His gospel and His Church, and prepare for a lifetime of righteous choices.*

- 1 Once upon a time, a father was about to leave for an evening bishopric meeting. His four-year-old daughter stepped in front of him, wearing pajamas and holding a copy of Book of Mormon Stories.
- 2 “Why do you have to go to a meeting?” she asked.
- 3 “Because I am a counselor in the bishopric,” he answered.
- 4 “But you are my dad!” his daughter protested.
- 5 He knelt in front of her. “Sweetheart,” he said, “I know you want me to read to you and help you go to sleep, but tonight I need to help the bishop.”
- 6 His daughter replied, “Doesn’t the bishop have a dad to help him go to sleep?”
- 7 We are eternally grateful for the countless members who serve diligently in the Church of Jesus Christ every day. Your sacrifice is truly sacred.
- 8 But as this girl seemed to understand, there’s something equally sacred—something irreplaceable—about a parent nurturing a child. It reflects the pattern of heaven.<sup>1</sup> Our Father in Heaven, our Divine Parent, surely rejoices when His children are taught and nurtured by their parents on earth.<sup>2</sup>
- 9 Parents, thank you for everything you’re doing to raise your children. And children, thank you for everything you’re doing to raise your parents, because as every parent knows, we often learn as much from our children about faith, hope, and charity as they learn from us!<sup>3</sup>
- 10 **Parents Have a Sacred Duty**
- 11 Have you ever thought about the tremendous risk our Father in Heaven takes each time He sends a child to earth? These are His spirit sons and daughters. They have limitless potential.
- 12 God has given parents the “sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, and to teach them to ... observe the commandments of God.”<sup>4</sup>
- 13 That’s enough to keep even the best parents awake at night.
- 14 My message to all parents is this:
- 15 The Lord loves you.
- 16 He is with you.
- 17 He stands beside you.
- 18 He is your strength in guiding your children to make righteous choices.
- 19 Accept this privilege and responsibility courageously and joyfully. Don’t delegate this source of heavenly blessings to anyone else. Within the framework of gospel values and principles, you are the ones to guide your child in the details of daily decisions. Help your children build faith in Jesus Christ, love His gospel and His Church, and prepare for a lifetime of righteous choices. In fact, that is God’s plan for parents.
- 20 Satan will oppose you, distract you, try to discourage you.
- 21 But every child has received the Light of Christ as a direct line to heaven. And the Savior will help you, guide you, and

encourage you. Seek His help. Inquire of the Lord!

- 22 Just as Jesus Christ is the strength of youth, Jesus Christ is also the strength of parents.

### 23 **He Magnifies Love**

- 24 Sometimes we might wonder if someone else might be better qualified to guide and teach our children. But no matter how inadequate you may feel, you have something that uniquely qualifies you: your love for your child.

- 25 A parent's love for a child is one of the strongest forces in the universe. It's one of the few things on this earth that can truly be eternal.

- 26 Now, perhaps you feel that your relationship with your child is less than ideal. That's where the Savior's power comes in. He heals the sick, and He can heal relationships. He multiplies bread and fish, and He can multiply the love and the joy in your home.

- 27 Your love for your children creates a rich environment for teaching truth and building faith. Make your home a house of prayer, learning, and faith; a house of joyful experiences; a place of belonging; a house of God.<sup>5</sup> And "pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that [you] may be filled with [His] love, which he [bestows] upon ... followers of his Son, Jesus Christ."<sup>6</sup>

### 28 **He Magnifies Small and Simple Efforts**

- 29 Another strength you have, as a parent, is the opportunity for daily, ongoing influence. Peers, teachers, and media influencers come and go. But you can be the most constant, steady influence in your child's life.

- 30 Your efforts may seem small compared to the loud voices your children hear in the world. At times it may feel that you're not accomplishing much. But remember that "by small means the Lord can bring about great things."<sup>7</sup> One home evening, one gospel conversation, or one good example may not change your child's life in a moment, any more than one drop of rain causes a plant immediately to grow. But the consistency of small and simple things, day after day, nourishes your children much better than an occasional flood.<sup>8</sup>

- 31 That is the Lord's way. He speaks to you and your child with a still, small voice, not a voice of thunder.<sup>9</sup> He healed Naaman not through "some great thing" but through the simple, repeated act of washing.<sup>10</sup> The children of Israel enjoyed the feast of quail in the wilderness, but what kept them alive was the small and simple miracle of manna—their daily bread.<sup>11</sup>

- 32 Brothers and sisters, daily bread is best prepared and served at home. Faith and testimony are best fostered in normal and natural ways, one bite at a time, in small and simple moments, in the constant flow of daily living.<sup>12</sup>

- 33 Every moment is a teaching moment. Every word and action can be a guide for making choices.<sup>13</sup>

- 34 You may not see the immediate effects of your efforts. But don't give up. "All things must come to pass in their time," the Lord said. "Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for [you] are laying the foundation of a great work."<sup>14</sup> What work could be greater than helping God's precious children learn who they really are and build their faith in Jesus Christ, His gospel, and His Church? Jesus Christ will bless and magnify your consistent efforts.

### 35 **He Gives Revelation**

- 36 Another powerful way the Lord supports parents is through the gift of personal revelation. God is eager to pour out His Spirit to guide parents.

- 37 As you are prayerful and sensitive to the Spirit, He will warn you of hidden dangers.<sup>15</sup> He will reveal your children's gifts, their strengths, and their unspoken concerns.<sup>16</sup> God will help you see your children as He sees them—beyond their outward appearance and into their hearts.<sup>17</sup>

- 38 With God's help, you can learn to know your children in a pure and heavenly way. I invite you to accept God's offer to guide your family by personal revelation. Seek His guidance in your prayers.<sup>18</sup>

### 39 **A Mighty Change**

- 40 Perhaps the most important help Jesus Christ offers to parents is the "mighty change" of heart.<sup>19</sup> It's a miracle every one of us needs.

- 41 For a moment, imagine this situation: You're at church, listening to a talk about families. The speaker describes a perfect home and an even more perfect family. Husband and wife never quarrel. Children stop reading their scriptures only when it's time to do homework. And the music of "Love One Another"<sup>20</sup> is playing in the background. Before the speaker gets to the part about everyone cheerfully joining to clean the bathroom, you're already thinking, "My family is hopeless."
- 42 Dear brothers and sisters, relax! Everyone in the congregation is thinking the same thing! The fact is, all parents worry about not being good enough.
- 43 Fortunately, there is a divine source of help for parents: It is Jesus Christ. He is the source of our mighty change of heart.
- 44 As you open your heart to the Savior and His teachings, He will show you your weakness. If you trust Jesus Christ with a humble heart, He will make weak things become strong.<sup>21</sup> He is the God of miracles.
- 45 Does that mean you and your family will be picture-perfect? No. But you will get better. Through the Savior's grace, little by little, you'll develop more of the attributes parents need: love for God and His children, patience, selflessness, faith in Christ, and courage to make righteous choices.
- 46 **Jesus Christ Offers Support through His Church**
- 47 Our effort to build faith in Jesus Christ is home centered, focused on the individual. And it is Church supported. Besides providing the sacred scriptures and the words of prophets, the Savior's Church offers many resources to help parents and children make righteous choices:
- 48 For the Strength of Youth: A Guide for Making Choices does not give you a list of dos or don'ts. It teaches eternal truths to help make choices centered on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Read it with your children. Let them talk about it. Help them to have these eternal and divine truths guide their choices.<sup>22</sup>
- 49 FSY conferences are another wonderful resource. I hope every youth will attend.
- I invite young single adults to join these conferences as mentors and counselors. I invite parents to build on the spiritual momentum their youth bring home from FSY conferences.
- 50 Children and youth in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have teachers, advisers, and mentors. Often you enter a young person's life at a crucial moment to build and support faith and testimony. Some of you are single adults. Some never had children of your own. Your joyful service to God's children is sacred in God's eyes.<sup>23</sup>
- 51 **Never Give Up on the Miracle**
- 52 My dear friends, my dear brothers and sisters, building faith in a child is somewhat like helping a flower grow. You cannot tug on the stem to make it taller. You cannot pry open the bud to get it to blossom sooner. And you cannot neglect the flower and expect it to grow or flourish spontaneously.
- 53 What you can and must do for the rising generation is provide rich, nourishing soil with access to flowing heavenly water. Remove weeds and anything that would block heavenly sunlight. Create the best possible conditions for growth. Patiently allow the rising generation to make inspired choices, and let God work His miracle. The result will be more beautiful and more stunning and more joyful than anything you could accomplish just by yourself.
- 54 In Heavenly Father's plan, families' relationships are meant to be eternal. This is why, as a parent, you never give up, even if you are not proud of how things went in the past.
- 55 With Jesus Christ, the Master Healer and Savior, there can always be a new beginning; He always gives hope.
- 56 Jesus Christ is the strength of families.
- 57 Jesus Christ is the strength of youth.
- 58 Jesus Christ is the strength of parents.
- 59 Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.
1. *"Innate in almost every parent is the desire to teach his or her children moral virtues. This is part of the miracle of Heavenly Father's plan.*

He wants His children to come to earth, following the eternal pattern of families that exists in heaven. Families are the basic organizational unit of the eternal realms, and so He intends for them also to be the basic unit on earth. Though earthly families are far from perfect, they give God's children the best chance to be welcomed to the world with the only love on earth that comes close to what we felt in heaven—parental love. Families are also the best way to preserve and pass on moral virtues and true principles that are most likely to lead us back to God's presence" (Henry B. Eyring, "Gathering the Family of God," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2017, 20).

2. Of course, we know that God's will is not always accomplished "in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). Mortal parenthood certainly pales in comparison to God's ideal. He surely sees that. He must weep over all the sorrows and heartache in family relationships. And yet He has not given up on the family. And He will not, because God has a glorious plan for the eternal destiny of His children. And at the center of that plan is the family.
3. See Matthew 18:1–5; Mosiah 3:19.
4. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Church of Jesus Christ.org*; see also *Doctrine and Covenants* 68:25–28.
5. See "Learning at Home Is Founded on Relationships," *Teaching in the Savior's Way: For All Who Teach in the Home and in the Church* (2022), 30–31; see also *Doctrine and Covenants* 109:8.
6. Moroni 7:48.
7. 1 Nephi 16:29; see also Alma 37:6–7.
8. See "Learning at Home Consists of Small, Simple, Consistent Efforts," *Teaching in the Savior's Way*, 31. President David O. McKay taught: "Let us not think that, because some [things] ... seem small and trivial, [that] they are unimportant. Life, after all, is made up of little things. Our life, our being, physically, is made up of little heart beats. Let that little heart stop beating, and life in this world ceases. The great sun is a mighty force in the universe, but we receive the blessings of [its] rays because they come to us as little beams, which, taken in the

aggregate, fill the whole world with sunlight. The dark night is made pleasant by the glimmer of what seem to be little stars; and so the true Christian life is made up of little Christ-like acts performed this hour, this minute—in the home" (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: David O. McKay* [2003], 219).

9. See Helaman 5:30.
10. See 2 Kings 5:9–14.
11. See Exodus 16.
12. See "Preparing Your Children for a Lifetime on God's Covenant Path," *Come, Follow Me—For Individuals and Families: New Testament 2023*, appendix (digital only).
13. See "Learning at Home Can Be Planned but Also Spontaneous," *Teaching in the Savior's Way*, 31; 1 Peter 3:15.
14. *Doctrine and Covenants* 64:32–33.
15. See Matthew 2:13.
16. See Alma 40:1; 41:1; 42:1.
17. See 1 Samuel 16:7.
18. See 1 Nephi 15:8.
19. Alma 5:13.
20. See "Love One Another," *Hymns*, no. 308.
21. See Ether 12:27.
22. "In the case of children, the responsibility of giving moral guidance rests with the parents. They know the disposition, understanding, and intelligence of each child. Parents spend a lifetime seeking to establish and maintain good communications with each of their children. They are in the best position to make the ultimate moral decisions as to the welfare and well-being of their offspring" (James E. Faust, "The Weightier Matters of the Law: Judgment, Mercy, and Faith," *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 54).
23. Two other resources worth mentioning: The digital version of this year's *Come, Follow Me* resource includes a new section titled "Preparing Your Children for a Lifetime on God's Covenant Path." It suggests simple, home-centered ideas for helping children prepare for baptism and other covenants and ordinances. And the newly revised *Teaching in the Savior's Way* has a section titled "Home and Family" that describes how the principles of Christlike teaching apply to the home (see pages 30–31).

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# Safely Gathered Home

ELDER QUENTIN L. COOK

*We are in a unique position to gather Israel on both sides of the veil as never before under the Father's plan.*

- 1 President Russell M. Nelson, our beloved prophet, has profoundly emphasized that our unique responsibility is to help gather scattered Israel and prepare the world for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup> The Father of our spirits desires His children to be safely gathered home.
- 2 Our Heavenly Father's plan for safely gathering His children to our heavenly home is not based on worldly success, economic status, education, race, or gender. Father's plan is based on righteousness, keeping His commandments, and receiving sacred ordinances and honoring the covenants we make.<sup>2</sup>
- 3 The divinely inspired doctrine that we are all brothers and sisters and "all are alike unto God" underlies this great work of gathering. This doctrine accords with those who deeply desire for people of diverse economic and racial status to experience better lives. We applaud and join in such efforts. Moreover, we desire for all of God's children to come unto Him and receive the eternal blessings He offers through His gospel.<sup>3</sup> In the Lord's preface to the Doctrine and Covenants, He declares, "Hearken ye people from afar; and ye that are upon the islands of the sea, listen together."<sup>4</sup>
- 4 I love that the very first verse in the Doctrine and Covenants includes the people who are on "the islands of the sea." I have had three specific calls to serve and live on the islands of the sea. I first served as a young missionary to the British Isles, second as a new General Authority in the Philippine Islands, and then as Area President in the Pacific Islands, which includes many Polynesian islands.
- 5 All three of these areas have successfully gathered believers to the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. Missionaries first arrived in the British Isles in 1837. This was one year after Joseph Smith's dedication of the Kirtland Temple, where Moses committed "the keys of the gathering of Israel from the four parts of the earth, and the leading of the ten tribes from the land of the north."<sup>5</sup> The early success in the British Isles is legendary. By 1851, over half the members of the Church were baptized converts living in the British Isles.<sup>6</sup>
- 6 In 1961, Elder Gordon B. Hinckley visited and initiated full-time missionary efforts in the Philippine Islands. At that time there was only one Filipino Melchizedek Priesthood holder. Amazingly, there are over 850,000 members of the Church today in the Philippine Islands. I admire the Filipino people; they have a deep and abiding love for the Savior.
- 7 Perhaps less well known is the ongoing missionary effort to the Polynesian Islands. It commenced in 1844 when Addison Pratt arrived in what is now French Polynesia.<sup>7</sup> Many Polynesians already believed in eternal families and accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior. Today almost 25 percent of Polynesians, in the Polynesian Islands, are members of the Church.<sup>8</sup>
- 8 I once listened to a 17-year-old girl on a distant Tahitian island who was a seventh-generation member. She paid tribute to her ancestors who had been converted in 1845 on Tubuai, two years before early Church members arrived in the Salt Lake Valley.<sup>9</sup>
- 9 Our doctrine is clear that there will be a time and a season for all people to receive and to respond to the gospel message. These examples are just a part of a much larger picture. President Nelson has continuously emphasized that the gathering of Israel is "the greatest challenge, ... cause, and ... work on earth today."<sup>10</sup>
- 10 Until the Restoration of the Church of Jesus Christ, including the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and the revelation and priesthood keys given to the Prophet Joseph Smith, understanding of the gathering of Israel

was fragmentary and limited.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> The distinctive name “Israel” was the title conferred upon Jacob.<sup>12</sup> It came to represent the posterity of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob. The original promise and covenant to Father Abraham is set forth in Abraham 2:9–10, which reads in part:

<sup>12</sup> “And I will make of thee a great nation, ...

<sup>13</sup> “And I will bless [all nations] through thy name; for as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name, and shall be accounted thy seed, and shall rise up and bless thee, as their father.”

<sup>14</sup> During the Council in Heaven in the premortal existence, the plan of salvation was discussed and sustained. It included certain laws and ordinances of the priesthood instituted before the foundation of the world and predicated upon the gathering.<sup>13</sup> It also included the overriding principle of agency.

<sup>15</sup> After several centuries as a powerful people, including the reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon, Israel was divided. The tribe of Judah and part of the tribe of Benjamin became the kingdom of Judah. The remainder, identified as the ten tribes, became the kingdom of Israel.<sup>14</sup> After 200 years of separate existence, the first scattering of Israel occurred in 721 BC when the ten tribes of Israel were carried away captive by the Assyrian king.<sup>15</sup> They later went to the north countries.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> In 600 BC at the commencement of the Book of Mormon, Father Lehi led a colony of Israelites to the Americas. Lehi understood the scattering of Israel of which he was a part. He is quoted by Nephi as saying that the house of Israel “should be compared like unto an olive tree, whose branches should be broken off and should be scattered upon all the face of the earth.”<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> In the so-called New World, the history of the Nephites and Lamanites as set forth in the Book of Mormon ends in approximately AD 400. Descendants of Father Lehi are spread throughout the Americas.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> This is clearly described by Mormon in 3 Nephi 5:20, which reads: “I am Mormon, and a pure descendant of Lehi. I have

reason to bless my God and my Savior Jesus Christ, that he brought our fathers out of the land of Jerusalem.”<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Clearly the high point in Israel’s chronological history is the birth, message, ministry, and mission of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> After the Savior’s eternity-shaping death and Resurrection, a second well-known scattering of Judah occurred between AD 70 and AD 135 when, due to Roman oppression and persecution, the Jews dispersed throughout the then-known world.

<sup>21</sup> President Nelson has taught, “The Book of Mormon came forth as a sign that the Lord had commenced to gather [the] children of the covenant.”<sup>21</sup> Thus, the Book of Mormon, translated by the Prophet Joseph Smith through the gift and power of God, is directed to Lehi’s descendants, scattered Israel, and Gentiles who are adopted into the tribes of Israel. The chapter heading to 1 Nephi 22 reads in part, “Israel will be scattered upon all the face of the earth—The Gentiles will nurse and nourish Israel with the gospel in the last days.” The Book of Mormon title page reads that one of the book’s purposes is for “the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ.” With the Restoration and Book of Mormon, the concept of gathering Israel has greatly expanded.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Those who accept the gospel of Jesus Christ, regardless of lineage, become part of gathered Israel.<sup>23</sup> With that gathering and the numerous temples built and announced, we are in a unique position to gather Israel on both sides of the veil as never before under the Father’s plan.

<sup>23</sup> President Spencer W. Kimball, speaking of the literal gathering of Israel, stated: “Now, the gathering of Israel consists of joining the true church and ... coming to a knowledge of the true God. ... Any person, therefore, who has accepted the restored gospel, and who now seeks to worship the Lord in his own tongue and with the Saints in the nations where he lives, has complied with the law of the gathering of Israel and is heir to all of the blessings promised the Saints in these last days.”<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> “The gathering of Israel now involves

conversion.”<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> As viewed through a clear lens, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have the great privilege of loving, sharing, inviting, and helping gather Israel to receive the fulness of the Lord’s covenant blessings. This includes Africans and Europeans, South and North Americans, Asians, Australians, and those upon the isles of the sea. “For verily the voice of the Lord is unto all men.”<sup>26</sup> “This gathering shall continue until the righteous are assembled in the congregations of the Saints in the nations of the world.”<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> No one has addressed the gathering more directly than President Russell M. Nelson: “Anytime you do anything that helps anyone—on either side of the veil—take a step toward making covenants with God and receiving their essential baptismal and temple ordinances, you are helping to gather Israel. It is as simple as that.”<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Where is the Church today? In the 62 years since I commenced serving a mission in 1960, the number of full-time missionaries serving under a call from the prophet has increased from 7,683 to 62,544. The number of missions has increased from 58 to 411. The number of members has increased from approximately 1,700,000 to approximately 17,000,000.

<sup>28</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic temporarily impacted some of our opportunities to share the gospel. It also provided experience using new technology, which will greatly enhance the gathering. We are grateful that members and missionaries are now expanding efforts to gather scattered Israel. Growth continues everywhere, especially South America and Africa. We also appreciate that so many across the world have responded to President Nelson’s powerful invitation for increased missionary service. Nevertheless, our commitment to love, share, and invite can be greatly expanded.

<sup>29</sup> An essential part of this missionary effort is for individual members to become beacon-light examples<sup>29</sup> wherever we live.<sup>30</sup> We cannot be in camouflage. Our Christlike example of kindness, righteousness, happiness, and sincere love for all peoples can create not only a guiding beacon light for them but also

an understanding that there is a safe harbor in the ordinances of salvation and exaltation of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

<sup>30</sup> Please understand that there are remarkable blessings in sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ. The scriptures speak of joy and peace, forgiveness of sins, protection from temptations, and sustaining power from God.<sup>31</sup> Looking beyond this mortal life, we will be prepared to share the gospel with those “in darkness and under the bondage of sin in the great world of the spirits of the dead.”<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> My specific prayer today is for every child, young man, young woman, family, quorum, Relief Society, and class to review how we individually and collectively accept dramatic counsel to help gather Israel that has been issued by the Lord and our beloved prophet.

<sup>32</sup> We respect agency. In this secular world, many will not respond and participate in the gathering of Israel. But many will, and the Lord expects those who have received His gospel to urgently strive to be a beacon-light example that will help others come to God. This allows our brothers and sisters across the earth to enjoy the supernal blessings and ordinances of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and be safely gathered home.

<sup>33</sup> I bear my sure and certain apostolic witness of the divinity of Jesus Christ and our Father in Heaven’s plan for us in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. See Russell M. Nelson, “Welcome Message,” *Liahona*, May 2021, 7.

2. See *Doctrine and Covenants* 20:37.

3. See 2 Nephi 26:33.

4. *Doctrine and Covenants* 1:1. In *Doctrine and Covenants* 1:4, the Lord continues, “And the voice of warning shall be unto all people, by the mouths of my disciples, whom I have chosen in these last days.”

5. *Doctrine and Covenants* 110:11.

6. In 1851, there were 52,165 total members of the Church. According to Church records and the “Religious Census of 1851” in England and Wales, there were over 28,000 members in those locations (see Robert L. Lively Jr., “Some Sociological Reflections on the Nineteenth-Century British Mission,” in *Mormons in Early Victorian Britain*, ed. Richard L. Jensen and Malcolm R. Thorp [1989], 19–20).

7. See *Saints: The Story of the Church of Jesus Christ in the Latter Days*, vol. 1, *The Standard of Truth, 1815–1846* (2018), 494–95, 514–15, 573.
8. Tonga: 45 percent; Samoa: 31 percent; American Samoa: 22.5 percent; and French Polynesia: 7 percent.
9. See *Saints*, 573–74.
10. Russell M. Nelson, “Hope of Israel” (worldwide youth devotional, June 3, 2018), [HopeofIsrael.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.hopeofisrael.churchofjesuschrist.org).
11. This unique and powerful doctrine is contained in the Book of Mormon and succinctly in the tenth article of faith, which begins, “We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes” (see James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*, 12th ed. [1924], 314–44).
12. As recorded in Genesis 32:28, the scriptural account reads, “Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men.”
13. See Joseph Smith, in “History, 1838–1856, volume D-1,” 1572, [josephsmithpapers.org](https://www.josephsmithpapers.org); see also Joseph Smith, “Discourse, 11 June 1843–A, as Reported by Wilford Woodruff,” [42–43], [josephsmithpapers.org](https://www.josephsmithpapers.org); Joseph Smith, “Discourse, 11 June 1843–A, as Reported by Willard Richards,” [241], [josephsmithpapers.org](https://www.josephsmithpapers.org).
14. See Bible Dictionary, “Israel, Kingdom of”; James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*, 315. Rehoboam and his subjects were known as the kingdom of Judah and were located in the southern part of modern Israel.
15. See 2 Kings 17:23.
16. See Doctrine and Covenants 133:26; see also Doctrine and Covenants 110:11.
17. 1 Nephi 10:12. Ammon later said, “Blessed is the name of my God, who has been mindful of this people, who are a branch of the tree of Israel, and has been lost from its body in a strange land” (Alma 26:36).
18. President Spencer W. Kimball, speaking of Lamanite Israel, taught that Zion is all the Americas. He said, “We are in Israel and are being gathered” (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [1982], 439).
19. When Father Lehi was instructed to take his family and depart into the wilderness, at least part of the reason was that Jerusalem would be destroyed (see 1 Nephi 2). The destruction of Solomon’s Temple, the downfall of Jerusalem, and the captivity of the tribe of Judah occurred in about 586 BC. “Israel was conquered in about 720 B.C.E., and its 10 tribes driven into exile. ... [In Jerusalem,] Solomon’s Temple sustained several attacks by foreign powers before finally, in 586 B.C.E., being totally destroyed by the army of Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king” (David B. Green, “The History of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem,” *Haaretz*, Aug. 11, 2014, [haaretz.com/jewish/.premium-history-of-the-temple-in-jerusalem-1.5256337](https://www.haaretz.com/jewish/.premium-history-of-the-temple-in-jerusalem-1.5256337)). See also 2 Kings 25:8–9.
20. See Tad R. Callister, *The Infinite Atonement* (2000).
21. Russell M. Nelson, “Children of the Covenant,” *Ensign*, May 1995, 33; see also “Covenants,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 88.
22. See Russell M. Nelson, in R. Scott Lloyd, “Seminar for New Mission Presidents: ‘Swift Messengers’ to Scattered Israel,” *Church News*, July 13, 2013, [thechurchnews.com](https://www.thechurchnews.com). President Nelson has stated that the gathering “is not a matter of physical location; it is a matter of individual commitment. People can be ‘brought to the knowledge of the Lord’ [3 Nephi 20:13] without leaving their homelands” (“The Gathering of Scattered Israel,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2006, 81). See also 3 Nephi 21:1–7.
23. Our doctrine is clear; the Lord scattered the tribes of Israel because of their rebellion and their unrighteousness. However, the Lord also utilized the scattering of His chosen people among the nations of the world to bless those nations. (See Guide to the Scriptures, “Israel—The Scattering of Israel,” [scriptures.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www scriptures.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).)
24. Spencer W. Kimball, *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 439.
25. Summary heading in Spencer W. Kimball, *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 438. See also “All Are Alike unto God,” ed. E. Dale LeBaron (1990), a collection of 23 conversion stories by Black African Latter-day Saints. Sister Julia N. Mavimbela said that before she joined the Church and came to the word Israel, she would “throw the book aside and say, ‘It is for the whites. It is not for us. We are not chosen.’ Today I know I belong to a royal family, if I live righteously. I am an Israelite, and when I was doing my ordinances in the temple, I captured the feeling that we are all on earth as one family” (in “All Are Alike unto God,” 151).
26. Doctrine and Covenants 1:2.
27. Spencer W. Kimball, *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 438.
28. Russell M. Nelson, “Hope of Israel.”
29. The Apostle Paul told his young friend Timothy to “be ... an example of the believers” (1 Timothy 4:12).
30. See 3 Nephi 18:24.
31. See Mosiah 18:8–13; 3 Nephi 18:25; Doctrine and Covenants 18:10–16; 31:5; 62:3.
32. Doctrine and Covenants 138:57.

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# Never Give Up an Opportunity to Testify of Christ

PRESIDENT BONNIE H. CORDON

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*True joy rests on our willingness to come closer to Christ and witness for ourselves.*

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- 1 Five years ago today, we raised our hands to sustain our beloved prophet, President Russell M. Nelson, as President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—the Lord’s mouthpiece for this remarkable season of growth and revelation. Through him, we have received countless invitations and have been promised glorious blessings if we will center our lives on our Savior, Jesus Christ.
- 2 In 2011, while I was serving with my husband as mission leaders in beautiful Curitiba, Brazil, my phone rang during a meeting. Rushing to silence it, I noticed the call was from my father. I quickly left the meeting to answer: “Hi, Dad!”
- 3 Unexpectedly, his voice was filled with emotion: “Hi, Bonnie. I need to tell you something. I’ve been diagnosed with ALS.”
- 4 My mind swirled with confusion, “Wait! What is ALS?”
- 5 Dad was already explaining, “My mind will stay alert while my body slowly shuts down.”
- 6 I felt my whole world shift as I began to wrestle with the implications of this grievous news. But on that unforgettable day, it was his last sentence that found a permanent place in my heart. My dear father said with urgency, “Bonnie, never give up an opportunity to testify of Christ.”
- 7 I have pondered and prayed over Dad’s counsel. I have often asked myself if I fully know what it means to never give up an opportunity to testify of Jesus Christ.
- 8 Like you, I have occasionally stood on the first Sunday of the month and borne a witness of Christ. Many times I have testified of gospel truths as part of a lesson. I have boldly taught truth and declared the divinity of Christ as a missionary.
- 9 Yet this plea felt more personal! It seemed as though he was saying, “Bonnie, don’t let the world overtake you! Stay true to your covenants with the Savior. Seek to experience His blessings every day, and be able to testify through the Holy Ghost of His power and presence in your life!”
- 10 We live in a fallen world, with distractions coaxing our eyes and hearts downward instead of heavenward. Much like the Nephites in 3 Nephi 11, we need Jesus Christ. Can you imagine yourself there, among people who had experienced so much chaos and destruction? What would it be like to hear the Lord’s personal invitation:
- 11 “Arise and come forth unto me, that ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet, that ye may know that I am ... the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world.
- 12 “And ... the multitude went forth ... one by one ... and did see with their eyes and did feel with their hands, and did know ... and had witnessed for themselves.”<sup>1</sup>
- 13 These Nephites eagerly went forward to thrust their hands into His side and feel the prints of the nails in His hands and feet so they could witness for themselves that this was the Christ. Similarly, many faithful people we have studied in the New Testament this year had anxiously awaited Christ’s coming. Then they stepped from their fields, workbenches, and dinner tables and followed Him, pressed upon Him, thronged Him, and sat with Him. Are we as anxious to witness for ourselves as the multitudes in the scriptures? Are the blessings we seek less needful than theirs?
- 14 When Christ physically visited the Nephites at their temple, His invitation



was not to stand at a distance and look upon Him, but to touch Him, to feel for themselves the reality of the Savior of humankind. How can we draw close enough to gain a personal witness of Jesus Christ? This may be part of what my father was trying to teach me. While we may not enjoy the same physical proximity as those who walked with Christ during His earthly ministry, through the Holy Ghost we can experience His power every day! As much as we need!

- 15 The young women around the world have taught me so much about seeking Christ and gaining a daily, personal witness of Him. Let me share the wisdom of two of them:
- 16 Livvy has watched general conference her entire life. In fact, in her home they traditionally watch all five sessions as a family. In the past, conference for Livvy had meant doodling or drifting into the occasional unintended nap. But this past October general conference was different. It became personal.
- 17 This time, Livvy decided to be an active recipient. She silenced notifications on her phone and took notes of impressions from the Spirit. She was amazed as she felt specific things God wanted her to hear and do. This decision made a difference in her life almost immediately.
- 18 Just days later her friends invited her to an inappropriate movie. She reflected, "I felt the words and spirit of conference return into my heart, and I heard myself declining their invitation." She also had the courage to share her testimony of the Savior in her ward.
- 19 After these events she stated, "The amazing thing is, when I heard myself testify that Jesus is the Christ, I felt the Holy Ghost confirm it again for me."
- 20 Livvy did not skip like a stone over the surface of conference weekend; she dove in, mind and spirit, and found the Savior there.
- 21 And then there is Maddy. When her family stopped attending church, Maddy was confused and not certain what to do. She realized something significant was missing. So at age 13, Maddy began attending church alone. Even though being alone was sometimes hard and uncomfortable, she knew she could find

the Savior at church and she wanted to be where He was. She said, "In church my soul felt like it was at home."

- 22 Maddy held onto the fact that her family had been sealed together for eternity. She started bringing her younger brothers with her to church and studying scriptures with them at home. Eventually her mom began joining them. Maddy told her mom of her desire to serve a mission and asked if her mom could be ready to attend the temple with her.
- 23 Today Maddy is in the MTC. She is serving. She is witnessing of Christ. Her example helped lead both of her parents back to the temple and back to Christ.
- 24 Like Livvy and Maddy, as we choose to seek Christ, the Spirit will witness of Him in many different situations. These witnesses of the Spirit occur as we fast, pray, wait, and continue forward. Our closeness to Christ grows through worshipping frequently in the temple, repenting daily, studying scriptures, attending church and seminary, pondering our patriarchal blessings, worthily receiving ordinances, and honoring sacred covenants. All of these invite the Spirit to enlighten our minds, and they bring added peace and protection. But do we honor them as sacred opportunities to testify of Christ?
- 25 I have attended the temple many times, but when I worship in the house of the Lord, it changes me. Sometimes while fasting, I find myself simply going hungry, but other times, I feast on the Spirit with purpose. I sometimes have mumbled prayers that are repetitive and routine, but I have also come eager to receive counsel from the Lord through prayer.
- 26 There is power in making these holy habits less of a checklist and more of a witness. The process will be gradual but will grow with daily, active participation and purposeful experiences with Christ. As we consistently act on His teaching, we gain a testimony of Him; we build a relationship with Him and our Heavenly Father. We begin to become like Them.
- 27 The adversary creates so much noise that it can be difficult to hear the Lord's voice. Our world, our challenges, our circumstances will not get quieter, but we can and must hunger and thirst after the things of Christ to "hear Him"

with clarity.<sup>2</sup> We want to create muscle memory of discipleship and testimony that will bring into focus our reliance on our Savior each day.

<sup>28</sup> My father has been gone for over 11 years now, but his words are alive in me. “Bonnie, never give up an opportunity to testify of Christ.” I invite you to join me in accepting his invitation. Look for Christ everywhere—I promise He is there!<sup>3</sup> True joy rests on our willingness to come closer to Christ and witness for ourselves.

<sup>29</sup> We know that in the last days, “every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess” that Jesus is the Christ.<sup>4</sup> I pray this witness will become a normal and natural experience for us now—that we will take every opportunity to joyfully testify: Jesus Christ lives!

<sup>30</sup> Oh, how I love Him. How grateful we are for His infinite Atonement, which has “made eternal life a possibility and immortality a reality for [us] all.”<sup>5</sup> I testify of our Savior’s goodness and great glory in His sacred name, even Jesus Christ, amen.

1. 3 Nephi 11:14–16; *emphasis added*.
2. See Russell M. Nelson, “Hear Him,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2020, 88–92.
3. See Alma 30:44; *Doctrine and Covenants* 6:36; Moses 6:63.
4. Mosiah 27:31; see also *Doctrine and Covenants* 88:104.
5. Russell M. Nelson, “Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2018, 93.

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# The Lord Jesus Christ Teaches Us to Minister

ELDER JUAN A. UCEDA

*With our Savior's help, we can love His precious sheep and minister to them as He would.*

- 1 The Lord Jesus Christ said:
- 2 "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. ...
- 3 "As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep."<sup>1</sup>
- 4 In the Greek version of this scripture, the word for good also means "beautiful, magnificent." So today, I wish to speak of the Good Shepherd, the Beautiful Shepherd, the Magnificent Shepherd, even Jesus Christ.
- 5 In the New Testament, He is called the "great shepherd,"<sup>2</sup> the "chief Shepherd,"<sup>3</sup> and "the Shepherd and Bishop of [our] souls."<sup>4</sup>
- 6 In the Old Testament, Isaiah wrote that "he shall feed his flock like a shepherd."<sup>5</sup>
- 7 In the Book of Mormon, He is called "the good shepherd"<sup>6</sup> and the "great and true shepherd."<sup>7</sup>
- 8 In the Doctrine and Covenants, He declares, "Wherefore, I am in your midst, and I am the good shepherd."<sup>8</sup>
- 9 In our day, President Russell M. Nelson has declared: "The Good Shepherd lovingly cares for all sheep of His fold, and we are His true undershepherds. Our privilege is to bear His love and to add our own love to friends and neighbors—feeding, tending, and nurturing them—as the Savior would have us do."<sup>9</sup>
- 10 More recently, President Nelson has said: "A hallmark of the Lord's true and living Church will always be an organized, directed effort to minister to individual children of God and their families. Because it is His Church, we as His servants will minister to the one, just as He did. We will minister in His name, with His power and authority, and with His loving-kindness."<sup>10</sup>
- 11 When the Pharisees and scribes murmured against the Lord, "saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them,"<sup>11</sup> He responded by presenting three beautiful stories that we have come to know as the parable of the lost sheep, the parable of the lost coin, and the parable of the prodigal son.
- 12 It is interesting to note that when Luke, the Gospel writer, is introducing the three stories, he uses the word parable in the singular, not in the plural.<sup>12</sup> It appears that the Lord is teaching one unique lesson with three stories—stories that present different numbers: 100 sheep, 10 coins, and 2 sons.
- 13 The key number in each of these stories, however, is the number one. And a lesson we might take from that number is that you might be an undershepherd for 100 elders and prospective elders in your elders quorum or an adviser to 10 young women or a teacher to 2 Primary children, but you always, always minister to them, care for them, and love them one by one, individually. You never say, "What a foolish sheep" or "After all, I do not really need that coin" or "What a rebellious son he is." If you and I have with us "the pure love of Christ,"<sup>13</sup> we, as the man in the story of the lost sheep, will "leave the ninety and nine ... and go after that which is lost, until [... until ... until we] find it."<sup>14</sup> Or, as the woman in the story of the lost coin, we will "light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently [... diligently] till [... till ... till we] find it."<sup>15</sup> If we have with us "the pure love of Christ," we will follow the example of the father in the story of the prodigal son, who, when the son "was yet a great way off, ... saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him."<sup>16</sup>
- 14 Can we feel the urgency in the heart of the man who lost only one sheep? Or the urgency in the heart of the woman who lost just one coin? Or the ineffable love and compassion in the heart of the

prodigal's father?

- 15 My wife, Maria Isabel, and I served in Central America, being stationed in Guatemala City. There I had the opportunity to meet Julia, a faithful member of the Church. I had the impression to ask her about her family. Her mother died of cancer in 2011. Her father had been a faithful leader in his stake, serving as a bishop and as a counselor to his stake president for several years. He was a true undershepherd of the Lord. Julia told me of his tireless efforts to visit, to minister, and to serve. He indeed rejoiced in feeding and tending the precious sheep of the Lord. He remarried and stayed active in the Church.
- 16 A few years later, he went through a divorce, and now he had to attend church alone once again. He felt out of place and also felt that some people were critical of him because of his divorce. He stopped attending church as a negative spirit filled his heart.
- 17 Julia spoke highly of this wonderful undershepherd, who was a hardworking, loving, and compassionate man. I vividly remember that a feeling of urgency came to me as she was describing him. I just wanted to do something for that man, a man who had done so much for so many throughout those years.
- 18 She gave me his cell phone number, and I began calling him, hoping to have the chance to meet with him personally. After several weeks and many, many phone calls without success, one day he finally answered the phone.
- 19 I told him that I had met Julia, his daughter, and that I was captivated by the way he had served, ministered, and loved the precious sheep of the Lord for so many years. He was not expecting a comment like that. I told him that I really wanted to visit with him eye to eye, face to face. He asked me my purpose in proposing such a meeting. I replied, "I really want to meet the father of such a wonderful lady." Then for a few seconds there was silence over the phone—a few seconds that seemed to me like an eternity. He simply said, "When and where?"
- 20 The day I met him, I invited him to share with me some of his experiences visiting, ministering, and serving the precious sheep of the Lord. As he was recounting some touching stories, I noticed that the tone of his voice changed and the same spirit he had felt so many times as an undershepherd came back. Now his eyes were filled with tears. I knew this was the right moment for me, but I found that I did not know what to say. I prayed in my mind, "Father, help me."
- 21 Suddenly, I heard myself saying, "Brother Florian, as a servant of the Lord, I apologize for our not being there for you. Please, forgive us. Give us another chance to show you that we do love you. That we need you. That you are important to us."
- 22 The following Sunday he was back. He had a long conversation with his bishop and remained active. A few months later he passed away—but he had come back. He had come back. I testify that with our Savior's help, we can love His precious sheep and minister to them as He would. And so, there in Guatemala City the Lord Jesus Christ brought back one more precious sheep into His fold. And He taught me a lesson on ministering that I cannot forget. In the name of the Good Shepherd, the Beautiful Shepherd, the Magnificent Shepherd, even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.
1. John 10:11, 15.
  2. Hebrews 13:20.
  3. 1 Peter 5:4.
  4. 1 Peter 2:25.
  5. Isaiah 40:11.
  6. Alma 5:38, 60.
  7. Helaman 15:13.
  8. Doctrine and Covenants 50:44.
  9. Russell M. Nelson, "Shepherds, Lambs, and Home Teachers," *Ensign*, Aug. 1994, 19.
  10. Russell M. Nelson, "Ministering with the Power and Authority of God," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2018, 69.
  11. Luke 15:2.
  12. See Luke 15:3.
  13. Moroni 7:47.
  14. Luke 15:4.
  15. Luke 15:8.
  16. Luke 15:20.

WEEK

TALK

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AFFIRMATION

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SPRINKLES

MY WHAT

MY WHY

## This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



# Remember What Matters Most

PRESIDENT M. RUSSELL BALLARD

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*What matters most is our relationships with Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son, our families, and our neighbors, and allowing the Spirit to guide us.*

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- 1 As we remember this weekend the Savior's triumphal entry into Jerusalem shortly before His atoning sacrifice, I recall His words of hope and comfort: "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."<sup>1</sup>
- 2 I love Him. I believe Him. I testify that He is the Resurrection and the Life.
- 3 This testimony has comforted and strengthened me during the past four and a half years since my wife, Barbara, passed away. I miss her.
- 4 Often, I have been reflecting on our eternal marriage and our life together.
- 5 I previously have shared how I first met Barbara and how that experience taught me to use the skill of "following up" that I had learned on my mission. I had to follow up quickly with her after we first met because she was beautiful, popular, and had a very busy social calendar. I was smitten early because she was approachable and friendly. I admired her goodness. I felt that she and I belonged together. It seemed that simple in my mind.
- 6 Barbara and I dated, and our relationship began to grow, but she was uncertain that marriage to me was right for her.
- 7 It wasn't enough for me to know; Barbara needed to know for herself. I knew if we spent time fasting and praying about the matter, Barbara could receive a confirmation from heaven.
- 8 We spent a weekend without dating so we could fast and pray individually to know for ourselves. Fortunately for me, she received the same confirmation that I did. The rest, as they say, is history.
- 9 When Barbara passed away, our children put on her headstone several lessons that Barbara wanted them to remember. One of those lessons is "what matters most is what lasts longest."
- 10 Today I will share from my heart a few feelings and thoughts on what matters most.
- 11 First, a relationship with our Heavenly Father and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, is most important. This relationship matters most now and in eternity.
- 12 Second, family relationships are among those things that matter most.
- 13 Throughout my ministry, I have visited many individuals and families impacted by devastating natural disasters. Many were displaced, hungry, and frightened. They needed medical assistance, food, and shelter.
- 14 They also needed their families.
- 15 I recognize some may not have the blessings of a close family, so I include extended family, friends, and even ward families as "family." These relationships are essential for emotional and physical health.
- 16 These relationships can also offer love, joy, happiness, and a sense of belonging.
- 17 Nurturing these important relationships is a choice. A choice to be part of a family requires commitment, love, patience, communication, and forgiveness.<sup>2</sup> There may be times when we disagree with another person, but we can do so without being disagreeable. In courtship and marriage, we don't fall in love or fall out of love as though we are objects being moved on a chessboard. We choose to love and sustain one another. We do the same in other family relationships and with friends who are like family to us.
- 18 The family proclamation states that "the divine plan of happiness enables family relationships to be perpetuated beyond the grave. Sacred ordinances and covenants available in holy temples make it possible for individuals to return to the presence of God and for families

to be united eternally.”<sup>3</sup>

19 Another thing that matters most is following the promptings of the Spirit in our most important relationships and in our efforts to love our neighbors as ourselves, including in our private and public ministries. I learned this lesson early in my life while serving as a bishop.

20 Late one cold, snowy winter evening, I was leaving my bishop’s office when I had a strong impression to visit an elderly widow in the ward. I glanced at my watch—it was 10:00 p.m. I reasoned that it was too late to make such a visit. And besides, it was snowing. I decided to visit this dear sister first thing in the morning rather than disturbing her at such a late hour. I drove home and went to bed but tossed and turned throughout the night because the Spirit was stirring me.

21 Early the next morning, I drove straight to the widow’s home. Her daughter answered the door and tearfully said, “Oh, Bishop, thank you for coming. Mother passed away two hours ago”—I was devastated. I will never forget the feelings of my heart. I wept. Who more than this dear widow deserved to have her bishop hold her hand, comfort her, and perhaps give her a final blessing? I missed that opportunity because I reasoned away this strong prompting from the Spirit.<sup>4</sup>

22 Brothers and sisters, young men and young women, and Primary children, I testify that following the promptings of the Spirit is one of the things that matter most in all our relationships.

23 Finally, on this Palm Sunday weekend, I testify that being converted to the Lord, bearing testimony of Him, and serving Him are also among the things that matter most.

24 Faith in Jesus Christ is the foundation of our testimonies. A testimony is a witness or confirmation of eternal truth impressed upon individual hearts and souls through the Holy Ghost. A testimony of Jesus Christ, born of and strengthened by the Spirit, changes lives—it changes the way we think and how we live. A testimony turns us toward our Heavenly Father and His divine Son.

25 Alma taught:

26 “Behold, I testify unto you that I do know that these things whereof I have spoken are true. And how do ye suppose that I know of their surety?”

27 “Behold, I say unto you they are made known unto me by the Holy Spirit of God. Behold, I have fasted and prayed many days that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit.”<sup>5</sup>

28 Having a testimony alone is not enough. As our conversion to Jesus Christ grows, we naturally want to testify of Him—His goodness, love, and kindness.

29 Often in our testimony meetings on fast Sundays, we hear the phrases “I am thankful” and “I love” more than we hear the phrases “I know” and “I believe.”

30 I invite you to bear your testimony of Jesus Christ more often. Bear testimony of what you know and believe and what you feel, not just of what you are thankful for. Testify of your own experiences of coming to know and love the Savior, of living His teachings, and of His redemptive and enabling power in your life. As you bear testimony of what you know, believe, and feel, the Holy Ghost will confirm the truth to those who earnestly listen to your testimony. They will do so because they have watched you become a peaceful follower of Jesus Christ. They will see what it means to be His disciple. They will also feel something they may not have felt before. A pure testimony comes from a changed heart and can be carried by the power of the Holy Ghost into the hearts of others who are open to receive it.

31 Those who feel something as a result of your testimony may then ask the Lord in prayer to confirm the truth of your testimony. Then they can know for themselves.

32 Brothers and sisters, I testify and witness to you that I know that Jesus Christ is the Savior and Redeemer of the world. He lives. He is the resurrected Son of God, and this is His Church, led by His prophet and apostles. I pray that someday when I pass to the next world, I may do so with my testimony burning brightly.

33 In my ministry, I have learned what

matters most is our relationships with Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son, our families, and our neighbors, and allowing the Spirit of the Lord to guide us in those relationships so we can testify of the things that matter most and last longest. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. John 11:25.
2. See the articles “Family,” “Unity,” and “Love” in *Gospel Topics in the Gospel Library* (at [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org) or on the mobile app) to read scriptures and talks from prophets, apostles, and other Church leaders on this topic.
3. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org).
4. An account of this experience is in Susan Easton Black and Joseph Walker, *Anxiously Engaged: A Biography of M. Russell Ballard* (2021), 90–91.
5. Alma 5:45–46.

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# One in Christ

ELDER D. TODD CHRISTOFFERSON

*It is only in and through our individual loyalty to and love of Jesus Christ that we can hope to be one.*

- 1 As President Dallin H. Oaks has noted, today is Palm Sunday, the start of Holy Week, marking the Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, His suffering in Gethsemane and death on the cross just days later, and His glorious Resurrection on Easter Sunday. Let us resolve never to forget what Christ endured to redeem us.<sup>1</sup> And let us never lose the overwhelming joy we will feel once again on Easter as we contemplate His victory over the grave and the gift of universal resurrection.
- 2 The evening before the trials and crucifixion that awaited Him, Jesus joined in a Passover meal with His Apostles. At the end of this Last Supper, in a sacred Intercessory Prayer, Jesus petitioned His Father in these words: "Holy Father, keep through thine own name [mine Apostles] whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are."<sup>2</sup>
- 3 Then, tenderly, the Savior expanded His petition to include all believers:
- 4 "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;
- 5 "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us."<sup>3</sup>
- 6 Becoming one is a recurring theme in the gospel of Jesus Christ and in God's dealings with His children. With respect to the city of Zion in Enoch's day, it is said that "they were of one heart and one mind."<sup>4</sup> Of the early Saints in the primitive Church of Jesus Christ, the New Testament records, "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul."<sup>5</sup>
- 7 In our own dispensation, the Lord admonished, "I say unto you, be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine."<sup>6</sup> Among the reasons the Lord gave as to why the early Saints in Missouri had failed to establish a place of Zion was that they "are not united according to the union required by the law of the celestial kingdom."<sup>7</sup>
- 8 Where God prevails in all hearts and minds, the people are described as "in one, the children of Christ."<sup>8</sup>
- 9 When the resurrected Savior appeared to the ancient Book of Mormon peoples, He noted with disapproval that in the past there had been disputations among the people about baptism and other matters. He commanded:
- 10 "There shall be no disputations among you, as there have hitherto been; neither shall there be disputations among you concerning the points of my doctrine, as there have hitherto been.
- 11 "For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention."<sup>9</sup>
- 12 In our extremely contentious world, how can unity be achieved, especially in the Church, where we are to have "one Lord, one faith, one baptism"?<sup>10</sup> Paul gives us the key:
- 13 "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.
- 14 "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ."<sup>11</sup>
- 15 We are too diverse and at times too discordant to be able to come together as one on any other basis or under any other name. Only in Jesus Christ can we truly become one.
- 16 Becoming one in Christ happens one by one—we each begin with ourselves. We are dual beings of flesh and spirit and are sometimes at war within ourselves. As Paul expressed:
- 17 "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man;

18 "But I see another law in [the] members [of my body], warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."<sup>12</sup>

19 Jesus was also a being of flesh and spirit. He was tested; He understands; He can help us achieve unity within.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, drawing upon the light and the grace of Christ, we strive to give our spirit—and the Holy Spirit—dominance over the physical. And when we fall short, Christ, by His Atonement, has given us the gift of repentance and the opportunity to try again.

20 If individually we each "put on Christ," then together we can hope to become one, as Paul said, "the body of Christ."<sup>14</sup> To "put on Christ" certainly includes making His "first and great commandment"<sup>15</sup> our first and greatest commitment, and if we love God, we will keep His commandments.<sup>16</sup>

21 Unity with our brothers and sisters in the body of Christ grows as we heed the second commandment—inextricably connected to the first—to love others as ourselves.<sup>17</sup> And I suppose an even more perfect unity would obtain among us if we followed the Savior's higher and holier expression of this second commandment—to love one another not only as we love ourselves but as He loved us.<sup>18</sup> In sum, it is "every man seeking the interest of his neighbor, and doing all things with an eye single to the glory of God."<sup>19</sup>

22 President Marion G. Romney, a former counselor in the First Presidency, in explaining how enduring peace and unity are obtained, said:

23 "If a single person, yielding to Satan, is filled with the works of the flesh, he wars within himself. If two yield, they each war within themselves and fight with each other. If many people yield, a society [reaps] the harvest of great stress and contention. If the rulers of a country yield, there is world-wide contention."

24 President Romney continued: "As the works of the flesh have universal application, so likewise does the gospel of peace. If one man lives it, he has peace within himself. If two men live it, they each have peace within themselves and with each other. If the citizens live it, the nation has domestic peace. When

there are enough nations enjoying the fruit of the Spirit to control world affairs, then, and only then, will the war-drums throb no longer, and the battle flags be furl'd. ... (See Alfred Lord Tennyson, "Locksley Hall," *The Complete Poetical Works of Tennyson*, ed. W. J. Rolfe, Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1898, p. 93, lines 27–28.)"<sup>20</sup>

25 When we "put on Christ," it becomes possible either to resolve or to lay aside differences, disagreements, and disputes. A rather dramatic example of overcoming division is found in our Church history. Elder Brigham Henry Roberts (commonly known as B. H. Roberts), born in England in 1857, served as a member of the First Council of the Seventy—what we refer to today as the Presidency of the Seventy. Elder Roberts was an able and tireless defender of the restored gospel and of the Church in some of its most difficult times.

26 In 1895, however, Elder Roberts's service in the Church was put in jeopardy by contention. B. H. had been appointed as a delegate to the convention that drafted a constitution for Utah when it became a state. Afterward, he decided to become a candidate for the United States Congress but did not notify or seek permission from the First Presidency. President Joseph F. Smith, a counselor in the First Presidency, censured B. H. for that failure in a general priesthood meeting. Elder Roberts lost the election and felt his defeat was due in large part to President Smith's statements. He was critical of Church leaders in some political speeches and interviews. He withdrew from active Church service. In a lengthy meeting in the Salt Lake Temple with members of the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve, B. H. remained adamant in justifying himself. Later, "President [Wilford] Woodruff gave [Elder Roberts] three weeks to reconsider his position. If he remained unrepentant, they would release him from the Seventy."<sup>21</sup>

27 In a subsequent private meeting with Apostles Heber J. Grant and Francis Lyman, B. H. was initially unyielding, but love and the Holy Spirit ultimately prevailed. Tears came to his eyes. The two Apostles were able to respond to certain perceived slights and offenses that troubled B. H., and they left with a heartfelt plea for reconciliation. The

next morning, after lengthy prayer, Elder Roberts sent a note to Elders Grant and Lyman that he was prepared to reunite with his brethren.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>28</sup> When he later met with the First Presidency, Elder Roberts said, "I went to the Lord and received light and instruction through His Spirit to submit to the authority of God."<sup>23</sup> Motivated by his love of God, B. H. Roberts remained a faithful and an able Church leader to the end of his life.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>29</sup> We can also see in this example that unity does not mean simply agreeing that everyone should do his or her own thing or go his or her own way. We cannot be one unless we all bend our efforts to the common cause. It means, in B. H. Roberts's words, submitting to the authority of God. We are different members of the body of Christ, fulfilling different functions at different times—the ear, the eye, the head, the hand, the feet—yet all of one body.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, our goal is "that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another."<sup>26</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Unity does not require sameness, but it does require harmony. We can have our hearts knit together in love, be one in faith and doctrine, and still cheer for different teams, disagree on various political issues, debate about goals and the right way to achieve them, and many other such things. But we can never disagree or contend with anger or contempt for one another. Said the Savior:

<sup>31</sup> "For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another.

<sup>32</sup> "Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another; but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away."<sup>27</sup>

<sup>33</sup> A year ago, President Russell M. Nelson pled with us in these words: "None of us can control nations or the actions of others or even members of our own families. But we can control ourselves. My call today, dear brothers and sisters, is to end conflicts that are raging in your

heart, your home, and your life. Bury any and all inclinations to hurt others—whether those inclinations be a temper, a sharp tongue, or a resentment for someone who has hurt you. The Savior commanded us to turn the other cheek [see 3 Nephi 12:39], to love our enemies, and to pray for those who spitefully use us [see 3 Nephi 12:44]."<sup>28</sup>

<sup>34</sup> I say again that it is only in and through our individual loyalty to and love of Jesus Christ that we can hope to be one—one within, one at home, one in the Church, eventually one in Zion, and above all, one with the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost.

<sup>35</sup> I return to the events of Holy Week and the ultimate triumph of our Redeemer. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ bears witness of His divinity and that He has overcome all things. His Resurrection bears witness that, bound to Him by covenant, we too may overcome all things and become one. His Resurrection bears witness that through Him, immortality and eternal life are realities.

<sup>36</sup> This morning, I bear witness of His literal Resurrection and all that it implies, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. See *Doctrine and Covenants* 19:18–19.
2. *John* 17:11.
3. *John* 17:20–21.
4. *Moses* 7:18.
5. *Acts* 4:32.
6. *Doctrine and Covenants* 38:27.
7. *Doctrine and Covenants* 105:4.
8. *4 Nephi* 1:17, emphasis added; see also *Mosiah* 5:7.
9. *3 Nephi* 11:28–29.
10. *Ephesians* 4:5.
11. *Galatians* 3:27–28.
12. *Romans* 7:22–23.
13. See *Hebrews* 4:15: "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."
14. See *1 Corinthians* 12:12–13, 27.
15. See *Matthew* 22:37–38.
16. See *John* 14:15.
17. See *Matthew* 22:39.
18. See *John* 15:12.
19. *Doctrine and Covenants* 82:19.
20. Marion G. Romney, "The Price of Peace," *Ensign*, Oct. 1983, 6.
21. See *Saints: The Story of the Church*



of Jesus Christ in the Latter Days, vol. 3, *Boldly, Nobly, and Independent, 1893–1955* (2022), 42–45.

22. See *Saints*, 3:45–46.

23. B. H. Roberts, in *Saints*, 3:47.

24. Interestingly, B. H. Roberts ran for Congress again in 1898, this time with First Presidency consent, and was elected. Given the deep prejudice against the Church at that time, however, and the fact that he had engaged in plural marriage, the House of Representatives refused to seat him. Nevertheless, in hearings

before the House regarding his service, B. H. was an eloquent and impassioned defender of the Church and its doctrine. (See *Saints*, 3:83–86; Truman G. Madsen, *Defender of the Faith: The B. H. Roberts Story* [1980], 241–72.)

25. See 1 Corinthians 12:14–27.

26. 1 Corinthians 12:25.

27. 3 Nephi 11:29–30.

28. Russell M. Nelson, “The Power of Spiritual Momentum,” *Liahona*, May 2022, 97; emphasis in original.

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# Sprinklings

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# The Greatest Easter Story Ever Told

ELDER GARY E. STEVENSON

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*Look at the Book of Mormon in a new light and consider the profound witness it bears of the reality of the risen Christ.*

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## 1 First Presidency Letter on Easter

2 You likely remember hearing a letter from the First Presidency read in your ward or branch several weeks ago. That letter announced that next Sunday—Easter Sunday—all wards and branches are to meet for sacrament meeting only, leaving additional time for worship at home as families to commemorate this most important holiday.<sup>1</sup>

3 The First Presidency's letter caught my attention, and it caused me to reflect on the way our family has celebrated Easter through the years. The more I thought about our celebrations, the more I found myself wondering if we are inadvertently shortchanging the true meaning of this holiday, so central to all believers in Jesus Christ.

## 4 Christmas and Easter Traditions

5 Those thoughts led me to ponder the difference between the way we have celebrated Christmas as compared with Easter. During December, we somehow manage to incorporate the fun of "Jingle Bells," Christmas stockings, and gifts alongside other, more thoughtful traditions—such as caring for those in need, singing our favorite Christmas carols and hymns, and of course opening the scriptures and reading the Christmas story in Luke 2. Every year as we read this beloved story from a large old Bible, our family does what your family probably does—dressed with towels on our heads and shoulders and donning bathrobes to represent Joseph, Mary, and the many who came to worship the baby Jesus, we reenact the treasured Christmas story of the Savior's birth.

6 Our family celebrations at Easter, however, have been somewhat different. I feel our family has relied more on "going to church" to provide the meaningful, Christ-centered part of Easter; and then, as a family, we have gathered to share in other Easter-related traditions. I have loved watching our children and now

our grandchildren hunt for Easter eggs and dig through their Easter baskets.

7 But the First Presidency letter was a wake-up call. Not only did they invite all of us to make sure our celebration of the most important event to ever happen on this earth—the Atonement and Resurrection of Jesus Christ—includes the reverence and respect the Lord deserves, but they also gave us more time with our families and friends on Easter Sunday to do so.

8 These words of the Prophet Joseph Smith add additional context to the significance of the events surrounding Easter: "The fundamental principles of our religion are the testimony of the Apostles and Prophets, concerning Jesus Christ, that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven; and all other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it."<sup>2</sup>

9 Lesa and I have discussed ways that our family can do better during the Easter season. Perhaps the question we have asked ourselves is one we could all contemplate: How do we model the teaching and celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Easter story, with the same balance, fulness, and rich religious tradition of the birth of Jesus Christ, the Christmas story?

10 It seems we are all trying. I observe a growing effort among Latter-day Saints toward a more Christ-centered Easter. This includes a greater and more thoughtful recognition of Palm Sunday and Good Friday as practiced by some of our Christian cousins. We might also adopt appropriate Christ-centered Easter traditions found in the cultures and practices of countries worldwide.

11 New Testament scholar N. T. Wright suggested: "We should be taking steps to celebrate Easter in creative new ways: in art, literature, children's games, poetry, music, dance, festivals, bells, special concerts. ... This is our greatest

festival. Take Christmas away, and in biblical terms you lose two chapters at the front of Matthew and Luke, nothing else. Take Easter away, and you don't have a New Testament; you don't have a Christianity."<sup>3</sup>

**12 Easter, the Bible, and the Book of Mormon**

13 We cherish the Bible for all it teaches us about the birth, ministry, Crucifixion, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. No three words embody more hope and eternal consequence for all of humankind than those uttered by a heavenly angel on Easter morning at the Garden Tomb: "He is risen."<sup>4</sup> We are deeply grateful for New Testament scripture that preserves the story of Easter and the Savior's Easter ministry in Judea and Galilee.

14 As Lesa and I continued to ponder and seek ways to expand our family Easter celebration to be more Christ-centered, we discussed what scripture reading tradition we might introduce to our family—the Luke 2 equivalent for Easter, if you will.

15 And then we had this heavenly epiphany: In addition to the important verses about Easter in the New Testament, we as Latter-day Saints are endowed with a most remarkable Easter gift! A gift of unique witness, another testament of the Easter miracle that contains perhaps the most magnificent Easter scriptures in all of Christianity. I am referring of course to the Book of Mormon and, more specifically, to the account of Jesus Christ appearing to inhabitants in the New World in His resurrected glory.

16 The Prophet Joseph Smith described the Book of Mormon as "the most correct of any book,"<sup>5</sup> and beginning with 3 Nephi 11, it tells the magnificent story of the resurrected Christ's visit to the Nephites, the Savior's Easter ministry. These Easter scriptures bear record of the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

17 In these chapters, Christ calls twelve disciples, teaches as He did in His Sermon on the Mount, announces that He has fulfilled the law of Moses, and prophesies about the latter-day gathering of Israel. He heals the sick and prays for the people in such a glorious way that "no tongue can speak, neither

can there be written by any man, neither can the hearts of men conceive so great and marvelous things as we both saw and heard Jesus speak; and no one can conceive of the joy which filled our souls at the time we heard him pray for us unto the Father."<sup>6</sup>

18 This Easter, our family is going to focus on the first 17 verses of 3 Nephi 11, with which you are familiar. You recall the great multitude round about the temple in the land Bountiful who heard the voice of God the Father and saw Jesus Christ descending out of heaven to extend the most beautiful Easter invitation:

19 "Arise and come forth unto me, ... that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet, that ye may know that I am ... the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world.

20 "And ... the multitude went forth, ... one by one ... and did see with their eyes and did feel with their hands, ... and did bear record, that it was he. ...

21 "And ... they did cry out with one accord, saying:

22 "Hosanna! Blessed be the name of the Most High God! And they did fall down at the feet of Jesus, and did worship him."<sup>7</sup>

23 Imagine: the Nephites at the temple actually touched the hands of the risen Lord! We hope to make these chapters in 3 Nephi as much a part of our Easter tradition as Luke 2 is of our Christmas tradition. In reality, the Book of Mormon shares the greatest Easter story ever told. Let it not be the greatest Easter story never told.

24 I invite you to look at the Book of Mormon in a new light and consider the profound witness it bears of the reality of the risen Christ as well as the richness and depth of the doctrine of Christ.

**25 The Book of Mormon Testifies of Jesus Christ**

26 We might ask, How can reading Book of Mormon scriptures at Easter bless our lives and those of our loved ones in a meaningful way? More than one might realize. Anytime we read and study from the Book of Mormon, we can expect remarkable outcomes.

27 Recently, Lesa and I attended the viewing of a dear friend, a woman of faith whose life was cut short by illness. We gathered with her family and close friends, exchanging fond memories of this beautiful soul who had enriched our lives.

28 While standing away some distance from the casket, conversing with others, I noticed two young Primary-age girls approach the casket and stretch up on their tiptoes—eyes just reaching its edge—to pay their final respects to their beloved aunt. With no one else nearby, Lesa slipped over and crouched down beside them to offer comfort and teaching. She asked how they were doing and if they knew where their aunt was now. They shared their sadness, but then these precious daughters of God, with confidence brimming in their eyes, said they knew their aunt was now happy and she could be with Jesus.

29 At this tender age, they found peace in the great plan of happiness and, in their own childlike way, testified of the profound reality and simple beauty of the Resurrection of the Savior. They knew this in their hearts because of thoughtful teachings of loving parents, family, and Primary leaders planting a seed of faith in Jesus Christ and eternal life. Wise beyond their years, these young girls understood truths that come to us through the Easter message and ministry of the resurrected Savior and the words of the prophets as told in the Book of Mormon.

30 I have observed that when President Russell M. Nelson gives a gift of the Book of Mormon to someone not of our faith, including world leaders, he often turns to 3 Nephi and reads about the appearance of the resurrected Christ to the Nephites. In doing so, the living prophet is in essence bearing witness of the living Christ.

31 We cannot stand as witnesses of Jesus Christ until we can bear witness of Him. The Book of Mormon is another witness of Jesus Christ because throughout its sacred pages, one prophet after another testifies not only that Christ would come but that He did come.

#### 32 **Because of Him**

33 I am holding in my hand a copy of the first edition of the Book of Mormon.

Doing so always moves me. For much of my adult life, I have been fascinated, enthralled, and riveted with what young Joseph Smith did to get this sacred book of scripture translated and published. The miracles that had to occur are staggering to contemplate.

34 But that is not why this book moves me. It is because this book, more than any other ever published on this earth, bears witness of the life, the ministry, the teachings, the Atonement, and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. My dear brothers and sisters, studying regularly from this book about Jesus Christ will change your life. It will open your eyes to new possibilities. It will increase your hope and fill you with charity. Most of all, it will build and strengthen your faith in Jesus Christ and bless you with a sure knowledge that He and our Father know you, love you, and want you to find your way back home, with a capital H.

35 Dear brothers and sisters, the time has come, foretold by prophets of old, “when the knowledge of a Savior shall spread throughout every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.”<sup>8</sup> We are seeing the fulfillment of this prophecy before our very eyes, through the witness of Jesus Christ found in the Book of Mormon.

36 No book does more to show that:

37 Because of Jesus Christ, everything changed.

38 Because of Him, everything is better.

39 Because of Him, life is manageable—especially the painful moments.

40 Because of Him, everything is possible.

41 His visit as a resurrected Savior, introduced by God the Father, is a most glorious and triumphant Easter message. It will help our family members gain a personal testimony of Jesus Christ as our Savior and Redeemer, who broke the bands of death.

42 I close with my testimony of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon and of Jesus Christ as the Son of the living God. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. See First Presidency letter, Feb. 15, 2023.
2. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 49;

- emphasis added.
3. N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (2008), 256.
  4. Matthew 28:6.
  5. *Teachings of Joseph Smith*, 64.
  6. 3 Nephi 17:17.
  7. See 3 Nephi 11:1–17.
  8. Mosiah 3:20.



# A Living Prophet for the Latter Days

ELDER ALLEN D. HAYNIE

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*Father in Heaven has chosen the pattern of revealing truth to His children through a prophet.*

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- 1 When I was a young boy, I loved Saturday because everything I did on that day seemed like an adventure. But no matter what I did, it was always preceded by the most important thing of all—watching cartoons on television. One such Saturday morning, as I was standing by the television and flipping through channels, I discovered that the cartoon I expected to find had been replaced by a broadcast of the general conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. While looking at the television and lamenting that there was no cartoon, I saw a white-haired man in a suit and tie sitting in a nice chair.
- 2 There was something different about him, so I asked my oldest brother, “Who is that?”
- 3 He said, “That’s President David O. McKay; he’s a prophet.”
- 4 I remember feeling something and somehow knowing that he was a prophet. Then, because I was a cartoon-crazed young boy, I changed the channel. But I’ve never forgotten what I felt during that brief, unexpected revelatory moment. With a prophet, sometimes it only takes a moment to know.<sup>1</sup>
- 5 Knowing by revelation that there is a living prophet on the earth changes everything.<sup>2</sup> It causes one to be uninterested in the debate about when is a prophet speaking as a prophet or whether one is ever justified in selective rejection of prophetic counsel.<sup>3</sup> Such revealed knowledge invites one to trust the counsel of a living prophet, even if we do not fully understand it.<sup>4</sup> After all, a perfect and loving Father in Heaven has chosen the pattern of revealing truth to His children through a prophet, someone who never sought such a sacred calling and who has no need of our help to be aware of his own imperfections.<sup>5</sup> A prophet is someone God has personally prepared, called, corrected, inspired, rebuked, sanctified, and sustained.<sup>6</sup> That is why we are never spiritually at risk in following prophetic counsel.
- 6 Whether we like it or not, all of us were chosen in some fashion in the pre-earth life to be born in these latter days. There are two realities that are associated with the latter days. The first reality is that Christ’s Church will be reestablished on the earth. The second reality is that things are going to get really challenging. The scriptures reveal that in the last days there will be “a great hailstorm sent forth to destroy the crops of the earth,”<sup>7</sup> plagues,<sup>8</sup> “wars and rumors of wars, and the whole earth shall be in commotion, ... and iniquity shall abound.”<sup>9</sup>
- 7 When I was a child, those prophecies of the last days scared me and caused me to pray that the Second Coming would not come in my lifetime—with some success I might add so far. But now I pray for the opposite, even though the prophesied challenges are assured,<sup>10</sup> because when Christ returns to reign, all of His creations will “lie down safely.”<sup>11</sup>
- 8 Current conditions in the world have caused some to panic. As God’s covenant children, we do not need to chase after this or that to know how to navigate through these troubled times. We do not need to fear.<sup>12</sup> The doctrine and principles that we must follow to survive spiritually and endure physically are found in the words of a living prophet.<sup>13</sup> That is why President M. Russell Ballard declared that “it is no small thing ... to have a prophet of God in our midst.”<sup>14</sup>
- 9 President Russell M. Nelson has testified that “God’s long-established pattern of teaching His children through prophets assures us that He will bless each prophet and that He will bless those who heed prophetic counsel.”<sup>15</sup> So the key is to follow the living prophet.<sup>16</sup> Brothers and sisters, unlike vintage comic books and classic cars, prophetic teachings do not become more valuable with age. That is why we should not seek to use

- the words of past prophets to dismiss the teachings of living prophets.<sup>17</sup>
- 10 I love the parables used by Jesus Christ to teach gospel principles. I would like to share a real-life parable of sorts with you this morning.
- 11 One day I walked into the cafeteria at Church headquarters to have some lunch. After getting a tray of food, I entered the dining area and noticed a table at which all three members of the First Presidency were seated, along with one empty chair. My insecurities caused me to make a quick detour away from that table, and then I heard the voice of our prophet, President Russell M. Nelson, saying, "Allen, there's an empty chair right here. Come and sit down with us." And so I did.
- 12 Near the end of the lunch, I was surprised to hear a loud crunching noise, and when I looked up, I saw that President Nelson had stood his plastic water bottle straight up and then flattened it and replaced the lid.
- 13 President Dallin H. Oaks then asked the question I wanted to ask, "President Nelson, why did you flatten your plastic water bottle?"
- 14 He replied, "It makes it easier for those who are handling recyclable materials because it doesn't take up as much space in the recycling container."
- 15 While pondering that response, I heard the same crunching sound again. I looked to my right, and President Oaks had flattened his plastic water bottle just like President Nelson. I then heard some noise to my left, and President Henry B. Eyring was flattening his plastic water bottle, although he had adopted a different strategy by doing it while the bottle was horizontal, which took more effort than with the bottle straight up. Noticing this, President Nelson kindly showed him the bottle-straight-up technique to more easily flatten the bottle.
- 16 At that point, I leaned over to President Oaks and quietly asked, "Is flattening your plastic water bottle a new recycling requirement of the cafeteria?"
- 17 President Oaks responded, with a smile on his face, "Well, Allen, you need to follow the prophet."
- 18 I'm confident that President Nelson was not declaring some new recycling-based doctrine in the cafeteria that day. But we can learn from the prompt response<sup>18</sup> of President Oaks and President Eyring to President Nelson's example and President Nelson's attentiveness to help teach those involved a better way.<sup>19</sup>
- 19 A number of years ago, Elder Neal A. Maxwell shared some observations and counsel that are prophetically on point with respect to our day:
- 20 "In the months and years ahead, events are likely to require each member to decide whether or not he [or she] will follow the First Presidency. Members will find it more difficult to halt longer between two opinions. ...
- 21 "... Let us leave a record so that the choices are clear, letting others do as they will in the face of prophetic counsel. ...
- 22 "Jesus said that when the fig trees put forth their leaves, 'summer is nigh.' ... Thus warned that summer is upon us, let us not then complain of the heat!"<sup>20</sup>
- 23 The rising generation is growing up in a time when there are more fig leaves and there is more heat. That reality imposes a weightier responsibility on the already risen generation, particularly when it comes to following prophetic counsel. When parents ignore the counsel of the living prophet, they not only lose the promised blessings for themselves but even more tragically teach their children that what a prophet says is insignificant or that prophetic counsel can be picked through in a smorgasbord fashion without concern for the resulting spiritual malnutrition.
- 24 Elder Richard L. Evans once observed: "Some parents mistakenly feel that they can relax a little as to conduct and conformity ... that they can ease up a little on the fundamentals without affecting their family or their family's future. But if a parent goes a little off course, the children are likely to exceed the parent's example."<sup>21</sup>
- 25 As a generation that has the sacred charge to prepare the rising generation for its prophesied role in the latter days,<sup>22</sup> which role must be fulfilled in a time when the adversary's influence is at its peak,<sup>23</sup> we cannot be a source

of confusion about the importance of following prophetic counsel. It is that very counsel that will allow the rising generation to see “the enemy while he [is] yet afar off; and then [they can make] ready” to withstand the enemy’s attack.<sup>24</sup> Our seemingly small deviations, quiet neglect, or whispered criticisms in response to prophetic counsel may result in our only walking dangerously near the edge of the covenant path; but when magnified by the adversary in the lives of the rising generation, such actions may influence them to leave that path altogether. Such a result is a generational price that is too high.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Some of you may feel you have fallen short in your efforts to follow the counsel of President Russell M. Nelson. If that is the case, then repent; begin again to follow the counsel of God’s chosen prophet. Set aside the distraction of childish cartoons and trust the Lord’s anointed. Rejoice because once again “there is a prophet in Israel.”<sup>26</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Even if you are unsure, I witness that we can withstand the heat of the latter days and even thrive in them. We are the Saints of the latter days, and these are great days. We were anxious to come to the earth at this time, having confidence that we would not be left to stumble when confronted by the adversary’s increasingly darker and more confusing mists<sup>27</sup> but rather to take counsel and direction from he who is authorized to say to us and the entire world, “Thus saith the Lord God.”<sup>28</sup> In the sacred name of the prophet whom God raised up, the Holy One of Israel,<sup>29</sup> even Jesus Christ, amen.

1. President Russell M. Nelson recently invited the students at Brigham Young University to have the same personal revelatory experience: “Ask your Heavenly Father if we truly are the Lord’s apostles and prophets. Ask if we have received revelation on this and other matters” (“The Love and Laws of God” [Brigham Young University devotional, Sept. 17, 2019], [speeches.byu.edu](https://speeches.byu.edu)). See also Neil L. Andersen, “The Prophet of God,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2018, 26–27: “We have the privilege as Latter-day Saints to receive a personal witness that President Nelson’s call is from God.” The story

of Alma’s conversion from listening to the prophet Abinadi provides further evidence that revelation concerning a prophet is available to all of us (see *Mosiah* 13:5; 17:2).

2. “We either have a prophet or we have nothing; and having a prophet, we have everything” (Gordon B. Hinckley, “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1974, 122).
3. “They began to disbelieve in the spirit of prophecy and in the spirit of revelation; and the judgments of God did stare them in the face” (*Helaman* 4:23; see also *Doctrine and Covenants* 11:25). “We sing and have done so constantly, ‘We thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet to guide us in these latter days.’ There are a great many who [ought to] put a postscript to that and say: ‘Provided he guides us to suit our own fancies and our own whims’” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Heber J. Grant* [2002], 80).
4. “Sometimes we will receive counsel that we cannot understand or that seems not to apply to us, even after careful prayer and thought. Don’t discard the counsel, but hold it close. If someone you trusted handed you what appeared to be nothing more than sand with the promise that it contained gold, you might wisely hold it in your hand awhile, shaking it gently. Every time I have done that with counsel from a prophet, after a time the gold flakes have begun to appear and I have been grateful” (Henry B. Eyring, “Finding Safety in Counsel,” *Ensign*, May 1997, 26; see also *3 Nephi* 1:13; *Doctrine and Covenants* 1:14).
5. See *2 Nephi* 4:17–18. “Condemn me not because of mine imperfection, neither my father, because of his imperfection, ... but rather give thanks unto God that he hath made manifest unto you our imperfections, that ye may learn to be more wise than we have been” (*Mormon* 9:31).
6. See *Doctrine and Covenants* 3:6–8; see also *Doctrine and Covenants* 93:47.
7. *Doctrine and Covenants* 29:16.
8. See *Doctrine and Covenants* 84:97; see also *Doctrine and Covenants* 87:6.
9. *Doctrine and Covenants* 45:26, 27.
10. See *Doctrine and Covenants* 1:38.
11. *Hosea* 2:18. “For I will reveal myself

- from heaven with power and great glory, with all the hosts thereof, and dwell in righteousness with men on earth a thousand years, and the wicked shall not stand" (Doctrine and Covenants 29:11).
12. See 1 Nephi 22:16–17; see also Doctrine and Covenants 59:23.
  13. "For behold, they have rejected the words of the prophets. Wherefore, if my father should dwell in the land after he hath been commanded to flee out of the land, behold, he would also perish" (1 Nephi 3:18; see also 2 Nephi 26:3; Doctrine and Covenants 90:5).
  14. M. Russell Ballard, "His Word Ye Shall Receive," *Ensign*, May 2001, 65; *Liahona*, July 2001, 65.
  15. Russell M. Nelson, "Ask, Seek, Knock," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2009, 82. "No man can be more happy than by obeying the living prophet's counsel" (The Teachings of Lorenzo Snow, ed. Clyde J. Williams [1996], 86).
  16. "Keep your eye upon those who preside in the Church today, or tomorrow, and pattern your life after them rather than to dwell upon how ancient prophets may have looked or thought or spoken" (The Teachings of Harold B. Lee [1996], 525).
  17. President Spencer W. Kimball once observed that "they who garnish the sepulchers of the dead prophets begin now by stoning the living ones" (The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, ed. Edward L. Kimball [1982], 462). "The most important words we can hear, ponder, and follow are those revealed through our living prophet" (Ronald A. Rasband, "The Things of My Soul," *Liahona*, Nov. 2021, 40).
  18. "When we hear the counsel of the Lord expressed through the words of the President of the Church, our response should be positive and prompt" (M. Russell Ballard, "His Word Ye Shall Receive," *Ensign*, May 2001, 65; *Liahona*, July 2001, 65).
  19. "The Church of Jesus Christ has always been led by living prophets and apostles. Though mortal and subject to human imperfection, the Lord's servants are inspired to help us avoid obstacles that are spiritually life threatening and to help us pass safely through mortality to our final, ultimate, heavenly destination" (M. Russell Ballard, "God Is at the Helm," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 24).
  20. Neal A. Maxwell, "A More Determined Discipleship," *Ensign*, Feb. 1979, 69, 70.
  21. Richard L. Evans, "Foundations of a Happy Home," in Conference Report, Oct. 1964, 135–36.
  22. See Doctrine and Covenants 123:11; see also Robert D. Hales, "Our Duty to God: The Mission of Parents and Leaders to the Rising Generation," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2010, 95–98.
  23. See Doctrine and Covenants 52:14.
  24. Doctrine and Covenants 101:54.
  25. See Mosiah 26:1–4.
  26. 2 Kings 5:8.
  27. "Thou shalt give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, ... for by doing these things ... the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before you, and cause the heavens to shake for your good, and his name's glory" (Doctrine and Covenants 21:4, 6). "No man who ever followed the teachings or took advice or counsel from the one who stands as the representative of the Lord ever went astray" (Doctrines of Salvation: Sermons and Writings of Joseph Fielding Smith, ed. Bruce R. McConkie [1998], 243).
  28. Ezekiel 3:27. "For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith" (Doctrine and Covenants 21:5).
  29. See 1 Nephi 22:20–21; see also 3 Nephi 20:23.

# He Could Heal Me!

ELDER PETER F. MEURS

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*The Savior's healing and redeeming power applies to accidental mistakes, poor decisions, challenges, and trials of every kind—as well as to our sins.*

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- 1 Moroni promises that if we read the Book of Mormon and then ask God the Eternal Father, with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ if it is true, God will manifest its truth by the power of the Holy Ghost.<sup>1</sup> Millions of people have applied this promise and received an assuring witness of the Restoration of the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- 2 Moroni exhorts us, as we read the Book of Mormon, to “remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam even down until [this] time, ... and [to] ponder it in [our] hearts.”<sup>2</sup> The stories and teachings in the Book of Mormon remind us and testify of the Savior's love, compassion, and mercy.
- 3 My father passed away in April 2013. As I prepared to speak at his funeral, I realized how blessed I was to know and love his favorite scriptures. He shared them in family gatherings, and he read them with me when I needed counsel, guidance, or strengthening of my faith. I heard him share them in talks and assignments. I not only knew them, but I can still remember the sound of his voice and the spiritual feelings I had as he shared them. Through sharing scriptures and feelings, my father helped me to establish a firm foundation of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 4 My father particularly loved the account of the Savior's visit to the people of Nephi.<sup>3</sup> This sacred account is of the resurrected and exalted Lord Jesus Christ. He had drunk of the bitter cup and suffered all things so that we would not suffer if we would repent.<sup>4</sup> He had visited the spirit world and organized the preaching of the gospel there.<sup>5</sup> He had risen from the dead, and He had been with and received commandments from the Father to share scriptures with the Nephites that would bless future generations.<sup>6</sup> He was exalted and had all of His eternal power and capacity. We can learn from every detail of His teachings.
- 5 In 3 Nephi 11, we read how the Savior descended out of heaven to teach the Nephites that He was Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified would come into the world. He declared that He was the Light of the World and that He glorified the Father in taking on the sins of the world. He invited the people to come forth to put their hands into His side and to feel the prints of the nails in His hands and in His feet. He wanted them to know that He was the God of Israel, who was slain for the sins of the world. The people joyfully responded, going forth one by one until they had all seen and felt that it was truly He of whom it was written by the prophets that should come.<sup>7</sup>
- 6 Jesus taught the Nephites about the importance of repentance, about becoming as a little child, and about the need to be baptized by one having His authority. He then taught much of the doctrine that we are studying this year in the New Testament.
- 7 In 3 Nephi 17, we read that Jesus told the people it was time for Him to go unto the Father and also to show Himself unto the lost tribes of Israel.<sup>8</sup> As He cast His eyes on the multitude, He noticed that they were in tears, looking steadfastly upon Him as if they would ask Him to tarry a little longer.<sup>9</sup>
- 8 The Savior's response to the Nephites was both touching and instructive. He said, “Behold, my bowels are filled with compassion towards you.”<sup>10</sup>
- 9 I believe that His compassion was much more than a response to the people's tears. It seems that He could see them through the eyes of His atoning sacrifice. He saw their every pain, affliction, and temptation. He saw their sicknesses. He saw their infirmities, and He knew from His agonizing suffering in Gethsemane and on Golgotha how to succor them according to their infirmities.<sup>11</sup>

- 10 Similarly, when our Savior, Jesus Christ, looks upon us, He sees and understands the pain and burden of our sins. He sees our addictions and challenges. He sees our struggles and afflictions of any kind—and He is filled with compassion toward us.
  - 11 His gracious invitation to the Nephites followed: “Have ye any that are sick among you? Bring them hither. Have ye any that are lame, or blind, or halt, or maimed, or leprous, or that are withered, or that are deaf, or that are afflicted in any manner? Bring them hither and I will heal them, for I have compassion upon you; my bowels are filled with mercy.”<sup>12</sup>
  - 12 And the people came forth “with all them that were afflicted in any manner; and he did heal them every one as they were brought forth unto him.”<sup>13</sup>
  - 13 In 1990 we were living in the small town of Sale, in Victoria, Australia. We were happily busy with family, Church, and work commitments. On a beautiful summer Saturday just before Christmas, we decided to visit some parks and a favorite beach. After enjoying a wonderful day playing as a family, we packed everyone into the car and headed home. While driving, I momentarily fell asleep and caused a head-on car accident. After some moments of recovery, I looked around the vehicle. My wife, Maxine, had a badly broken leg and was struggling to breathe. She had a broken sternum. Our three daughters were in shock but thankfully appeared to be OK. I had some minor injuries. But our five-month-old son was unresponsive.
  - 14 Amid the stress and confusion of that accident scene, our eldest daughter, 11-year-old Kate, said with urgency, “Dad, you need to give Jarom a blessing.” After some struggle, my daughters and I managed to get out of the car. Maxine couldn’t be moved. Carefully I picked Jarom up; then, while lying on the ground on my back, I gently placed him on my chest and gave him a priesthood blessing. By the time the ambulance arrived about 40 minutes later, Jarom was conscious.
  - 15 That night I left three family members in the hospital and took a hushed taxi ride home with two of my daughters. Through the long night, I pled with Heavenly Father that my family and those injured in the other vehicle would recover. Mercifully, my prayers and fervently offered prayers by many others were answered. All were healed over time, a great blessing and tender mercy.
  - 16 Yet I continued to have deep feelings of guilt and remorse for causing such a terrible accident. I would wake during the night and relive the horrific events. I struggled for years to forgive myself and to find peace. Then, as a priesthood leader, while assisting others to repent and helping them to feel the compassion, mercy, and love of the Savior, I realized that He could heal me.
  - 17 The Savior’s healing and redeeming power applies to accidental mistakes, poor decisions, challenges, and trials of every kind—as well as to our sins. As I turned to Him, my feelings of guilt and remorse were gradually replaced with peace and rest.
  - 18 President Russell M. Nelson taught: “When the Savior atoned for all mankind, He opened a way that those who follow Him can have access to His healing, strengthening, and redeeming power. These spiritual privileges are available to all who seek to hear Him and follow Him.”<sup>14</sup>
  - 19 Brothers and sisters, whether you are carrying the burden of unresolved sin, suffering because of an offense committed against you long ago, or struggling to forgive yourself for an accidental mistake, you have access to the healing and redeeming power of the Savior Jesus Christ.
  - 20 I testify that He lives. He is our Savior and Redeemer. He loves us. He has compassion for us, He is filled with mercy, and He can heal you. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.
1. See Moroni 10:4.
  2. Moroni 10:3.
  3. See 3 Nephi 11–26.
  4. See Doctrine and Covenants 19:16–19.
  5. See Doctrine and Covenants 138:29–32.
  6. See 3 Nephi 26:2.
  7. See 3 Nephi 11:8, 10–11, 14–15.
  8. See 3 Nephi 17:4.
  9. See 3 Nephi 17:5.
  10. 3 Nephi 17:6.
  11. See Alma 7:11–12.
  12. 3 Nephi 17:7.
  13. 3 Nephi 17:9.
  14. Russell M. Nelson, “The Power of Spiritual Momentum,” *Liahona*, May 2022, 100.



# Trusting the Doctrine of Christ

ELDER EVAN A. SCHMUTZ

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*When we have built our houses on the foundation of a covenantal relationship with Christ, we are trusting the doctrine of Christ.*

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- 1 In my mind's eye, I see the aging prophet Nephi at his desk, the plates of gold spread before him, his stylus in hand.
- 2 Nephi was in the process of finishing his last engraving on the record. He wrote, "And now, my beloved brethren, I make an end of my sayings."<sup>1</sup> But soon after, the Spirit urged Nephi to return to his record and write a concluding message. Under the powerful influence of the Holy Ghost, that great prophet took his stylus again in hand and wrote, "Wherefore, the things ... I have written sufficeth me, save it be a few words ... I must speak concerning the doctrine of Christ."<sup>2</sup>
- 3 How eternally grateful we are for those "few words"<sup>3</sup> and for the Spirit compelling Nephi to write them. Nephi's treatise on the doctrine of Christ is a treasure to those who feast upon it. It contains a vision of the Savior's baptism<sup>4</sup> and the voice of the Son inviting all to follow Him<sup>5</sup> and "do the things which [we] have seen [Him] do."<sup>6</sup> It contains Nephi's witness that those who, with faith in Christ, sincerely repent of their sins and follow the Savior into the waters of baptism will "receive the Holy Ghost; yea, then cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost."<sup>7</sup> We also hear the voice of the Father bearing record: "Yea, the words of my Beloved are true and faithful. He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved."<sup>8</sup>
- 4 President Russell M. Nelson emphasized the singular importance of the doctrine of Christ during remarks to newly called mission leaders: "More than anything else, we want our missionaries ... to have the doctrine of Christ engraved in their hearts—rooted ... in the marrow of their bones."<sup>9</sup>
- 5 Preach My Gospel summarizes five important elements of the doctrine of Christ. It says, "[We] invite others to come unto Christ by helping them receive the restored gospel through faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement, repentance, baptism, receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end."<sup>10</sup>
- 6 But the importance of the doctrine of Christ is not just for missionaries! And it is much more profound than a mere summary repetition of its five key elements. It encompasses the law of the gospel. It is the great plan for eternal life.
- 7 Brothers and sisters, if we are to accept President Nelson's invitation to have the doctrine of Christ rooted in the marrow of our bones, we must deepen our conversion to the Lord by study, prayer, faithful living, and continual repentance. We must invite the Holy Ghost to engrave the doctrine of Christ in the "fleshy tables of [our] heart[s]"<sup>11</sup> as deeply and as permanently as it was engraved by Nephi upon the plates of gold.
- 8 Last October, President Nelson asked, "What does it mean to overcome the world?" Among other things, he said, "It means trusting the doctrine of Christ more than the philosophies of men."<sup>12</sup>
- 9 The word trust is defined as an "assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something."<sup>13</sup> That someone is Jesus Christ, and that something is His doctrine.
- 10 So how would intentionally trusting the doctrine of Christ change the way we live our lives?
- 11 If we trust the doctrine of Christ, we will trust Christ enough to live by His every word.<sup>14</sup> We will make a lifelong study of Jesus Christ,<sup>15</sup> His ministry, His teachings, and His infinite Atonement, including His glorious Resurrection. We will study His promises and the conditions upon which those promises are given.<sup>16</sup> As we study, we will be filled with greater love for the Lord.
- 12 If we trust the doctrine of Christ, we will approach our Heavenly Father every day

in humble, secret prayer, where we can express gratitude for the gift of His Son and for all of our blessings.<sup>17</sup> We can pray for the revelatory companionship of the Holy Ghost,<sup>18</sup> pray to align our will with His,<sup>19</sup> pray to reflect upon our covenants and renew our commitment to keep them.<sup>20</sup> We can pray to sustain and express love for our prophets, seers, and revelators;<sup>21</sup> pray for the cleansing power of forgiveness;<sup>22</sup> and pray for the strength to resist temptation.<sup>23</sup> I invite you to make prayer a priority in your life, seeking each day to improve your communication with God.

<sup>13</sup> If we trust the doctrine of Christ, we will set aside the shiny things of the world so that we can focus on the Redeemer of the world.<sup>24</sup> We will limit or eliminate time spent on social media; digital games; wasteful, excessive, or inappropriate entertainment; the allure of this world's treasures and vanities; and any other activities that give place to the false traditions and misguided philosophies of men. It is only in Christ we find truth and lasting fulfillment.

<sup>14</sup> Sincere repentance<sup>25</sup> will become a joyful<sup>26</sup> part of our lives—both to be forgiven for sin and to be changed in the image of Christ.<sup>27</sup> Repentance with faith in Christ gives us access to the Atonement of Christ. President Dallin H. Oaks has taught that when the Savior forgives, He “does more than cleanse [us] from sin. He also gives [us] new strength.”<sup>28</sup> Each one of us needs this strength to keep the commandments of God and to fulfill the eternal purpose of our lives.

<sup>15</sup> In Jesus and in His doctrine, we find strength. He said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and whoso buildeth upon this buildeth upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them.”<sup>29</sup>

<sup>16</sup> We see this promise fulfilled in the lives of faithful people. It was a little over a year ago that I was privileged to meet Travis and Kacie. They were married civilly in 2007. At the time, Travis was not a member of the Church. Kacie, though raised in an active Latter-day Saint home, had drifted from her faith in her teens and had strayed from her foundation.

<sup>17</sup> In 2018, Travis met the missionaries, and he was baptized in 2019. Travis

became a missionary to Kacie, who also experienced a life-changing conversion. They were sealed in the temple in September 2020. About two years after his baptism, Travis was called to serve in the bishopric.

<sup>18</sup> Travis has a rare disease that continuously forms clusters of tumors in his internal organs. He has undergone many surgeries to remove the recurring tumors, but the disease is incurable. Several years ago, Travis was given fewer than 10 years to live.

<sup>19</sup> Kacie has retinitis pigmentosa, a rare genetic disease that causes irreversible narrowing of the field of vision until complete blindness sets in.

<sup>20</sup> Kacie spoke to me of her future. She anticipated the time, not far distant, when she would be widowed, blind, without financial support, and left alone to raise four growing children. I asked Kacie how she could handle such a bleak future. She smiled peacefully and said, “I have never been happier or more hopeful in my life. We hold to the promises we received in the temple.”

<sup>21</sup> Travis is now the bishop. Two months ago he had another major surgery. But he is optimistic and peaceful. Kacie's vision has worsened. She now has a guide dog and is unable to drive. But she is content, raising her children and serving as a counselor in the Young Women presidency.

<sup>22</sup> Travis and Kacie are building their house on the rock. Travis and Kacie trust the doctrine of Christ and the promise that God “shall consecrate [their] afflictions for [their] gain.”<sup>30</sup> In God's perfect plan, suffering with faith in Christ is linked to our becoming perfected in Christ.<sup>31</sup> Like the wise man in the parable who built his house upon a rock,<sup>32</sup> when the rain descends and the floods come and the winds blow and beat upon the house Travis and Kacie are building, it will fall not, for it will be founded upon a rock.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Jesus did not speak of the possibility of rain and flood and wind in our lives; He spoke of the certainty that storms will arise. The variable in this parable is not whether storms will come but how we have responded to His loving invitation to both hear and do what He has taught.<sup>34</sup> There is no other way to



survive.

24 When we have built our houses on the foundation of a covenantal relationship with Christ, we are trusting the doctrine of Christ, and as we come unto Him, we have His promise of eternal life. People who trust the doctrine of Christ press forward with steadfastness in Christ and endure to the end. There is no other way to be saved in the kingdom of heaven.<sup>35</sup>

25 I bear my personal witness of the living, resurrected reality of Jesus Christ. I testify that God our Father so loved the world He sent His Son to redeem us from sin<sup>36</sup> and heal us from sorrow.<sup>37</sup> I testify that He has called a prophet of God in our time, even President Russell M. Nelson, through whom He speaks and guides us.

26 With all my heart, I invite you to trust the doctrine of Christ and build your lives upon the rock of the Redeemer. He will never fail you. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. 2 Nephi 30:18.
2. 2 Nephi 31:2; *emphasis added*.
3. See 2 Nephi 31–32.
4. See 2 Nephi 31:7–8.
5. See 2 Nephi 31:10.
6. 2 Nephi 31:12.
7. 2 Nephi 31:13.
8. 2 Nephi 31:15.
9. In Marianne Holman Prescott, “Elder Russell M. Nelson: ‘Epistles of the Lord,’” *Church News*, July 1, 2015, [thechurchnews.com](http://thechurchnews.com).
10. *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2018), 1. The “missionary purpose” reflects the five elements of the doctrine of Christ. The teaching of 2 Nephi 31–32 includes several other important elements that are part of the doctrine of Christ, such as holding fast to the word of Christ (see 2 Nephi 31:19–20; 32:3); keeping commandments (see 2 Nephi 31:7, 10, 18); prayer (see 2 Nephi 32:8–9); and at its very core, the doctrine that Christ’s atoning sacrifice is the only way whereby we can be saved (see 2 Nephi 31:21). Elements of the doctrine of Christ are found throughout the scriptures, although the most thorough discussions of the doctrine are found in 2 Nephi 31:5–21, 3 Nephi 11:31–39, 3 Nephi 27:13–21, and Moses 6:59–62.
11. 2 Corinthians 3:3.

12. Russell M. Nelson, “Overcome the World and Find Rest,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2022, 96; *emphasis added*.
13. Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, “trust.”
14. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:44.
15. See Matthew 11:29.
16. See Russell M. Nelson, “Drawing the Power of Jesus Christ into Our Lives,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2017, 39: “We begin by learning about Him. ... The more we know about the Savior’s ministry and mission—the more we understand His doctrine and what He did for us. ... I [invite you] to let the scriptural citations about Jesus Christ in the Topical Guide become [your] personal core curriculum.”
17. See Matthew 6:6–13.
18. See 3 Nephi 19:9.
19. See 2 Nephi 4:35; 3 Nephi 19:24; Doctrine and Covenants 46:30.
20. See Russell M. Nelson, “The Temple and Your Spiritual Foundation,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2021, 95: “I invite you to set a regular time to rehearse in your mind the covenants you have made.”
21. See Doctrine and Covenants 107:22.
22. See Mosiah 4:10.
23. See Matthew 6:13.
24. See Matthew 6:19–21, 33.
25. King Benjamin described sincere repentance: “And again, believe that ye must repent of your sins and forsake them, and humble yourselves before God; and ask in sincerity of heart that he would forgive you; and now, if you believe all these things see that ye do them” (Mosiah 4:10).
26. See Russell M. Nelson, “The Power of Spiritual Momentum,” *Liahona*, May 2022, 98–99: “Start today to experience the joy of putting off the natural man. The Savior loves us always but especially when we repent. ... Experience the joy and relief of repenting.”
27. See Alma 5:14–15.
28. Dallin H. Oaks, “Our Message for Missionaries” (worldwide missionary broadcast, Jan. 20, 2016); see also Dallin H. Oaks, “Sin and Suffering,” *Ensign*, July 1992, 73.
29. 3 Nephi 11:39; *emphasis added*.
30. 2 Nephi 2:2.
31. See Hebrews 5:8–9.
32. See 3 Nephi 14:24–27.
33. See 3 Nephi 14:24–25.
34. See 3 Nephi 14:24.
35. See 2 Nephi 31:20–21.
36. See John 3:16–17.
37. See John 16:20.



# The Work of the Temple and Family History—One and the Same Work

ELDER BENJAMÍN DE HOYOS

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*A central focus of the plan of our Heavenly Father is uniting family for this life and for eternity.*

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- 1 I am so grateful for the ongoing building of temples in this “dispensation of the fulness of times” (Doctrine and Covenants 128:18). Since the early days of the Restoration, faithful Saints have made many sacrifices to receive temple ordinances and covenants. Following their great example, in 1975, after many economic sacrifices to travel from Mexico City, my dear wife, Evelia, and I, being accompanied by our dear parents, were sealed as an eternal husband and wife in the Mesa Arizona Temple. That day, as we were united by the authority of the priesthood in the house of the Lord, we truly experienced a glimpse of heaven.
- 2 **The Work and Purpose of Temples**
- 3 That experience has permitted me to appreciate much better how, after three years of hard work and great sacrifice, the Saints in Kirtland, Ohio, finally completed their beautiful temple in the spring of 1836—the first in this dispensation. In March of that same year, over a thousand people gathered in the temple and at its entrances for the dedicatory service. The Prophet Joseph Smith arose to offer the dedicatory prayer, which he had received by revelation (see Doctrine and Covenants 109). In it he described many of the extraordinary blessings that are bestowed upon those who worthily enter the temples of the Lord. Then the choir sang the hymn “The Spirit of God,” and the congregation stood and gave the Hosanna Shout “with such [force that it] seemed ... to raise the roof from the building” (Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith [2007], 307).
- 4 One week later the Prophet described the appearance of the Lord in the temple, who said:
- 5 “For behold, I have accepted this house, and my name shall be here; and I will manifest myself to my people in mercy in this house. ...
- 6 “And the fame of this house shall spread to foreign lands; and this is the beginning of the blessing which shall be poured out upon the heads of my people” (Doctrine and Covenants 110:7, 10).
- 7 After this and other visions, Elijah the prophet, who was taken to heaven without tasting death, appeared before the Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and said:
- 8 “Behold, the time has fully come, which was spoken of by the mouth of Malachi—testifying that he [Elijah] [the prophet] should be sent, before the great and dreadful day of the Lord come—
- 9 “To turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse—
- 10 “Therefore, the keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands; and by this ye may know that the great and dreadful day of the Lord is near, even at the doors” (Doctrine and Covenants 110:14–16).
- 11 **The Temple and Family History**
- 12 After the Lord restored the sealing keys to Joseph Smith, the work of salvation on both sides of the veil began in our dispensation (see 1 Corinthians 15:22, 29; Doctrine and Covenants 128:8–18).
- 13 President Boyd K. Packer taught that “this signal event went unheeded by the world, but it would influence the destiny of every soul who has ever lived or will live. Things began quietly to happen. The Church became a temple-building church.
- 14 “In the world there emerged here and there, in a way thought to be

spontaneous, people and organizations and societies interested in tracing genealogies. This has all taken place since the appearance of Elijah in the Kirtland Temple" (The Holy Temple [1980], 141).

15 "From that very day, April 3, 1836, the hearts of the children began to turn to their fathers. Thereafter ordinances were not tentative, but permanent. The sealing power was with us. No authorization transcends it in value. That power gives substance and eternal permanence to all ordinances performed with proper authority for both the living and the dead" (Preparing to Enter the Holy Temple [2002], 28).

16 Dear brothers and sisters, the construction and proper use of temples has been in any dispensation a sign of the true Church of Jesus Christ. After the dedication of the Salt Lake Temple in 1893, President Wilford Woodruff encouraged the members of the Church to find the records of their ancestors and to record their genealogy by going as far back as possible in order to bring the names into the temple and perform the ordinances of salvation and exaltation (see Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Wilford Woodruff [2004], 174).

#### 17 **Family History and Temple Work—One Work**

18 One year later (1894), the same President Woodruff oversaw the creation of the Genealogical Society of Utah. One hundred years later, in 1994, Elder Russell M. Nelson, then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, said, "Events of that historic year established family history research and temple service as one work in the Church" ("The Spirit of Elijah," Ensign, Nov. 1994, 85).

#### 19 **Family History Work**

20 Dear brothers and sisters, the Lord encourages us as members of His Church to preserve our own family history, to learn from our ancestors, and to make the necessary arrangements for them to receive the ordinances of the gospel in the temples to help them to progress along the covenant path, which will bless them with an eternal family. That is a central focus of the plan of our Heavenly Father: uniting family for this life and for eternity.

21 To those of you who do not feel capable of doing this work, you should know that you are not alone. We can all turn to the tools that the Church has prepared and that are found in the FamilySearch centers, which we used to know as family history centers. These FamilySearch centers have been designed so that almost everyone, with little help, can find their ancestors' information and organize it properly so that they can take it to the house of the Lord. Please contact the family history consultants in your ward or branch, who will guide you every step of the way.

22 As we follow the guidance of the prophets and learn how to do our family history and perform the temple ordinances for our ancestors, we will experience great joy to the point that we will not want to stop doing it. The Spirit will flood our hearts, awaken our faculties to do it, and guide us as we search for the names of our ancestors. But let us remember that family history is more than just looking for names, dates, and places. It is uniting families and feeling the joy that comes from extending to them the ordinances of the gospel.

23 I love the inspired teaching of our beloved prophet, President Russell M. Nelson, who has said: "The temple lies at the center of strengthening our faith and spiritual fortitude because the Savior and His doctrine are the very heart of the temple. Everything taught in the temple, through instruction and through the Spirit, increases our understanding of Jesus Christ. His essential ordinances bind us to Him through sacred priesthood covenants. Then, as we keep our covenants, He endows us with His healing, strengthening power" ("The Temple and Your Spiritual Foundation," Liahona, Nov. 2021, 93–94).

24 Certainly, the work of the temple and family history are one and the same work in the Church.

25 I testify to these truths. I know this is the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, whom we remember and venerate at this Easter time. I know He loves us, and when we keep our covenants and put our confidence in Him, He endows us with His healing and strengthening power. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

# Focus on Jesus Christ

BROTHER MILTON CAMARGO

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*The Lord Jesus Christ is the solution to our problems, but we must lift our eyes and raise our sights to see Him.*

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- 1 My father used to tell me, “Don’t focus so intensely on your problems that you can’t see the solution.”
  - 2 I testify that the Lord Jesus Christ is the solution to even our most difficult problems. Specifically, He has overcome four problems that every one of us faces and that not one of us can solve on our own:
  - 3 The first problem is physical death. We can try to delay it or ignore it, but we can’t overcome it on our own. Jesus Christ, however, overcame death for us, and as a consequence, we will all be resurrected one day.<sup>1</sup>
  - 4 The second problem includes the tribulations, difficult experiences, sadness, pain, and unfairness of this world. Jesus Christ overcame all of this. For those who strive to follow Him, He will one day “wipe away all tears” and make things right again.<sup>2</sup> In the meantime, He can strengthen us to pass through our trials with confidence, good cheer, and peace.<sup>3</sup>
  - 5 The third problem is spiritual death arising from sin. Jesus Christ overcame this problem by taking upon Himself “the chastisement of our peace.”<sup>4</sup> Because of His atoning sacrifice, we can be freed from the consequences of our sins if we have faith in the Savior, sincerely repent, accept the covenant the Father offers us through essential ordinances such as baptism, and endure to the end.<sup>5</sup>
  - 6 The fourth problem is our limited, imperfect natures. Jesus Christ has the solution to this problem too. He doesn’t just erase our errors and make us innocent again. He can work “a mighty change in ... our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually.”<sup>6</sup> We can be perfected by the grace of Christ and one day become like Him.<sup>7</sup>
  - 7 Unfortunately, too often we concentrate so much on our own problems that we lose focus on the solution, our Savior, Jesus Christ. How do we avoid that mistake? I believe the answer lies in the covenants we are invited to make with Him and our Father in Heaven.
- ## 8 Focusing on Jesus Christ through Covenants
- 9 Our covenants help us focus our attention, our thoughts, and our actions on Christ. As we “cleave unto the covenants [we have] made,” we can more easily identify “the things of this world” that we should “lay aside” and “the things of a better [world]” we should diligently seek.<sup>8</sup>
  - 10 That’s what the people of Ammon did in the Book of Mormon. As they learned of Jesus Christ and began to focus their lives on Him, they recognized that they should bury their weapons of war and became perfectly honest and “distinguished for their zeal towards God.”<sup>9</sup>
  - 11 Covenant keeping leads us to seek after whatever invites the influence of the Spirit and reject whatever drives it away—“for we know that if we can be worthy of the presence of the Holy Ghost, we can also be worthy to live in the presence of Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.”<sup>10</sup> This may mean that we have to change our vocabulary, using kinder words. It could mean replacing spiritually unhealthy habits with new habits that strengthen our relationship with the Lord, such as daily prayer and scripture study, individually and with our family.
  - 12 President Russell M. Nelson said that “each person who makes covenants in baptismal fonts and in temples—and keeps them—has increased access to the power of Jesus Christ. ...
  - 13 “The reward for keeping covenants with God is heavenly power—power that strengthens us to withstand our trials, temptations, and heartaches better.”<sup>11</sup>

- 14 Renewing our covenants during the sacrament each Sunday is a great opportunity to examine ourselves<sup>12</sup> and refocus our lives on Jesus Christ. By partaking of the sacrament, we declare that we do “always remember him.”<sup>13</sup> The word always is so significant. It extends the Savior’s influence into every part of our lives. We don’t remember Him only at church or only during our morning prayers or only when we’re in trouble and we need something.
- 15 Yes, we sometimes get distracted. We forget. We lose our focus. But renewing our covenants means that we want to always remember the Savior, that we will try to do so throughout the week, and that we will recommit and refocus on Him again at the sacrament table next week.
- 16 **Focusing on Jesus Christ in Our Homes**
- 17 Clearly, focusing on Jesus Christ must be more than a Sunday, at-church activity. When President Nelson introduced Come, Follow Me in 2018, he said, “It is time for a home-centered Church.”<sup>14</sup> He said we should “transform [our] home into a sanctuary of faith” and “a center of gospel learning.” And he made four wonderful promises to us if we do.<sup>15</sup>
- 18 *The first promise:* “Your Sabbath days will truly be a delight.” It will become a day when we draw closer to our Savior. As a young woman from Peru said, “The Lord’s day is the day I get the most answers from the Lord.”
- 19 *The second promise:* “Your children will be excited to learn and to live the Savior’s teachings.” That is why “we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, ... that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins.”<sup>16</sup>
- 20 We do this so that one day, when our son goes out to work or to hike in the mountains or to hunt beasts in the forests, as Enos did, he may remember what we taught him about Christ and about the joy of living the gospel. And who knows? Maybe this will be the day when he will finally feel the spiritual hunger that turns him to Jesus Christ so he can hear the voice of the Lord saying to him, “Thy sins are forgiven thee, and thou shalt be blessed.”<sup>17</sup>
- 21 *The third promise:* “The influence of the adversary in your life and in your home will decrease.” Why? Because the more we focus on Jesus Christ, the more sin loses its appeal.<sup>18</sup> As our homes are filled with the Savior’s light, there is less and less room for the darkness of the adversary.
- 22 *The fourth promise:* “Changes in your family will be dramatic and sustaining.” Why? Because the change that Jesus Christ brings is “a mighty change.”<sup>19</sup> He changes our very natures; we become “new creatures.”<sup>20</sup> We gradually become more like the Savior, filled with His pure love for all of God’s children.
- 23 Who wouldn’t want these promises fulfilled in their lives and in their families? What do we need to do to obtain them? The answer is to transform our homes into a sanctuary of faith and a center of gospel learning. And how do we do that? By focusing on Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, making Them the center of our family life, the most important influence in our home.
- 24 Could I suggest that you begin by making the words of Christ, found in the scriptures, a daily part of your life? There is no prescribed formula for perfect scripture study. It could be 5 or 10 minutes each day—or more if you can. It could be a chapter or a few verses a day. Some families prefer to study in the morning before they leave for school or work. Others prefer to read at night before bed. Some young couples have told me that they study individually on the way to work and then share insights with each other via text so their comments and discussions are recorded.
- 25 *Come, Follow Me* provides many suggestions of activities and resources that can help individuals and families learn gospel principles from the scriptures. The Bible videos and the Book of Mormon videos can also be valuable tools to make the scriptures more accessible to your family. Youth and children are often inspired by the memorable stories in the scriptures. These stories and the gospel principles they teach will stay with your children, like trusted friends, when they need good examples of service, virtue, obedience, patience, perseverance, personal revelation, charity, humility, and faith in Jesus Christ. Over time, your

consistency in feasting on the word of God will help your children grow closer and closer to the Savior. They will come to know Him as never before.

26 The Lord Jesus Christ lives today. He can be an active, daily presence in our lives. He is the solution to our problems, but we must lift our eyes and raise our sights to see Him. He has said, "Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not."<sup>21</sup> As we focus on Him and our Father in Heaven, make and keep covenants with Them, and make Them the most important influence in our home and family, we will become the kind of people President Nelson envisioned: "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."<sup>22</sup> In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. See 1 Corinthians 15:21–22.
2. Revelation 21:4.
3. See Matthew 11:28–30; John 16:33.

4. Isaiah 53:5.
5. See 2 Nephi 31:10–13, 15–17.
6. Mosiah 5:2.
7. See Moroni 10:32.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 25:10, 13.
9. Alma 27:27; see also Alma 24:17–18.
10. "Conversion Is Our Goal," Come, Follow Me—For Individuals and Families: New Testament 2023, v.
11. Russell M. Nelson, "Overcome the World and Find Rest," *Liahona*, Nov. 2022, 96.
12. See 1 Corinthians 11:28.
13. Moroni 4:3; 5:2.
14. Russell M. Nelson, "Opening Remarks," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 7.
15. See Russell M. Nelson, "Becoming Exemplary Latter-day Saints," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 113.
16. 2 Nephi 25:26.
17. Enos 1:5.
18. See Mosiah 5:2; Alma 13:11–12.
19. See Alma 5:12–14.
20. See Mosiah 27:25–26.
21. Doctrine and Covenants 6:36.
22. Russell M. Nelson, "Overcome the World and Find Rest," 98.





# When to Receive Your Patriarchal Blessing

ELDER KAZUHIKO YAMASHITA

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*When you receive your blessing, you will realize and feel how Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ love you and how They focus on you individually.*

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- 1 Yesterday my dear friend Elder Randall K. Bennett talked about patriarchal blessings. It was a great message and inspired us all. My dear brothers and sisters, may I talk about patriarchal blessings as well? Patriarchs, as requests for patriarchal blessings may increase, I pray that the Lord will bless you as you continue to magnify your calling.
- 2 As I go to stake conferences, I always visit with the stake patriarch and his spouse. Patriarchs are gentle, obedient, and incredible leaders called of God. They tell me many wonderful spiritual experiences. I ask them the age of the youngest and the oldest person to whom they have given a blessing. So far the youngest was 11, and the oldest was 93.
- 3 I received my patriarchal blessing as a new member of the Church, at age 19, two years after I was baptized. My patriarch was incredibly old. He joined the Church in 1916 and was a pioneer of the Church in Japan. It was my great honor to receive my patriarchal blessing from that remarkable disciple of the Lord. His Japanese was a bit difficult for me to understand, but it was powerful.
- 4 The patriarchs I have met tell me that many individuals receive their patriarchal blessings just before serving a mission. My dear young men, young women, parents, and bishops, patriarchal blessings are not only for preparation to serve a mission. Worthy baptized members may receive their patriarchal blessing when the time is right for them.<sup>1</sup>
- 5 Dear adult members, some of you have not yet received your patriarchal blessings. Remember, there is no maximum age.
- 6 My mother-in-law was a very active Church member, serving as a Relief Society teacher until she passed away at age 91. I was sad to learn that she did not receive a patriarchal blessing. She experienced many difficulties in her life, and because she did not have a priesthood holder in the home, she did not receive many priesthood blessings. A patriarchal blessing may have given her comfort when she needed it most.
- 7 Adults, if you have not yet received a patriarchal blessing, please do not worry! Everyone's spiritual timeline is different. If you are 35 or 85 and you have a desire, talk to your bishop about receiving your blessing.
- 8 New members of the Church, have you heard of patriarchal blessings? I didn't know about the opportunity to receive one when I joined the Church, but my beloved bishop told me about patriarchal blessings and encouraged me to prepare to receive mine after I was baptized. My dear new members, you can receive a patriarchal blessing as well. The Lord will help you prepare for this sacred opportunity.
- 9 Let's consider two purposes for a patriarchal blessing:
  - 10 A patriarchal blessing contains personal counsel from the Lord to you.<sup>2</sup>
  - 11 A patriarchal blessing declares your lineage in the house of Israel.
- 12 Your patriarchal blessing is a message from your Heavenly Father and will likely include promises and inspired counsel to guide you throughout your life. A patriarchal blessing is not going to map out your life or answer all your questions. If it doesn't mention an important life event, do not take that to mean you won't have that opportunity. Likewise, there is no guarantee everything in your blessing will come to pass in this life. A patriarchal blessing is eternal, and if you live worthy, promises that are not

fulfilled in this life will be granted in the next.<sup>3</sup>

13 As you receive a declaration of lineage, you will come to know that you are of the house of Israel and the seed of Abraham.<sup>4</sup> To understand the significance of this, focus on the promises the Lord made to the house of Israel through Abraham.

14 Those promises include:

15 “His posterity would be numerous (see Genesis 17:5–6; Abraham 2:9; 3:14).

16 “His seed, or descendants, would receive the gospel and bear the priesthood (see Abraham 2:9).

17 “Through the ministry of his seed, ‘all the families of the earth [would] be blessed, even with the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal’ (Abraham 2:11).”<sup>5</sup>

18 As members of the Church, we are children of the covenant.<sup>6</sup> We receive the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant as we obey the laws and ordinances of the gospel.

19 Preparation for your patriarchal blessing will help you increase your faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. And when you receive your patriarchal blessing and read and ponder it, you can focus on Them more often.

20 President Thomas S. Monson explained, “The same Lord who provided a Liahona for Lehi provides for you and for me today a rare and valuable gift to give direction to our lives, to mark the hazards to our safety, and to chart the way, even safe passage—not to a promised land, but to our heavenly home.”<sup>7</sup>

21 My dear bishops, parents, elders quorum and Relief Society presidents, ward mission leaders, ministering brothers and sisters, please encourage those young men and young women, adult members, and new members who have not yet received their patriarchal blessing to seek the Lord’s direction and help in preparing themselves to do so.

22 I frequently and prayerfully read my patriarchal blessing; it always gives me encouragement. I recognize what the Lord expects of me, and it has helped

me to repent and be humble. When I read and ponder it, I desire to live worthy of receiving its promised blessings.

23 Just as scriptures we have read many times have new meaning to us later, our patriarchal blessing will have a different meaning to us at different times. Mine has a different meaning now than it did when I was 30 and when I was 50. It is not that the words change, but we see them in a different way.

24 President Dallin H. Oaks declared that a patriarchal blessing “is given under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and should be read and interpreted under the influence of that same Spirit. The meaning and significance of a patriarchal blessing will be taught line upon line in the course of time by the power of the same Spirit that inspired [it].”<sup>8</sup>

25 Brothers and sisters, I bear my witness that Heavenly Father and His Beloved and Only Begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, live. They love us. Patriarchal blessings are sacred gifts from Them. When you receive your blessing, you will realize and feel how They love you and how They focus on you individually.

26 The Book of Mormon is another testament of Jesus Christ. And I am grateful to be led by a living prophet, President Russell M. Nelson.

27 I am so grateful for our Savior, Jesus Christ. This Easter Sunday I will focus on Him and His Resurrection and worship Him and give thanks for His sacrifice. I know He suffered so deeply because He loves us so deeply. I know He was resurrected because of His love for us. He is real. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. See *General Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 18.17, [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org).
2. See “Patriarchal Blessings,” in *True to the Faith* (2004), 112.
3. See “Patriarchal Blessings,” in *True to the Faith*, 113.
4. See Abraham 2:10.
5. “Abrahamic Covenant,” in *True to the Faith*, 5.
6. See 3 Nephi 20:25–26.
7. Thomas S. Monson, “Your Patriarchal Blessing: A Liahona of Light,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 65.
8. Dallin H. Oaks, “Patriarchal Blessings,” *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting: The Patriarch*, Jan. 8, 2005, 10.

# A Voice of Gladness!

ELDER KEVIN R. DUNCAN

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*The building of temples has been one of the highest priorities of all prophets since the Prophet Joseph Smith.*

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- 1 "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; ... a voice of gladness for the living and the dead; glad tidings of great joy."<sup>1</sup>
- 2 Brothers and sisters, it is almost impossible to hear these words from the Prophet Joseph Smith and not break out into a great big smile!
- 3 Joseph's jubilant expression truly captures the full and majestic joy found in God our Heavenly Father's great plan of happiness, for He has assured us, "Men are, that they might have joy."<sup>2</sup>
- 4 We all shouted for joy<sup>3</sup> in our premortal life when we heard God's plan of happiness, and we continue to shout for joy here as we live according to His plan. But what exactly was the context for this happy declaration from the Prophet? What spurred these deep and heartfelt emotions?
- 5 The Prophet Joseph had been teaching about baptism for the dead. This was indeed a glorious revelation that was received with great joy. When Church members first learned that they could be baptized for their deceased loved ones, they rejoiced. Wilford Woodruff said, "The moment I heard of it, my soul leaped [for] joy!"<sup>4</sup>
- 6 Baptism for our deceased loved ones wasn't the only truth the Lord would reveal and restore. There were a host of other gifts, or endowments, that God had been eager to bestow upon His sons and daughters.
- 7 These other gifts included priesthood authority, covenants and ordinances, marriages that could last forever, the sealing of children to their parents within the family of God, and ultimately the blessing of returning home to the presence of God, our Heavenly Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ. All these blessings were made possible through the Atonement of Jesus Christ.
- 8 Because God considered these to be among His highest and holiest blessings,<sup>5</sup> He instructed that sacred buildings be erected where He could confer these precious gifts upon His children.<sup>6</sup> These buildings would be His home on earth. These buildings would be temples where that which was sealed or bound on earth in His name, by His word, and with His authority would be bound in the heavens.<sup>7</sup>
- 9 As members of the Church today, some of us may find it easy to take these glorious eternal truths for granted. They have become second nature to us. Sometimes it is helpful when we see them through the eyes of those who learn about them for the very first time. This became evident to me through a recent experience.
- 10 Last year, just prior to the rededication of the Tokyo Japan Temple, many guests not of our faith toured that temple. One such tour included a thoughtful leader from another religion. We taught our guest about Heavenly Father's plan of happiness, Jesus Christ's redeeming role in that plan, and the doctrine that families can be united eternally through the sealing ordinance.
- 11 At the conclusion of the tour, I invited our friend to share his feelings. In reference to the uniting of families—past, present, and future—this good man asked in all sincerity, "Do the members of your faith truly understand just how profound this doctrine is?" He added, "This may well be one of the only teachings that can unite this world that is so divided."
- 12 What a powerful observation. This man was not moved simply by the exquisite craftsmanship of the temple but rather by the stunning and profound doctrine that families are united and sealed to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ forever.<sup>8</sup>

- 13 We should not be surprised, then, when even someone not of our faith recognizes the majesty of what happens in the temple. What could become common or routine for us is sometimes seen in its splendor and majesty by those who hear it or feel it for the very first time.
- 14 Although temples had existed anciently, with the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the building of temples has been one of the highest priorities of all prophets since the Prophet Joseph Smith. And it is easy to understand why.
- 15 When the Prophet Joseph was teaching about baptism for the dead, he revealed another great truth. He taught: "Let me assure you that these are principles in relation to the dead and the living that cannot be lightly passed over, as pertaining to our salvation. For their salvation is necessary and essential to our salvation, ... they without us cannot be made perfect—neither can we without our dead be made perfect."<sup>9</sup>
- 16 As we can see, the need for temples and the work that is done for both the living and the dead become very clear.
- 17 The adversary is on the alert. His power is threatened by the ordinances and covenants performed in temples, and he does anything he can to try to stop the work. Why? Because he knows of the power that comes from this sacred work. As each new temple is dedicated, the saving power of Jesus Christ expands throughout the world to counteract the efforts of the adversary and to redeem us as we come unto Him. As temples and covenant keepers grow in number, the adversary grows weaker.
- 18 In the early days of the Church, some would worry when a new temple would be announced, for they would say, "We never began to build a temple without the bells of hell starting to ring." But Brigham Young courageously retorted, "I want to hear them ring again."<sup>10</sup>
- 19 In this mortal life, we will never escape the war, but we can have power over the enemy. That power and strength come from Jesus Christ as we make and keep temple covenants.
- 20 President Russell M. Nelson has taught: "The time is coming when those who do not obey the Lord will be separated from those who do. Our safest insurance is to continue to be worthy of admission to His holy house."<sup>11</sup>
- 21 Here are some additional blessings God has promised us through His prophet:
- 22 Do you need miracles? Our prophet has said: "I promise you that the Lord will bring the miracles He knows you need as you make sacrifices to serve and worship in His temples."<sup>12</sup>
- 23 Do you need the healing and strengthening power of the Savior Jesus Christ? President Nelson reassures us that "everything taught in the temple ... increases our understanding of Jesus Christ. ... As we keep our covenants, He endows us with His healing, strengthening power. And oh, how we will need His power in the days ahead."<sup>13</sup>
- 24 On the first Palm Sunday, as Jesus Christ triumphantly entered Jerusalem, a multitude of His disciples "rejoice[d] and praise[d] God with a loud voice ... saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord."<sup>14</sup>
- 25 How fitting that on Palm Sunday of 1836, the Kirtland Temple was being dedicated. On that occasion the disciples of Jesus Christ were rejoicing as well. In that dedicatory prayer, the Prophet Joseph Smith declared these words of praise:
- 26 "O Lord God Almighty, hear us ... and answer us from heaven, ... where thou sittest enthroned, with glory, honor, power, majesty, [and] might. ...
- 27 "... Help us by the power of thy Spirit, that we may mingle our voices with those bright, shining seraphs around thy throne, with acclamations of praise, singing Hosanna to God and the Lamb!
- 28 "And let these ... thy saints shout aloud for joy."<sup>15</sup>
- 29 Brothers and sisters, today on this Palm Sunday, let us as disciples of Jesus Christ also praise our holy God and rejoice in His goodness to us. "What do we hear in the gospel which we have received?" Truly "a voice of gladness!"<sup>16</sup>
- 30 I witness that you will feel joy more and more as you enter the holy temples of the Lord. I witness that you will experience the joy He in turn has for you, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. Doctrine and Covenants 128:19.
2. 2 Nephi 2:25; see also Isaiah 55:12.
3. See Job 38:7.
4. Wilford Woodruff, "Remarks," *Deseret News*, May 27, 1857, 91; punctuation modernized.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 124:39.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:45–46.
8. President Joseph F. Smith taught, "There has got to be a welding together and a joining together of parents and children and children and parents until the whole chain of God's family shall be welded together into one chain, and they shall all become the family of God and His Christ" (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* [2011], 411).
9. Doctrine and Covenants 128:15.
10. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (1997), 300.
11. Russell M. Nelson, "The Future of the Church: Preparing the World for the Savior's Second Coming," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Apr. 2020, 9.
12. Russell M. Nelson, "Becoming Exemplary Latter-day Saints," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 114.
13. Russell M. Nelson, "The Temple and Your Spiritual Foundation," *Liahona*, Nov. 2021, 93–94.
14. Luke 19:37–38.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 109:77, 79–80.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 128:19.

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