
October 2023

General Conference

FOR NOTE-TAKING AND PERSONAL STUDY.



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Saturday Morning

In the Path of Their Duty

BY ELDER DAVID A. BEDNAR

You who today are pressing forward in the path of your duty are the strength of the Savior's restored Church.

1 I earnestly pray for the help of the Holy Ghost as I now express my love, admiration, and gratitude for the members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints all around the world.

2 **They of the Last Wagon**

3 The year 1947 marked the 100th anniversary of the first Latter-day Saint pioneers arriving in the Salt Lake Valley. Many memorable celebrations were held during that year, and countless expressions of gratitude were offered for the devoted disciples of Jesus Christ who blazed trails, built homes, planted crops in the barren desert, and settled communities.

4 President J. Reuben Clark, First Counselor in the First Presidency, gave one of the most memorable and touching tributes to these faithful pioneers in the October 1947 general conference.

5 In his message, President Clark briefly acknowledged the well-known leaders who guided the westward migration, such as Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Wilford Woodruff, Parley P. Pratt, and many others. However, his primary purpose was not to recount the accomplishments of these noteworthy individuals. Rather, he focused his remarks on the stalwart souls whose names are neither known nor officially recorded in Church history. The instructive title of his message is "They of the Last Wagon."¹

6 President Clark described in great detail the characteristics of and the challenges faced by the migrants who traveled in the last covered wagon in each of the long wagon trains that crossed the plains. He praised these anonymous and uncelebrated heroes who, day after day, week after week, and month after month, choked on the dust stirred up by all of the wagons rolling in front of them—and who overcame the relentless obstacles they encountered along the way.

7 President Clark declared, "They of the last wagon pressed forward, worn and tired, footsore, sometimes almost disheartened, borne up by their faith that God loved them, that the restored gospel was true, and that the Lord led and directed the Brethren out in front."²

8 He concluded his message with this stirring commendation: "To these humble souls, great in faith, great in work, great in righteous living, great in fashioning our priceless heritage, I humbly render my love, my respect, my reverent homage."³

9 **No Less Serviceable**

10 In 1990, President Howard W. Hunter, then President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, delivered a message about the indispensable contributions of countless Church members who serve diligently and faithfully and who receive little or no public acknowledgment or acclaim.

Horizontal lines for writing notes on the right side of the page.

- 11 President Hunter explained:
- 12 "It was said [about the young and valiant Captain Moroni]:
- 13 "'If all men had been, and were, and ever would be, like unto Moroni, behold, the very powers of hell would have been shaken forever; yea, the devil would never have power over the hearts of the children of men' (Alma 48:17).
- 14 "What a compliment to a famous and powerful man. ... Two verses later is a statement about Helaman and his brethren, who played a less conspicuous role than Moroni, that reads:
- 15 "'Now behold, Helaman and his brethren were no less serviceable unto the people than was Moroni' (Alma 48:19)."
- 16 President Hunter continued, "In other words, even though Helaman was not as noticeable or conspicuous as Moroni, he was as serviceable; that is, he was as helpful or useful as Moroni."⁴
- 17 President Hunter then counseled all of us to be no less serviceable. He said: "If you feel that much of what you do this year or in the years to come does not make you very famous, take heart. Most of the best people who ever lived weren't very famous either. Serve and grow, faithfully and quietly."⁵
- 18 **In the Path of Their Duty**
- 19 I am grateful for millions of Church members who today are coming unto the Savior⁶ and pressing forward on the covenant path in the last wagons of our contemporary wagon trains—and who truly are no less serviceable. Your strong faith in Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ and your unpretentious, consecrated lives inspire me to be a better man and disciple.
- 20 I love you. I admire you. I thank you. And I commend you.
- 21 A statement in the Book of Mormon by Samuel the Lamanite best summarizes my feelings for you.
- 22 "Behold that the more part of them are in the path of their duty, and they do walk circumspectly before God, and they do observe to keep his commandments and his statutes. ...

- 23 "Yea, I say unto you, that the more part of them are doing this, and they are striving with unwearied diligence that they may bring the remainder of their brethren to the knowledge of the truth."⁷
- 24 I believe the phrase "in the path of their duty" describes discerning brothers and sisters who look for and sit next to people who are alone in Church meetings and in a variety of other settings. They consistently strive to "comfort those that stand in need of comfort,"⁸ without expectations of acknowledgment or praise.
- 25 The phrase "in the path of their duty" describes spouses and children who support a companion, parent, or child who serves in a leadership position in the Lord's restored Church. Their steady, quiet, and typically unrecognized sustaining influence makes possible the blessing of many individuals and families in ways that will be fully known only in eternity.
- 26 The phrase "in the path of their duty" describes individuals who, having turned away from God, humbly are returning to Him once again,⁹ repenting of their sins, and seeking the cleansing and healing power of the Savior's Atonement. Coming unto Christ¹⁰ by returning to the covenant path from sinful detours into "forbidden paths"¹¹ is spiritually essential and righteously rigorous. As they press forward with faith and weary not in well-doing, they are laying the foundation of a great work in their individual lives,¹² "to all generations and for eternity."¹³
- 27 The phrase "in the path of their duty" describes righteous individuals who yearn to become yoked to the Savior through the authorized covenants and ordinances of His gospel—but may be prohibited from doing so by factors beyond their control. I promise your personal anguish will be relieved and your obedience and faithfulness to patiently submit your will to God will be rewarded in "the own due time of the Lord."¹⁴ "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."¹⁵
- 28 The phrase "in the path of their duty" describes the inspired translators and interpreters around the world who serve the Lord by helping friends and members to "hear the fulness of the

gospel in [their] own tongue, and in [their] own language.”¹⁶ Their voices, signed language, and translated documents convey eternal truths, yet few of us know their names or ever express appreciation. Through the gift of tongues with which they have been blessed, translators and interpreters serve diligently, selflessly, and, most often, anonymously to help people receive the spiritual gift of faith through reading and hearing the word of God.¹⁷

29 The phrase “in the path of their duty” describes faithful married men and women who honor their covenant responsibility to multiply and replenish the earth and who are blessed with the strength and stamina to wrestle with their children in sacrament meetings. In an increasingly confused world beset with calamities and misplaced priorities, these courageous souls heed not the secular voices extolling self-centeredness; they reverence the sanctity and importance of life in Heavenly Father’s plan of happiness for His children.

30 Many married couples also trust in God when the righteous desires of their hearts are not realized how or when they had hoped and dreamed. They “wait upon the Lord”¹⁸ and do not demand that He meet their mortal deadlines. “For since the beginning of the world have not men heard nor perceived by the ear, neither hath any eye seen, O God, besides thee, how great things thou hast prepared for [them] that waiteth for thee.”¹⁹

31 The phrase “in the path of their duty” describes the thousands and thousands of nursery leaders and Primary teachers who love and instruct the children of the Church each Sabbath day.

32 Consider the eternal impact of the service rendered by these devoted disciples—and the marvelous blessings promised to those who minister to children.

33 “And [Jesus] took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them,

34 “Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.”²⁰

35 The phrase “in the path of their duty” describes dedicated children tenderly caring for aged parents, a sleep-deprived mother comforting a frightened child while standing guard as a “lioness at the gate” of her home,²¹ Church members who arrive early and stay late to set up and take down chairs, and inspired individuals who invite family, friends, and associates to come and see, come and help, and come and stay.²²

36 I have described only a few selected examples of covenant-keeping and devoted disciples of Jesus Christ like you who are pressing forward “in the path of [your] duty.” Millions of additional examples of Latter-day Saints who offer their “whole souls”²³ unto God are found in Christ-centered homes and in Church units around the world.

37 You love and serve, listen and learn, care and console, and teach and testify by the power of the Holy Ghost. You fast and pray often, wax stronger and stronger in humility, and grow firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, “unto the filling [your] souls with joy and consolation, yea, even to the purifying and the sanctification of [your] hearts, which sanctification cometh because of ... yielding [your] hearts unto God.”²⁴

38 **Promise and Testimony**

39 They of the last wagon, all who are no less serviceable, and you who today are pressing forward in the path of your duty are the strength of the Savior’s restored Church. And as the Lord has promised, “all thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, shall be revealed and set forth upon all who have endured valiantly for the gospel of Jesus Christ.”²⁵

40 I joyfully witness that Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son live and Their promises are sure, in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

1. J. Reuben Clark, “They of the Last Wagon,” *Improvement Era*, Nov. 1947, 704–5, 747–48; see also J. Reuben Clark, in *Conference Report*, Oct. 1947, 154–60; “To Them of the Last Wagon,” *Ensign*, July 1997, 34–39.
2. J. Reuben Clark, “They of the Last Wagon,” 705.
3. J. Reuben Clark, “They of the Last Wagon,” 748.

4. *Howard W. Hunter, "No Less Serviceable" (Brigham Young University devotional, Sept. 2, 1990), 1–2, speeches.byu.edu.*
5. *Howard W. Hunter, "No Less Serviceable," 6.*
6. *See Moroni 10:32–33.*
7. *Helaman 15:5–6; emphasis added.*
8. *Mosiah 18:9.*
9. *See Helaman 7:17.*
10. *See Moroni 10:30, 32.*
11. *1 Nephi 8:28.*
12. *See Doctrine and Covenants 64:33.*
13. *Doctrine and Covenants 109:24.*
14. *1 Nephi 10:3; see also 3 Nephi 5:25; 20:29.*
15. *Psalms 30:5.*
16. *Doctrine and Covenants 90:11.*
17. *See Romans 10:17.*
18. *Isaiah 40:31.*
19. *Doctrine and Covenants 133:45.*
20. *Mark 9:36–37.*
21. *Julie B. Beck, "Choose Ye This Day to Serve the Lord" (Brigham Young University Women's Conference, Apr. 29, 2010), 4, womensconference.byu.edu.*
22. *See Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Missionary Work: Sharing What Is in Your Heart," Ensign or Liahona, May 2019, 15–18.*
23. *Omni 1:26.*
24. *Helaman 3:35.*
25. *Doctrine and Covenants 121:29.*

of salvation, eternal families, or the very doctrine of Jesus Christ.

- 24 In that moment every family home evening lesson, scripture study session, prayer of faith offered, blessing given, testimony shared, covenant made and kept, house of the Lord attended, and Sabbath day observed mattered—oh, how it mattered! It was too late to put oil in our lamps. We needed every single drop, and we needed it right now!
- 25 Because of Jesus Christ and His restored gospel, if I died, my family would be comforted, strengthened, and one day restored. If I lived, I would have access to the greatest power on this earth to help succor, sustain, and heal me. In the end, because of Jesus Christ, everything can be OK.
- 26 We learn from a careful study of the Doctrine and Covenants what “OK” looks like:
- 27 “And at that day, when I shall come in my glory, shall the parable be fulfilled which I spake concerning the ten virgins.
- 28 “For they that are wise and have received the truth, and have taken the Holy Spirit for their guide, and have not been deceived—verily I say unto you, they shall not be hewn down and cast into the fire, but shall abide the day.”⁷
- 29 Jesus Christ makes it possible for us to “abide the day.” Abiding the day does not mean adding to an ever-increasing to-do list. Think of a magnifying glass. Its sole purpose is not simply to make things appear bigger. It can also gather and focus light to make it more powerful. We need to simplify, focus our efforts, and be gatherers of the Light of Jesus Christ. We need more holy and revelatory experiences.
- 30 Located in northwestern Israel is a beautiful mountain range often referred to as the “evergreen mountain.” Mount Carmel⁸ stays green year-round due largely in part to tiny amounts of dew. Nourishment happens daily. Like “the dews of Carmel,”⁹ as we seek to nourish our souls “with things pertaining to righteousness,”¹⁰ “small and simple things,”¹¹ our testimonies and the testimonies of our children will live!
- 31 Now, you may be thinking, “But Sister Wright, you do not know my family. We

are really struggling and do not look anything like this.” You are correct. I do not know your family. But a God with infinite love, mercy, power, knowledge, and glory does.

- 32 The questions you may be asking are questions of the heart that ache in the depths of your soul. Similar questions are found in the holy scriptures:
- 33 “Master, carest thou not that [my family] perish?”¹²
- 34 “Where is now my hope?”¹³
- 35 “What shall [I] do, that this cloud of darkness may be removed from overshadowing [me]?”¹⁴
- 36 “Where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding?”¹⁵
- 37 “How is it possible that [I] can lay hold upon every good thing?”¹⁶
- 38 “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”¹⁷
- 39 And then ever so sweetly come the answers:
- 40 “Believest thou in the power of Christ unto salvation?”¹⁸
- 41 “Hath the Lord commanded any that they should not partake of his goodness?”¹⁹
- 42 “Believe ye that [He is] able to do this?”²⁰
- 43 “Believest thou the prophets?”²¹
- 44 “Do ye exercise faith in the redemption of him who created you?”²²
- 45 “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”²³
- 46 My dear friends, we cannot share our oil, but we can share His light. Oil in our lamps will not only help us “abide the day” but can also be the means of illuminating the path that leads those we love to the Savior, who stands ready “with open arms to receive” them.²⁴
- 47 “Thus saith the Lord; Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, ... and they shall come again from the land of the enemy.
- 48 “And there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come

see and love Jesus Christ? If not, maybe try something else.

21 When I realized that I was spiritually face-blind, that I saw rules but not the face of the Father’s mercy, I knew it wasn’t the Church’s fault. It wasn’t God’s, and it didn’t mean everything was lost; it’s something we all have to learn. Even the early witnesses to the Resurrection often came face-to-face with the resurrected Lord but did not recognize Him; from the Garden Tomb to the shores of Galilee, His first followers “saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.”⁸ They had to learn to recognize Him, and so do we.⁹

22 Charity

23 When I realized I was spiritually face-blind, I started to follow Mormon’s counsel to pray “with all the energy of heart” to be filled with the love promised His disciples—my love for Him and His love for me—and to “see him as he is ... and have this hope.”¹⁰ I prayed for years to be able to follow the first great commandment to love God and to feel that “first great truth ... that God loves us with all of His heart, might, mind, and strength.”¹¹

24 The Gospels

25 I also read and reread and reread the four Gospels—this time reading not to extract rules but to see who He is and what He loves. And, in time, I was swept away by the river of love that flowed from Him.

26 Jesus announced at the outset that He had come “to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind.”¹²

27 This wasn’t just a to-do list or good PR; it is the shape of His love.

28 Open the Gospels at random; on almost every page we see Him caring for people who suffer—socially, spiritually, and physically. He touches people considered polluted and unclean¹³ and feeds the hungry.¹⁴

29 What is your favorite story of Jesus? I suspect it shows the Son of God reaching out to embrace or offer hope to someone on the margins—the leper,¹⁵ the hated Samaritan,¹⁶ the accused and scandalous sinner,¹⁷ or the national enemy.¹⁸ That kind of grace is amazing.

30 Try writing down every time He praises or heals or eats with an outsider, and you will run low on ink before you leave Luke.

31 As I saw this, my heart leapt in loving recognition, and I began to feel that He might love me. As President Nelson taught, “The more you learn about the Savior, the easier it will be to trust in His mercy, His infinite love.”¹⁹ And the more you will trust and love your Heavenly Father.

32 Elder Jeffrey R. Holland has taught us that Jesus came to show “us who and what God our Eternal Father is like, how completely devoted He is to His children in every age and nation.”²⁰

33 Paul says God is “the Father of [all] mercies, and the God of all comfort.”²¹

34 If you see Him differently, please keep trying.

35 Covenants and God’s Embrace

36 Prophets invite us to seek His face.²² I take this as a reminder that we worship our Father, not a formula, and that we’re not finished until we see Jesus as the face of our Father’s love²³ and follow Him, not just His rules.²⁴

37 When prophets and apostles talk of covenants, they aren’t like coaches yelling out from (red velvet) bleachers, telling us to “try harder!” They want us to see our covenants are fundamentally about relationships²⁵ and can be a cure for spiritual face blindness.²⁶ They are not rules to earn His love; He already loves you perfectly. Our challenge is to understand and shape our life to that love.²⁷

38 We try to see through our covenants, as if through a window, to the face of the Father’s mercy behind.

39 Covenants are the shape of God’s embrace.

40 The River of God’s Love

41 Finally, we can learn to see Him by serving Him. “For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served?”²⁸

42 A few years ago, I got a calling I didn’t feel up to. I awoke early, nervous—but with a phrase in mind I had not heard before: that to serve in this Church is to

stand in the river of God's love for His children. This Church is a work party of people with picks and shovels trying to help clear the channel for the river of God's love to reach His children at the end of the row.

43 Whoever you are, whatever your past, there is room for you in this Church.²⁹

44 Grab a pick and shovel and join the team. Help carry His love to His children, and some of it will splash on you.³⁰

45 Let us seek His loving face, His covenant embrace, and then join arm in arm with His children, and together we will sing "Redeemer of Israel":

Restore, my dear Savior,
The light of thy face;
Thy soul-cheering comfort impart;
And let the sweet longing
For thy holy place
Bring hope to my desolate heart.³¹

46 May we seek His loving face and then be vessels of His mercy to His children.³² In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. See Hadyn D. Ellis and Melanie Florence, "Bodamer's (1947) Paper on Prosopagnosia," *Cognitive Neuropsychology*, vol. 7, no. 2 (1990), 84–91; Joshua Davis, "Face Blind," *Wired*, Nov. 1, 2006, wired.com.
2. See Dennis Nealon, "How Common Is Face Blindness?," *Harvard Medical School*, Feb. 24, 2023, hms.harvard.edu; Oliver Sacks, "Face-Blind," *New Yorker*, Aug. 23, 2010, newyorker.com.
3. "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" (David A. Bednar, "Abide in Me, and I in You; Therefore Walk with Me," *Liahona*, May 2023, 125).
4. See 1 Nephi 8:19; 15:23. "It is hard to keep the Lord's commandments without faith and trust in Him" (Henry B. Eyring, "The Faith to Ask and Then to Act," *Liahona*, Nov. 2021, 75).
5. *Alma* 5:26.
6. See Russell M. Nelson, "The Answer Is Always Jesus Christ," *Liahona*, May 2023, 127–28.
7. *John* 12:21.
8. *John* 20:14. They saw but did not know

Him on the road to Emmaus (see *Luke* 24:16), in a locked room (see *Luke* 24:37), on the shores of Galilee (see *John* 21:4), and at the Garden Tomb (see *John* 20:14).

9. If we seek Him with all our heart and keep going with faith, He will be found. "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil. . . . "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (*Jeremiah* 29:11, 13). "The day shall come when you shall comprehend even God, being quickened in him and by him. "Then shall ye know that ye have seen me, that I am" (*Doctrine and Covenants* 88:49–50). "Every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am" (*Doctrine and Covenants* 93:1).
10. *Moroni* 7:48. Paul also connects charity with our ability to see clearly. At the conclusion of his great sermon on charity, he writes that though "now we see through a glass, darkly," we will later see "face to face: . . . then shall I know even as also I am known" (*1 Corinthians* 13:12).
11. Jeffrey R. Holland, "Tomorrow the Lord Will Do Wonders among You," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2016, 127. "The greater definition of 'the pure love of Christ' . . . is not what we as Christians try but largely fail to demonstrate toward others but rather what Christ totally succeeded in demonstrating toward us. True charity has been known only once. It is shown perfectly and purely in Christ's unflinching, ultimate, and atoning love for us" (Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant: The Messianic Message of the Book of Mormon* [1997], 336).
12. *Luke* 4:18, New King James Version.
13. See *Matthew* 8:3; 9:25.
14. See *Matthew* 14:13–21.
15. See *Matthew* 8:1–3.
16. See *John* 4:7–10; He praised the Samaritan (see *Luke* 10:25–37).
17. See *Matthew* 21:31; *Luke* 7:27–50; 15:1–10; *John* 8:2–12.
18. See *Matthew* 8:5–13.
19. Russell M. Nelson, "Christ Is Risen; Faith in Him Will Move Mountains," *Liahona*, May 2021, 103.
20. Jeffrey R. Holland, "The Grandeur of God," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2003, 70. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (*John* 14:9).
21. *2 Corinthians* 1:3.
22. See *Psalms* 27:8; *Doctrine and Covenants* 88:68.

23. See 2 Corinthians 4:6; Pope Francis, "Misericordiae Vultus: Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy," Apostolic Letters, vatican.va.
24. This is an important theme. It's not just the work of salvation and exaltation but His work of salvation and exaltation (see *General Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 1.2, Gospel Library). I don't just go to a temple but to the house of the Lord; it's not the Mormon Church but the Church of Jesus Christ (see Russell M. Nelson, "The Correct Name of the Church," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 87–89). Our leaders point us to Him and even remind us that there "is no amorphous entity called 'the Atonement' upon which we may call for succor, healing, forgiveness, or power. Jesus Christ is the source" (Russell M. Nelson, "Drawing the Power of Jesus Christ into Our Lives," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2017, 40).
25. "The covenant path is all about our relationship with God"; it is the "path of love— ... compassionate caring for and reaching out to each other" (Russell M. Nelson, "The Everlasting Covenant," *Liahona*, Oct. 2022, 11). See David A. Bednar, "The Blessed and Happy State" (address given at the seminar for new mission leaders, June 24, 2022); Scott Taylor, "Elder Bednar Shares 7 Lessons on 'the Blessed and Happy State' of Obedience," *Church News*, June 27, 2022, thechurchnews.com. "Entering into sacred covenants and worthily receiving priesthood ordinances yoke us with and bind us to the Lord Jesus Christ and Heavenly Father. This simply means that we trust in the Savior as our Advocate and Mediator and rely on His merits, mercy, and grace during the journey of life. ...
"Living and loving covenant commitments creates a connection with the Lord that is deeply personal and spiritually powerful. ... Jesus then becomes much more than the central character in scripture stories; His example and teachings influence our every desire, thought, and action" (David A. Bednar, "But We Heeded Them Not," *Liahona*, May 2022, 15). See also D. Todd Christofferson, "Our Relationship with God," *Liahona*, May 2022, 78–80.
26. "And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh; "For without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live" (Doctrine and Covenants 84:21–22).
27. Patricia Holland, "A Future Filled with Hope" (worldwide devotional for young adults, Jan. 8, 2023), Gospel Library: "You don't have to run around chasing after [the hope that He will help you]; you don't and you can't manufacture it. Like so much in the realm of grace, you won't acquire it by leaning on your own strength or on that of another person. There are no secret formulas or any magical mantras involved. ... "In fact, the part we play is important but actually very small; God has the larger portion of the task. Our part is to come unto Him in lowliness and simplicity, then we should worry not and fear not."
28. Mosiah 5:13; see also John 17:3.
29. President Nelson has repeatedly called on us to "expand our circle of love to embrace the whole human family" ("Blessed Are the Peacemakers," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2002, 41). In May 2022 he told young adults that "labels can lead to judging and animosity. Any abuse or prejudice toward another because of nationality, race, sexual orientation, gender, educational degrees, culture, or other significant identifiers is offensive to our Maker" ("Choices for Eternity" [worldwide devotional for young adults, May 15, 2022], Gospel Library). And importantly, he said: "I grieve that our Black brothers and sisters the world over are enduring the pains of racism and prejudice. Today I call upon our members everywhere to lead out in abandoning attitudes and actions of prejudice. I plead with you to promote respect for all of God's children" ("Let God Prevail," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2020, 94). "Prejudice is not consistent with the revealed word of God. Favor or disfavor with God depends on devotion to Him and His commandments, not on the color of a person's skin or other attributes. "... This includes prejudice based on race, ethnicity, nationality, tribe, gender, age, disability, socioeconomic status, religious belief or nonbelief, and sexual orientation" (*General Handbook*, 38.6.14, Gospel Library).
30. See 1 Nephi 11:25.
31. "Redeemer of Israel," Hymns, no. 6.
32. See Romans 9:23.

For the Sake of Your Posterity

BY ELDER CARLOS A. GODOY

Don't be the weak link in this beautiful chain of faith you started, or you received, as a legacy. Be the strong one.

- 1 A few years ago, when I was serving in the South America Northwest Area and living in Peru, I had a beautiful experience that I would like to share with you.
- 2 It happened when I was returning home after a busy weekend of assignments. After finally completing the airport immigration process, I found a friendly taxi driver waiting for me from our usual taxi service. He took me to his car, and I sat in the back, ready to relax and enjoy a quiet trip home. After driving a few blocks, the driver received a phone call from his supervisor telling him I took the wrong taxi. A different car was reserved for me, and the supervisor asked him to take me back to the airport if I wanted to change cars. I told him it was not necessary, and we could keep going. After a few minutes of silence, he looked at me through the rearview mirror and asked, "You are a Mormon, aren't you?"
- 3 Well, after that inviting question, I knew my quiet moments were over. I could not resist exploring where his question would take us.
- 4 I learned that his name was Omar, his wife's name was Maria Teresa, and they had two children—Carolina, age 14, and Rodrigo, age 10. Omar had been a member of the Church since he was a child. His family was active, but at some point, his parents stopped going to church. Omar became completely inactive when he was 15. He was then 40 years old.
- 5 At that moment I realized I did not take the wrong taxi. It was not a coincidence! I told him who I was and that I was in his taxi because the Lord was calling him back to His fold.
- 6 We then talked about the time he and his family were active members of the Church. He had fond memories of sweet family-home-evening moments and some Primary songs. He then softly sang a few words of "I Am a Child of God."¹
- 7 After getting his address, phone number, and permission to share with his bishop, I told him I would find a way to be in the chapel on his first day back to church. We finished our trip from the airport to my home, as well as our little trip to his past, and we went our separate ways.
- 8 A few weeks later his bishop called me, telling me Omar was planning to attend church on a certain Sunday. I told him I would be there. That Sunday, Omar was there with his son. His wife and daughter were not yet interested. A few months later, his bishop called me again, this time to tell me that Omar would be baptizing his wife and his two children, and he invited me to be there. Here is the picture of that Sunday where they were confirmed members of the Church.
- 9 That same Sunday, I told Omar and his family that if they were prepared, in one year I would be honored to perform their sealing in the Lima Peru Temple. Here is a picture of that memorable moment for all of us, taken one year later.
- 10 Why am I sharing this experience with you? I am sharing it for two purposes.
- 11 First, to address those good members who for some reason have fallen away from the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. Second, to also address those participating members today who maybe are not being as faithful to their covenants as they should be. In both cases, generations ahead of them are impacted, and blessings and promises that were reserved for their posterities are at risk.
- 12 Let's start with the first scenario, good members who have left the covenant path, as happened with my Peruvian friend Omar. When I asked him why he decided to return, he said it was because he and his wife felt their children would be happier in life with the gospel of

Jesus Christ. He felt it was about time to go back to church for the sake of their children.

- 13 It is so sad when we come across inactive members or nonmembers of the Church who at one time had the gospel within their families and lost it because of their parents' or grandparents' decision to take a break from the Church. That decision could have an impact on their posterity forever!
- 14 Their children and grandchildren have been precluded from the protection and the blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ in their lives. Even more heartbreaking, they have lost the promises of an eternal family which were there one day. The decision of one has impacted a whole chain of descendants. A legacy of faith has been broken.
- 15 However, as we know, anything broken can be mended through Jesus Christ. For this reason, please consider this invitation from President Russell M. Nelson: "Now, if you have stepped off the path, may I invite you with all the hope in my heart to please come back. Whatever your concerns, whatever your challenges, there is a place for you in this, the Lord's Church. You and generations yet unborn will be blessed by your actions now to return to the covenant path."²
- 16 Now, let's address the second scenario, today's participating members who maybe are not being as faithful as they should be. Just as yesterday's decisions impact today's realities, decisions of today will impact our future and the future of our family members.
- 17 President Dallin H. Oaks taught us:
- 18 "The restored gospel of Jesus Christ encourages us to think about the future. ... It teaches great ideas about the future to guide our actions today.
- 19 "In contrast, we all know persons who are concerned only with the present: spend it today, enjoy it today, and take no thought for the future.
- 20 "... As we make current decisions, we should always be asking, 'Where will this lead?'"³ Will our current decisions lead us to joy now and in eternity, or will they lead us to sorrow and tears?
- 21 Some may think, "We don't need to

attend church every Sunday," or "We will pay tithing when things get better," or "I will not support the Church leaders in this subject."

- 22 "But," they say, "we know the Church is true, and we will never leave the gospel of Jesus Christ."
- 23 Those with thoughts like these do not realize the negative impact this "lukewarm" type of membership will have on their lives and on the lives of their posterity. The parents may remain active, but the risk of losing their children is high—in this life and in eternity.
- 24 Regarding those who will not inherit celestial glory with their families, the Lord says, "These are they who are not valiant in the testimony of Jesus; wherefore, they obtain not the crown over the kingdom of our God."⁴ Is that what we want for ourselves or our children? Shouldn't we be more valiant and less lukewarm for our own sake and for the sake of our posterity?
- 25 President M. Russell Ballard also addressed a similar concern:
- 26 "For some, Christ's invitation to believe and remain continues to be hard. ... Some disciples struggle to understand a specific Church policy or teaching. Others find concerns in our history or in the imperfections of some members and leaders, past and present. ...
- 27 "... The decision to 'walk no more' with Church members and the Lord's chosen leaders will have a long-term impact that cannot always be seen right now."⁵
- 28 What a sad legacy to pass along—and for what reason? Whatever it is, it isn't enough to ignore the negative spiritual impact it will create for generations ahead.
- 29 My dear brothers and sisters, if you are going through one of these two situations I mentioned in my message, please reconsider your course of action. You know there is a plan for us in this life. You know that families can be eternal. Why put yours at risk? Don't be the weak link in this beautiful chain of faith you started, or you received, as a legacy. Be the strong one. It is your turn to do it, and the Lord can help you.
- 30 From the bottom of my heart, I invite you to think about it, to look ahead and

The Sealing Power

BY ELDER D. TODD CHRISTOFFERSON

The sealing power makes individual salvation and family exaltation universally available to the children of God.

1 It has been prophesied since at least the days of Isaiah¹ that in the latter days, the Lord's ancient covenant people, the house of Israel, should be "gathered in from their long dispersion, from the isles of the sea, and from the four parts of the earth"² and restored to "the lands of their inheritance."³ President Russell M. Nelson has spoken often and powerfully about this gathering, calling it "the most important thing taking place on earth today."⁴

2 What is the purpose of this gathering?

3 By revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord identified one purpose as the protection of the covenant people. He said, "The gathering together upon the land of Zion, and upon her stakes, [will] be for a defense, and for a refuge from the storm, and from wrath when it shall be poured out without mixture upon the whole earth."⁵ "Wrath" in this context may be understood as the natural consequences of widespread disobedience to the laws and commandments of God.

4 Most importantly, the gathering is for the purpose of bringing the blessings of salvation and exaltation to all who will receive them. It is how the covenant promises given to Abraham are realized. The Lord told Abraham that through his seed and priesthood "all the families of the earth [should] be blessed, even with the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal."⁶ President Nelson expressed it this way: "When we embrace the gospel and are baptized, we take upon ourselves the sacred name of Jesus Christ. Baptism is the gate that leads to becoming joint heirs to all the promises given anciently by the Lord to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their posterity."⁷

5 In 1836, Moses appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith in the Kirtland Temple and "committed . . . the keys of the gathering of Israel from the four parts of the earth."⁸ On that same occasion, Elias appeared

and "committed the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham, saying that in us and our seed all generations after us should be blessed."⁹ With this authority, we now carry the gospel of Jesus Christ—the good news of redemption through Him—to all parts and peoples of the earth and gather all who will into the gospel covenant. They become "the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God."¹⁰

6 On that same occasion in the Kirtland Temple, there was a third heavenly messenger who appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. I speak of the prophet Elijah, and it is the authority and keys he restored that I want to speak about today.¹¹ The power to validate all priesthood ordinances and make them binding both on earth and in heaven—the sealing power—is crucial for gathering and preparing a covenant people on both sides of the veil.

7 Years earlier, Moroni had made it clear to Joseph Smith that Elijah would bring essential priesthood authority: "I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet."¹² Joseph Smith later explained: "Why send Elijah? Because he holds the keys of the authority to administer in all the ordinances of the Priesthood; and [unless] the authority is given, the ordinances could not be administered in righteousness"¹³—that is, the ordinances would not be valid in both time and eternity.¹⁴

8 In a teaching now canonized as scripture in the Doctrine and Covenants, the Prophet stated: "It may seem to some to be a very bold doctrine that we talk of—a power which records or binds on earth and binds in heaven. Nevertheless, in all ages of the world, whenever the Lord has given a dispensation of the priesthood to any man by actual revelation, or any set of men, this power has always been given. Hence, whatsoever those men did in authority, in the name of the Lord, and did it truly and faithfully, and kept a proper and faithful record of the same,

it became a law on earth and in heaven, and could not be annulled, according to the decrees of the great Jehovah.”¹⁵

9 We tend to think of the sealing authority as applying only to certain temple ordinances, but that authority is necessary to make any ordinance valid and binding beyond death.¹⁶ The sealing power confers a seal of legitimacy upon your baptism, for example, so that it is recognized here and in heaven. Ultimately, all priesthood ordinances are performed under the keys of the President of the Church, and as President Joseph Fielding Smith explained, “He [the President of the Church] has given us authority, he has put the sealing power in our priesthood, because he holds those keys.”¹⁷

10 There is another vital purpose in the gathering of Israel that has special meaning when we talk about sealing on earth and in heaven—that is the building and operation of temples. As the Prophet Joseph Smith explained: “What was the object of gathering the ... people of God in any age of the world? ... The main object was to build unto the Lord a house whereby He could reveal unto His people the ordinances of His house and the glories of His kingdom, and teach the people the way of salvation; for there are certain ordinances and principles that, when they are taught and practiced, must be done in a place or house built for that purpose.”¹⁸

11 The validity that the sealing power gives to priesthood ordinances includes, of course, vicarious ordinances performed in the place designated by the Lord—His temple. Here we see the majesty and sacredness of the sealing power—it makes individual salvation and family exaltation universally available to the children of God wherever and whenever they may have lived on the earth. No other theology or philosophy or authority can match such an all-inclusive opportunity. This sealing power is a perfect manifestation of the justice, mercy, and love of God.

12 With access to the sealing power, our hearts naturally turn to those who have gone before. The latter-day gathering into the covenant crosses through the veil. In the perfect order of God, the living cannot experience eternal life in its fulness without forging enduring links

to “the fathers,” our ancestors. Likewise, the progress of those who are already on the other side, or who may yet cross through the veil of death without the benefit of sealings, is incomplete until vicarious ordinances bind them to us, their descendants, and us to them in the divine order.¹⁹ The commitment to aid one another across the veil can be classified as a covenant promise, part of the new and everlasting covenant. In Joseph Smith’s words, we want to “seal up our dead to come forth [with us] in the first resurrection.”²⁰

13 The highest and holiest manifestation of the sealing power is in the eternal union of a man and a woman in marriage and the linking of humankind through all their generations. Because the authority to officiate in these ordinances is so sacred, the President of the Church personally oversees its delegation to others. President Gordon B. Hinckley said on one occasion, “I have said many times that if nothing else came out of all of the sorrow and travail and pain of the restoration than the sealing power of the holy priesthood to bind together families forever, it would have been worth all that it has cost.”²¹

14 Without the sealings that create eternal families and link generations here and hereafter, we would be left in eternity with neither roots nor branches—that is, neither ancestry nor posterity. It is this free-floating, disconnected state of individuals, on the one hand, or connections that defy the marriage and family relations God has appointed,²² on the other hand, that would frustrate the very purpose of the earth’s creation. Were that to become the norm, it would be tantamount to the earth being smitten with a curse or “utterly wasted” at the Lord’s coming.²³

15 We can see why “marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children.”²⁴ At the same time, we recognize that in the imperfect present, this is not the reality or even a realistic possibility for some. But we have hope in Christ. While we wait upon the Lord, President M. Russell Ballard reminds us that “scriptures and latter-day prophets confirm that everyone who is faithful in keeping gospel covenants will have the opportunity for exaltation.”²⁵

16 Some have experienced unhappy and unhealthy family circumstances and feel little desire for an eternal family association. Elder David A. Bednar made this observation: "To you who have experienced the heartache of a divorce in your family or felt the agony of violated trust, please remember [that God's pattern for families] begins again with you! One link in the chain of your generations may have been broken, but the other righteous links and what remains of the chain are nonetheless eternally important. You can add strength to your chain and perhaps even help to restore the broken links. That work will be accomplished one by one."²⁶

17 In the funeral services for Sister Pat Holland, wife of Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, last July, President Russell M. Nelson taught: "In time, Patricia and Jeffrey will be reunited. They will later be joined by their children and their covenant-keeping posterity to experience the fullness of joy that God has in store for His faithful children. Knowing that, we understand that the most important date in Patricia's life was not her birth date or her death date. Her most important date was June 7, 1963, when she and Jeff were sealed in the St. George Temple. ... Why is this so important? Because the very reason the earth was created was so families could be formed and sealed to each other. Salvation is an individual matter, but exaltation is a family matter. No one can be exalted alone."

18 Not long ago, my wife and I joined a dear friend in a sealing room of the Bountiful Utah Temple. I first met this friend when she was a child in Córdoba, Argentina. My missionary companion and I were contacting people in a neighborhood just blocks away from the mission office, and she answered the door when we came to her home. In due time, she and her mother and siblings joined the Church, and they have remained faithful members. She is now a lovely woman, and this day we were in the temple to seal her deceased parents to one another and then seal her to them.

19 A couple who over the years have become close friends represented her parents at the altar. It was an emotional moment that became even sweeter when our Argentine friend was sealed to her parents. There were just six of

us present on a quiet afternoon away from the world, and yet one of the most important things that ever takes place on the earth was happening. I was gratified that my role and association had come full circle from knocking on her door as a young missionary to now, these many years later, performing the sealing ordinances that linked her to her parents and past generations.

20 This is a scene taking place constantly all over the world in temples. This is the ultimate step in gathering the covenant people. It is the highest privilege of your membership in the Church of Jesus Christ. I promise that as you faithfully seek that privilege, in time or eternity it will surely be yours.

21 I testify that the sealing power and authority restored to earth through Joseph Smith are real, that what is thereby bound on earth truly is bound in heaven. I testify that President Russell M. Nelson, as President of the Church, is the one man on earth today that by his keys directs the use of this supernal power. I testify that the Atonement of Jesus Christ has made immortality a verity and the possibility of exalted family relationships a reality. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. See, for example, *Isaiah 49*.
2. *2 Nephi 10:8*.
3. *2 Nephi 10:7*.
4. *Russell M. Nelson and Wendy W. Nelson, "Hope of Israel" (worldwide youth devotional, June 3, 2018), Gospel Library*.
5. *Doctrine and Covenants 115:6*.
6. *Abraham 2:11*.
7. *Russell M. Nelson, "The Everlasting Covenant," Liahona, Oct. 2022, 4; see also Russell M. Nelson, "Children of the Covenant," Ensign, May 1995, 34. "The new and everlasting covenant" (Doctrine and Covenants 132:6) and the Abrahamic covenant are essentially the same—two ways of phrasing the covenant God made with mortal men and women at different times" (Russell M. Nelson, "The Everlasting Covenant," 4)*.
8. *Doctrine and Covenants 110:11*.
9. *Doctrine and Covenants 110:12*.
10. *Doctrine and Covenants 84:34*.
11. See *Doctrine and Covenants 110:13–16*.
12. *Doctrine and Covenants 2:1*.
13. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith (2007), 310*.

14. "The spirit, power, and calling of Elijah is, that ye have power to hold the key of the revelation, ordinances, oracles, powers and endowments of the fullness of the Melchizedek Priesthood and of the kingdom of God on the earth; and to receive, obtain, and perform all the ordinances belonging to the kingdom of God, even unto the turning of the hearts of the fathers unto the children, and the hearts of the children unto the fathers, even those who are in heaven" (Teachings: Joseph Smith, 311).
15. Doctrine and Covenants 128:9.
16. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:7.
17. Joseph Fielding Smith, in Henry B. Eyring, "Families under Covenant," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2012, 63; see also endnote 5 on page 65.
18. Teachings: Joseph Smith, 416–17.
19. Without these "welding links" (see Doctrine and Covenants 128:18) between the fathers and the children created via temple ordinances, the Lord states, "ye shall be rejected ... with your dead" (Doctrine and Covenants 124:32). No wonder the Prophet warned: "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, as Paul says concerning the fathers—that they without us cannot be made perfect—neither can we without our dead be made perfect" (Doctrine and Covenants 128:15).
20. Teachings: Joseph Smith, 312.
21. Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley (1997), 475–76.
22. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:8–12.
23. See Malachi 4:6; Doctrine and Covenants 2:3.
24. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," Gospel Library.
25. M. Russell Ballard, "Hope in Christ," *Liahona*, May 2021, 55.
26. David A. Bednar, "A Welding Link" (worldwide devotional for young adults, Sept. 10, 2017), Gospel Library.

Love Thy Neighbour

BY ELDER IAN S. ARDERN

Compassion is an attribute of Christ. It is born of love for others and knows no boundaries.

- 1 This morning, I invite you to join with me on an African journey. You won't see any lions, zebras, or elephants, but perhaps, by journey's end, you will see how thousands of members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are responding to Christ's second great commandment to "love thy neighbour" (Mark 12:31).
- 2 Imagine for a moment the rural, red dirt of Africa. You see from the parched and barren earth that rain has not fallen in any measurable quantity for too many years. The few cattle which cross your path are more bones than flesh and are being driven by a blanket-covered Karamojong herdsman who, with sandalled feet, trudges on in hope of finding vegetation and water.
- 3 As you navigate the rough and rocky road, you see several groups of beautiful children and wonder why they are not in school. The children smile and wave, and you wave back with a tear and a smile. Ninety-two percent of the youngest children you see on this journey live in food poverty, and your heart groans with anguish.
- 4 Ahead, you see a mother carrying a carefully balanced five-gallon (19 L) container of water on her head and another in her hand. She represents one of every two households in this area where women, young and old, walk more than 30 minutes each way, each day, to a source of water for their family. A wave of sorrow washes over you.
- 5 Two hours pass and you arrive at a secluded, shady clearing. The meeting place is not a hall or even a tent but rather under a few large trees providing shelter from the sweltering sun. In this place, you notice there is no running water, no electricity, no flush toilets. You look around and know you are amongst a people who love God, and you instantly feel God's love for them. They have gathered to receive help and hope, and you have arrived to share it.
- 6 Such was the journey of Sister Ardern and me, in the company of Sister Camille Johnson, our General Relief Society President, and her husband, Doug, and Sister Sharon Eubank, director of the Church's Humanitarian Services, as we travelled in Uganda, a country of 47 million people in the Africa Central Area of the Church. On that day, under the shade of the trees, we visited a community health project that is jointly funded by the Church Humanitarian Services, UNICEF, and the Ministry of Health of the Ugandan government. These are trusted organisations, carefully selected to ensure the donated humanitarian funds of the members of the Church are prudently used.
- 7 As heart-wrenching as it was to see malnourished children and the effects of tuberculosis, malaria, and incessant diarrhea, there came to each of us an increase of hope for a better tomorrow for those we met.
- 8 That hope came, in part, through the kindness of Church members from around the world who donate time and money to the Church humanitarian effort. As I saw the sick and the afflicted being helped and lifted, I bowed my head in gratitude. At that moment, I better understood what was meant by the King of kings, who said:
- 9 "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you ... :
- 10 "For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in" (Matthew 25:34–35).
- 11 Our Saviour's plea is to "let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16; see also verses 14–15). In that far-flung corner of the earth, your good works brightened the lives and lightened the load of a people in desperate need, and God was glorified.

- 12 On that hot and dusty day, I wished you could have heard their prayers of praise and gratitude to God. They would have me say to you in their native Karamojong, "Alakara." Thank you.
- 13 Our journey reminded me of the parable of the good Samaritan, whose journey took him on a dusty road, not unlike the one I described, a road that went from Jerusalem to Jericho. This ministering Samaritan teaches us what it means to "love thy neighbour."
- 14 He saw "a certain man ... [who] fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead" (Luke 10:30). The Samaritan "had compassion on him" (Luke 10:33).
- 15 Compassion is an attribute of Christ. It is born of love for others and knows no boundaries. Jesus, the Saviour of the world, is the epitome of compassion. When we read that "Jesus wept" (John 11:35), we are witnesses, as were Mary and Martha, of His compassion, which caused Him first to groan in the spirit and be troubled (see John 11:33). In a Book of Mormon example of Christ's compassion, Jesus appeared to a multitude and said:
- 16 "Have ye any that are lame, or blind, or halt, ... 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. ...
- 17 "... And he did heal them every one" (3 Nephi 17:7, 9).
- 18 Despite our every effort, you and I won't heal everyone, but each of us can be the one who can make a difference for good in the life of someone. It was just one lad, a mere boy, who offered the five loaves and two fishes that fed the five thousand. We may ask of our offering, as Andrew the disciple did of the loaves and fishes, "What are they among so many?" (John 6:9). I assure you: it is sufficient to give or to do what you are able and then to allow Christ to magnify your effort.
- 19 On this point, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland invited us, "rich or poor, ... to 'do what we can' when others are in need." He then testified, as I do, that God "will help you and guide you in [your] compassionate acts of discipleship" ("Are We Not All Beggars?," Ensign or Liahona, Nov. 2014, 41).
- 20 In that distant land, on that unforgettable day, I stood then and stand now as a witness of the soul-stirring and life-changing compassion of members of the Church, both rich and poor.
- 21 The parable of the good Samaritan continues as he "bound up [the man's] wounds ... and took care of him" (Luke 10:34). Our Church humanitarian efforts find us quickly responding to natural disasters and binding up the world's widening wounds of disease, hunger, infant mortality, malnutrition, displacement, and the often-unseen wounds of discouragement, disappointment, and despair.
- 22 The Samaritan then "took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him" (Luke 10:35). As a church we are grateful to collaborate with other "hosts" or organisations such as Catholic Relief Services, UNICEF, and Red Cross/Red Crescent to assist in our humanitarian endeavours. We are equally grateful for your "two pence" or two euros, two pesos, or two shillings that are easing the burden that too many around the world are having to bear. It is unlikely you will know the recipients of your time, dollars, and dimes, but compassion does not require us to know them; it only requires us to love them.
- 23 Thank you, President Russell M. Nelson, for reminding us that "when we love God with all our hearts, He turns our hearts to the well-being of others" ("The Second Great Commandment," Ensign or Liahona, Nov. 2019, 97). I testify that each of us will have an increase of joy, peace, humility, and love as we respond to President Nelson's call to turn our hearts to the well-being of others and to Joseph Smith's plea to "feed the hungry, clothe the naked, provide for the widow, dry up the tear of the orphan, [and] comfort the afflicted, whether in this Church, or any other, or in no church at all, wherever [we find] them" ("Editor's Reply to a Letter from Richard Savary," Times and Seasons, Mar. 15, 1842, 732).
- 24 All those months ago, we found the hungry and the afflicted on a dry and dusty plain and were witnesses to their pleading eyes for help. In our own way, we groaned in the spirit and were

troubled (see John 11:33), and yet those feelings were tempered as we saw the compassion of Church members at work as the hungry were fed, the widows were provided for, and the afflicted were comforted and their tears dried up.

25 May we be forever looking to the well-being of others and show in word and

deed that we "are willing to bear one another's burdens" (Mosiah 18:8), to "bind up the broken-hearted" (Doctrine and Covenants 138:42), and to keep Christ's second great commandment to "love thy neighbour" (Mark 12:31). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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Kingdoms of Glory

BY PRESIDENT DALLIN H. OAKS

We have a loving Heavenly Father who will see that we receive every blessing and every advantage that our own desires and choices allow.

1 Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are frequently asked, “How is your church different from other Christian churches?” Among the answers we give is the fulness of the doctrine of Jesus Christ. Foremost among that doctrine is the fact that our Heavenly Father loves all His children so much that He wants us all to live in a kingdom of glory forever. Moreover, He wants us to live with Him and His Son, Jesus Christ, eternally. His plan gives us the teachings and the opportunity to make the choices that will assure us the destiny and the life we choose.

2 **I.**

3 From modern revelation we know that the ultimate destiny of all who live on the earth is not the inadequate idea of heaven for the righteous and the eternal sufferings of hell for the rest. God’s loving plan for His children includes this reality taught by our Savior, Jesus Christ: “In my Father’s house are many mansions.”¹

4 The revealed doctrine of the restored Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints teaches that all the children of God—with exceptions too limited to consider here—will ultimately inherit one of three kingdoms of glory, even the least of which “surpasses all understanding.”² After a period in which the disobedient suffer for their sins, which suffering prepares them for what is to follow, all will be resurrected and proceed to the Final Judgment of the Lord Jesus Christ. There, our loving Savior, who, we are taught, “glorifies the Father, and saves all the works of his hands,”³ will send all the children of God to one of these kingdoms of glory according to the desires manifested through their choices.

5 Another unique doctrine and practice of the restored Church is the revealed commandments and covenants that offer all the children of God the sacred privilege of qualifying for the highest

degree of glory in the celestial kingdom. That highest destination—exaltation in the celestial kingdom—is the focus of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

6 From modern revelation, Latter-day Saints have this unique understanding of God’s plan of happiness for His children. That plan begins with our life as spirits before we were born, and it reveals the purpose and conditions of our chosen journey in mortality and our desired destination thereafter.

7 **II.**

8 We know from modern revelation that “all kingdoms have a law given”⁴ and that the kingdom of glory we receive in the Final Judgment is determined by the laws we choose to follow in our mortal journey. Under that loving plan, there are multiple kingdoms—many mansions—so that all of God’s children will inherit a kingdom of glory whose laws they can comfortably “abide.”

9 As we describe the nature and requirements of each of the three kingdoms in the Father’s plan, we begin with the highest, which is the focus of the divine commandments and ordinances God has revealed through The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In the “celestial” glory⁵ there are three levels,⁶ of which the highest is exaltation in the celestial kingdom. This is the dwelling of those “who have received of his fulness, and of his glory,” wherefore, “they are gods, even the sons [and daughters] of God”⁷ and “dwell in the presence of God and his Christ forever and ever.”⁸ Through revelation, God has revealed the eternal laws, ordinances, and covenants that must be observed to develop the godly attributes necessary to realize this divine potential. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints focuses on these because the purpose of this restored Church is to prepare God’s children for salvation in the celestial glory and, more

particularly, for exaltation in its highest degree.

- 10 God’s plan, founded on eternal truth, requires that exaltation can be attained only through faithfulness to the covenants of an eternal marriage between a man and a woman in the holy temple,⁹ which marriage will ultimately be available to all the faithful. That is why we teach that “gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.”¹⁰
- 11 A uniquely valuable teaching to help us prepare for exaltation is the 1995 proclamation on the family.¹¹ Its declarations clarify the requirements that prepare us to live with God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. Those who do not fully understand the Father’s loving plan for His children may consider this family proclamation no more than a changeable statement of policy. In contrast, we affirm that the family proclamation, founded on irrevocable doctrine, defines the mortal family relationship where the most important part of our eternal development can occur.
- 12 The Apostle Paul describes the three degrees of glory, likening them to the glories of the sun, moon, and stars.¹² He names the highest “celestial” and the second “terrestrial.”¹³ He does not name the lowest, but a revelation to Joseph Smith added its name: “telestial.”¹⁴ Another revelation also describes the nature of the persons to be assigned to each of these kingdoms of glory. Those who do not choose “to abide the law of a celestial kingdom”¹⁵ will inherit another kingdom of glory, lesser than the celestial but suited to the laws they have chosen and can comfortably “abide.” That word abide, so common in the scriptures, means a secure placement.¹⁶ For example, those in the terrestrial kingdom—comparable to the popular concept of heaven—“are they who receive of the presence of the Son, but not of the fulness of the Father.”¹⁷ They were “honorably men of the earth, who were blinded by the craftiness of men,”¹⁸ but “not valiant in the testimony of Jesus.”¹⁹
- 13 The revealing description of those assigned to the lowest of the kingdoms of glory, the telestial, is “he who cannot abide ... a terrestrial glory.”²⁰ That

describes those who reject the Savior and have observed no divine limits on their behavior. This is the kingdom where the wicked abide, after they have suffered for their sins. These are described in modern revelation as “they who received not the gospel of Christ, neither the testimony of Jesus. ...

- 14 “These are they who are liars, and sorcerers, and adulterers, and whoremongers, and whosoever loves and makes a lie.”²¹
- 15 Speaking of the three kingdoms of glory with his prophetic vision, President Russell M. Nelson recently wrote: “Mortal lifetime is barely a nanosecond compared with eternity. But what a crucial nanosecond it is! Consider carefully how it works: During this mortal life you get to choose which laws you are willing to obey—those of the celestial kingdom, or the terrestrial, or the telestial—and, therefore, in which kingdom of glory you will live forever. What a plan! It is a plan that completely honors your agency.”²²
- 16 **III.**
- 17 The Apostle Paul taught that the Lord’s teachings and commandments were given that we may all attain “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”²³ That process requires far more than acquiring knowledge. It is not even enough to be convinced of the gospel; we must act so that we are converted by it. In contrast to other preaching, which teaches us to know something, the gospel of Jesus Christ challenges us to become something.
- 18 From such teachings we conclude that the Final Judgment is not just an evaluation of a sum total of good and evil acts—what we have done. It is based on the final effect of our acts and thoughts—what we have become. We qualify for eternal life through a process of conversion. As used here, this word of many meanings signifies a profound change of nature. It is not enough for anyone just to go through the motions. The commandments, ordinances, and covenants of the gospel are not a list of deposits required to be made in some heavenly account. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a plan that shows us how to become what our Heavenly Father desires us to become.²⁴
- 19 **IV.**

20 Because of Jesus Christ and His Atonement, when we fall short in this life, we can repent and rejoin the covenant path that leads to what our Heavenly Father desires for us.

21 The Book of Mormon teaches that “this life is the time for [us] to prepare to meet God.”²⁵ But that challenging limitation to “this life” was given a hopeful context (at least to some extent for some persons) by what the Lord revealed to President Joseph F. Smith, now recorded in Doctrine and Covenants section 138. “I beheld,” the prophet wrote, “that the faithful elders of this dispensation, when they depart from mortal life, continue their labors in the preaching of the gospel of repentance and redemption, through the sacrifice of the Only Begotten Son of God, among those who are in darkness and under the bondage of sin in the great world of the spirits of the dead.

22 “The dead who repent will be redeemed, through obedience to the ordinances of the house of God,

23 “And after they have paid the penalty of their transgressions, and are washed clean, shall receive a reward according to their works, for they are heirs of salvation.”²⁶

24 In addition, we know that the Millennium, the thousand years that follow the Second Coming of the Savior, will be a time to perform the required ordinances for those who have not received them in their mortal lives.²⁷

25 There is much we do not know about the three major periods in the plan of salvation and their relationship to one another: (1) the premortal spirit world, (2) mortality, and (3) the next life. But we do know these eternal truths: “Salvation is an individual matter, but exaltation is a family matter.”²⁸ We have a loving Heavenly Father who will see that we receive every blessing and every advantage that our own desires and choices allow. We also know that He will force no one into a sealing relationship against his or her will. The blessings of a sealed relationship are assured for all who keep their covenants but never by

forcing a sealed relationship on another person who is unworthy or unwilling.

26 My dear brothers and sisters, I testify of the truth of these things. I testify of our Lord Jesus Christ, “the author and finisher of our faith,”²⁹ whose Atonement, under the plan of our Father in Heaven, makes it all possible, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. John 14:2.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 76:89.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 76:43.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 88:36.
5. 1 Corinthians 15:40; see also Joseph Smith Translation, 1 Corinthians 15:40 (in 1 Corinthians 15:40, footnote a).
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 131:1.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 76:56, 58.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 76:62.
9. See 1 Corinthians 11:11; Doctrine and Covenants 132:19–20.
10. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” Gospel Library.
11. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.”
12. See 1 Corinthians 15:41.
13. 1 Corinthians 15:40.
14. Joseph Smith Translation, 1 Corinthians 15:40 (in 1 Corinthians 15:40, footnote a).
15. Doctrine and Covenants 88:22.
16. See Topical Guide, “Abide”; John 15:4–7, 10.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 76:77.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 76:75.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 76:79.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 88:23.
21. Doctrine and Covenants 76:82, 103.
22. Russell M. Nelson, *Heart of the Matter* (2023), 45.
23. Ephesians 4:13.
24. See Dallin H. Oaks, “The Challenge to Become,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 32–34; *Liahona*, Jan. 2001, 40–43.
25. Alma 34:32.
26. Doctrine and Covenants 138:57–59.
27. See Doctrine and Covenants 29:11; *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* (1998), 413–14.
28. Russell M. Nelson, “Come, Follow Me,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2019, 89.
29. Hebrews 12:2; see also Moroni 6:4.

Saturday Afternoon

Opening the Windows of Heaven

BY ELDER NEIL L. ANDERSEN

The windows of heaven open in many ways. Trust in the Lord's timing; the blessings always come.

1 While I was in South America recently, Brother Roger Parra from Venezuela shared the following experience with me:

2 "In 2019 Venezuela was shaken by problems that caused a power blackout for five days.

3 "Chaos and anarchy reigned in the streets, and many desperate people did not have sufficient food.

4 "Some began looting food businesses, destroying everything in their path.

5 "As the owner of a small bakery, I was very worried about our business. As a family, we decided to give away all the food in our bakery to people in need.

6 "Through one very dark night riots were everywhere. My only concern was for the safety of my beloved wife and children.

7 "At dawn I went to our bakery. Sadly, every nearby food business had been destroyed by looters, but to my great astonishment, our bakery was intact. Nothing had been destroyed. I humbly thanked my Heavenly Father.

8 "Arriving home, I told my family of God's blessing and protection.

9 "They were all so grateful.

10 "My oldest son, Rogelio, only 12 years old, said, 'Papa! I know why our store was protected. You and Mama always pay your tithes.'"

11 Brother Parra concluded: "The words of Malachi came into my mind. 'I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground' [Malachi 3:11]. We knelt down and gratefully thanked our Heavenly Father for His miracle."¹

12 **Prove Me Now Herewith**

13 All that we have and all that we are comes from God. As disciples of Christ, we willingly share with those around us.

14 With all the Lord gives to us, He has asked us to return to Him and His kingdom on earth 10 percent of our increase. He has promised us that as we are honest in our tithes, He will "open ... the windows of heaven, and pour ... out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."² He has promised us that He will protect us from evil.³ These promises are so certain,⁴ the Lord declares, "Prove me now herewith,"⁵ a phrase found nowhere else in the scriptures but when quoting Malachi.

15 The windows of heaven open in many ways. Some are temporal, but many are spiritual. Some are subtle and easy to overlook. Trust in the Lord's timing; the blessings always come.

16 We sorrow with those who struggle to have the necessities of life. The Church recently donated 54 million US dollars to provide relief to vulnerable children and mothers across the world.⁶ And with the offerings from your monthly fast, our good bishops help thousands

Horizontal lines for writing notes.

each week who temporarily need food on their tables, clothes on their backs, and shelter over their heads. The only permanent solution to the poverty of this world is the gospel of Jesus Christ.⁷

17 A Matter of Faith

18 The Apostle Paul warned that the wisdom of men understands the things of men but has difficulty understanding the things of God.⁸ The world speaks of tithing in terms of our money, but the sacred law of tithing is principally a matter of our faith. Being honest in our tithes is one way we show our willingness to put the Lord first in our lives, above our own cares and interest. I promise you that as you trust in the Lord, the blessings of heaven will follow.

19 Jesus said to give “unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s.”⁹ The resurrected Savior asked the Nephites to write into their record His promises found in Malachi.¹⁰ In our day, the Lord reconfirmed the divine law of tithing, declaring: “This shall be the beginning of the tithing of my people. And [they] shall pay one-tenth of all their interest annually; and this shall be a standing law unto them forever.”¹¹

20 The Lord clearly directed how tithing should be disbursed, saying, “Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse,”¹² meaning bring the tithes into His restored kingdom, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.¹³ He directed that the use of these sacred tithes would be prayerfully considered by a council of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, the Presiding Bishopric, “and by mine own voice unto them, saith the Lord.”¹⁴

21 The Lord’s Sacred Funds

22 These sacred funds do not belong to the leaders of the Church. They belong to the Lord. His servants are painstakingly aware of the sacred nature of their stewardship.

23 President Gordon B. Hinckley recounted this childhood experience: “When I was a boy I raised a question with my father ... concerning the expenditure of Church funds. He reminded me that mine is the God-given obligation to pay my tithes and offerings. When I do so, [my father said,] that which I give is no

longer mine. It belongs to the Lord to whom I consecrate it.” His father added: “What the authorities of the Church do with it need not concern [you, Gordon]. They are answerable to the Lord, who will require an accounting at their hands.”¹⁵

24 We deeply feel the weight of being “answerable to the Lord.”

25 Your Generous Tithes and Offerings

26 From the generous tithes and offerings you have consecrated to the Lord, last year more than a billion US dollars were used to bless those in need.¹⁶

27 In our momentous responsibility to take the restored gospel across the world, we have more than 71,000 missionaries serving in 414 missions.¹⁷ Because of your tithes and offerings, missionaries, regardless of their family financial situation, are able to serve.

28 Temples are being built across the world in unprecedented numbers. Currently, 177 temples are in operation, 59 are currently under construction or renovation, and 79 more are in planning and design.¹⁸ Your tithes are allowing the blessings of the temple to be in places only the Lord could foresee.

29 There are more than 30,000 congregations housed in thousands of chapels and other facilities in 195 countries and territories.¹⁹ Because of your faithful tithes, the Church is being established in faraway places you may never visit among righteous Saints you may never know.

30 The Church currently sponsors five institutions of higher learning.²⁰ These serve more than 145,000 students. One hundred and ten thousand classes are being taught each week in our seminaries and institutes.²¹

31 These blessings and so many more come in large measure from the young and old of every economic circumstance who pay an honest tithe.

32 The spiritual power of the divine law of tithing is not measured by the amount of money contributed, for both the prosperous and the poor are commanded by the Lord to contribute 10 percent of their income.²² The power comes from placing our trust in the Lord.²³

33 The added abundance of the Lord conveyed through your generous tithes has strengthened the reserves of the Church, providing opportunities to advance the Lord's work beyond anything we have yet experienced. All is known by the Lord, and in time, we will see His sacred purposes fulfilled.²⁴

34 **Blessings Come in Many Ways**

35 The blessings of tithing come in many ways. In 1998 I accompanied then-Elder Henry B. Eyring to a large Church meeting in the Utah area now known as Silicon Slopes, a community of great innovation in technology. It was a time of growing prosperity, and Elder Eyring cautioned the Saints about comparing what they had with others and wanting more. I will always remember his promise that as they paid an honest tithe, their desire for more material possessions would diminish. Within two years, the technology bubble burst. Many lost their jobs, and companies struggled during this time of financial adjustment. Those who followed the counsel of Elder Eyring were blessed.

36 His promise reminded me of another experience. I met 12-year-old Charlotte Hlimi near Carcassonne, France, in 1990 while serving as a mission president. The Hlimis were a faithful family living in an apartment with eight children. They had a picture of the Savior and of the prophet on the wall. In the interview for her patriarchal blessing, I asked Charlotte if she paid an honest tithe. She responded, "Yes, President Andersen. My mother has taught me that there are temporal blessings and spiritual blessings that come from paying our tithing. My mother taught me that if we always pay our tithing, we will want for nothing. And President Andersen, we want for nothing."²⁵

37 In giving me permission to share her story, Charlotte, now 45 and sealed in the temple, commented: "My testimony of tithing was very real at the time, and it is even stronger now. I am deeply grateful for this commandment. As I live it I continue to be abundantly blessed."²⁵

38 One day each of us will finish our earthly journey. Twenty-five years ago, just days before my mother-in-law, Martha Williams, died of cancer, she received a small check in the mail. She immediately

asked my wife, Kathy, for her checkbook to pay her tithing. As her mother was so weakened that she could scarcely write, Kathy asked if she could write the check for her. Her mother responded, "No, Kathy. I want to do it myself." And then she quietly added, "I want to be right before the Lord." One of the final things Kathy did for her mother was to hand her tithing envelope to her bishop.

39 **God's Important Work**

40 My brothers and sisters, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is "out of obscurity,"²⁶ bringing remarkable blessings across the earth. There will be those who cheer us forward and those who do not. I have thought of the words of the wise Gamaliel, who, upon hearing of the miracles of the Apostles Peter and John, warned the council in Jerusalem:

41 "Let [these men] alone: for if ... this work be of men, it will come to nought:

42 "But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest ... ye be found even to fight against God."²⁷

43 You and I are part of God's important work upon the earth. It will not come to naught but will continue to move across the world, preparing the way for the Savior's return. I testify to the words of President Russell M. Nelson: "In coming days, we will see the greatest manifestations of the Savior's power that the world has ever seen. Between now and the time He returns ... , He will bestow countless privileges, blessings, and miracles upon the faithful."²⁸

44 This is my witness. Jesus is the Christ. This is His holy work. He will come again. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. *Personal correspondence from Roger Parra, Aug. 4, 2023.*
2. *Malachi 3:10.*
3. *See Malachi 3:11. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland said: "In my life, for example, I have seen God's promise fulfilled that He would 'rebuke the devourer for [my sake]' [Malachi 3:11]. That blessing of protection against evil has been poured out upon me and on my loved ones beyond any capacity I have to adequately acknowledge. But I believe that divine safety has come, at least in part, because of our determination, individually and as a family, to pay tithing" ("Like a Watered Garden," *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 34; *Liahona*, Jan. 2002, 38).*
4. *"The Lord will open the windows of*

heaven according to our need, and not according to our greed. If we are paying tithing to get rich, we are doing it for the wrong reason. ... The blessing to the giver ... may not be always in the form of financial or material benefit" (Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley [1997], 657).

5. Malachi 3:10; 3 Nephi 24:10.
6. See "The Church of Jesus Christ Is Helping Alleviate Global Malnutrition," Aug. 11, 2023, newsroom.ChurchofJesusChrist.org; see also "How the Church of Jesus Christ and UNICEF Are Keeping Mothers and Children Healthy and Safe," Aug. 17, 2023, newsroom.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
7. "And the Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them" (Moses 7:18).
8. See 1 Corinthians 2:14. The logic of man does not always align with the wisdom of God. In Malachi's day, many had become distant from the Lord. The Lord implored His covenant people, "Return unto me, and I will return unto you." What follows this tender invitation is a deeply important question for each of us: "But ye said, Wherein shall we return?" (Malachi 3:7). Or in other words, "What am I to change? How do I draw closer to Thee?" The Lord answers by teaching the importance of tithing, not simply as a financial law but a tangible way to turn the desires of our hearts to Him. We observed this in our own family. Kathy's mother joined the Church at age 22. Martha and Bernard Williams attended church for a brief period, but after a move to another state, they became less active. Bernard received a military deployment overseas, and Martha moved home to Tampa, Florida, where she accepted the generous invitation to live with her aunt and uncle, who were opposed to the Church. While living in very humble circumstances, expecting her first child and not attending church, Martha Williams made the decision to start sending her tithing check to the bishop. Later in her life, when asked why, she said that she remembered something the missionaries had taught her about tithing and God's blessings: "We desperately needed God's blessings in our lives, and so I began sending our tithing check to the bishop." Martha and Bernard Williams returned to the Church. Their greatest blessing—six generations have been blessed because of her decision to pay her tithing when she had nothing but faith in God and hope in His promises.
9. Matthew 22:21.
10. See 3 Nephi 24.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 119:3–4. "Tithing is the donation of one-tenth of one's income to God's Church (see Doctrine and Covenants 119:3–4; interest is understood to mean income). All members who have income should pay tithing" (General Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 34.3.1, Gospel Library).
12. Malachi 3:10.
13. "We pay tithing, as the Savior taught, by bringing the tithes 'into the storehouse' [Malachi 3:10; 3 Nephi 24:10]. We do this by paying our tithing to our bishop or branch president. We do not pay tithing by contributing to our favorite charities. The contributions we should make to charities come from our own funds, not from the tithes we are commanded to pay to the storehouse of the Lord" (Dallin H. Oaks, "Tithing," Ensign, May 1994, 35).
14. Doctrine and Covenants 120:1.
15. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Rise to a Larger Vision of the Work," Ensign, May 1990, 96.
16. See "The 2022 Report on How the Church of Jesus Christ Cared for Those in Need," Mar. 22, 2023, newsroom.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
17. Received via email from the Missionary Department, Sept. 14, 2023.
18. See "Temple List," ChurchofJesusChrist.org/temples/list.
19. Received via email from Member and Statistical Records, July 28, 2023.
20. This includes Brigham Young University, Brigham Young University–Idaho, Brigham Young University–Hawaii, Ensign College, and BYU–Pathway Worldwide.
21. Received via email from Seminaries and Institutes, July 28, 2023.
22. See General Handbook, 34.3.1.
23. President Dallin H. Oaks shared this story about trusting in the Lord: "My widowed mother supported her three young children on a [meager] salary. ... I asked my mother why she paid so much of her salary as tithing. I have never forgotten her explanation: 'Dallin, there might be some people who can get along without paying tithing, but we can't. The Lord has chosen to take your father and leave me to raise you children. I cannot do that without the blessings of the Lord, and I obtain those blessings by paying an honest tithing'" ("Tithing," 33).
24. "That through my providence, notwithstanding the tribulation which shall descend upon you, that the church may stand independent above all other creatures beneath the celestial world" (Doctrine and Covenants 78:14).
25. Personal correspondence from Charlotte Hlimi Martin, Aug. 30, 2023.
26. Doctrine and Covenants 1:30.
27. Acts 5:38–39.
28. Russell M. Nelson, "Overcome the World and Find Rest," Liahona, Nov. 2022, 95.

Preserving the Voice of the Covenant People in the Rising Generation

BY BROTHER JAN E. NEWMAN

One of our most sacred responsibilities is to help our children come to know deeply and specifically that Jesus is the Christ.

- 1 One of the most touching moments in the Book of Mormon is the resurrected Savior's visit to the people at the temple in the land Bountiful. After a day of teaching, healing, and building faith, Jesus directed the people's attention to the rising generation: "He commanded that their little children should be brought."¹ He prayed for them and blessed them one by one. The experience was so moving that the Savior Himself wept multiple times.
- 2 Then, speaking to the multitude, Jesus said:
- 3 "Behold your little ones.
- 4 "And as they looked ... they saw the heavens open, and they saw angels descending out of heaven," ministering to their children.²
- 5 I have often thought about this experience. It must have melted every person's heart! They saw the Savior. They felt Him. They knew Him. He taught them. He blessed them. And He loved them. It's no wonder that after this sacred event, these children grew up to help establish a society of peace, prosperity, and Christlike love that lasted for generations.³
- 6 Wouldn't it be wonderful if our children could have experiences like that with Jesus Christ—something that would bind their hearts to Him! He invites us, as He invited those parents in the Book of Mormon, to bring our little ones to Him. We can help them know their Savior and Redeemer the way these children did. We can show them how to find the Savior in the scriptures and build their foundations on Him.⁴
- 7 Recently, a good friend taught me something I hadn't noticed before about the parable of the wise man who built his house upon a rock. According to the account in Luke, as the wise man laid the foundation for his house, he "dugged deep."⁵ It wasn't a casual or simple endeavor—it took effort!
- 8 To build our lives on the rock of our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, we need to dig deep. We remove anything that is sandy or superfluous in our lives. We keep digging until we find Him. And we teach our children to bind themselves to Him through sacred ordinances and covenants so that when the oppositional storms and floods come, as they surely will, they will have little effect upon them "because of the rock upon which [they] are built."⁶
- 9 This kind of strength doesn't just happen. It is not passed on to the next generation like a spiritual inheritance. Each person must dig deep to find the rock.
- 10 We learn this lesson from another account in the Book of Mormon. When King Benjamin gave his final address to his people, they gathered as families to hear his words.⁷ King Benjamin bore powerful witness of Jesus Christ, and the people were deeply moved by his testimony. They declared:
- 11 "The Spirit ... has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts. ...
- 12 "And we are willing to enter into a covenant with our God to do his will ... all the remainder of our days."⁸
- 13 One might expect that little children with such deeply converted parents would eventually become converted and make covenants themselves. And yet, for some reason not mentioned in the record, the covenant made by the parents did not get traction with some of their children. Several years later "there were many of the rising generation that could not understand the words of king

Benjamin, being little children at the time he spake unto his people; and they did not believe the tradition of their fathers.

14 “They did not believe what had been said concerning the resurrection of the dead, neither did they believe concerning the coming of Christ. ...

15 “And they would not be baptized; neither would they join the church. And they were a separate people as to their faith.”⁹

16 What a sobering thought! For the rising generation, it’s not enough for faith in Jesus Christ to be “the tradition of their fathers.” They need to own faith in Christ for themselves. As the covenant people of God, how can we instill within the hearts of our children a desire to make and keep covenants with Him?

17 We can start by following the example of Nephi: “We talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins.”¹⁰ Nephi’s words imply a constant, ongoing effort to teach our children about Christ. We can ensure that the voice of the covenant people is not silent in the ears of the rising generation and that Jesus is not a Sunday-only topic.¹¹

18 The voice of the covenant people is found in our own words of testimony. It is found in the words of living prophets. And it is preserved powerfully in the scriptures. It is there that our children will come to know Jesus and find answers to their questions. It is there they will learn for themselves the doctrine of Christ. It is there they will find hope. This will prepare them for a lifetime of seeking truth and living on the covenant path.

19 I love this counsel from President Russell M. Nelson:

20 “Where can we go to hear Him?”

21 “We can go to the scriptures. They teach us about Jesus Christ and His gospel, the magnitude of His Atonement, and our Father’s great plan of happiness and redemption. Daily immersion in the word of God is crucial for spiritual survival, especially in these days of increasing upheaval. As we feast on the

words of Christ daily, the words of Christ will tell us how to respond to difficulties we never thought we would face.”¹²

22 So what does it look like to feast on the words of Christ and hear Him? Well, it looks like whatever works best for you! It might be gathering with your family to talk about the things the Holy Ghost taught you in your scripture study using Come, Follow Me. It might be gathering each day with your children to read a few verses from the scriptures and then looking for opportunities to discuss what you learned as you spend time together. Just find what works for you and your family; then try to do a little better each day.

23 Consider this insight from Teaching in the Savior’s Way: “Taken individually, a single home evening, scripture study session, or gospel conversation may not seem like it is accomplishing much. But the accumulation of small, simple efforts, repeated consistently over time, can be more powerful and strengthening than an occasional monumental moment or landmark lesson. ... So don’t give up, and don’t worry about accomplishing something grand every time. Just be consistent in your efforts.”¹³

24 One of our most sacred responsibilities is to help our children come to know deeply and specifically that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, their personal Savior and Redeemer, who stands at the head of His Church! We cannot allow our covenant voice to become muted or silent when it comes to Him.

25 You may feel a bit inadequate in this role, but you should never feel alone. For example, ward councils are authorized to organize teacher council meetings for parents. In these quarterly meetings, parents can gather to learn from each other’s experiences, discuss how they are strengthening their families, and learn key principles of Christlike teaching. This meeting should be held in the second hour of church.¹⁴ It is led by a ward member selected by the bishop and follows the format of regular teacher council meetings, using Teaching in the Savior’s Way as the primary resource.¹⁵ Bishops, if your ward is not currently holding teacher council meetings for parents, work with your Sunday School president and ward council to organize yourselves.¹⁶

“and keep his commandments which he has given [me]; that [I] may always have his Spirit.”⁸ It helps me to endure to the end.⁹ Or at least to the end of the day! And in those days that I fail to remember Him all day, He is still there, loving me and telling me, “It’s OK; you can try again tomorrow.”

12 Although we are imperfect at remembering Him, our loving Heavenly Father never fails to remember us.

13 One of the mistakes we often make is to think that keeping covenants, or the promises we make to God, is somehow a transaction we make with Him: I obey, and He protects me from anything bad ever happening to me. I pay my tithing, and I will never lose my job or the fire will not burn my house. But then when things don’t go as we expected, we cry unto the Lord, “Carest thou not that I perish?”¹⁰

14 Our covenants are not merely transactional; they are transformational.¹¹ Through my covenants I receive sanctifying, strengthening power of Jesus Christ, which allows me to become a new person, to forgive what seems unforgivable, to overcome the impossible. Intentionally remembering Jesus Christ always is powerful; it gives me added strength to “keep his commandments which he has given [me].”¹² It helps me to be nicer, to smile for no reason, to be a peacemaker,¹³ to avoid conflict, to let God prevail in my life.¹⁴

15 When our pain or the pain of someone we love is so much that we can’t bear it, remembering Jesus Christ and coming unto Him can lighten the burden, soften the heart, and ease the pain. This is the power that enabled a father beyond his natural capacity to sustain his daughter through the physical and emotional pain of losing her leg.

16 When Elder Soares visited Argentina last June and asked Flavia about her tragic accident, she faithfully replied, “I experienced turmoil, bitterness, anger, and hate when [this happened]. Something that helped me was not to ask, ‘why me?’ but ‘what for?’ ... This was something that brought me closer to others and the Lord. ... Instead of distancing myself from Him, I had to cling to Him.”¹⁵

17 President Nelson taught: “The reward for

keeping covenants with God is heavenly power—power that strengthens us to withstand our trials, temptations, and heartaches better. ... Thus, covenant keepers are entitled to a special kind of rest.”¹⁶ This is the kind of rest and peace I saw in the eyes of the widow, despite the heartache she felt of missing her husband every day.

18 The New Testament tells of a time when Jesus and His disciples were on a ship:

19 “And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship. ...

20 “And he was ... asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?

21 “And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. ...

22 “And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?”¹⁷

23 I have always been intrigued by this story. Did the Lord expect them to use their faith to calm the storm? To rebuke the winds? Faith in Jesus Christ is the feeling of peace to withstand the storm, knowing that we will not perish because He is in the ship with us.

24 This is the kind of faith we saw when we visited the families after the fires in Chile. Their houses had been burned to the ground; they had lost everything. Yet as we were walking in what used to be their homes and they were telling us about their experiences, we felt that we were standing on holy ground. One sister said to my wife, “When I saw that nearby houses were burning, I had the impression that our house was going to be burned, that we were going to lose everything. Instead of desperation, I experienced a sense of indescribable peace. Somehow, I felt everything was going to be OK.” Trusting God and keeping our covenants with Him bring power to our weakness and comfort to our grief.

25 I am grateful for the opportunity that Renee and I had to meet some of these extraordinary Saints, for their many examples of faith, strength, and perseverance. For stories of heartbreak and disappointment that will never make the front page of a newspaper or ever go viral. For the pictures that are not

Promptings of the Spirit

BY ELDER GARY E. STEVENSON

The constant companionship of the Holy Ghost is one of the greatest spiritual gifts Latter-day Saints enjoy.

1 Introduction

2 Recently, the eyes of the sporting world focused on the 2023 FIFA Women’s World Cup, hosted by Australia and New Zealand. World-class athletes narrowed from more than 200 national teams from around the globe demonstrated their grit, dedication, talent, and athleticism as they competed for the soccer world’s highest honor.

3 We marvel at performers in numerous sports and other disciplines who achieve the highest level of their art. We speak of their God-given talents or gifts. This includes those gifted in dance, gymnastics, music, art, drama, mathematics, science, and more. Each such person demonstrates God-given gifts that are then refined and honed by a lifetime of hard work, study, and practice. God-given gifts make gifted people.

4 Exercising Spiritual Gifts

5 Looking through a gospel lens, God endows His children with many spiritual gifts, making them spiritually gifted people. Covenant-keeping members of the Church are bestowed with gifts of the Spirit, which include the gift of a testimony of Jesus Christ as our Savior, the gift of the Holy Ghost, the gift of faith to heal and be healed, the gift of discernment, the gift of receiving miracles, and the gifts of wisdom and knowledge.¹ The Lord invites us to earnestly seek the best gifts, even spiritual gifts. He gives spiritual gifts to bless us and to use in blessing others.²

6 Returning to our analogy of gifted performers, it is important to remember that a gift alone does not a master make. Extraordinary natural talent notwithstanding, it is through painstaking and laborious practice and effort that performers refine and hone their craft to reach their highest level of artistry. Even those gifts received and unwrapped are often accompanied by

the dreaded language “some assembly required.”

7 Likewise, I have observed a learning curve associated with spiritual gifts. Exercising spiritual gifts requires spiritual exercise. “Having the guidance of the Holy Ghost in your life requires spiritual work. This work includes fervent prayer and consistent scripture study. It also includes keeping your covenants and God’s commandments. ... It includes worthily partaking of the sacrament each week.”³

8 What are the fruits of exercising spiritual gifts? They include promptings from the Spirit that help us face our daily needs and show us what to do and say and blessings of peace and comfort. As we listen and act on spiritual promptings, the Holy Ghost magnifies our abilities and capacities to far exceed what we can do on our own. These precious spiritual gifts will help us in every aspect of our lives.⁴

9 The constant companionship of the Holy Ghost is one of the greatest spiritual gifts Latter-day Saints enjoy.

10 How important is this gift? President Russell M. Nelson answered this question categorically when he stated that “in coming days, it will not be possible to survive spiritually without the guiding, directing, comforting, and constant influence of the Holy Ghost.”⁵

11 How to Invite and Recognize the Promptings of the Spirit

12 Over the course of my ministry, I have found a universal longing by everyone to know how to invite and recognize the promptings of the Holy Ghost. Promptings of the Spirit are very personal and come in different ways. We are, however, blessed to have words of prophets, both ancient and modern, give us valuable insights about how to receive direction from the Spirit.

13 Let me offer four guiding principles that may be of assistance to you in inviting and recognizing the promptings of the Spirit.

14 *Stand in Holy Places*

15 The first is to stand in holy places.⁶ I recently participated in the Tokyo Japan Temple open house. The response to formal invitations sent to both media and VIP guests far exceeded expectations. Hundreds joined in these guided temple tours. Guests were deeply touched by the beauty of the temple, including patterns and motifs with deep, traditional Japanese connections. More poignant yet was the reverent and respectful reaction elicited from guests as ancestral ordinances were described in rooms where they would occur. But most heartwarming were stirrings of the Spirit.

16 One such moment with a prominent government official remains etched in my mind. Following a moment of meditative silence in the celestial room, emotional and deeply touched he whispered in my ear, "Even the air that I breathe in this room feels different." I recognized he was trying to describe the presence of the Holy Spirit, which, indeed, dwells in sacred spaces. If you hope to feel the Spirit, be in a place where the Spirit can easily dwell.

17 Our temples and homes are the most sacred of these dedicated spaces. In them we more easily invite and recognize the Spirit. Other holy places include meetinghouses, seminary buildings and institutes, and Church history sites and visitors' centers. Stand in holy places.

18 *Stand with Holy People*

19 Second, stand with holy people. I'll describe the second guiding principle with another memory.

20 I will never forget participating in a devotional held in a popular sports arena. Usually, this arena was filled with raucous fans cheering their home team and perhaps even jeering their opponent. But on this night, the atmosphere was quite different. The arena was filled with thousands of young people assembled to honor and commemorate the life of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Their reverent, quiet tone; gratitude; and prayerful hearts

filled the arena with the presence of the Holy Spirit. I could literally see it in their faces. It was the gift of the Holy Ghost in action, affirming the testimonies being borne of Joseph Smith and the Restoration of the gospel.

21 The Spirit cannot be restrained from attending a gathering of holy people. If you hope to feel the Spirit, be with people with whom the Spirit can easily dwell. The Savior said it this way: "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."⁷ For young people, consider your gatherings of holy people: quorums and classes, FSY and seminary, ward and stake activities—even ward choirs. Choose to be with people and go to places where righteousness is found. Find your strength in numbers. Find good friends. Be good friends. Support one another wherever you are. Stand with holy people.

22 *Testify of Holy Truths*

23 Third, testify of holy truths as often as you can. The Comforter always shares His voice when we testify with our voice. The Spirit bears witness to the speaker and listener alike.

24 I remember once taking a 45-minute taxi ride in New York City. Having had a warm gospel conversation with the driver for the duration of my ride to the airport, I paid her and prepared to exit the taxi. Then I realized I had not offered a testimony of what I had shared. Pausing, I shared a simple, short testimony, inviting the Spirit and bringing tears to both our eyes.

25 As you seek and take opportunities to share your testimony with others, you will create moments to recognize the Spirit for yourself.

26 *Listen to the Holy Spirit*

27 The final principle is to listen to the Holy Spirit. He can be our constant companion, but He speaks in subtle, quiet tones. The prophet Elijah found that the voice of the Lord was not in the wind, the earthquake, or the fire but was "a still small voice."⁸ It is "not a voice of thunder" but rather "a still voice of perfect mildness, as if it had been a whisper," and yet it can "pierce even to the very soul."⁹

28 President Boyd K. Packer stated: “The Spirit does not get our attention by shouting or shaking us with a heavy hand. Rather it whispers. It caresses so gently that if we are preoccupied we may not feel it at all.”¹⁰ I have observed that sometimes His voice is so subtle, or I am so preoccupied, that a loved one captures it for me. Many have been the times when promptings of the Holy Ghost have come to me through my wife, Lesa. Righteous parents or leaders may also receive inspired guidance for you.

29 The noise, clamor, and contention prevalent in the world may overpower still, quiet impressions of the Holy Spirit. Find a quiet place, a holy space where you can seek to receive direction from the Spirit.

30 Some Words of Caution

31 As you consider these principles to invite and recognize the Spirit, consider the following words of cautionary guidance.¹¹

32 Confirm your spiritual impressions. For example, impressions from the Spirit will align with the scriptures and the teachings of the living prophets.

33 Be certain that the feelings you receive are consistent with your assignment. Unless you are called by proper authority, impressions from the Spirit are not given for you to counsel or correct others.

34 Spiritual matters cannot be forced. You can cultivate an attitude and an environment that invite the Spirit, and you can prepare yourself, but you cannot dictate how or when inspiration comes. Be patient and trust that you will receive what you need when the time is right.

35 Use your own best judgment. Sometimes we want to be led by the Spirit in all things. However, often the Lord wants us to use our God-given intelligence and act in ways that are consistent with our best understanding. President Dallin H. Oaks taught:

36 “A desire to be led by the Lord is a strength, but it needs to be accompanied by an understanding that our Heavenly Father leaves many decisions for our personal choices. ... Persons who try to shift all decision making to the Lord and plead for revelation in every choice will

soon find circumstances in which they pray for guidance and don’t receive it. ...

37 “We should study things out in our minds. ... Then we should pray for guidance and act upon it. ... If we do not receive guidance, we should act upon our best judgment.”¹²

38 Conclusion with an Invitation

39 In conclusion, Latter-day Saints should be gifted, covenant-keeping people. Nonetheless, it remains for each of us to seek to exercise our spiritual gifts and then to invite and learn to recognize promptings of the Spirit. Four guiding principles to assist us in this crucial spiritual endeavor are:

40 Stand in holy places.

41 Stand with holy people.

42 Testify of holy truths.

43 Listen to the Holy Spirit.

44 Your ability to invite and recognize the promptings of the Spirit will develop a step at a time. “Becoming more attuned to the language of the Spirit is like learning another language. It is a gradual process that requires diligent, patient effort.”¹³

45 Returning to where we began, please remember that as Latter-day Saints you are gifted. Picture this familiar fast Sunday scene, recently described to me. A young child, standing on a stool, was barely visible over the pulpit. Her father stood next to her, offering encouragement and assisting with soft whispers to her ear as she proudly shared, “I am a child of God.”

46 The next testimony that followed came from a young adult who began with a nervous quip: “I wish I had someone whispering in my ear like that.” Then she had a flash of inspiration and testified, “I do have someone whispering in my ear like that—the Holy Ghost!”

47 I close with an invitation especially for all youth! Many of you start your day by standing in front of a mirror. Tomorrow, this week, this year, always, pause as you look at yourself in the mirror. Think to yourself, or say aloud if you like, “Wow, look at me! I am awesome! I am a child of God! He knows me! He loves me! I

am gifted—gifted with the Holy Ghost as my constant companion!”

48 I add my testimony to you, gifted Latter-day Saints, of God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, who bears testimony of Them. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. See *Doctrine and Covenants* 46:13–25.
2. See *Doctrine and Covenants* 46:8–9, 26; *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ* (2023), 103.
3. *Preach My Gospel*, 101.
4. See *Preach My Gospel*, 101.

5. Russell M. Nelson, “Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2018, 96.
6. See *Doctrine and Covenants* 87:8.
7. *Matthew* 18:20.
8. *1 Kings* 19:12.
9. *Helaman* 5:30.
10. Boyd K. Packer, “The Candle of the Lord,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1983, 53.
11. Much of the content in this section is taken from chapter 4 of *Preach My Gospel*.
12. Dallin H. Oaks, “Our Strengths Can Become Our Downfall,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1994, 13–14.
13. *Preach My Gospel*, 106.

each individual?" She didn't get an answer, but I was sustained as bishop on the following Sunday. She did not ask Heavenly Father those questions anymore but supported me in my calling for six years.

14 On the Sunday when I was released, my wife heard a voice while she was receiving the sacrament. The voice whispered to her, "Because it was too hard for you to walk, I called him as a bishop in order to hold you and walk for you." Looking back at the past six years, she realized that all of the many challenges that seemed to be endless had now been resolved along the way.

15 We learned that when we think it is not a good time for us to receive a calling, it may be the time we need that calling the most. Whenever the Lord asks us to serve in any calling, whether it is a lighter or heavier calling, He sees our needs. He provides the strength we need and has blessings ready to be poured out upon us as we faithfully serve.

16 There are many other things that distract us from staying on the covenant path. No matter what it is, it is never too late to turn our hearts to Heavenly Father for help. Elder Paul V. Johnson taught us: "When we follow Satan, we give him power. When we follow God, He gives us power."6

17 King Benjamin in the Book of Mormon testifies: "I would desire that ye should consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. For behold, they are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual; and if they hold out faithful to the end they are received into heaven, that thereby they may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness."7

18 **3. How Can Keeping Covenants with God Make You Happy?**

19 My wife says that our marriage yokes us together, and because of that she can do things she couldn't do before. For example, ever since she was young, she has had a hard time going out in the dark, but it is not hard anymore because I go with her. She is short and cannot reach to the high shelves unless she uses a chair or ladder, but I can reach the things from high shelves for her because I am taller than her. Taking our Savior's yoke upon us is like that. As we

yoke ourselves to Him, we can do things we couldn't do on our own because He can do the things we cannot do for ourselves.

20 Elder David A. Bednar said: "Making and keeping sacred covenants yokes us to and with the Lord Jesus Christ. In essence, the Savior is beckoning us to rely upon and pull together with Him, even though our best efforts are not equal to and cannot be compared with His. As we trust in and pull our load with Him during the journey of mortality, truly His yoke is easy and His burden is light."8

21 President Nelson also taught:

22 "Yoking yourself with the Savior means you have access to His strength and redeeming power."9

23 "The reward for keeping covenants with God is heavenly power—power that strengthens us to withstand our trials, temptations, and heartaches better. This power eases our way. Those who live the higher laws of Jesus Christ have access to His higher power."10

24 "Keeping covenants actually makes life easier! Each person who makes covenants in baptismal fonts and in temples—and keeps them—has increased access to the power of Jesus Christ."11

25 My dear brothers and sisters, do you want to be happy? Stay on the covenant path. Your life will be easier, happier, and filled with joy. Our Savior is inviting us, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."12 He is the living Christ. He carries our burdens and makes our life easier. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. Russell M. Nelson, in Sarah Jane Weaver, "In Orlando, President Nelson Shares 7 Truths That Have the Power to Change Lives," *Church News*, June 9, 2019, thechurchnews.com.
2. Dale G. Renlund, "Accessing God's Power through Covenants," *Liahona*, May 2023, 36.
3. Dale G. Renlund, "Accessing God's Power through Covenants," 36.
4. Thomas S. Monson, "Models to Follow," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2002, 61.
5. Thomas S. Monson, "Keep the

God Knows and Loves You

BY ELDER ALAN T. PHILLIPS

God's plan of happiness is all about you. You are His precious child and of great worth.

- 1 Six years ago our family was traveling at night just outside the city of Oxford. As is often the case with young children, we needed to stop, so we found a service station with an array of shops and restaurants. With precision, we filed out of the car, visited the services, and filed back in, resuming our journey.
- 2 Fifteen minutes later our eldest son asked a significant question: "Where is Jasper?" Jasper sits on his own at the back of the car. We assumed he had fallen asleep or was hiding or playing a trick on us.
- 3 As his brother inspected the back of the car more closely, we discovered our five-year-old son was not there. Our hearts filled with dread. As we made our way back to the service station, we pleaded with Heavenly Father that Jasper would be kept safe. We called the police and informed them of the situation.
- 4 When we anxiously arrived, more than 40 minutes later, we found two police vehicles in the car park, lights flashing. Inside one of them was Jasper, playing with the buttons. I will never forget the joy we felt in being reunited with him.
- 5 Many of the Savior's parabolic teachings focus on gathering, restoring, or striving to find that which has been scattered or lost. Among these are the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son.¹
- 6 As this incident with Jasper has played in my mind over the years, I have reflected on the divine identity and importance of God's children, the redemptive power of Jesus Christ, and the perfect love of a Father in Heaven, who knows you and me. I hope to bear witness of these truths today.
- 7 **I. Children of God**
- 8 Life is challenging. Many people feel overwhelmed, alone, isolated, or exhausted. When things are difficult, we may feel that we have wandered or fallen behind. Knowing that we are all children of God and members of His eternal family will restore a sense of belonging and purpose.²
- 9 President M. Russell Ballard shared: "There is one important identity we all share now and forever. ... That is that you are and have always been a son or daughter of God. ... Understanding this truth—really understanding it and embracing it—is life-changing."³
- 10 Do not misunderstand or devalue how important you are to your Father in Heaven. You are not an accidental by-product of nature, a cosmic orphan, or the result of matter plus time plus chance. Where there is design, there is a designer.
- 11 Your life has meaning and purpose. The ongoing Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ brings light and understanding regarding your divine identity. You are a beloved child of Heavenly Father. You are the subject matter of all those parables and teachings. God loves you so much that He sent His Son to heal, rescue, and redeem you.⁴
- 12 Jesus Christ recognized the divine nature and eternal worth of each person.⁵ He explained how the two great commandments to love God and love our neighbor are the foundation of all of God's commandments.⁶ One of our divine responsibilities is to care for those in need.⁷ This is why as disciples of Jesus Christ we "bear one another's burdens, ... mourn with those that mourn ... , and comfort those that stand in need of comfort."⁸
- 13 Religion is not only about our relationship with God; it is also about our relationship with each other. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland explained that the English word religion comes from the Latin religare, meaning "to tie" or, more literally, "to re-tie." Thus, "true religion [is] the tie that binds us to God and to

each other.”⁹

14 How we treat one another truly matters. President Russell M. Nelson teaches, “The Savior’s message is clear: His true disciples build, lift, encourage, persuade, and inspire.”¹⁰ This is even more important when our fellow travelers feel lost, alone, forgotten, or removed.

15 We do not have to look far to find people who are struggling. We can start by helping someone in our own family, congregation, or local community. We can also seek to relieve the suffering of the 700 million people living in extreme poverty¹¹ or the 100 million people who are forcibly displaced due to persecution, conflict, and identity-based violence.¹² Jesus Christ is the perfect example of caring for those in need—the hungry, the stranger, the sick, the poor, the imprisoned. His work is our work.

16 Elder Gerrit W. Gong teaches that “our journey to God is often found together.”¹³ As such, our wards should be a refuge for all of God’s children. Are we passively attending church or actively creating communities whose purpose is to worship, remember Christ, and minister to one another?¹⁴ We can heed President Nelson’s counsel to judge less, love more, and extend the pure love of Jesus Christ through our words and actions.¹⁵

17 II. The Redemptive Power of Jesus Christ

18 The Atonement of Jesus Christ is the supreme expression of our Heavenly Father’s love for His children.¹⁶ The word atonement describes the setting “at one” of those who have been estranged or separated.

19 Our Savior’s mission was to provide both a way to return to Heavenly Father and relief in the journey. The Savior knows through His experience how to support us through life’s challenges.¹⁷ Make no mistake: Christ is our rescuer and the healer of our souls.

20 As we exercise faith, He helps us press forward through hardships. He continues to extend His loving and merciful invitation:

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; ... and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”¹⁸

23 The metaphor of the yoke is powerful. As President Howard W. Hunter explained: “The yoke was a device ... that allowed the strength of a second animal to be linked and coupled with the effort of a single animal, sharing and reducing the heavy labor of the [task in hand]. A burden that was overwhelming or perhaps impossible for one to bear could be equitably and comfortably borne by two bound together with a common yoke.”¹⁹

24 President Nelson taught: “You come unto Christ to be yoked with Him and with His power, so that you’re not pulling life’s load alone. You’re pulling life’s load yoked with the Savior and Redeemer of the world.”²⁰

25 How do we yoke or bind ourselves to the Savior? Elder David A. Bednar explains:

26 “Making and keeping sacred covenants yokes us to and with the Lord Jesus Christ. In essence, the Savior is beckoning us to rely upon and pull together with Him. ...

27 “We are not and never need be alone.”²¹

28 To anyone burdened, lost, confused: You do not have to do this alone.²² Through the Atonement of Christ and His ordinances, you can be yoked or bound to Him. He will lovingly provide the strength and healing you need to face the journey ahead. He is the refuge from our storms still.²³

29 III. Heavenly Father’s Love

30 For the record, Jasper is witty, affectionate, intelligent, and rambunctious. But the key to this story is he is mine. He is my son, and I love him more than he will ever know. If an imperfect, earthly father feels this way about his child, can you imagine how a perfect, glorified, loving Heavenly Father feels about you?

31 To my dear friends of the rising generation, Gen Z and Gen Alpha: Please know faith requires work.²⁴ We live in a time when, for many, only “seeing is believing.” Faith can be

challenging and requires choices. But prayers are answered.²⁵ And answers can be felt.²⁶ Some of the most real things in life are not seen; they are felt, known, and experienced. They too are real.

32 Jesus Christ wants you to know and have a relationship with your Father in Heaven.²⁷ He taught, “What man among you, having a son, and he shall be standing out, and shall say, Father, open thy house that I may come in and sup with thee, will not say, Come in, my son; for mine is thine, and thine is mine?”²⁸ Can you think of a more personal, loving image of God the Eternal Father?

33 You are His child. If you are feeling lost, if you have questions or lack wisdom, if you are struggling with your circumstances or wrestling with spiritual dissonance, turn to Him. Pray to Him for comfort, love, answers, and direction. Whatever the need and wherever you are, pour out your heart to your Heavenly Father. For some, you may want to follow President Nelson’s invitation and ask “if He is really there—if He knows you. Ask Him how He feels about you. And then listen.”²⁹

34 Dear brothers and sisters:

- Know your Father in Heaven. He is perfect and loving.
- Know who Jesus Christ is.³⁰ He is our Savior and Redeemer. Bind yourself and those you love to Him.
- And know who you are. Know your true divine identity. God’s plan of happiness is all about you. You are His precious child and of great worth. He knows and loves you.

35 Of these simple but foundational truths I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. See Luke 15:4–32.
2. See *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ* (2023), 1.
3. M. Russell Ballard, “Children of Heavenly Father” (Brigham Young University devotional, Mar. 3, 2020), speeches.byu.edu.
4. See John 3:16; Mosiah 15:1; 3 Nephi 17:6–10.
5. See *Preach My Gospel*, chapter 3.
6. See Matthew 22:36–40.
7. See *General Handbook: Serving in*

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1.2, Gospel Library.

8. Mosiah 18:8, 9.
9. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Religion: Bound by Loving Ties” (Brigham Young University devotional, Aug. 16, 2016), speeches.byu.edu.
10. See Russell M. Nelson, “Peacemakers Needed,” *Liahona*, May 2023, 99.
11. “The number of people in extreme poverty rose by 70 million to more than 700 million people” (“Poverty,” Nov. 30, 2022, World Bank, worldbank.org).
12. “More than 100 million people are forcibly displaced” (“Refugee Data Finder,” May 23, 2022, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, unhcr.org).
13. Gerrit W. Gong, “Room in the Inn,” *Liahona*, May 2021, 25.
14. See *General Handbook*, 1.3.7, Gospel Library.
15. See Russell M. Nelson, “Peacemakers Needed,” 98–101.
16. See John 3:16.
17. See Alma 7:11–12; *Doctrine and Covenants* 122:8.
18. Matthew 11:28–29.
19. Howard W. Hunter, “Come unto Me,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 18.
20. “The Mission and Ministry of the Savior: A Discussion with Elder Russell M. Nelson,” *Ensign*, June 2005, 18.
21. David A. Bednar, “Bear Up Their Burdens with Ease,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 88.
22. President Camille N. Johnson said: “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’ [Philippians 4:13]” (“Jesus Christ Is Relief,” *Liahona*, May 2023, 82).
23. See Psalm 62:6–8.
24. See James 2:17.
25. See Matthew 7:7–8; James 1:5.
26. “He [the Holy Ghost] is the Comforter (John 14:26). As the soothing voice of a loving parent can quiet a crying child, the whisperings of the Spirit can calm our fears, hush the nagging worries of our life, and comfort us when we grieve. The Holy Ghost can fill us ‘with hope and perfect love’ and ‘teach [us] the peaceable things of the kingdom’ (Moroni 8:26; *Doctrine and Covenants* 36:2)”

(Topics and Questions, "Holy Ghost," Gospel Library).

"He [the Holy Ghost] 'witnesses of the Father and the Son' (2 Nephi 31:18). It is only through the power of the Holy Ghost that we can receive a sure testimony of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

"The Holy Ghost testifies of truth, and it is through His power that we 'may know the truth of all things' (Moroni 10:5)" ("The Holy Ghost Testifies of Truth," Liahona, Mar. 2010, 14, 15).

"But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me" (John 15:26).

27. See John 14:6–7; 17:3.
28. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 7:17 (in the Bible appendix).
29. Russell M. Nelson, "Come, Follow Me," Ensign or Liahona, May 2019, 90.
30. See Mark 8:27–29.

How Great Will Be Your Joy

BY ELDER RONALD A. RASBAND

I now invite you to take your know-how, coupled with your time-honored testimonies, and go on a mission.

1 My dear brothers and sisters, my thoughts today are on the gathering of Israel, what President Russell M. Nelson calls “the most important thing taking place on earth today. Nothing else compares in magnitude, nothing else compares in importance, nothing else compares in majesty.”¹

2 The gathering is the ultimate recognition that “the worth of souls is great in the sight of God.”² It is as simple as that. We are gathering God’s children in these last days that they might have “blessings poured out upon their heads”³ and the promises of “the riches of eternity.”⁴ It follows that to gather Israel we need missionaries—many more than are serving.⁵ Today I am speaking to the many seasoned seniors in the Church who could serve as missionaries. The Lord needs you. We need you in New York and Chicago, Australia and Africa, Thailand and Mexico, and everywhere in between.

3 Let me take you back to the year 2015. I was a newly called member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. One of the wonderful responsibilities we carry as Apostles is to assign missionaries to their fields of labor. I had participated as a Seventy in the process,⁶ but now as an Apostle, I felt the full weight of the assignment. I began with prayerfully placing a great number of young elders and sisters, one by one, in missions around the world. Then I turned to the senior couples. There were 10 on the list. Not very many. Surprised, I asked my associate from the Missionary Department, “How many do we need this week to fill the requests?”

4 He responded, “300.”

5 That sobering moment has stayed with me: 10 couples to fill 300 requests.

6 President Russell M. Nelson has encouraged couples to “get on their

knees and ask Heavenly Father if the time is right for them to serve a mission.”⁷ Of all the qualifications, he said, “a desire to serve may be the most important.”⁸

7 As the scripture says, “If ye have desires to serve God ye are called to the work.”⁹ That work is all about the law of the harvest. We read in John, “Both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.”¹⁰

8 I have seen the law of the harvest fulfilled in my own family.

9 Some years ago I was visiting family, when the bishop asked me to conclude the sacrament service.¹¹ As I was coming down from the stand, a woman approached me with her seven children and introduced herself as Sister Rebecca Guzman.

10 She asked, “Elder Rasband, do you know Rulon and Verda Rasband?”

11 I beamed and replied, “They are my parents.”

12 You can see where this is going. With Rebecca’s permission, who is here with family in the Conference Center, I share her family’s story.¹²

13 My parents, Elder Rulon and Sister Verda Rasband, were serving as a senior couple in the Florida Fort Lauderdale Mission.¹³ They were proselyting and by divine guidance knocked on the door of Rebecca’s home. She was just a teenager and loved listening to the music of the Osmonds, in particular our friend Donny—who is here with us today.¹⁴ She had listened to their media interviews and learned they were members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. She felt there was something different about them, and thinking it might be their religion, Rebecca spent two years researching the Church’s beliefs in the school library. So, when a kindly-looking

couple knocked on her family's door and introduced themselves as Latter-day Saint missionaries, she was taken back.

14 "My mother told me to get rid of them," Rebecca later wrote, "but my heart said, 'No.' I looked into their faces, and I felt so much warmth and love. The memory still brings tears to my eyes and deep emotion to my heart."¹⁵

15 Rebecca invited them in, and my missionary parents shared a message with her, her two younger sisters, and, despite her objections, her mother.

16 Rebecca described to me: "Both your parents were wonderful in explaining any questions we had. I can still see their faces as if there was light surrounding them. We always hugged your mother when she left, and she always made a point of helping my mother feel comfortable and respected. Your father always had a sparkle in his eyes as he was teaching us about Jesus Christ. He tried to include my father in discussions and eventually won him over. My father was a chef at a local country club and started cooking dinners for your parents, including making your father's favorite, key lime pie."¹⁶

17 When Elder and Sister Rasband asked Rebecca and her family to read the Book of Mormon, Rebecca did so in five days. She wanted to be baptized immediately, but the other members of her family were not ready. After four months, Rebecca insisted she be baptized and join the true Church. She recalled, "Every fiber of my soul knew it was true."¹⁷ On April 5, 1979, missionaries baptized 19-year-old Rebecca, her mother, and two sisters. My father was a witness at the baptism.

18 When I met Rebecca and her family at church, we took a photograph of her family with me. I took it home to my elderly mother, and she held it close to her heart. Then she said to me, "Ronnie, this is one of the happiest days of my life."

19 My mother's response begs the question for our seniors: "What are you doing at this stage of your life?" There are so many ways senior missionaries can do what no one else can. You are a remarkable force for good, seasoned in the Church, and poised to encourage and rescue God's children.

20 Some of you might be thinking: "But what about leaving the grandchildren? We would miss family milestones, birthdays, friends, and even our pets." If I had asked my mother why she and Dad went on a mission, I know she would have said this: "I have grandchildren. I want them to know that your father and I served in the mission field, we wanted to set an example for our posterity, and we were blessed, so blessed."

21 As I have visited missions around the world, I have seen the remarkable service of our legion of senior missionaries. It is clear they are happy doing "the will of the Lord" and being about "the Lord's business."¹⁸

22 For some, and we hope thousands of you, full-time missionary service in another corner of the world will be just the right place.¹⁹ For others, serving a Church-service mission at home might be preferable. Because of health issues and other circumstances, there are those who are unable to serve. We understand those situations, and it would be my hope you might find ways to support those who are serving. Follow the prophet's counsel and pray to know what the Lord would have you do.

23 Mission fields around the world are pleading for your help. President Nelson has said of our senior missionaries, "They are young in spirit, wise, and willing to work."²⁰

24 Out in the field, you have a smorgasbord of opportunities: you may serve in mission offices or temples, strengthen young missionaries, bolster small branches, work in FamilySearch centers or at historic sites, teach institute, provide humanitarian service, work with young adults, help in employment centers or on Church farms. The particulars of ways to serve, what best suits you, where you are needed, and how you can get ready to go are addressed on the website "Senior Missionary."²¹ You can also talk with your bishop or branch president.

25 I have called many couples to serve and watched as the Light of Christ has filled their countenances.²² At their return, they have described growing closer to the Lord and closer to one another, feeling the Spirit of the Lord pour down upon them, and knowing they are making a difference.²³ Who would not want that?

26 A mission might be the greatest chapter in a couple's life. A good title might be "My Lord Will Have Need of Me."²⁴ You may be on unfamiliar ground; however, the power of the Spirit will make you feel right at home.

27 My parents and tens of thousands of returned missionary couples have borne testimony of the joy they found in missionary work. The Lord has said in latter-day scripture, "And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!"²⁵

28 Isaiah gave us a poetic description of what it means to serve in the mission "field." Scripture tells us "the field is the world."²⁶ This great ancient prophet wrote, "For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands."²⁷ The mountains, hills, fields, and trees can be likened to mission presidents, bishops, district leaders, members, and those who seek the truth but "they know not where to find it."²⁸ They will testify that the senior missionaries change the very landscape with their testimony of our Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

29 As an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, I ask you to serve as a missionary in the gathering of Israel and perhaps even serve again. We need you—we need you. We are grateful to you seniors for the lives you have led and the examples you have been in your homes, wards, and stakes. I now invite you to take your know-how, coupled with your time-honored testimonies, and go on a mission. I pray that the next time I sit down to assign senior couples, there will be hundreds of you waiting anxiously for your call.

30 I also promise that as you serve, you will feel the love of the Lord in your life, you will know Him, He will know you, and "how great shall be your joy."²⁹ Your dedicated service to Jesus Christ will inspire and bless your family, your grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. "Peace, and love [will] be multiplied"³⁰ in their lives for years to come. I promise. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

- (worldwide youth devotional, June 3, 2018), Gospel Library.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 18:10.
 3. 3 Nephi 10:18.
 4. Doctrine and Covenants 78:18.
 5. The Church has 71,000 full-time missionaries in 414 missions across the world, from North and South America to Europe and Africa, Asia, and Australia/Oceania. There are 34,000 senior Church-service missionaries. (Missionary Department data, Sept. 2023.)
 6. See Ronald A. Rasband, "The Divine Call of a Missionary," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2010, 52–53.
 7. Russell M. Nelson, "Senior Missionary Moments," *Ensign*, Apr. 2016, 67; *Liahona*, Apr. 2016, 27.
 8. Russell M. Nelson, "Senior Missionaries and the Gospel," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2004, 81.
 9. Doctrine and Covenants 4:3.
 10. John 4:36.
 11. I was in New York, USA, attending the baptism of granddaughter Brooklyn and the blessing of granddaughter Ella, April 2006.
 12. Letter from Rebecca Guzman to Elder Ronald A. Rasband, Sept. 8, 2009.
 13. My parents served in the Florida Fort Lauderdale Mission in 1979.
 14. The Osmond family was a popular American music group known for their pop songs. The group reached the height of fame in the mid-1970s, performing on television variety shows. Donny and Marie continued with television with stage careers, while the brothers performed for decades as country artists in Branson, Missouri.
 15. Letter from Rebecca Guzman, Sept. 8, 2009.
 16. Letter from Rebecca Guzman, Sept. 8, 2009.
 17. Letter from Rebecca Guzman, Sept. 8, 2009.
 18. Doctrine and Covenants 64:29.
 19. Senior missionary opportunities take many forms, and couples or senior sisters may list preferences as well as a full-time or Church-service assignment. Ultimately, the prophet of the Church issues the call for full-time service. Stake presidents issue Church-service assignments. Service can range from 6 months to 23 months, and senior missionaries have more flexibility and

1. Russell M. Nelson, "Hope of Israel"

less strenuous activity than young missionaries. See *seniormissionary*. ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

20. Russell M. Nelson, "Senior Missionaries and the Gospel," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2004, 79.
21. See *seniormissionary*. ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
22. See Alma 5:14. "Countenance" can be described as reflecting an individual's spiritual attitude and state of mind.

23. See Jude 1:22; Mosiah 4:20.

24. See "I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go," Hymns, no. 270.
25. Doctrine and Covenants 18:15.
26. The Lord explained, "The field is the world; ... the harvest is the end of the world" (Matthew 13:38–39).
27. Isaiah 55:12.
28. Doctrine and Covenants 123:12.
29. Doctrine and Covenants 18:15.
30. Jude 1:2.

Saturday Evening

Hallmarks of Happiness

BY ELDER GARY B. SABIN

Building upon the foundation of Jesus Christ is essential to our happiness.

1 While on a business flight several years ago, I found myself seated next to a man from the Netherlands. I was eager to visit with him since I had served in Belgium and the Netherlands as a young missionary.

2 As we became acquainted, he gave me his business card with the unique job title of “professor of happiness.” I commented on his amazing profession and asked him what a professor of happiness did. He said he taught people how to have a happy life by establishing meaningful relationships and goals. I replied, “That’s wonderful, but what if you could also teach how those relationships can continue beyond the grave and answer other questions of the soul, such as what is the purpose of life, how can we overcome our weaknesses, and where do we go after we die?” He admitted that it would be amazing if we had the answers to those questions, and I was pleased to share with him that we do.

3 Today, I would like to review a few essential principles for true happiness that seem to elude so many in this confusing world, where many things are interesting but few are truly important.

4 Alma taught the people of his day, “For behold, I say unto you there be many things to come; and behold, there is one thing which is of more importance than they all—for behold, the time is not far distant that the Redeemer liveth and cometh among his people.”¹

5 This declaration is equally important to us today as we anticipate and prepare

for Christ’s Second Coming!

6 Therefore, my first observation is that building upon the foundation of Jesus Christ is essential to our happiness. This is a sure foundation, “a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall.”² Doing so prepares us for the challenges of life, come what may.

7 Many years ago, I went to a summer Scout camp with our son Justin. As the activities got underway, he excitedly announced that he and his friends wanted to earn the archery merit badge. Doing so required the boys to pass a short written test and hit a target with their arrows.

8 My heart sank. At the time, Justin was quite frail due to cystic fibrosis, a disease he had been battling since birth. I wondered if he could pull the bow back far enough to send the arrow to the target.

9 As he and his friends left for the archery class, I silently prayed that he would not be humiliated by the experience. A couple of anxious hours later, I saw him coming up the path toward me with a big smile. “Dad!” he exclaimed. “I got the merit badge! I got a bull’s-eye; it was on the target next to mine, but I hit a bull’s-eye!” He had pulled the bow back with all his might and let the arrow fly, unable to control its trajectory. How grateful I am for that understanding archery instructor who never said, “Sorry, wrong target!” Rather, upon seeing Justin’s obvious limitations and earnest effort, he kindly responded, “Good job!”

- 10 That is how it will be for us if we do our very best to follow Christ and His prophets in spite of our limitations. If we come unto Him by keeping our covenants and repenting of our sins, we will joyfully hear our Savior's commendation: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."³
- 11 I bear you my witness of the divinity of the Savior of the world and of His redemptive love and power to heal, strengthen, and lift us when we are earnestly striving to come unto Him. Conversely, there is no way we can move with the crowd and also toward Jesus. The Savior has defeated death, disease, and sin and has provided a way for our ultimate perfection if we will follow Him with all of our hearts.⁴
- 12 My second observation is that it is crucial to our happiness that we remember that we are sons and daughters of a loving Heavenly Father. Knowing and trusting this reality changes everything.
- 13 Several years ago, on a flight home from a Church assignment, Sister Sabin and I found ourselves seated directly behind a very large man who had a big, angry face tattooed on the back of his bald head as well as the number 439.
- 14 When we landed, I said, "Excuse me, sir. Do you mind if I ask the significance of the number tattooed on the back of your head?" I didn't dare ask about the angry face.
- 15 He said, "That's me. That's who I am. I own that territory: 219!"
- 16 Four hundred and thirty-nine was the actual number on his head, so I was surprised he got it wrong since it was so important to him.
- 17 I thought how sad it was that this man's identity and self-esteem were based on a number associated with a gang territory. I thought to myself: This tough-looking man was once someone's little boy who still needed to feel valued and to belong. If only he knew who he really was and to whom he really belonged, for we have all been "bought with a price."⁵
- 18 There is a wise line in a song from the film *The Prince of Egypt* that states, "Look at your life through heaven's eyes."⁶ As the knowledge of our divine lineage and eternal potential sinks deep into our souls, we will be able to view life as a purposeful, unfolding adventure to learn and grow from, even as "we see through a glass, darkly,"⁷ for a short season.
- 19 The third hallmark for happiness is to always remember the worth of a soul. We do this best by following the Savior's admonition: "Love one another; as I have loved you."⁸
- 20 He also taught, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."⁹
- 21 The book of Proverbs wisely counsels, "Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it."¹⁰
- 22 We will never regret being too kind. In God's eyes, kindness is synonymous with greatness. Part of being kind is being forgiving and nonjudgmental.
- 23 Many years ago our young family was going to see a movie for family home evening. We were all in the van except for one of our sons and my wife, Valerie. It was dark outside, and as our son threw open the door and ran toward the car, he accidentally kicked what he thought was our cat on the porch. Unfortunately for our son and my wife, who was right behind him, it was not our cat but rather a very unhappy skunk, who let them know it! We all returned to the house, where they both showered and washed their hair with tomato juice, the supposed sure remedy to eliminate the skunk odor. By the time they had cleaned up and changed their clothes, we were all desensitized to any odor, so we decided we were OK to go to the movie after all.
- 24 Once we were seated at the back of the theater, one by one the people around us suddenly decided to go out to get popcorn. When they came back, however, no one returned to their original seat.
- 25 We have laughed as we've recalled that experience, but what if all of our sins had an odor? What if we could smell dishonesty, lust, envy, or pride? With our own weaknesses revealed, we would hopefully be a little more considerate and careful of others and, likewise, they with us as we make the needed changes

in our lives. I actually love the smell of tobacco in church, because it indicates someone is trying to change. They need our welcoming arms around them.

26 President Russell M. Nelson has wisely said, "One of the easiest ways to identify a true follower of Jesus Christ is how compassionately that person treats other people."¹¹

27 Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."¹²

28 As disciples of Jesus Christ, we are asked to trust Heavenly Father and our Savior and not attempt to replace Them. Jesus Christ knows everyone's imperfections perfectly and will judge them perfectly.

29 My fourth happiness hallmark is to maintain an eternal perspective. Our Father's plan stretches into the eternities; it is easy to focus on the here and now and forget the hereafter.

30 I was taught this lesson powerfully a number of years ago by our then-16-year-old daughter, Jennifer. She was about to have a double lung transplant, where the five diseased lobes of her lungs would be completely removed and replaced by two healthy smaller lobes, donated by two amazing Christlike friends. It was a very high-risk procedure, yet the night before her surgery, Jennifer almost preached to me with all of her 90 pounds (41 kg), saying, "Don't worry, Dad! Tomorrow I will wake up with new lungs, or I will wake up in a better place. Either way will be great." That is faith; that is eternal perspective! Seeing life from an eternal vantage point provides clarity, comfort, courage, and hope.

31 After the surgery, when the long-awaited day came to remove the breathing tube and turn off the ventilator that had been helping Jennifer breathe, we anxiously waited to see if her two smaller lobes would work. When she took her first breath, she immediately started crying. Seeing our concern, she quickly exclaimed, "It's just so good to breathe."

32 Ever since that day, I have thanked Heavenly Father morning and night for my ability to breathe. We are surrounded by innumerable blessings that we can

easily take for granted if we are not mindful. Conversely, when nothing is expected and everything is appreciated, life becomes magical.

33 President Nelson has said: "Each new morning is a gift from God. Even the air we breathe is a loving loan from Him. He preserves us from day to day and supports us from one moment to another. Therefore, our first noble deed of the morning should be a humble prayer of gratitude."¹³

34 That brings me to my fifth and final observation, which is you will never be happier than you are grateful.

35 The Lord declared, "And he who receiveth all things with thankfulness shall be made glorious."¹⁴ Perhaps this is because gratitude gives birth to a multitude of other virtues.

36 How our awareness would change if every morning we awoke with only the blessings we were grateful for the night before. Failure to appreciate our blessings can result in a sense of dissatisfaction, which can rob us of the joy and happiness that gratitude engenders. Those in the great and spacious building entice us to look beyond the mark, thereby missing the mark entirely.

37 In reality, the greatest happiness and blessing of mortality will be found in whom we have become through God's grace as we make and keep sacred covenants with Him. Our Savior will polish and refine us through the merits of His atoning sacrifice and has said of those who willingly follow Him, "They shall be mine in that day when I shall come to make up my jewels."¹⁵

38 I promise you that if we build our lives upon the foundation of Jesus Christ; value our true identity as sons and daughters of God; remember the worth of a soul; maintain an eternal perspective; and gratefully appreciate our many blessings, especially Christ's invitation to come unto Him, we can find the true happiness we seek during this mortal adventure. Life will still have its challenges, but we will be able to better face each with a sense of purpose and peace because of the eternal truths we understand and live by.

39 I bear you my witness of the reality

of God, our loving Father, and of His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. I also testify of living prophets, seers, and revelators. What a blessing it is to receive the counsel of heaven through them. As the Savior clearly stated, "Whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same." 16 In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. *Alma 7:7; emphasis added.*
2. *Helaman 5:12.*
3. *Matthew 25:21.*
4. *See Moroni 10:32.*
5. *1 Corinthians 6:20; see also 1 Corinthians 7:23.*

6. Stephen Schwartz, "Through Heaven's Eyes," *The Prince of Egypt: Music from the Original Motion Picture Soundtrack* (1998), 7.
7. *1 Corinthians 13:12.*
8. *John 13:34.*
9. *Matthew 25:40.*
10. *Proverbs 3:27.*
11. Russell M. Nelson, "Peacemakers Needed," *Liahona*, May 2023, 98.
12. *Ephesians 4:32.*
13. *Teachings of Russell M. Nelson* (2018), 137–38.
14. *Doctrine and Covenants 78:19.*
15. *Doctrine and Covenants 101:3.*
16. *Doctrine and Covenants 1:38..*

Humble to Accept and Follow

BY ELDER JONI L. KOCH

Humility is a mandatory requirement for us to be ready to return to the presence of God.

- 1 In the fifth chapter of Alma, an introspective question is posed: "Could ye say, if ye were called to die at this time, within yourselves, that ye have been sufficiently humble?"¹ That question implies that humility is a mandatory requirement for us to be ready to return to the presence of God.
- 2 We all like to think we are sufficiently humble, but some experiences in life make us realize that the natural, prideful man or woman often is very much alive within us.
- 3 Years ago, when our two daughters were still living at home, I decided to show them and my wife the business unit of which I was in charge in the company I worked for.
- 4 My real purpose though was to show them a place where, unlike our home, everyone would do exactly what I asked them to do without questioning me. As we arrived at the front gate, which usually opened automatically when my car approached, I was surprised that it didn't open this time. Instead, a security guard I had never seen before in my life came to the car and asked me for my company ID.
- 5 I told him I never needed an ID to drive into the property with my car and then asked him the classic prideful-person question: "Do you know who you're talking to?"
- 6 To which he replied, "Well, since you don't have your company ID, I cannot know who you are, and while I am at this gate, you will not be allowed to enter the premises without proper identification."
- 7 I thought about looking at the rearview mirror to check my daughters' reaction to all that, but I knew they were savoring every second of that moment! My wife at my side was shaking her head in disapproval of my behavior. My last resort then was to apologize to the guard and say I was very sorry for treating him so badly. "You're forgiven," he said, "but without a company ID, you're not coming in today!"
- 8 I then drove very slowly back home to get my ID, having perhaps learned this valuable lesson: when we choose not to be humble, we end up being humiliated.
- 9 In Proverbs we find, "A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit."² In order to develop humility, we must understand what it really means in the context of the gospel.
- 10 Some people confuse being humble with other things such as, for example, being poor. But there are actually many who are poor and prideful and also many who are rich and yet humble. Others who are very shy or have low self-esteem may have an outward appearance of humility but deep inside are full of pride sometimes.
- 11 Then what is humility? According to Preach My Gospel, it is a "willingness to submit to the will of the Lord. ... It is being teachable. ... [It] is a vital catalyst for spiritual growth."³
- 12 There are certainly many opportunities for us all to improve in this Christlike attribute. I would like to explore first how humble we've been, or should be, in following the counsel of our prophet. A pop quiz for us individually could be:
 - Do we mention the full name of the Church in all our interactions? President Russell M. Nelson said, "To remove the Lord's name from the Lord's Church is a major victory for Satan."⁴
 - Are we letting God prevail in our lives by accepting our prophet's very specific invitation? "Today I call upon our members everywhere to lead out in abandoning attitudes and actions of prejudice."⁵

- Are we overcoming the world, trusting the doctrine of Christ more than the philosophies of men, as our prophet taught?⁶
- Have we become peacemakers, saying positive things to and about people? President Nelson taught us last general conference the following: "If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy that we can say about another person—whether to his face or behind her back—that should be our standard of communication."⁷

- 13 These are simple but powerful instructions. Remember, all the people of Moses had to do to be healed was to look at the brass serpent which he had lifted up.⁸ But "because of the simpleness of the way, or the easiness of it, there were many who perished."⁹
- 14 During this conference we've heard and will yet hear the unfailing counsel of our prophets and apostles. It's a perfect occasion to develop humility and let our strong opinions be swallowed by an even stronger conviction that the Lord does speak through these chosen leaders.
- 15 Above all, in developing humility, we must also understand and accept that we are not able to overcome our challenges or to achieve our full potential through our own efforts only. Motivational speakers, writers, coaches, and influencers around the world, especially on digital platforms, will say that everything depends solely on us and our actions. The world believes in the arm of flesh.
- 16 But through the restored gospel, we've learned that we greatly depend on Heavenly Father's benevolence and the Atonement of our Savior, Jesus Christ, "for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do."¹⁰ That's why it's so important to make and keep covenants with God, as doing so will give us full access to the healing, enabling, and perfecting power of Jesus Christ through His Atonement.
- 17 Attending sacrament meeting weekly and worshipping in the temple regularly to participate in the ordinances and to receive and renew covenants is a sign that we recognize our dependence on Heavenly Father and our Savior, Jesus

Christ. That will invite Their power into our lives to help us through all our problems and ultimately fulfill the measure of our creation.

- 18 Not long ago the level of my humility and understanding of my dependence on the Lord was once again tested. I was in a taxi going to the airport to catch a short flight to a place where there was a very difficult situation to solve. The taxi driver, who was not a member of the Church, looked at me through the mirror and said, "I can see you're not well today!"
- 19 "Could you tell?" I asked.
- 20 "Of course," he said. Then he said something like, "You actually have a very negative halo around you!"
- 21 I explained to him that I had quite a hard situation to deal with, and he then asked me, "Have you done everything in your power to solve this?"
- 22 I responded I had done everything I could.
- 23 He then said something I have never forgotten: "So leave this in God's hands, and everything will work out fine."
- 24 I confess that I was tempted to ask him, "Do you know who you're talking to?" But I didn't! What I did was humble myself before the Lord throughout that one-hour flight, asking for divine help. As I left the airplane, I learned that the difficult situation to be solved was already in order and that my presence wouldn't even be necessary anymore.
- 25 Brothers and sisters, the command, invitation, and promise from the Lord is clear and comforting: "Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers."¹¹
- 26 May we be humble to follow the counsel of our prophets and accept that only God and Jesus Christ can transform us—through ordinances and covenants received in His Church—into the best version of ourselves in this life and, one day, make us perfect in Christ. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. *Alma 5:27.*
2. *Proverbs 29:23.*
3. "Seek Christlike Attributes," *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Sharing the*

Seeing God's Family through the Overview Lens

BY SISTER TAMARA W. RUNIA

I believe we can, through the eye of faith, zoom out and view ourselves and our families with hope and joy.

- 1 When our youngest daughter, Berkeley, was little, I started using reading glasses—the kind that zoom in and magnify everything. One day, as we sat together reading a book, I looked at her with love but also sadness because, suddenly, she seemed more grown up. I thought, "Where has the time gone? She's so big!"
- 2 As I lifted my reading glasses to wipe away a tear, I realized, "Oh wait—she's not bigger; it's just these glasses! Never mind!"
- 3 Sometimes all we can see is that up-close, magnified view of those we love. Tonight, I invite you to zoom out and look through a different lens—an eternal lens that focuses on the big picture, your bigger story.
- 4 During humankind's early push into space, the unmanned rockets had no windows. But by the Apollo 8 mission to the moon, the astronauts had one. While floating in space, they were struck by the power of seeing our earth and took this spectacular image, capturing the whole world's attention! Those astronauts experienced a sensation so powerful it has been given its own name: the overview effect.
- 5 Viewing from a new vantage point changes everything. One space traveler said it "reduces things to a size that you think everything is manageable. ... We can do this. Peace on earth—no problem. It gives people that type of energy ... that type of power."¹
- 6 As humans, we have an earthbound point of view, but God sees the grand overview of the universe. He sees all creation, all of us, and is filled with hope.
- 7 Is it possible to begin to see as God sees even while living on the surface of this planet—to feel this overview feeling? I believe we can, through the eye of faith, zoom out and view ourselves and our families with hope and joy.
- 8 The scriptures agree. Moroni speaks about those whose faith was so "exceedingly strong" that they "truly saw ... with an eye of faith, and they were glad."²
- 9 With an eye focused on the Savior, they felt joy and knew this truth: because of Christ, it all works out. Everything you and you are worried about—it's all going to be OK! And those who look with an eye of faith can feel that it's going to be OK now.
- 10 I went through a rough patch my senior year in high school when I wasn't making great choices. I remember seeing my mom crying, and I wondered if I'd disappointed her. At the time, I worried that her tears meant she'd lost hope for me, and if she didn't feel hope for me, maybe there wasn't a way back.
- 11 But my dad was more practiced at zooming out and taking the long view. He'd learned from experience that worry feels a lot like love, but it's not the same.³ He used the eye of faith to see that everything would work out, and his hopeful approach changed me.
- 12 When I graduated from high school and went to BYU, my dad sent letters reminding me of who I was. He became my cheerleader, and everybody needs a cheerleader—someone who isn't telling you, "You're not running fast enough"; they're lovingly reminding you that you can.
- 13 Dad exemplified Lehi's dream. Like Lehi, he knew that you don't chase after your loved ones who feel lost. "You stay where you are and call them. You go to the tree, stay at the tree, keep eating the fruit and, with a smile on your face, continue to beckon to those you love and show by example that eating the fruit is a happy thing!"⁴
- 14 This visual image has helped me during low moments when I find myself at the tree, eating the fruit and crying because

I'm worried; and really, how helpful is that? Instead, let's choose hope—hope in our Creator and in one another, fueling our ability to be better than we are right now.

- 15 Shortly after Elder Neal A. Maxwell passed away, a reporter asked his son what he'd miss most. He said dinners at his parents' house because he always left feeling like his dad believed in him.
- 16 This was around the time our adult children were starting to come home for Sunday dinners with their spouses. During the week, I found myself making lists in my mind of things I could remind them of on Sunday, like "Maybe try and help out more with the kids when you're home" or "Don't forget to be a good listener."
- 17 When I read Brother Maxwell's comment, I threw away the lists and silenced that critical voice, so when I saw my grown children for that brief time each week, I focused on the many positive things they were already doing. When our oldest son, Ryan, passed away a few years later, I remember being grateful our time together was happier and more positive.
- 18 Before we interact with a loved one, can we ask ourselves the question "Is what I'm about to do or say helpful or hurtful?" Our words are one of our superpowers, and family members are like human blackboards, standing in front of us saying, "Write what you think of me!" These messages, whether intentional or unintentional, should be hopeful and encouraging.⁵
- 19 Our job is not to teach someone who's going through a rough patch that they are bad or disappointing. On rare occasions we may feel prompted to correct, but most often let's tell our loved ones in spoken and unspoken ways the messages they long to hear: "Our family feels whole and complete because you are in it." "You will be loved for the rest of your life—no matter what."
- 20 Sometimes what we need is empathy more than advice; listening more than a lecture; someone who hears and wonders, "How would I have to feel to say what they just said?"
- 21 Remember, families are a God-given laboratory where we're figuring things

out, so missteps and miscalculations are not just possible but probable. And wouldn't it be interesting if, at the end of our lives, we could see that those relationships, even those challenging moments, were the very things that helped us to become more like our Savior? Each difficult interaction is an opportunity to learn how to love at a deeper level—a godlike level.⁶

- 22 Let's zoom out to view family relationships as a powerful vehicle to teach us the lessons we came here to learn as we turn to the Savior.
- 23 Let's admit, in a fallen world there's no way to be a perfect spouse, parent, son or daughter, grandchild, mentor, or friend—but a million ways to be a good one.⁷ Let's stay at the tree, partake of the love of God, and share it. By lifting the people around us, we ascend together.
- 24 Unfortunately, the memory of eating the fruit is not enough; we need to partake again and again in ways that reposition our lens and connect us to the heavenly overview by opening up the scriptures, which are filled with light, to chase away the darkness, staying on our knees until our casual prayer turns mighty. This is when hearts soften, and we begin to see as God sees.
- 25 In these last days, perhaps our greatest work will be with our loved ones—good people living in a wicked world. Our hope changes the way they see themselves and who they really are. And through this lens of love, they'll see who they will become.
- 26 But the adversary does not want us or our loved ones to return home together. And because we live on a planet that is bound by time and a finite number of years,⁸ he tries to perpetuate a very real sense of panic in us. It's hard to see, when we're zoomed in, that our direction matters more than our speed.
- 27 Remember, "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."⁹ Thankfully, the God we worship is not bound by time. He sees who our loved ones really are and who we really are.¹⁰ So He's patient with us, hoping we'll be patient with each other.
- 28 I will admit there are times when earth, our temporal home, feels like an island of sorrow—moments when I have one eye

that [we] may be filled with this love” (Moroni 7:48).

7. Paraphrase of a statement attributed to Jill Churchill.
8. See Richard Eyre, *Life before Life: Origins of the Soul ... Knowing Where You Came from and Who You Really Are* (2000), 107.
9. Traditional proverb.
10. See *Doctrine and Covenants* 93:24, 26.
11. See Robert Frost, “Birches,” in *Mountain Interval* (1916), 39.
12. See Russell M. Nelson, “Joy and Spiritual Survival,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 81–84; see also Russell M. Nelson, “Let God Prevail,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2020, 92–95.
13. *Doctrine and Covenants* 123:17.
14. *Doctrine and Covenants* 98:3; emphasis added.
15. Wayne E. Brickey, *Inviting Him In: How the Atonement Can Change Your Family* (2003), 144.
16. See Russell M. Nelson, “Peacemakers Needed,” *Liahona*, May 2023, 100.
17. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Harold B. Lee* (2000), 134.
18. See Paul E. Koelliker, “He Truly Loves Us,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2012, 18.
19. *Revelation* 22:16.

Brothers and Sisters in Christ

BY ELDER ULISSES SOARES

May we enjoy more the spiritual kinship that exists between us and value the different attributes and varied gifts we all have.

- 1 My dear friends, we have had marvelous conference sessions today. We have all felt the Spirit of the Lord and His love through the wonderful messages shared by our leaders. I feel privileged to address you this evening as the concluding speaker of this session. I pray that the Spirit of the Lord continues with us as we rejoice together as true brothers and sisters in Christ.
- 2 Our dear prophet, Russell M. Nelson, declared: "I call upon our members everywhere to lead out in abandoning attitudes and actions of prejudice. I plead with you to promote respect for all of God's children."¹ As a global and ever-growing Church, following this invitation from our prophet is a vital prerequisite for building the Savior's kingdom in every nation of the world.
- 3 The gospel of Jesus Christ teaches that we are all begotten spirit sons and daughters of heavenly parents who truly love us² and that we lived as a family in God's presence before we were born on this earth. The gospel also teaches that we were all created in the image and likeness of God.³ Therefore, we are equal before Him,⁴ for He "hath made of one blood all nations of men [and women]."⁵ Therefore, we all have divine nature, heritage, and potential, for there is "one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in [us] all."⁶
- 4 As disciples of Christ, we are invited to increase our faith in, and love for, our spiritual brother- and sisterhood by genuinely knitting our hearts together in unity and love, regardless of our differences, thereby increasing our ability to promote respect for the dignity of all the sons and daughters of God.⁷
- 5 Wasn't that exactly the condition that the people of Nephi experienced for almost two centuries after Christ ministered to them?
- 6 "And surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God. ..."
- 7 "Neither were there Lamanites, nor any manner of -ites; but they were in one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God.
- 8 "And how blessed were they!"⁸
- 9 President Nelson further emphasized the importance of spreading dignity and respect for our fellow beings when he stated: "The Creator of us all calls on each of us to abandon attitudes of prejudice against any group of God's children. Any of us who has prejudice toward another race needs to repent! ... It behooves each of us to do whatever we can in our spheres of influence to preserve the dignity and respect every son and daughter of God deserves."⁹ In reality, human dignity presupposes respect for our differences.¹⁰
- 10 Considering the sacred bond that unifies us with God as His children, this prophetic direction given by President Nelson is undoubtedly a fundamental step toward building bridges of understanding rather than creating walls of prejudice and segregation among us.¹¹ However, as Paul warned the Ephesians, we must recognize that in order to achieve this purpose, it will be required to make an individual and collective effort to act with lowliness, meekness, and long-suffering toward one another.¹²
- 11 There is a tale of a certain Jewish rabbi who was enjoying the sunrise with two friends. He asked them, "How do you know when the night is over and a new day has begun?"
- 12 One of them replied, "When you can look into the east and can distinguish a sheep from a goat."
- 13 The other then responded, "When you can look into the horizon and distinguish an olive tree from a fig tree."

- 14 They then turned to the wise rabbi and asked him the same question. After long reflection, he replied, "When you can look into the east and see the face of a woman or the face of a man and can say, 'She is my sister; he is my brother.'" 13
- 15 My dear friends, I can assure you that the light of a new day shines brighter in our lives when we see and treat our fellow beings with respect and dignity and as true brothers and sisters in Christ.
- 16 During His earthly ministry, Jesus so perfectly exemplified this principle as He "went about doing good" 14 unto all people, inviting them to come unto Him and partake of His goodness regardless of their origin, social class, or cultural characteristics. He ministered, healed, and was always attentive to everyone's needs, especially those who at the time were considered different, belittled, or excluded. He denied none but treated them with equity and love, for He saw them as His brothers and sisters, sons and daughters of the same Father. 15
- 17 One of the most striking occasions when this occurred was when the Savior traveled to Galilee, purposely taking the route which passed through Samaria. 16 Jesus then decided to sit by Jacob's well to rest. While there, a Samaritan woman approached to fill her pitcher with water. In His omniscience, Jesus addressed her, saying, "Give me to drink." 17
- 18 This woman was amazed that a Jew had asked a Samaritan woman for assistance and expressed her surprise, saying, "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." 18
- 19 But Jesus, abandoning the long-held traditions of animosity between Samaritans and Jews, lovingly ministered to this woman, helping her to understand who He truly was—that is, the Messiah, who would tell all things and whose coming she was awaiting. 19 The impact of that tender ministry caused the woman to run into the city to announce to the people what had happened, saying, "Is not this the Christ?" 20
- 20 I have deep compassion for those who have been mistreated, belittled, or persecuted by unfeeling and thoughtless people, because, in the

course of my life, I have seen firsthand the pain good people suffer from being judged or dismissed because they happened to speak, look, or live differently. I also feel genuine sorrow in my heart for those whose minds remain darkened, whose vision is limited, and whose hearts remain hardened by the belief in the inferiority of those who are different from them. Their limited view of others actually obstructs their ability to see who they are as children of God.

- 21 As foretold by the prophets, we are living in the perilous days leading up to the Second Coming of the Savior. 21 The world in general is polarized by strong divisions, accentuated by racial, political, and socioeconomic lines. Such divisions sometimes end up influencing people's way of thinking and acting in relation to their fellow beings. For this reason, it is not uncommon to see people characterizing the way of thinking, acting, and speaking of other cultures, races, and ethnicities as inferior, making use of preconceived, mistaken, and often sarcastic ideas, generating attitudes of contempt, indifference, disrespect, and even prejudice against them. Such attitudes have their roots in pride, arrogance, envy, and jealousy, characteristics of a carnal nature, 22 which are totally contrary to Christlike attributes. This conduct is improper for those who are striving to become His true disciples. 23 In fact, my dear brothers and sisters, there is no place for prejudiced thoughts or actions in the community of Saints.
- 22 As sons and daughters of the covenant, we can help to eliminate this kind of behavior by looking at the apparent differences that exist between us with the Savior's eyes 24 and based on what we have in common—our divine identity and kinship. Moreover, we can strive to see ourselves reflected in the dreams, hopes, sorrows, and pains of our neighbor. We are all fellow travelers as God's children, equal in our imperfect state and in our ability to grow. We are invited to walk together, peaceably, with our hearts filled with love toward God and all men—or, as Abraham Lincoln noted, "with malice toward none; with charity for all." 25
- 23 Have you ever pondered on how the principle of respect for human dignity and equality is demonstrated through

the simple way we dress in the house of the Lord? We all come to the temple united in one purpose and filled with the desire to be pure and holy in His holy presence. Dressed in white, all of us are received by the Lord Himself as His beloved children, men and women of God, progeny of Christ.²⁶ We are privileged to perform the same ordinances, make the same covenants, commit ourselves to live higher and holier lives, and receive the same eternal promises. United in purpose, we see one another with new eyes, and in our oneness, we celebrate our differences as divine children of God.

²⁴ I recently helped guide dignitaries and government officials through the open house for the Brasília Brazil Temple. I paused in the changing area with the vice president of Brazil, and we discussed the white clothing that everyone wears inside the temple. I explained to him that this universal use of white clothing symbolizes that we are all alike unto God and that, in the temple, our identities were not vice president of a country or a church leader but our eternal identity as sons of a loving Heavenly Father.

²⁵ The Iguaçu River flows through southern Brazil and empties into a plateau that forms a system of waterfalls known worldwide as the Iguaçu Falls—one of the most beautiful and impressive of God’s creations on earth, considered one of the seven wonders of the world. A colossal volume of water flows into a single river and then separates, forming hundreds of unparalleled waterfalls. Metaphorically speaking, this phenomenal system of waterfalls is a reflection of God’s family on earth, for we share the same spiritual origin and substance, derived from our divine heritage and kinship. However, each of us flows in different cultures, ethnicities, and nationalities, with different opinions, experiences, and feelings. Despite this, we move forward as God’s children and as brothers and sisters in Christ, without losing our divine connection, which makes us a unique people and a beloved community.²⁷

²⁶ My dear brothers and sisters, may we align our hearts and minds with the knowledge and testimony that we are all equal before God, that we are all fully endowed with the same eternal potential and inheritance. May we enjoy

more the spiritual kinship that exists between us and value the different attributes and varied gifts we all have. If we do so, I promise you that we will flow in our own way, as does the water of the Iguaçu Falls, without losing our divine connection that identifies us as a peculiar people, “the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God.”²⁸

²⁷ I testify to you that as we continue to flow this way during our mortal life, a new day will begin with a new light that will brighten our lives and illuminate wonderful opportunities to value more, and be more fully blessed by, the diversity created by God among His children.²⁹ We will surely become instruments in His hands to promote respect and dignity among all His sons and daughters. God lives. Jesus is the Savior of the world. President Nelson is the prophet of God in our day. I bear witness of these truths in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. Russell M. Nelson, “Let God Prevail,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2020, 94; see also *General Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 38.6.14, Gospel Library.
2. See *Doctrine and Covenants* 76:24.
3. See *Genesis* 1:26–27; *Mosiah* 7:27; *Ether* 3:14–17; *Moses* 2:26–28; 6:9–10.
4. See *2 Nephi* 26:33; see also M. Russell Ballard, “Hope in Christ,” *Liahona*, May 2021, 53.
5. *Acts* 17:26; see also *Doctrine and Covenants* 93:33–35.
6. *Ephesians* 4:6.
7. See *Mosiah* 18:21.
8. *4 Nephi* 1:16–18.
9. Russell M. Nelson, “We Are All Children of God,” *Inspiration (blog)*, May 25, 2021, [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org).
10. See “Punta del Este Declaration on Human Dignity for Everyone Everywhere,” 2018.
11. See “President Nelson Shares Social Post about Racism and Calls for Respect for Human Dignity” (news release, June 1, 2020), [newsroom.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/newsroom).
12. See *Ephesians* 4:2–3.
13. See Boyd Matheson, “How You Know When a New Day Has Dawned in 2020,” *Deseret News*, Dec. 30, 2019, [deseret.com](https://www.deseret.com).
14. *Acts* 10:38.
15. See *2 Nephi* 26:33.

16. See John 4:4.
17. John 4:7.
18. John 4:9.
19. See John 4:25.
20. John 4:29; see also John 4:6–30.
21. See 2 Nephi 26:14–30.
22. See *Guide to the Scriptures*, “Natural Man,” Gospel Library; see also 1 Corinthians 2:14; Mosiah 16:5; Alma 42:7–24.
23. See “Seek Christlike Attributes,” *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ* (2023), 123–38; see also *Guide to the Scriptures*, “Disciple,” Gospel Library.
24. See 1 Samuel 16:7.
25. Abraham Lincoln, “Second Inaugural Address,” Mar. 4, 1865, [loc.gov](https://www.loc.gov).
26. See 4 Nephi 1:17; see also *Guide to the Scriptures*, “Children of Christ,” Gospel Library.
27. See Martin Luther King Jr., “Facing the Challenge of a New Age,” speech given Dec. 3, 1956.
28. 4 Nephi 1:17.
29. See Acts 17:26.

Sunday Morning

Praise to the Man

BY PRESIDENT M. RUSSELL BALLARD

How abundantly blessed we are to know all that we know because we have Joseph Smith, the prophet of this last dispensation of time.

1 My dear brothers and sisters, I'm honored to be with you this morning. I pray that the Lord will bless me.

2 My eyes aren't what they used to be. I went and saw the eye doctor, and I said, "I can't see the teleprompter."

3 And she said, "Well, your eyes are old. They're not going to change."

4 So I'll do the best I can.

5 I'd like to share with you some things that have been in my mind. I have seemed to have the Prophet Joseph in my mind the last few months. I've sat and contemplated his glorious responsibility in becoming the prophet of this, the dispensation of the fulness of times.

6 I think how grateful we are as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that Joseph Smith, a boy who desired to know what he needed to do to have his sins forgiven, found the courage to go into a grove of trees near his home in Palmyra, New York, and there kneel in prayer and—by his own statement—pray out loud for the first time (see Joseph Smith—History 1:14).

7 On that occasion, as Joseph got on his knees in what we call the Sacred Grove, the heavens opened. Two personages, brighter than the noonday sun, appeared before him. One spoke to him and said, "[Joseph,] this is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!" (Joseph Smith—History 1:17). Thus began the Restoration of the fulness of the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ.

8 Because Jesus, our Savior and our Redeemer, spoke to the boy Joseph and opened up this dispensation of time that we now live in, we sing, "Praise to the man who communed with Jehovah!" ("Praise to the Man," Hymns, no. 27). We thank the Lord for Joseph Smith and for his courage to go into that grove of trees in 1820, near his home in Palmyra, New York.

9 I've been thinking about all of the marvelous things that we know and all of the things that we have. My beloved brothers and sisters, my testimony to you this morning is how abundantly blessed we are to know all that we know because we have Joseph Smith, the prophet of this last dispensation of time.

10 We have an understanding of the purpose of life, of who we are.

11 We know who God is; we know who the Savior is, because we have Joseph, who went into a grove of trees as a boy, seeking forgiveness for his sins.

12 I think it's one of the most glorious and wonderful things that anybody in this world can know—that our Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ have revealed Themselves in this latter day and that Joseph has been raised up to restore the fulness of the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ.

13 We have the Book of Mormon. What a marvelous and wonderful gift the Book of Mormon is to the membership of the Church. It is another witness, another testament that Jesus is the Christ. We

have it because Joseph was worthy to go get the plates, was inspired by heaven to translate them by the gift and power of God and to give the book to the world.

14 Though my message this morning is simple, it's deep, and it's full of love for the Prophet Joseph Smith and for all of those, my brothers and sisters, who have sustained him and were willing to sustain him in his youth.

15 I would like to pay tribute this morning to his mother. I've always thought how wonderful it was that when Joseph came home from that experience in the Sacred Grove and told his mother what had happened, Lucy Mack Smith believed him.

16 I'm grateful for his father and his brothers and his sisters and his family, who sustained him in this tremendous responsibility that the Lord placed upon him to become the prophet to restore the fulness of the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ once again upon the earth.

17 So my testimony this morning is that I know that Jesus Christ is the Savior and Redeemer of the world. I also know that our Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ appeared and spoke to Joseph and prepared him to become the prophet.

18 I marvel, and I'm sure that many of you do too, at how blessed we are to know what we know about our purpose in life, why we are here, what we should be trying to do and accomplish in our daily lives. We're in the process of trying to prepare ourselves, a day at a time, to be a little better, be a little kinder, be a little more prepared for that day, which

will surely come, when we shall pass back into the presence of our Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

19 That's getting a little closer for me. I'll soon be 95. My children tell me they think I'm a lot older than that some days, but that's OK. I'm doing the best I can.

20 But for nearly 50 years, brothers and sisters, I've had the privilege to cover the world in my assignment as a General Authority of the Church. It's been a wonderful blessing. I think I've gotten pretty close to almost all parts of the world. I've met with members of the Church all over the world.

21 Oh, how I love you. What a glorious experience that's been—to look into your faces, be in your presence, and feel your love that you have for the Lord and for the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

22 May our Heavenly Father watch over us now and bless all the proceedings of the conference. And may we have the Spirit of the Lord well up in our hearts, and may our love for the gospel of Jesus Christ—our beloved Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ—increase as we strive to serve Him and keep His commandments and be more like Him as a result of our attending general conference. Wherever you are in this world, may God bless you. May the Spirit of the Lord be with us. May we feel the power of heaven as we worship together in this session of conference.

23 I leave you my witness and testimony that I know that Jesus is the Christ. He is our Savior, our Redeemer. He is our best friend. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Walking in Covenant Relationship with Christ

BY PRESIDENT EMILY BELLE FREEMAN

The One who was bruised and broken for us will allow mortality to do its work in us, but He doesn't ask us to face those challenges alone.

- 1 I was introduced to a trail in Israel by my good friend Ilan. "It's called the Jesus Trail," he said, "because it's the path from Nazareth to Capernaum that many believe Jesus walked." I decided right then and there I wanted to walk that trail, so I began planning a trip to Israel.
- 2 Six weeks before the trip, I broke my ankle. My husband worried about the injury; my greatest concern was how I would walk the Jesus Trail one month later. I am stubborn by nature, so I didn't cancel the plane tickets.
- 3 I remember meeting our Israeli guide that beautiful June morning. I hopped out of the van and then pulled out a set of crutches and a knee scooter. Mya, our guide, took one look at my cast and said, "Uh, I don't think you can walk this trail in that condition."
- 4 "Maybe not," I replied. "But there's nothing that prevents me from trying." She gave a slight nod, and we began. I love her for that, for believing I could walk the trail broken.
- 5 I navigated the steep path and the boulders for a time on my own. Then, moved by the sincerity of my commitment, Mya pulled out a thin rope, tied it to the handlebars of my scooter, and began to pull. She pulled me up the hills, through lemon orchards, and along the banks of the Sea of Galilee. At the journey's end, I expressed gratitude for my sweet guide, who had helped me accomplish something I could have never accomplished on my own.
- 6 When the Lord called Enoch to journey through the land and testify of Him, Enoch hesitated.¹ He was just a lad, slow of speech. How could he walk that path in his condition? He was blinded by what was broken in him. The Lord's answer to what hindered him was simple and immediate: "Walk with me."² Like Enoch, we must remember that the One who was bruised and broken for us³ will allow mortality to do its work in us, but He doesn't ask us to face those challenges alone.⁴ No matter the heaviness of our story or the current course of our path, He will invite us to walk with Him.⁵
- 7 Think of the young man in a spot of trouble who met the Lord in a wilderness place. Jacob had journeyed far from home. In the dark of night, he had a dream that not only contained a ladder but also held significant covenant promises, including what I like to call the five-finger promise.⁶ On that night, the Lord stood beside Jacob, introduced Himself as the God of Jacob's father, and then promised:
 - I am with you.
 - I will keep you safe.
 - I will bring you home again.
 - I will not leave you.
 - I will keep my promise to you.⁷
- 8 Jacob had a choice to make. He could choose to live his life simply acquainted with the God of his father, or He could choose to live life in committed covenant relationship with Him. Years later, Jacob testified of a life lived within the Lord's covenant promises: "God ... answered me in the day of my distress, and was *with me* in the way which I went."⁸ Just as He did for Jacob, the Lord will answer each of us in our day of distress if we choose to tether our life with His. He has promised to walk *with us* in the way.
- 9 We call this walking the covenant path—a path that begins with the covenant of baptism and leads to deeper covenants we make in the temple. Perhaps you hear those words and think of checkboxes. Maybe all you see is a path of requirements. A closer look reveals something more compelling. A

covenant is not only about a contract, although that is important. It's about a relationship. President Russell M. Nelson taught, "The covenant path is all about our relationship with God."⁹

10 Consider a marriage covenant. The wedding date is important, but equally important is the relationship forged through the life lived together afterward. The same is true with a covenant relationship with God. Conditions have been set, and there will be expectations along the way. And yet He invites each of us to come as we are able, with full purpose of heart, and to "press forward"¹⁰ with Him at our side, trusting that His promised blessings will come. Scripture reminds us that often those blessings come in His own time and in His own way: 38 years,¹¹ 12 years,¹² immediately.¹³ As your trail will demand, so His succor will be.¹⁴

11 His is a mission of condescension. Jesus Christ will meet us where we are as we are. This is the *why* of the garden, the cross, and the tomb. The Savior was sent to help us overcome.¹⁵ But staying where we are won't bring the deliverance we seek. Just as He didn't leave Jacob there in the dirt, the Lord doesn't intend to leave any of us where we are.

12 His is also a mission of ascension. He will work within us¹⁶ to lift us up to where He is and, in the process, enable us to become as He is. Jesus Christ came to lift us.¹⁷ He wants to help us become. This is the *why* of the temple.

13 We must remember: it's not the course alone that will exalt us; it's the companion—our Savior. And *this* is the *why* of covenant relationship.

14 When I was in Israel, I visited the Western Wall. For the Jews, this is the most holy site in Israel. It is all that remains of their temple. Most wear their finest when they visit this sacred place; their choice of garment is a symbol of their devotion to their relationship with God. They visit the wall to read scripture, to worship, and to pour out their prayers. The plea for a temple in their midst consumes their every day, their every prayer, this longing for a house of covenant. I admire their devotion.

15 When I returned home from Israel, I listened more closely to the

conversations around me regarding covenants. I noticed people asking, *Why should I walk a covenant path? Do I need to enter a house for making covenants? Why do I wear the holy garment? Should I invest in a covenant relationship with the Lord?* The answer to these good and important questions is simple: it depends on what degree of relationship you want to experience with Jesus Christ.¹⁸ Each of us will have to discover our own response to those deeply personal questions.

16 Here is mine: I walk this path as a "*beloved* daughter of heavenly parents,"¹⁹ *divinely known*²⁰ and deeply *trusted*.²¹ As a child of the covenant, I am eligible to receive *promised*²² blessings. I have *chosen*²³ to walk with the Lord. I have been *called*²⁴ to stand as a witness of Christ. When the path feels overwhelming, I am *strengthened*²⁵ with enabling grace. Each time I cross the threshold of His house, I experience deeper covenant relationship with Him. I am *sanctified*²⁶ with His Spirit, *endowed*²⁷ with His power, and set apart²⁸ to build His kingdom. Through a process of daily repentance and weekly partaking of the sacrament, I am learning to become *steadfast*²⁹ and to go about doing *good*.³⁰ I walk this path with Jesus Christ, looking forward to the promised day when He will come again. Then I will be *sealed His*³¹ and lifted up as a *holy*³² daughter of God.

17 This is why I walk the covenant path.

18 This is why I cling to covenant promises.

19 This is why I enter His covenant house.

20 This is why I wear the holy garment as a constant reminder.

21 Because I want to live in committed covenant relationship with Him.

22 Perhaps you do too. Begin where you are.³³ Don't let your condition hinder you. Remember, pace or placement on the path are not as important as progress.³⁴ Ask someone you trust who is on the covenant path to introduce you to the Savior they have come to know. Learn more of Him. Invest in the relationship by entering into covenant with Him. It doesn't matter your age or your condition. You can walk with Him.

23 After we finished walking the Jesus Trail,

Mya did not take back her rope. She left it tied to my scooter. For the next few days, my teenage nephews and their friend took turns pulling me through the streets of Jerusalem.³⁵ They made sure I did not miss out on the stories of Jesus. I was reminded of the strength of the rising generation. We can learn from you. You have a genuine desire to know the guide, Jesus Christ. You trust the strength of the rope that tethers us to Him. You are unusually gifted in gathering others to Him.³⁶

24 Thankfully, we walk this path together, calling out encouragement along the way.³⁷ As we share our personal experience with Christ, we will strengthen personal devotion. Of this I bear witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. *The people of Enoch had gone astray, they had denied Christ, and they "sought their own counsels in the dark" (see Moses 6:27–28). In a time when he had lost faith in humanity, Enoch turned to the Lord for guidance. This call to Enoch is the same call the Lord extends to all of us: "Walk with me" (Moses 6:34; see also Matthew 11:28). But maybe, like Enoch, you are unsure if you can walk this path in your condition. Maybe you feel hindered in some way. Perhaps the very reason we need to walk the covenant path is because of our condition, because we are hindered in some way and we need His help.*
2. See Moses 6:23–34.
3. See "Jesus of Nazareth, Savior and King," Hymns, no. 181.
4. See Ether 12:27.
5. See Matthew 11:28–30.
6. *My girls want to whisper this five-finger promise to their children (my grandchildren) every morning—a reminder of a Father in Heaven who is divinely aware of each of His children.*
7. See Genesis 28:10–22. *The Abrahamic covenant was also a significant emphasis of that night. These elements of the Abrahamic covenant play a central role in our lives and in the gospel of Jesus Christ: (1) the promise of an eternal inheritance (verse 13); (2) eternal posterity (verse 14); and (3) the blessing and responsibility to bless all nations of the earth (verse 14).*

8. *Genesis 35:3; emphasis added. Jacob's parents directed him to leave home to distance himself from Esau, who had threatened to kill him, and to have the opportunity to meet someone whom he could marry in the covenant (see Genesis 27:41–45; 28:1–2, 5).*
9. Russell M. Nelson, "The Everlasting Covenant," *Liahona*, Oct. 2022, 11.
10. 2 Nephi 31:20.
11. See John 5:5, the story of the pool of Bethesda.
12. See Mark 5:25, the story of the woman who touched Christ's robe.
13. See Matthew 14:31, the story of Peter walking on water.
14. See "How Firm a Foundation," Hymns, no. 85.
15. See 1 Nephi 11:16–33.
16. See Philippians 1:6; 2:13; Words of Mormon 1:7.
17. See John 12:32.
18. *A path is often defined by key characteristics such as guideposts or mile markers. It is a way to make sure you are on the right trail or making progress in the right direction. A relationship also can be defined by key characteristics. Some of these include expectation (see Jeremiah 29:11; Doctrine and Covenants 132:7); submissiveness (see Mosiah 3:19; Alma 7:23; 13:28); humility; obedience; patience; yielding; trust (see Proverbs 3:5); and love (see Romans 8:31–39).*
19. "Young Women Theme," Gospel Library, emphasis added; see also Bonnie H. Cordon, "Beloved Daughters," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2019, 67.
20. See John 4:1–29, the story of the woman at the well.
21. See Alma 38:1–3.
22. See Numbers 6:23–27.
23. See Joshua 24:22.
24. See Doctrine and Covenants 25:3, the story of Emma Smith.
25. See 1 Corinthians 15:9–10.
26. See 2 Chronicles 20:1–17, especially verse 14.
27. See Doctrine and Covenants 109:1–46.
28. See 1 Samuel 16:11–13.
29. See Esther 4:16, the story of Esther.
30. See Acts 10:38.
31. See Isaiah 43:1–5.
32. See Deuteronomy 28:1–9.
33. *A good friend reminded me that a call to action is important in any relationship.*

34. *Conversation with Kristen Olsen, Sept. 2023.*
35. *To Mack Oswald, Camden Oswald, Ashton Matheny, and Jack Butler, thanks for pulling me along.*
36. *"You will remember that I have invited the youth of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to enlist in the Lord's youth battalion to participate in the greatest cause on earth today—the gathering of Israel. I issued this invitation to our youth because they are unusually gifted in reaching out to others and sharing what they believe in a convincing*
- fashion" (Russell M. Nelson, "Witnesses, Aaronic Priesthood Quorums, and Young Women," Ensign or Liahona, Nov. 2019, 39).*
37. *"The kingdom of God ... is like a besieged city surrounded on all sides by death. Each man has his place on the wall to defend and no one can stand where another stands, but 'nothing prevents us from calling encouragement to one another'" (Martin Luther, in Lewis William Spitz, The Renaissance and Reformation Movements [1987], 335).*

Bearing Witness of Jesus Christ in Word and Actions

BY ELDER ADILSON DE PAULA PARRELLA

As we strive to live our lives in harmony with the gospel of Jesus Christ, our conduct will be a living testimony of our Redeemer.

- 1 At baptism one of the promises that we make is that we are willing to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ. My purpose today is to remind us that we can show God that we take the name of His Son upon ourselves by bearing testimony in word and deed, as often as we can, that Jesus is the Christ.
- 2 When ministering to and teaching the people in the Americas after His Resurrection, the Savior declared:
- 3 "Have they not read the scriptures, which say ye must take upon you the name of Christ, which is my name? For by this name shall ye be called at the last day;
- 4 "And whoso taketh upon him my name, and endureth to the end, the same shall be saved at the last day."¹
- 5 President Russell M. Nelson has taught us that "taking the Savior's name upon us includes declaring and witnessing to others—through our actions and our words—that Jesus is the Christ."²
- 6 As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we have the blessing and privilege to stand as witnesses of the Lord and His name everywhere we are.³ As we strive to live our lives in harmony with the gospel of Jesus Christ, our conduct will be a living testimony of our Redeemer and His name. Moreover, we witness of Christ in word by sharing with others what we believe, feel, or know of Jesus Christ.
- 7 When we humbly share our testimony of the Lord through our words and actions, the Holy Ghost confirms⁴ to those with real intent, open hearts, and willing minds that Jesus is indeed the Christ.⁵
- 8 I would like to share two recent and inspiring examples of members who show God that they take the name of Jesus Christ upon themselves by talking of Him and bearing pure witness of the Lord in Church meetings.
- 9 First example: When my wife, Elaine, and I went to Spain in 2022, we attended Sunday meetings in a small unit of the Church there. As I sat on the stand and my wife in the congregation, I noticed that she sat by an older woman. When the sacrament meeting ended, I walked toward Elaine and asked her to introduce me to her new friend. She did so and indicated that this woman, who was not a member of the Church, had been visiting the Church for about two years. When I heard that, I asked this God-fearing woman what made her come back and attend our meetings for such an extended period. The woman lovingly replied, "I like to come here because you speak of Jesus Christ in your meetings."
- 10 Clearly, members of the Church in that unit in Spain talked, taught, and testified of Christ in their meetings.
- 11 Second example: After serving in the Brazil Area, I received a new assignment to serve at Church headquarters. When we moved to Salt Lake City at the end of July of this year, we attended Sunday meetings at our new and wonderful ward. One of these meetings was a fast and testimony meeting. After reverently partaking of the sacrament, members stood up and bore heartfelt testimonies of the Savior one after the other. The meeting was centered on Jesus Christ, and we could palpably feel the Spirit. We were edified, and our faith was strengthened. If friends of the Church, honestly seeking the truth, had been at that meeting, they would have recognized that this is the Church of Jesus Christ.
- 12 What a blessing to see that our Church meetings are choice opportunities for us to testify of Christ and signal to God that we rejoice in taking His Son's name

upon us.

- 13 Now, let me mention a powerful example of taking upon us the name of Jesus Christ by bearing testimony of Him through actions.
- 14 Last August, I accompanied Elder Jonathan S. Schmitt to the open house of the Feather River California Temple in Yuba City. There I had the blessing of guiding groups on a tour of the temple. One of these groups included a member of the Church, Virgil Atkinson, and seven friends of other faiths. Toward the end of the visit, in a temple sealing room, Brother Atkinson was emotional as he expressed his love for his friends who had come to the temple that day. Almost immediately after he had done so, a woman in the group stood up and said, "We all love Virgil. He has never imposed his faith on us. But he is not shy about it either. He just lives what he believes."
- 15 Over the years, Brother Atkinson's Christlike living served as a powerful testimony to his friends. His example is strong evidence that he has taken upon himself the name of Christ.
- 16 In conclusion, let me share the lesson I learned about how to take upon us the name of Christ and testify of Him by using the correct name of the Church.
- 17 President Nelson, God's living prophet, in a 2018 general conference address titled "The Correct Name of the Church," said: "It is a correction. It is the command of the Lord. Joseph Smith did not name the Church restored through him; neither did Mormon. It was the Savior Himself who said, 'For thus shall my church be called in the last days, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' [Doctrine and Covenants 115:4]."⁶
- 18 We all left general conference that day committed and determined to follow the prophet and to use the revealed name of the Church from then on. I really watched myself to make sure I used the correct name of the Church. The first few times, I had to be very conscious and not allow myself to go back to the old ways. After the first attempts, I felt more comfortable with using the revealed name of the Church. I admit that many times, I would speak the name of the Church quickly. I felt concerned that

people would not pay attention to the Church's full name and that they might think it to be a bit long.

- 19 However, I later realized that speaking the full name of the Church with intent gave me valuable opportunities to speak the name of Jesus Christ and in fact bear testimony of the Savior by declaring His name in the name of His Church. I also noticed that when I spoke the correct name of the Church with others, I more frequently remembered Jesus Christ and felt His influence in my life.
 - 20 By following the prophet, we can all learn to testify more of Jesus Christ by using the correct name of the Church, thus taking upon us more fully the name of the Lord.
 - 21 This Sabbath morning, I gladly testify that President Nelson is God's living prophet and that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is Christ's restored Church. I humbly witness of the Son of God and His divinity. He is God's Firstborn and Only Begotten Son, our Savior and Redeemer, the Emmanuel.⁷ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.
1. 3 Nephi 27:5–6.
 2. Russell M. Nelson, "The Correct Name of the Church," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 88: "Taking the Savior's name upon us includes declaring and witnessing to others—through our actions and our words—that Jesus is the Christ."
 3. See Mosiah 18:9.
 4. See 2 Nephi 31:18.
 5. See Alma 12:10; Moroni 10:4–5; Doctrine and Covenants 64:34.
 6. Russell M. Nelson, "The Correct Name of the Church," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 87: "Instead, it is a correction. It is the command of the Lord. Joseph Smith did not name the Church restored through him; neither did Mormon. It was the Savior Himself who said, 'For thus shall my church be called in the last days, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' [Doctrine and Covenants 115:4]."
 7. See Matthew 1:23; Luke 2:11; Doctrine and Covenants 18:11; 20:21; 76:22–24; 93:21.

Be Peaceable Followers of Christ

BY ELDER QUENTIN L. COOK

I testify that “peaceable followers of Christ” will find personal peace in this life and a glorious heavenly reunion.

1 We live in a time when “peaceable followers of Christ”¹ experience unique challenges. Those who believe in, humbly worship, and testify of Jesus Christ have always experienced trials, tribulation, and adversities.² My wife, Mary, and I are no different. In the last few years, we have seen many of our close high school friends, missionary companions, some of their precious wives, and former work associates pass away, or, as President Russell M. Nelson has said, graduate to the other side of the veil. We have seen some who were raised in faith and belief step off the covenant path.

2 Sadly, we lost a grandson of 23 who died in a tragic single-car accident. Some dear friends, family members, and colleagues have also endured significant health challenges.

3 Whenever trials occur, we mourn and strive to bear one another’s burdens.³ We lament things that will not be accomplished and songs that will not be sung.⁴ Bad things happen to good people on this mortal journey. The devastating fires on Maui in Hawaii, southern Chile, and Canada are examples of horrendous events good people sometimes face.

4 We read in the Pearl of Great Price that the Lord revealed to Abraham the eternal nature of spirits. Abraham learned of our pre-earth life, foreordination, the Creation, the choosing of a Redeemer, and this mortal life, which is the second estate of man.⁵ The Redeemer declared:

5 “We will make an earth whereon these may dwell;

6 “And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them.”⁶

7 Now all of us are here in the second

estate of our journey of progression toward a kingdom of glory as part of God’s great plan of salvation and exaltation. We are blessed with agency and subject to the trials of mortality. This is the time allotted for us to prepare to meet God.⁷ We are blessed to know of Jesus Christ and His role in the plan. We have the privilege to become members of His restored Church—The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. As peaceable followers of Christ, we strive to live His commandments. It has never been easy for His followers. Nor was it easy for the Savior to faithfully fulfill His mortal mission.

8 The scriptures are clear: many will succumb to an “eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die” approach.⁸ Other nonbelievers retreat to somber enclaves of like-minded participants who advocate for the next “new thing”⁹ and philosophies of men.¹⁰ They know not where to find the truth.¹¹

9 Peaceable followers of Christ do not follow either path. We are warm, engaged members of the communities where we live. We love, share, and invite all of God’s children to follow Christ’s teachings.¹² We follow the counsel of our beloved prophet, President Nelson: we choose the role of “a peacemaker, now and always.”¹³ This inspired approach is consistent with both the scriptures and prophetic direction.

10 In 1829 the restored Church had not yet been organized, nor had the Book of Mormon been published. A small group of struggling people, moved by the Spirit of God, followed the Prophet Joseph Smith. The Lord revealed to Joseph counsel for difficult times: “Fear not, little flock; do good; let earth and hell combine against you, for if ye are built upon my rock, they cannot prevail.”¹⁴ He also counseled them:

11 “Look unto me in every thought; doubt

not, fear not.

- 12 "... Be faithful, keep my commandments, and ye shall inherit the kingdom of heaven."¹⁵
- 13 Clearly, our heavenly destiny is not altered when we suffer adversity. In Hebrews we are counseled to "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."¹⁶ Jesus Christ is "the author of eternal salvation."¹⁷
- 14 I love the words of Mormon, quoted by his son Moroni, commending "the peaceable followers of Christ ... because of your peaceable walk with the children of men."¹⁸
- 15 For those of us in the Church striving to be peaceable followers of Christ, a brighter day awaits us as we focus on our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Trials are a part of mortality and occur in everyone's life throughout the world. This includes major conflicts between countries and individuals.
- 16 Church leaders are frequently asked, "Why does a just God allow bad things to happen, especially to good people?" and "Why are those who are righteous and in the Lord's service not immune from such tragedies?"
- 17 We do not know all the answers; however, we do know important principles that allow us to face trials, tribulation, and adversities with faith and confidence in a bright future that awaits each of us. No better example exists in scripture with respect to passing through tribulation than the word of the Lord to Joseph Smith, the Prophet, while he was a prisoner in Liberty Jail.
- 18 The Lord in part declared:
- 19 "If the very jaws of hell shall gape open the mouth wide after thee, know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good.
- 20 "The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he?
- 21 "... Fear not what man can do, for God shall be with you forever and ever."¹⁹
- 22 It is clear we have a Father in Heaven who knows and loves us personally and understands our suffering perfectly.

His Son, Jesus Christ, is our Savior and Redeemer.

- 23 President Russell M. Nelson and President M. Russell Ballard have both strongly emphasized the significance of the new second edition of *Preach My Gospel*.²⁰ I share their enthusiasm. This new edition, amplifying sacred scripture, powerfully proclaims:
- 24 "In His atoning sacrifice, Jesus Christ took upon Himself our pains, afflictions, and infirmities. Because of this, He knows 'according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities' (Alma 7:12; see also verse 11). He invites, 'Come unto me,' and as we do, He gives us rest, hope, strength, perspective, and healing (Matthew 11:28; see also verses 29–30).
- 25 "As we rely on Jesus Christ and His Atonement, He can help us endure our trials, sicknesses, and pain. We can be filled with joy, peace, and consolation. All that is unfair about life can be made right through the Atonement of Jesus Christ."²¹
- 26 We can joyfully be peaceable followers of Christ.
- 27 Our Father's plan of happiness for His children includes not only a premortal and mortal life but also a potential for eternal life, including a great and glorious reunion with those we have lost. All wrongs will be righted, and we will see with perfect clarity and faultless perspective and understanding.
- 28 Church leaders have compared this perspective with someone walking into the middle of a three-act play.²² Those without knowledge of the Father's plan do not understand what happened in the first act (or the premortal existence) and the purposes established there; nor do they understand the clarification and resolution that come in the third act, which is the glorious fulfillment of the Father's plan.
- 29 Many do not appreciate that under His loving and comprehensive plan, those who appear to be disadvantaged, through no fault of their own, are not ultimately impacted.²³
- 30 The scriptures are clear: peaceable followers of Christ who are righteous, follow the Savior, and keep His

commandments will be blessed. One of the most important scriptures for those who are righteous, regardless of their situation in life, is part of King Benjamin's address to his people. He promises that those who faithfully keep the commandments are blessed in all things in this life and "are received into heaven ... [and] dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness."²⁴

31 We recognize that almost all of us have experienced physical and spiritual storms in our lives, some devastating. A loving Father in Heaven and His Son, Jesus Christ, who is the head of His restored Church, have provided us scriptures and prophets to prepare us, warn us about dangers, and give us guidance to prepare and protect us. Some directions require immediate action, and some provide protection for many years in the future. The Lord's preface to the Doctrine and Covenants, section 1, admonishes us to "give heed to the words of the prophets."²⁵

32 Section 1 also cautions us, "Prepare ye, prepare ye for that which is to come."²⁶ The Lord provides His people a chance to prepare for the challenges they will face.

33 The Lord gave a powerful revelation to President Brigham Young on January 14, 1847, at Winter Quarters.²⁷ This revelation is a classic example of the Lord preparing people for that which is to come. The faithful Saints had begun their exodus to the mountain sanctuary of the Salt Lake Valley. They had successfully built the Nauvoo Temple and received sacred saving ordinances. They had been driven out of Missouri, and their persecutors had driven them out of Nauvoo in a terrible winter season. The revelation to Brigham gave practical counsel on how to prepare for the exodus. The Lord placed special emphasis on taking care of the poor, the widows, the fatherless, and the families of those serving in the Mormon Battalion as the main body of Saints proceeded on their perilous journey.

34 In addition to providing other advice to live righteously, the Lord emphasized two principles that continue to be applicable today.

35 First, He encouraged them to "praise the Lord with singing, with music, with dancing, and with a prayer of praise and

thanksgiving."²⁸

36 Second, the Lord counseled if they were "sorrowful, call on the Lord thy God with supplication, that your souls may be joyful."²⁹

37 These two admonitions are great counsel for our own day. Lives full of praise, music, and thanksgiving are uniquely blessed. Being joyful and relying on heavenly help through prayer is a powerful way to be peaceable followers of Christ. Striving always to be of good cheer helps avoid being cast down in spirit.

38 The final line of a perceptive hymn conveys the ultimate answer in a beautiful fashion: "Earth has no sorrow that heav'n cannot heal."³⁰

39 As an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, I testify that "peaceable followers of Christ" will find personal peace in this life and a glorious heavenly reunion. I bear a sure witness of the Savior's divinity and the reality of His Atonement. He is our Savior and Redeemer. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. *Moroni 7:3.*
2. *See John 16:33.*
3. *See Mosiah 18:8–9; see also 2 Nephi 32:7.*
4. *See Quentin L. Cook, "The Songs They Could Not Sing," Ensign or Liahona, Nov. 2011, 104–7.*
5. *See the chapter heading for Abraham 3.*
6. *Abraham 3:24–25.*
7. *See Alma 12:24.*
8. *See 2 Nephi 28:7–9.*
9. *Acts 17:21.*
10. *See Russell M. Nelson, "Overcome the World and Find Rest," Liahona, Nov. 2022, 96.*
11. *See Doctrine and Covenants 123:12.*
12. *"Missionaries return home with a love for the people they have served and taught. They are true ambassadors spreading goodwill for the peoples in whose countries they have lived and worked. They are not concerned with income levels and have no racial bias. They are not out to build any worldly kingdoms. They are, in the words of Mormon, 'the peaceable followers of Christ' [Moroni 7:3]" (L. Tom Perry, "The Peaceable Followers of Christ," Ensign, Nov. 1989, 71).*
13. *Russell M. Nelson, "Peacemakers Needed," Liahona, May 2023, 100.*
14. *Doctrine and Covenants 6:34.*

15. Doctrine and Covenants 6:36–37.
16. Hebrews 4:16.
17. Hebrews 5:9; see also the chapter heading.
18. Moroni 7:3–4.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 122:7–9.
20. See Scott Taylor, “President Nelson Introduces New Edition of ‘Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ,’” *Church News*, June 22, 2023, thechurchnews.com; see also Sarah Jane Weaver, “Video: 3 Apostles Talk about the Impact of ‘Preach My Gospel,’” *Church News*, Aug. 10, 2023, thechurchnews.com.
21. *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ* (2023), 56.
22. See Boyd K. Packer, “The Play and the Plan” (Church Educational System fireside for young adults, May 7, 1995 [printed 1997]), 2: “In mortality, we are like actors who enter a theater just as the curtain goes up on the second act. We have missed act 1. ... ‘And they all lived happily ever after’ is never written into the second act. That line belongs in the third act, when the mysteries are solved

and everything is put right.” See also Neal A. Maxwell, *All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience* (1979), 37: “[God] sees the beginning from the end. ... The arithmetic ... is something we mortals cannot comprehend. We cannot do the sums because we do not have all the numbers. We are locked in the dimension of time and are contained within the tight perspectives of this second estate.”

23. Those who die before reaching the age of accountability are saved in the celestial kingdom (see Doctrine and Covenants 137:10). Those who have died without knowledge of the gospel and would have received it if they had been given the opportunity will also be heirs of the celestial kingdom (see Doctrine and Covenants 137:7).
24. Mosiah 2:41.
25. Doctrine and Covenants 1:14.
26. Doctrine and Covenants 1:12.
27. See Doctrine and Covenants 136.
28. Doctrine and Covenants 136:28.
29. Doctrine and Covenants 136:29.
30. “Come, Ye Disconsolate,” Hymns, no. 115.

The Prodigal and the Road That Leads Home

BY ELDER DIETER F. UCHTDORF

Though choices may have taken you far from the Savior and His Church, the Master Healer stands at the road that leads home, welcoming you.

1 A Certain Man Had Two Sons

2 It has been called by some the greatest short story ever told.¹ Since it has been translated into thousands of languages across the world, it is quite possible that during the past two millennia, the sun has not set without the story being referenced somewhere in the world.

3 It was told by Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, who came to earth “to save that which was lost.”² He begins with these simple words: “A certain man had two sons.”³

4 Immediately we learn of a heartbreaking conflict. One son⁴ tells his father he is through with life at home. He wants his freedom. He wants to leave behind the culture and teachings of his parents. He asks for his share of the inheritance—now.⁵

5 Can you imagine what the father felt when he heard this? When he realized that what his son wanted more than anything else was to leave the family and perhaps never return?

6 The Great Adventure

7 The son must have felt a thrill of adventure and excitement. At long last, he was on his own. Free from the principles and rules of the culture of his youth, he could finally make his own choices without being influenced by his parents. No more guilt. He could bask in the acceptance of a like-minded community and live life on his own terms.

8 Arriving in a faraway country, he quickly made new friends and began living the life he had always dreamed of. He must have been a favorite of many, for he spent money freely. His new friends—beneficiaries of his prodigality—did not judge him. They celebrated, applauded, and championed his choices.⁶

9 Had there been social media in that time, surely he would have filled pages with animated photos of laughing friends: #Livingmybestlife! #Neverhappier! #Shouldhavedonethislongago!

10 The Famine

11 But the party did not last—it rarely does. Two things happened: first, he ran out of money, and second, a famine swept through the land.⁷

12 As the problems worsened, he panicked. The once unstoppable, jubilant high roller now could not afford a single meal, let alone a place to stay. How would he survive?

13 He had been generous to his friends—would they help him now? I can see him asking for a little support—just for now—until he got back on his feet.

14 The scriptures tell us, “No man gave unto him.”⁸

15 Desperate to remain alive, he found a local farmer who hired him to feed swine.⁹

16 Extremely hungry now, abandoned and alone, the young man must have wondered how things could have gone so terribly, dreadfully wrong.

17 It wasn’t just an empty stomach that troubled him. It was an empty soul. He had been so sure that giving in to his worldly desires would make him happy, that moral laws were obstacles to that happiness. Now he knew better. And oh, what a price he had to pay for that knowledge!¹⁰

18 As the physical and spiritual hunger grew, his thoughts returned to his father. Would he help him after all that had happened? Even the humblest of his father’s servants had food to eat and shelter from the storms.

- 19 But return to his father?
- 20 Never.
- 21 Confess to his village that he had squandered his inheritance?
- 22 Impossible.
- 23 Face the neighbors who surely had warned him that he was disgracing his family and breaking his parents' hearts? Return to his old friends after boasting of how he was breaking free?
- 24 Unbearable.
- 25 But the hunger, loneliness, and remorse simply wouldn't go away—until "he came to himself."¹¹
- 26 He knew what he needed to do.
- 27 **The Return**
- 28 Now let us go back to the father, the brokenhearted master of the house. How many hundreds, perhaps thousands, of hours had he spent worrying about his son?
- 29 How many times had he looked down the very road his son had taken and relived the penetrating loss he had felt as his son walked away? How many prayers had he offered in the deep of night, pleading with God that his son would be safe, that he would discover truth, that he would return?
- 30 And then one day, the father looks out on that lonely road—the road that leads home—and sees a distant figure walking toward him.
- 31 Is it possible?
- 32 Though the individual is a great way off, the father knows in an instant it is his son.
- 33 He runs to him, throws his arms around him, and kisses him.¹²
- 34 "Father," the son cries out, in words he must have rehearsed a thousand times, "I have sinned against both heaven and you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. All I ask is that you take me in as a hired servant."¹³
- 35 But the father scarcely lets him finish. Tears in his eyes, he commands his servants: "Bring the finest robe in the house and place it on my son's shoulders.

Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Make a feast to celebrate. My son has returned!"¹⁴

36 **The Celebration**

- 37 In my office hangs a painting by the German artist Richard Burde. Harriet and I love this painting. It depicts one tender scene from the Savior's parable in a deeper perspective.
- 38 The Return of the Prodigal Son, by Richard Burde.
- 39 While almost everyone is overjoyed at the son's return, one is not—his older brother.¹⁵
- 40 He is carrying some emotional baggage.
- 41 He was there when his brother demanded his inheritance. He witnessed firsthand the massive weight of grief on his father.
- 42 Ever since his brother left, he has tried to lift his father's burden. Every day, he has worked to restore his father's broken heart.
- 43 And now the reckless child is back, and people can't stop lavishing attention on his rebellious brother.
- 44 "All these years," he tells his father, "never once have I refused to do a single thing you asked. Yet in all that time, you never celebrated me."¹⁶
- 45 The loving father responds, "Dear son, all that I have is yours! This is not about comparing rewards or celebrations. This is about healing. This is the moment we have been hoping for all these years. Your brother was dead and is alive again! He was lost but now he is found!"¹⁷
- 46 **A Parable for Our Time**
- 47 My beloved brothers and sisters, dear friends, like all of the Savior's parables, this one is not just about people living long ago. It's about you and me, today.
- 48 Who among us has not departed from the path of holiness, foolishly thinking we could find more happiness going our own self-centered way?
- 49 Who among us has not felt humbled, brokenhearted, and desperate for forgiveness and mercy?
- 50 Perhaps some may even have wondered,

32:13–14). *Famine can induce spiritual hunger* (“The Tugs and Pulls of the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 36; *Liahona*, Jan. 2001, 45).

11. Luke 15:17.
12. See Luke 15:20.
13. See Luke 15:18–19, 21.
14. See Luke 15:22–24.
15. Remember, the younger son had already received his inheritance. For the older one, that meant that everything else belonged to him. Giving anything to the younger son would mean to take it away from the son who stayed.

16. See Luke 15:29.
17. See Luke 15:31–32.
18. Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Laborers in the Vineyard,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2012, 33.
19. What is given to one does not in the slightest diminish the birthright of others. The Savior taught this doctrine when He offered the parable of the laborers in Matthew 20:1–16.
20. See Alma 34:31.
21. 2 Nephi 31:19–20.
22. 1 Peter 1:8.
23. See Psalm 28:7.

More Than a Hero

BY BISHOP W. CHRISTOPHER WADDELL

Jesus Christ is not only our hero; He is our Lord and King, the Savior and Redeemer of mankind.

1 From 1856 to 1860, thousands of Latter-day Saint pioneers pulled their belongings in handcarts for over 1,000 miles (1,600 km) as they traveled to the Salt Lake Valley. One hundred sixty-seven years ago this very week, on October 4, 1856, President Brigham Young was surprised to learn that two handcart companies, led by Edward Martin and James Willie, were still hundreds of miles from Salt Lake, with winter fast approaching.¹ The very next day, not far from where we meet today, President Young stood before the Saints and declared: “Many of our brethren and sisters are on the plains with handcarts, and they must be brought here. ... Go and bring in those people now on the plains.”²

2 Just two days later, the first rescue parties departed in search of the handcart pioneers.

3 A member of the Willie company described the desperate situation prior to the arrival of the main rescue team. He shared: “[Just] when it seemed all would be lost, ... and there seemed little left to live for, like a thunderbolt out of the clear sky, God answered our prayers. A rescue party, bringing food and supplies ... , came into sight. ... How we thanked God for our rescue.”³

4 These rescuers were heroes to the pioneers, putting their own lives at risk in extreme weather conditions to bring as many as possible safely home. One such hero was Ephraim Hanks.

5 In mid-October, and unaware of the handcart predicament, Hanks was returning to his home in Salt Lake following a trip when, during the night, he was awakened by a voice saying, “The hand-cart people are in trouble and you are wanted; will you go and help them?”

6 With that question ringing in his mind, he hurried back to Salt Lake City. And upon hearing President Heber C.

Kimball call for additional volunteers, Hanks set out the very next day, on his own, to the rescue. Moving quickly, he overtook other rescuers en route, and upon reaching the Martin company, Hanks recalled, “The sight that met my gaze as I entered their camp can never be erased from my memory ... [and] was enough to touch the stoutest heart.”⁴

7 Ephraim Hanks spent days moving from tent to tent blessing the sick. He related that “in scores of instances, when we administered to the sick, and rebuked the diseases in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the sufferers would rally at once; they were healed almost instantly.”⁵ Ephraim Hanks will forever be a hero to those handcart pioneers.

8 Similar to that remarkable rescue, events which impact our lives and even the course of history are frequently the result of decisions and achievements of individual men and women—great artists, scientists, business leaders, and politicians. These extraordinary individuals are often honored as heroes, with monuments and memorials built to commemorate their exploits.

9 When I was a young boy, my first heroes were athletes. My earliest memories are of collecting baseball cards with the pictures and statistics of Major League Baseball players. “Hero worship” as a child can be fun and innocent, as when children dress up as their favorite superheroes for Halloween. Although we admire and respect many talented and remarkable men and women for their abilities and contributions, the degree to which they are revered, if taken to an excess, can be the equivalent of the children of Israel worshipping a golden calf in the desert of Sinai.

10 As adults, what was once innocent childhood fun can become a stumbling block when “hero worship” of politicians, bloggers, influencers, athletes, or musicians causes us to look “beyond the mark”⁶ and lose sight of what is truly

essential.

- 11 For the children of Israel, the challenge was not the gold that they brought with them on their journey to the promised land but rather what they allowed the gold to become: an idol, which then became the object of their worship, turning their attention away from Jehovah, who had parted the Red Sea and delivered them from bondage. Their focus on the calf impacted their ability to worship the true God.⁷
- 12 The hero—our hero, now and always—is Jesus Christ, and anything or anyone that distracts us from His teachings, as found in the scriptures and through the words of living prophets, can negatively impact our progress on the covenant path. Before the Creation of this world, we looked to Jesus Christ when it became clear that the plan proposed by Father in Heaven, which included our opportunity to progress and become like Him, was being challenged.
- 13 Not only was Jesus Christ the leader in defending our Father’s plan, but He would also play the most crucial role in its implementation. He responded to the Father and volunteered to offer Himself “a ransom for all,”⁸ to pay a debt that each of us would incur through sin but could not pay on our own.
- 14 President Dallin H. Oaks has taught, “[Jesus Christ] has done everything that is essential for our journey through mortality toward the destiny outlined in the plan of our Heavenly Father.”⁹
- 15 In the Garden of Gethsemane, when faced with such an overwhelming task, the Savior bravely stated, “Not my will, but thine, be done,” and proceeded to take upon Himself the combined pains, the sicknesses, and the suffering for the sins of all who would ever live.¹⁰ In a perfect act of obedience and commitment, Jesus Christ completed the supreme heroic act in all of creation, culminating in His glorious Resurrection.
- 16 In our most recent general conference, President Russell M. Nelson reminded us: “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!”¹¹ And I would

add, “Choose Him.”

- 17 In our complex world, it can be tempting to turn to society’s heroes in an effort to provide clarity to life when it may seem confusing or overwhelming. We buy the clothes they sponsor, we embrace the politics they espouse, and we follow their suggestions shared on social media. This might be fine for a temporary diversion, but we must be watchful that this form of hero worship does not become our golden calf. Choosing the right hero has eternal consequences.
- 18 When our family arrived in Spain to begin our service as mission leaders, we found a framed quote shared by Elder Neal A. Maxwell that has relevance to the heroes we choose to follow. He stated, “If you have not chosen the kingdom of God first, it will in the end make no difference what you have chosen instead.”¹² Brothers and sisters, it is by choosing Jesus Christ, the King of kings, that we choose the kingdom of God. Any other choice is the equivalent of choosing the arm of flesh, or a golden calf, and will ultimately fail us.
- 19 In the Old Testament book of Daniel, we read the account of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who clearly knew which hero to choose—and it was not any of the gods of King Nebuchadnezzar. They confidently declared:
- 20 “Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace. ...
- 21 “But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image.”¹³
- 22 As the Apostle Paul taught, “There be gods many,”¹⁴ and, I may add, heroes many to whom we are invited to bow down, to worship, and to embrace. But just as Daniel’s three friends knew, there is only One who is guaranteed to deliver—because He already has and He always will.
- 23 For us on our journey back to the presence of God, to our promised land, it’s not the politician, the musician, the athlete, or the vlogger that is the issue but, rather, choosing to allow them to become the primary objects of our attention and focus in place of our Savior and Redeemer.

24 We choose Him, Jesus Christ, when we choose to honor His day whether we're at home or traveling on vacation. We choose Him when we choose His words through the scriptures and the teachings of living prophets. We choose Him when we choose to hold a temple recommend and live worthy of its use. We choose Him when we are peacemakers and refuse to be contentious, "especially when we have differences of opinion." 15

25 No leader has ever shown more courage, no humanitarian has shown more kindness, no physician has cured more disease, and no artist has been more creative than Jesus Christ.

26 In a world of heroes, with monuments and museums devoted to the exploits of mortal men and women, there is One who stands above all others. I testify that Jesus Christ is not only our hero; He is our Lord and King, the Savior and Redeemer of mankind. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. *Studies devoted to the Willie and Martin handcart companies include LeRoy R. and Ann W. Hafen, Handcarts to Zion: The Story of a Unique Western Migration, 1856–1860 (1960); Rebecca Cornwall and Leonard J. Arrington, Rescue of the 1856 Handcart Companies (1981); Howard K. and Cory W. Bangarter, Tragedy and Triumph: Your Guide to the Rescue of the 1856 Willie and*

Martin Handcart Companies, 2nd ed. (2006); and Andrew D. Olsen, The Price We Paid: The Extraordinary Story of the Willie and Martin Handcart Pioneers (2006).

2. Brigham Young, "Remarks," *Deseret News*, Oct. 15, 1856, 252.
3. John Oborn, "Brief History of the Life of John Oborn, Pioneer of 1856," 2, in *John Oborn reminiscences and diary, circa 1862–1901*, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.
4. Ephraim K. Hanks's narrative, in Andrew Jenson, "Church Emigration," *Contributor*, Mar. 1893, 202–3.
5. Hanks, in Jenson, "Church Emigration," 204.
6. *Jacob* 4:14.
7. See *Exodus* 32.
8. *1 Timothy* 2:6; see also *Matthew* 20:28.
9. Dallin H. Oaks, "What Has Our Savior Done for Us?," *Liahona*, May 2021, 75.
10. See *Luke* 22:39–44.
11. Russell M. Nelson, "The Answer Is Always Jesus Christ," *Liahona*, May 2023, 127.
12. Attributed to 18th-century English clergyman William Law; quoted in Neal A. Maxwell, "Response to a Call," *Ensign*, May 1974, 112.
13. See *Daniel* 3:13–18.
14. *1 Corinthians* 8:5.
15. Russell M. Nelson, "Peacemakers Needed," *Liahona*, May 2023, 98.

the Lord's errand.

15 We need, and you will need, the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost. Now, we desire it, yet we know from experience that it is not easy to achieve. We each think and say and do things in our daily lives that can offend the Spirit.

16 When that happens, as it will, we may feel disapproval from the Lord. And we may be tempted to feel we are alone. It is important to remember the sure promise we receive each week as we repent and partake of the sacrament: "That they may always have his Spirit to be with them."⁵

17 If you have felt the influence of the Holy Ghost today, you may take it as a sweet evidence that the Atonement is working in your life.

18 As Elder Jeffrey R. Holland has said: "Whenever these moments of our extremity come, we must not succumb to the fear that God has abandoned us or that He does not hear our prayers. He does hear us. He does see us. He does love us."⁶

19 That assurance has helped me. When I feel distant from the Lord, when answers to my prayers seem delayed, I have learned to follow the counsel of President Nelson to review my life for opportunities to repent. He reminds us, "Daily repentance is the pathway to purity, and purity brings power."⁷

20 If you find yourself having difficulty in feeling the Holy Ghost, you might ponder whether there is anything for which you might repent and receive forgiveness.⁸ You can pray with faith to know what to do to be cleansed and thus more nearly qualify for that constant companionship of the Holy Ghost.

21 If you want to receive the companionship of the Holy Ghost, you must want it for the right reasons. Your purposes must be the Lord's purposes. If your motives are too selfish, you will find it difficult to receive and sense the promptings of the Spirit.

22 The key for me and for you is to want what the Savior wants. Our motives need to be driven by the pure love of Christ. Our prayers need to be "All I want is what you want. Thy will be done."

23 I try to remember the Savior's sacrifice and His love for me. Then, when I pray to Heavenly Father to give thanks, I feel love and assurance that my prayers are heard and that I will receive whatever is best for me and those I love. It strengthens my testimony.

24 Of all the things of which the Holy Ghost testifies, the most precious for us is that Jesus is the Christ, the living Son of God. The Savior promised, "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me."⁹

25 Years ago I received a phone call from a distraught mother. She told me that her daughter had moved far from home. She sensed from the little contact she had with her daughter that something was terribly wrong. She pleaded with me to help.

26 I found out who the daughter's home teacher was. You can tell by that name that it was a long time ago. I called him. He was young. Yet he told me that he and his companion both had been awakened in the night with not only concern for the daughter but with inspiration that she was about to make choices that would bring sadness and misery. With only that inspiration of the Spirit, they went to see her.

27 At first she did not want to tell them about her situation. Under inspiration, they pleaded with her to repent and choose the path the Lord had for her. She realized then, I believe by the Spirit, that the only way they could have known what they knew about her life was from God. A mother turned her loving concerns over to Heavenly Father and the Savior. The Holy Ghost had been sent to those home teachers because they were willing to serve the Lord. They had followed the counsel and promise found in the Doctrine and Covenants:

28 "Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dew from heaven.

29 "The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness

and truth; and thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever and ever.”¹⁰

30 I testify that the Lord has kept His promise. The Holy Ghost is being sent to the faithful covenant members of the Church of Jesus Christ. Now, your experiences will be unique, and the Spirit will guide in the way best suited to your faith and capacity to receive revelation for you and for those you love and serve. I pray with all my heart that your confidence will grow.

31 I bear my witness that God the Father lives. He loves you. He hears your every prayer. Jesus Christ did pray to the Father to send the Holy Ghost to guide, comfort, and testify of truth to us. The Father and His Beloved Son appeared to Joseph Smith in a grove of trees. The Prophet Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon by the gift and power of God.

32 Heavenly messengers restored priesthood keys. President Russell M. Nelson is the prophet of God for all the earth.

33 As a witness of Jesus Christ, I know that He lives and He leads His Church. You and I have the opportunity to have the Holy Ghost as our constant companion and to have those truths confirmed as we remember and love the Savior,

repent, and ask for His love to be in our hearts. I pray that we may have that blessing and the companionship of the Holy Spirit this day and every day of our lives. I love you. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. *Russell M. Nelson, "Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives," Ensign or Liahona, May 2018, 96.*
2. *Helaman 11:23.*
3. *1 Nephi 3:7.*
4. *1 Nephi 4:5–6.*
5. *Doctrine and Covenants 20:77.*
6. *Jeffrey R. Holland, "Lessons from Liberty Jail" (Brigham Young University devotional, Sept. 7, 2008), 5, speeches.byu.edu.*
7. *Russell M. Nelson, "We Can Do Better and Be Better," Ensign or Liahona, May 2019, 68.*
8. *"An inability to feel the Spirit, or a general feeling of apathy or numbness, [can also be] a symptom of poor mental health" ("At times I have difficulty feeling the Spirit because I feel numb ...," in "Mental Health: Help for Me," Life Help, Gospel Library). If you experience difficulties with your mental or emotional health, please be assured of Heavenly Father's love for you, and continue to pray to Him and trust in Him.*
9. *John 15:26.*
10. *Doctrine and Covenants 121:45–46.*

Sunday Afternoon

Jesus Christ Is the Treasure

BY ELDER DALE G. RENLUND

Focus on Jesus Christ. He is our Savior and Redeemer, the “mark” to whom we should look, and our greatest treasure.

- 1 In 1907 a wealthy Englishman named George Herbert, the fifth Earl of Carnarvon,¹ moved to Egypt and took up an interest in archaeology. He approached a well-known Egyptologist, Howard Carter, and proposed a partnership. Carter would oversee their archaeological excavations, and Carnarvon would provide the funding.
- 2 Together they successfully explored a variety of locations. Then they received permission to excavate in the Valley of the Kings, located near modern-day Luxor, where the tombs of many pharaohs had been found. They decided to look for the tomb of King Tutankhamun. Tutankhamun had ascended to the throne of Egypt more than 3,000 years earlier and reigned for 10 years before his unexpected death.² He was known to have been buried in the Valley of the Kings,³ but the location of his tomb was unknown.
- 3 Carter and Carnarvon spent five years unsuccessfully searching for Tutankhamun’s tomb. Eventually Carnarvon informed Carter that he was finished with the fruitless quest. Carter pleaded for just one more season of excavation, and Carnarvon relented and agreed to the funding.
- 4 Carter realized that the entire floor of the Valley of the Kings had been methodically excavated—except the area of their own base camp. Within a few days of digging there, they found the first steps leading down to the tomb.⁴
- 5 When Carter eventually peered into the antechamber of Tutankhamun’s tomb, he saw gold everywhere. After three months of cataloging the contents of the antechamber, they opened the sealed burial chamber in February 1923—100 years ago. This was the most famous archaeological find of the 20th century.
- 6 During those years of ineffectual searching, Carter and Carnarvon had overlooked what was literally under their feet. Some five centuries before the Savior’s birth, the Book of Mormon prophet Jacob referred to taking for granted or undervaluing what is nearby as “looking beyond the mark.” Jacob foresaw that the people of Jerusalem would not recognize the promised Messiah when He came. Jacob prophesied that they would be a “people [who] despised the words of plainness ... and [would seek] for things that they could not understand. Wherefore, because of their blindness, which blindness [would come] by looking beyond the mark, they must needs fall.”⁵ In other words, they would stumble.
- 7 Jacob’s prediction proved accurate. During Jesus’s mortal ministry, many looked beyond the mark, beyond Him. They looked past the Savior of the world. Instead of recognizing His role in fulfilling Heavenly Father’s plan, they

condemned and crucified Him. They looked and waited for someone else to bring them salvation.

- 8 Like those people in Jerusalem, and like Carter and Carnarvon, we too can be prone to look beyond the mark. We need to guard against this tendency lest we miss Jesus Christ in our lives and fail to recognize the many blessings He offers us. We need Him. We are counseled to rely "wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save."⁶
- 9 He is our mark. If we incorrectly imagine that there is a need for something beyond what He offers, we deny or diminish the scope and power He can have in our lives. He has claimed the rights of mercy and extends that mercy to us.⁷ He is the ultimate "source [to whom we should] look for a remission of [our] sins."⁸ He is our Advocate with the Father and champions what the Father has wanted all along: for us to return to Him as inheritors in His kingdom. We need to, in the words of the prophet Alma, "cast about [our] eyes and 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 [our] sins; and that he shall rise again from the dead, which shall bring to pass the resurrection."⁹ Jesus Christ is our treasure.
- 10 The Savior has given us many ways to focus on Him intentionally, including the daily opportunity to repent. Sometimes we undervalue how great this offered blessing is. When I was eight years old, I was baptized by my father. Afterward, I held his hand as we were going to cross a busy street. I was not paying attention and stepped from the curb just as a big truck came rumbling by. My father jerked me back, out of the street and onto the curb. Had he not done so, I would have been hit by the truck. Knowing my own mischievous nature, I thought, "Maybe it would have been better for me to be killed by the truck because I'll never be as clean as I am now right after my baptism."
- 11 As an eight-year-old, I had mistakenly presumed that the water of baptism washed away sins. Not so. In the years since my baptism, I have learned that sins are cleansed by the power of Jesus Christ through His atoning sacrifice as we make and keep the baptismal covenant.¹⁰ Then, through the gift of

repentance, we can remain clean. I have also learned that the sacrament brings a powerful virtuous cycle into our lives, enabling us to retain a remission of our sins.¹¹

- 12 Just like the treasure that was under the feet of Carter and Carnarvon, the treasured blessings of the sacrament are available to us each time we attend sacrament meeting. We are promised that the Holy Ghost will be our constant companion if we approach the sacrament the way a new convert approaches baptism and confirmation, with a broken heart and contrite spirit and a determination to live up to that baptismal covenant. The Holy Ghost blesses us with His sanctifying power so that we can always retain a remission of our sins, week in and week out.¹²
- 13 Our spiritual foundation is strengthened through repentance and by conscientiously preparing for and worthily partaking of the sacrament. Only with a robust spiritual foundation can we handle the metaphorical rain, wind, and floods that confront us in our lives.¹³ Conversely, our spiritual foundation is weakened when we voluntarily skip sacrament meeting or when we do not focus on the Savior during the sacrament. We may unintentionally "withdraw [ourselves] from the Spirit of the Lord, that it may have no place in [us] to guide [us] in wisdom's paths that [we] may be blessed, prospered, and preserved."¹⁴
- 14 When we have the Holy Ghost with us, we will be inspired and guided to make and keep other covenants, such as those we make in temples. Doing so deepens our relationship with God.¹⁵ You may have noticed that many new temples have been announced in recent years, bringing temples ever closer to members.¹⁶ Paradoxically, as temples become more accessible, it may be easier for us to become more casual about temple attendance. When temples are distant, we plan our time and resources to travel to the temple to worship there. We prioritize these journeys.
- 15 With a temple close at hand, it can be easy to let little things get in the way of attending, saying to ourselves, "Well, I'll just go another time." Living close to a temple does bring greater flexibility in scheduling time in the temple, but that

very flexibility can make it easier to take the temple for granted. When we do, we “miss the mark,” undervaluing the opportunity to draw closer to the Savior in His holy house. Our commitment to attend should be at least as strong when the temple is nearby as when it is distant.

16 After Carter and Carnarvon excavated elsewhere in the Valley of the Kings looking for Tutankhamun’s tomb, they realized their oversight. We do not need to labor unsuccessfully, as they did for a time, to find our treasure. Nor need we seek counsel from exotic sources, prizing the novelty of the source and thinking such counsel will be more enlightened than that which we can receive from a humble prophet of God.

17 As recorded in the Old Testament, when Naaman sought a cure for his leprosy, he was indignant at being asked to dip himself seven times in a nearby ordinary river. But he was persuaded to follow the prophet Elisha’s counsel rather than rely on his own preconceived notions of how the miracle should occur. As a result, Naaman was healed.¹⁷ When we trust God’s prophet on the earth today and act on his counsel, we will find happiness, and we too can be healed. We need to look no further.

18 Brothers and sisters, I encourage you to remember and always focus on Jesus Christ. He is our Savior and Redeemer, the “mark” to whom we should look, and our greatest treasure. As you come to Him, you will be rewarded with strength to face life’s challenges, courage to do what is right, and the ability to fulfill your mission in mortality. Treasure the opportunity to repent, the privilege of partaking of the sacrament, the blessing of making and keeping temple covenants, the delight of worshipping in the temple, and the joy of having a living prophet.

19 I bear my solemn and sure witness that God, the Eternal Father, is our Heavenly Father and that He lives; Jesus is the Christ; He is our kind, wise heavenly Friend,¹⁸ and this is His restored Church. Thank you for your faith and faithfulness. I pray that you will be blessed, prospered, and preserved, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. *The full name of the fifth Earl of Carnarvon is George Edward Stanhope Molyneux Herbert.*
2. *A computed tomography (CT) scan*

done in 2005 indicated that King Tutankhamun may have suffered a compound fracture of one of his leg bones, perhaps leading to an infection and death.

3. *Most of the New Kingdom pharaohs of Egypt were buried in the Valley of the Kings. Most of those tombs were found and robbed in antiquity.*

4. *This account of the discovery of Tutankhamun’s tomb is primarily based on Eric H. Cline, “King Tut’s Tomb,” in Archaeology: An Introduction to the World’s Greatest Sites (2016), 60–66.*

*Numerous factors contributed to Carter’s and Carnarvon’s choices of where to excavate—and where not to excavate—in the Valley of the Kings. The area around the base camp was not immediately appealing for excavation. The triangular area provided visitor access to the tomb of Ramses VI, so excavations there would be particularly disruptive. The area was covered by, in Carter’s words, “a number of roughly constructed workmen’s huts, used probably by the labourers in the tomb of Rameses[,] ... [and] three feet of soil that lay beneath them.” It did not seem likely that huts would have been built on top of the entrance to a tomb (see Howard Carter and A. C. Mace, *The Tomb of Tut-ankh-Amen: Discovered by the Late Earl of Carnarvon and Howard Carter*, vol. 1 [1923], 124–28, 132). For other accounts of the discovery of Tutankhamun’s tomb, see Zahi Hawass, *Tutankhamun and the Golden Age of the Pharaohs* (2005); Nicholas Reeves, *The Complete Tutankhamun: The King, the Tomb, the Royal Treasure* (1990), 80–83; and Nicholas Reeves and Richard H. Wilkinson, *The Complete Valley of the Kings: Tombs and Treasures of Egypt’s Greatest Pharaohs* (1996), 81–82.*

5. *Jacob 4:14.*
6. *2 Nephi 31:19.*
7. *See Moroni 7:27–28.*
8. *2 Nephi 25:26.*
9. *Alma 33:22.*
10. *See Doctrine and Covenants 76:52.*
11. *See David A. Bednar, “Teach to Build Faith in Jesus Christ” (address given at the seminar for new mission leaders, June 23, 2023); Rachel Sterzer Gibson, “Teach to Build Faith in Jesus Christ, Elder Bednar*

Instructs," Church News, June 23, 2023, thechurchnews.com.

12. The sacrament was, however, not instituted as a specific means of securing a remission of our sins (see James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*, 12th ed. [1924], 175). A person cannot willfully sin on Saturday evening and expect that all he or she needs to do is eat a piece of bread and drink a cup of water on Sunday and magically be cleansed. But the sanctifying effect of the Holy Ghost can cleanse all who repent with a sincere heart and with real intent.
13. See 3 Nephi 18:12–13.
14. Mosiah 2:36.
15. President Russell M. Nelson said: "God has a special love for each person who makes a covenant with Him in the waters of baptism. And that divine love deepens as additional covenants are made and faithfully kept" ("Choices for Eternity" [worldwide devotional for

young adults, May 15, 2022], Gospel Library). The multiple covenants on the covenant path are not just sequential but additive and even synergistic. They facilitate a closer and stronger connection with God. Such a connection allows us to be transformed to the point that His image is in our countenances and our hearts have been mightily and permanently changed (see Alma 5:14).

16. President Nelson explained that the Lord "is making His temples more accessible. He is accelerating the pace at which we are building temples. He is increasing our ability to help gather Israel. He is also making it easier for each of us to become spiritually refined" ("Focus on the Temple," *Liahona*, Nov. 2022, 121).
17. See 2 Kings 5:9–14.
18. See "I Know That My Redeemer Lives," Hymns, no. 136.

Eternal Truth

BY ELDER JOHN C. PINGREE JR.

Our need to recognize truth has never been more important!

1 Brothers and sisters, thank you for your devotion to God the Father and to His Son, Jesus Christ, and thank you for your love and service to each other. You truly are remarkable!

2 Introduction

3 After my wife, Anne, and I received a call to serve as full-time mission leaders, our family determined to learn each missionary's name before arriving in the field. We obtained photos, created flash cards, and began studying faces and memorizing names.

4 Once we arrived, we held introductory conferences with the missionaries. As we mingled, I overheard our nine-year-old son:

5 "Nice to meet you, Sam!"

6 "Rachel, where are you from?"

7 "Wow, David, you're tall!"

8 Alarmed, I went to our son and whispered, "Hey, let's remember to refer to the missionaries as Elder or Sister."

9 He gave me a puzzled look and said, "Dad, I thought we were supposed to memorize their names." Our son did what he thought was right based on his understanding.

10 So, what is our understanding of truth in today's world? We are constantly bombarded with strong opinions, biased reporting, and incomplete data. At the same time, the volume and sources of this information are proliferating. Our need to recognize truth has never been more important!

11 Truth is critical for us to establish and strengthen our relationship with God, find peace and joy, and reach our divine potential. Today, let us consider the following questions:

12 What is truth, and why is it important?

13 How do we find truth?

14 When we find truth, how can we share it?

15 Truth Is Eternal

16 The Lord has taught us in scripture that "truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come" (Doctrine and Covenants 93:24). It "was not created or made" (Doctrine and Covenants 93:29) and has "no end" (Doctrine and Covenants 88:66).¹ Truth is absolute, fixed, and immutable. In other words, truth is eternal.²

17 Truth helps us avoid deception,³ discern good from evil,⁴ receive protection,⁵ and find comfort and healing.⁶ Truth can also guide our actions,⁷ make us free,⁸ sanctify us,⁹ and lead us to eternal life.¹⁰

18 God Reveals Eternal Truth

19 God reveals eternal truth to us through a network of revelatory relationships involving Himself, Jesus Christ, the Holy Ghost, prophets, and us. Let us discuss the distinct yet interconnected roles each participant plays in this process.

20 First, God is the source of eternal truth.¹¹ He and His Son, Jesus Christ,¹² have a perfect understanding of truth and always act in harmony with true principles and laws.¹³ This power allows Them to create and govern worlds¹⁴ as well as to love, guide, and nurture each one of us perfectly.¹⁵ They want us to understand and apply truth so we can enjoy the blessings They do.¹⁶ They may impart truth in person or, more typically, through messengers such as the Holy Ghost, angels, or living prophets.

21 Second, the Holy Ghost testifies of all truth.¹⁷ He reveals truths to us directly and witnesses of truth taught by others. Impressions from the Spirit typically come as thoughts to our minds and feelings to our hearts.¹⁸

22 Third, prophets receive truth from God and share that truth with us.¹⁹ We learn

the truth from past prophets in the scriptures²⁰ and from living prophets at general conference and through other official channels.

23 Finally, you and I play a crucial role in this process. God expects us to seek, recognize, and act on truth. Our ability to receive and apply truth is dependent on the strength of our relationship with the Father and the Son, our responsiveness to the influence of the Holy Ghost, and our alignment with latter-day prophets.

24 We need to remember that Satan works to keep us from truth. He knows that without truth, we cannot gain eternal life. He weaves strands of truth with worldly philosophies to confuse us and distract us from what is communicated by God.²¹

25 Seeking, Recognizing, and Applying Eternal Truth

26 As we seek eternal truth,²² the following two questions can help us recognize whether a concept comes from God or from another source:

27 Is the concept taught consistently in the scriptures and by living prophets?

28 Is the concept confirmed by the witness of the Holy Ghost?

29 God reveals doctrinal truths through prophets, and the Holy Ghost confirms those truths to us and helps us apply them.²³ We must seek and be prepared to receive these spiritual impressions when they come.²⁴ We are most receptive to the witness of the Spirit when we are humble,²⁵ pray sincerely and study God's words,²⁶ and keep His commandments.²⁷

30 Once the Holy Ghost confirms a specific truth to us, our understanding deepens as we put that principle into practice. Over time, as we consistently live the principle, we gain a sure knowledge of that truth.²⁸

31 For example, I have made mistakes and felt remorse for poor choices. But through prayer, study, and faith in Jesus Christ, I received a witness of the principle of repentance.²⁹ As I continued to repent, my understanding of repentance grew stronger. I felt closer to God and His Son. I now know that sin can be forgiven through Jesus Christ, because I experience the blessings of

repentance each day.³⁰

32 Trusting God When Truth Is Not Yet Revealed

33 So, what should we do when we sincerely seek for truth not yet revealed? I have empathy for those of us who yearn for answers that do not seem to come.

34 To Joseph Smith, the Lord counseled, "Hold your peace until I shall see fit to make all things known ... concerning the matter" (Doctrine and Covenants 10:37).

35 And to Emma Smith, He explained, "Murmur not because of the things which thou hast not seen, for they are withheld from thee and from the world, which is wisdom in me in a time to come" (Doctrine and Covenants 25:4).

36 I too have sought answers to heartfelt questions. Many answers have come; some have not.³¹ As we hold on—trusting God's wisdom and love, keeping His commandments, and relying on what we do know—He helps us find peace until He reveals the truth of all things.³²

37 Understanding Doctrine and Policy

38 When seeking truth, it helps to understand the difference between doctrine and policy. Doctrine refers to eternal truths, such as the nature of the Godhead, the plan of salvation, and Jesus Christ's atoning sacrifice. Policy is the application of doctrine based on current circumstances. Policy helps us administer the Church in an orderly way.

39 While doctrine never changes, policy adjusts from time to time. The Lord works through His prophets to uphold His doctrine and to modify Church policies according to the needs of His children.

40 Unfortunately, we sometimes confuse policy with doctrine. If we do not understand the difference, we risk becoming disillusioned when policies change and may even begin to question God's wisdom or the revelatory role of prophets.³³

41 Teaching Eternal Truth

42 When we obtain truth from God, He encourages us to share that knowledge with others.³⁴ We do this when we teach a class, guide a child, or discuss

gospel truths with a friend.

43 Our aim is to teach truth in a way that invites the converting power of the Holy Ghost.³⁵ Let me share some simple invitations from the Lord and His prophets that can help.³⁶

44 Center on Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, and Their fundamental doctrine.³⁷

45 Stay grounded in the scriptures and the teachings of latter-day prophets.³⁸

46 Rely on doctrine established through multiple authoritative witnesses.³⁹

47 Avoid speculation, personal opinions, or worldly ideas.⁴⁰

48 Teach a point of doctrine within the context of related gospel truths.⁴¹

49 Use teaching methods that invite the influence of the Spirit.⁴²

50 Communicate clearly to avoid misunderstanding.⁴³

51 **Speaking Truth in Love**

52 How we teach truth really matters. Paul encouraged us to speak “the truth in love” (see Ephesians 4:14–15). Truth has the best chance of blessing another when conveyed with Christlike love.⁴⁴

53 Truth taught without love can cause feelings of judgment, discouragement, and loneliness. It often leads to resentment and division—even conflict. On the other hand, love without truth is hollow and lacks the promise of growth.

54 Both truth and love are essential for our spiritual development.⁴⁵ Truth provides the doctrine, principles, and laws necessary to gain eternal life, while love engenders the motivation needed to embrace and act upon what is true.

55 I am forever grateful for others who patiently taught me eternal truth with love.

56 **Conclusion**

57 In conclusion, let me share eternal truths that have become an anchor to my soul. I have come to know these truths by following the principles discussed today.

58 I know that God is our Heavenly Father.⁴⁶ He is all knowing,⁴⁷ all powerful,⁴⁸ and perfectly loving.⁴⁹ He created a plan for

us to gain eternal life and become like Him.⁵⁰

59 As part of that plan, He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to help us.⁵¹ Jesus taught us to do the Father’s will⁵² and to love one another.⁵³ He atoned for our sins⁵⁴ and gave up His life on the cross.⁵⁵ He arose from the dead after three days.⁵⁶ Through Christ and His grace, we will be resurrected,⁵⁷ we can be forgiven,⁵⁸ and we can find strength in affliction.⁵⁹

60 During His earthly ministry, Jesus established His Church.⁶⁰ Over time, that Church was changed, and truths were lost.⁶¹ Jesus Christ restored His Church and the truths of the gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith.⁶² And today, Christ continues to lead His Church through living prophets and apostles.⁶³

61 I know that as we come unto Christ, we can eventually “be perfected in him” (Moroni 10:32), obtain “a fulness of joy” (Doctrine and Covenants 93:33), and receive “all that [the] Father hath” (Doctrine and Covenants 84:38). To these eternal truths I bear witness in the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. See also Psalm 117:2; Doctrine and Covenants 1:39.
2. “Contrary to the doubts of some, there really is such a thing as right and wrong. There really is absolute truth—eternal truth. One of the plagues of our day is that too few people know where to turn for truth” (Russell M. Nelson, “Pure Truth, Pure Doctrine, and Pure Revelation,” Liahona, Nov. 2021, 6).
3. See Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:37.
4. See Moroni 7:19.
5. See 2 Nephi 1:9; Doctrine and Covenants 17:8.
6. See Jacob 2:8.
7. See Psalm 119:105; 2 Nephi 32:3.
8. See John 8:32; Doctrine and Covenants 98:8.
9. See John 17:17.
10. See 2 Nephi 31:20.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:11–13; 93:36.
12. See John 5:19–20; 7:16; 8:26; 18:37; Moses 1:6.
13. See Alma 42:12–26; Doctrine and Covenants 88:41.
14. See Moses 1:30–39.
15. See 2 Nephi 26:24.
16. See Doctrine and Covenants 82:8–9.
17. See John 16:13; Jacob 4:13; Moroni 10:5; Doctrine and Covenants 50:14; 75:10; 76:12; 91:4; 124:97.
18. See Doctrine and Covenants 6:22–23; 8:2–3.

19. See Jeremiah 1:5, 7; Amos 3:7; Matthew 28:16–20; Moroni 7:31; Doctrine and Covenants 1:38; 21:1–6; 43:1–7. A prophet is “a person who has been called by and speaks for God. As a messenger of God, a prophet receives commandments, prophecies, and revelations from God. His responsibility is to make known God’s will and true character to mankind and to show the meaning of His dealings with them. A prophet denounces sin and foretells its consequences. He is a preacher of righteousness. On occasion, prophets may be inspired to foretell the future for the benefit of mankind. His primary responsibility, however, is to bear witness of Christ. The President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is God’s prophet on earth today. Members of the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles are sustained as prophets, seers, and revelators” (Guide to the Scriptures, “Prophet,” Gospel Library). Examples of these principles are found in the lives of Adam (see Moses 6:51–62), Enoch (see Moses 6:26–36), Noah (see Moses 8:19, 23–24), Abraham (see Genesis 12:1–3; Abraham 2:8–9), Moses (see Exodus 3:1–15; Moses 1:1–6, 25–26), Peter (see Matthew 16:13–19), and Joseph Smith (see Doctrine and Covenants 5:6–10; 20:2; 21:4–6).
20. See 2 Timothy 3:16.
21. See John 8:44; 2 Nephi 2:18; Doctrine and Covenants 93:39; Moses 4:4.
22. See 1 Nephi 10:19. President Dallin H. Oaks instructed: “We need to be cautious as we seek [God’s] truth and choose sources for that search. We should not consider secular prominence or authority as qualified sources. . . . When we seek the truth about religion, we should use spiritual methods appropriate for that search: prayer, the witness of the Holy Ghost, and study of the scriptures and the words of modern prophets” (“Truth and the Plan,” Ensign or Liahona, Nov. 2018, 25).
23. Elder D. Todd Christofferson taught: “Apostles and prophets . . . declare God’s word, but in addition, we believe men and women generally and even children can learn from and be guided by divine inspiration in response to prayer and study of the scriptures. . . . Members of the Church of Jesus Christ are given the gift of the Holy Ghost, which facilitates an ongoing communication with their Heavenly Father. . . . This is not to say that every member speaks for the Church or can define its doctrines but that each can receive divine guidance in dealing with the challenges and opportunities of his or her life” (“The Doctrine of Christ,” Ensign or Liahona, May 2012, 89–90, note 2).
24. See 2 Nephi 33:1–2.
25. See Doctrine and Covenants 1:28.
26. See Moroni 10:3–5; Doctrine and Covenants 9:7–9; 84:85.
27. See Doctrine and Covenants 5:35; 63:23; 93:27–28. Despite our earnest efforts, some of us may still struggle to feel the Spirit due to mental health challenges. Depression, anxiety, and other neurological conditions can add complexity to recognizing the Holy Ghost. In such cases, the Lord invites us to continue living the gospel, and He will bless us (see Mosiah 2:41). We can look for additional activities—such as listening to sacred music, engaging in service, or spending time in nature—that help us feel the fruits of the Spirit (see Galatians 5:22–23) and strengthen our connection to God. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland expressed: “So how do you best respond when mental or emotional challenges confront you or those you love? Above all, never lose faith in your Father in Heaven, who loves you more than you can comprehend. . . . Faithfully pursue the time-tested devotional practices that bring the Spirit of the Lord into your life. Seek the counsel of those who hold keys for your spiritual well-being. Ask for and cherish priesthood blessings. Take the sacrament every week, and hold fast to the perfecting promises of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Believe in miracles. I have seen so many of them come when every other indication would say that hope was lost. Hope is never lost” (“Like a Broken Vessel,” Ensign or Liahona, Nov. 2013, 40–41).
28. See John 7:17; Alma 32:26–34. Ultimately, God desires for us to gain truth “line upon line, precept upon precept,” until we comprehend all things (see Proverbs 28:5; 2 Nephi 28:30; Doctrine and Covenants 88:67; 93:28).
29. See 1 John 1:9–10; 2:1–2.
30. President Russell M. Nelson explained: “Nothing is more liberating, more ennobling, or more crucial to our individual progression than is a regular, daily focus on repentance. Repentance is not an event; it is a process. It is the key to happiness and peace of mind. When coupled with faith, repentance opens our access to the power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ” (“We Can Do Better and Be Better,” Ensign or Liahona, May 2019, 67).
31. I do not know all the reasons that God withholds some eternal truths from us, but Elder Orson F. Whitney provided an interesting insight: “It is blessed to believe without seeing, since by the exercise of faith comes spiritual development, one of the great objects of man’s earthly existence; while knowledge, by swallowing up faith, prevents its exercise, thus hindering that development. ‘Knowledge is power;’ and all things are to be known in due season. But premature knowledge—knowing at the wrong time—is fatal both to progress

- and to happiness" ("The Divinity of Jesus Christ," *Improvement Era*, Jan. 1926, 222; see also *Ensign*, Dec. 2003, 8–9; *Liahona*, Dec. 2003, 14–15).
32. See *Doctrine and Covenants* 76:5–10. The Lord also counseled Hyrum Smith to "seek not to declare my word, but first seek to obtain my word. ... Hold your peace [and] study my word" (*Doctrine and Covenants* 11:21–22). The prophet Alma provides an example for handling unanswered questions: "These mysteries are not yet fully made known unto me; therefore I shall forbear" (*Alma* 37:11). He also explained to his son Corianton that "there are many mysteries which are kept, that no one knoweth them save God himself" (*Alma* 40:3). I have also found strength from the response of Nephi when he was presented with a question he could not answer: "I know that [God] loveth his children; nevertheless, I do not know the meaning of all things" (*1 Nephi* 11:17).
 33. Similarly, cultural traditions are not doctrine or policy. They can be useful if they help us follow doctrine and policy, but they can also impede our spiritual growth if they are not based on true principles. We should avoid traditions that do not build our faith in Jesus Christ or help us progress toward eternal life.
 34. See *Doctrine and Covenants* 15:5; 88:77–78.
 35. See *Doctrine and Covenants* 50:21–23.
 36. Adapted from the document "Principles for Ensuring Doctrinal Purity," approved by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in February 2023.
 37. See *1 Nephi* 15:14. The Lord directed His servants to avoid focusing on tenets, or concepts, that are not central to His gospel: "And of tenets thou shalt not talk, but thou shalt declare repentance and faith on the Savior, and remission of sins by baptism, and by fire, yea, even the Holy Ghost" (*Doctrine and Covenants* 19:31). Elder Neil L. Andersen explained: "Let us focus on the Savior Jesus Christ and the gift of His atoning sacrifice. This does not mean we cannot tell an experience from our own life or share thoughts from others. While our subject might be about families or service or temples or a recent mission, everything ... should point to the Lord Jesus Christ" ("We Talk of Christ," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2020, 89–90).
 38. See *Doctrine and Covenants* 28:2–3, 8. The prophet Alma admonished those appointed to preach the gospel to "teach nothing save it were the things which he had taught, and which had been spoken by the mouth of the holy prophets" (*Mosiah* 18:19). President Henry B. Eyring declared, "We must teach the fundamental doctrines of the Church as contained in the standard works and the teachings of the prophets, whose responsibility it is to declare doctrine" ("The Lord Will Multiply the Harvest" [evening with a General Authority, Feb. 6, 1998], in *Teaching Seminary: Preservice Readings* [2004], 96). Elder D. Todd Christofferson testified that "in the Church today, just as anciently, establishing the doctrine of Christ or correcting doctrinal deviations is a matter of divine revelation to those the Lord endows with apostolic authority" ("The Doctrine of Christ," 86).
 39. See *2 Corinthians* 13:1; *2 Nephi* 11:3; *Ether* 5:4; *Doctrine and Covenants* 6:28. Elder Neil L. Andersen observed: "A few question their faith when they find a statement made by a Church leader decades ago that seems incongruent with our doctrine. There is an important principle that governs the doctrine of the Church. The doctrine is taught by all 15 members of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve. It is not hidden in an obscure paragraph of one talk. True principles are taught frequently and by many. Our doctrine is not difficult to find" ("Trial of Your Faith," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2012, 41). Elder D. Todd Christofferson similarly taught: "It should be remembered that not every statement made by a Church leader, past or present, necessarily constitutes doctrine. It is commonly understood in the Church that a statement made by one leader on a single occasion often represents a personal, though well-considered, opinion, not meant to be official or binding for the whole Church" ("The Doctrine of Christ," 88).
 40. See *3 Nephi* 11:32, 40. President Gordon B. Hinckley said: "I have spoken before about the importance of keeping the doctrine of the Church pure. ... I worry about this. Small aberrations in doctrinal teaching can lead to large and evil falsehoods" (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* [1997], 620). President Dallin H. Oaks warned that there are some "who select a few sentences from the teachings of a prophet and use these to support their political agenda or other personal purposes. ... To wrest the words of a prophet to support a private agenda, political or financial or otherwise, is to try to manipulate the prophet, not to follow him" ("Our Strengths Can Become Our Downfall" [Brigham Young University fireside, June 7, 1992], 7, speeches.byu.edu). President Henry B. Eyring cautioned: "Doctrine gains its power as the Holy Ghost confirms that it is true. ... Because we need the Holy Ghost, we must be cautious and careful not to go beyond teaching true doctrine. The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of Truth. His confirmation is invited by our avoiding speculation or personal interpretation. That can be hard to do. ... It is tempting to try something

new or sensational. But we invite the Holy Ghost as our companion when we are careful to teach only true doctrine. One of the surest ways to avoid even getting near false doctrine is to choose to be simple in our teaching. Safety is gained by that simplicity, and little is lost" ("The Power of Teaching Doctrine," *Ensign*, May 1999, 74; *Liahona*, July 1999, 86). Elder Dale G. Renlund taught: "Seeking greater understanding is an important part of our spiritual development, but please be cautious. Reason cannot replace revelation. Speculation will not lead to greater spiritual knowledge, but it can lead us to deception or divert our focus from what has been revealed" ("Your Divine Nature and Eternal Destiny," *Liahona*, May 2022, 70).

41. See Matthew 23:23. President Joseph F. Smith warned: "It is very unwise to take a fragment of truth and treat it as if it were the whole thing. ... All the revealed principles of the gospel of Christ are necessary and essential in the plan of salvation." He further explained: "It is neither good policy nor sound doctrine to take any one of these, single it out from the whole plan of gospel truth, make it a special hobby, and depend upon it for our salvation and progress. ... They are all necessary" (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [1939], 122). Elder Neal A. Maxwell explained: "The gospel's principles ... require synchronization. When pulled apart from each other or isolated, men's interpretations and implementations of these doctrines may be wild. Love, if not checked by the seventh commandment, could become carnal. The fifth commandment's laudable emphasis upon honoring parents, unless checked by the first commandment, could result in unconditional loyalty to errant parents rather than to God. ... Even patience is balanced by 'reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost' [*Doctrine and Covenants* 121:43]" ("Behold, the Enemy Is Combined," *Ensign*, May 1993, 78–79). President Marion G. Romney instructed, "Searching [the scriptures] for the purpose of discovering what they teach as enjoined by Jesus is a far cry from hunting through them for the purpose of finding passages which can be pressed into service to support a predetermined conclusion" ("Records of Great Worth," *Ensign*, Sept. 1980, 3).
42. See 1 Corinthians 2:4; Moroni 6:9. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland emphasized the need to communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ in a way that leads to spiritual edification through the power of the Holy Ghost: "The Lord has never given more emphatic counsel to the Church than that we are to teach the gospel 'by the Spirit, even the Comforter which was sent forth to teach the truth.' Do we teach the gospel 'by the Spirit of truth?' He has inquired. Or do we teach it 'some other way? And if it be by some other way,' He warns, 'it is not of God' [*Doctrine and Covenants* 50:14, 17–18]. ... No eternal learning can take place without that quickening of the Spirit from heaven. ... That is what our members really want. ... They want their faith fortified and their hope renewed. They want, in short, to be nourished by the good word of God, to be strengthened by the powers of heaven" ("A Teacher Come from God," *Ensign*, May 1998, 26).
43. See Alma 13:23. Speaking of our Heavenly Father, President Russell M. Nelson testified, "He communicates simply, quietly, and with such stunning plainness that we cannot misunderstand Him" ("Hear Him," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2020, 89).
44. See Psalm 26:3; Romans 13:10; 1 Corinthians 13:1–8; 1 John 3:18.
45. See Psalm 40:11.
46. See Romans 8:16.
47. See 1 Samuel 2:3; Matthew 6:8; 2 Nephi 2:24; 9:20.
48. See Genesis 17:1; Jeremiah 32:17; 1 Nephi 7:12; Alma 26:35.
49. See Jeremiah 31:3; 1 John 4:7–10; Alma 26:37.
50. See 2 Nephi 9; *Doctrine and Covenants* 20:17–31; Moses 6:52–62.
51. See John 3:16; 1 John 4:9–10.
52. See John 8:29; 3 Nephi 27:13.
53. See John 15:12; 1 John 3:11.
54. See Luke 22:39–46.
55. See John 19:16–30.
56. See John 20:1–18.
57. See 1 Corinthians 15:20–22; Mosiah 15:20–24; 16:7–9; *Doctrine and Covenants* 76:16–17.
58. See Acts 11:17–18; 1 Timothy 1:14–16; Alma 34:8–10; Moroni 6:2–3, 8; *Doctrine and Covenants* 19:13–19.
59. See Matthew 11:28–30; 2 Corinthians 12:7–10; Philippians 4:13; Alma 26:11–13.
60. See Matthew 16:18–19; Ephesians 2:20.
61. See Matthew 24:24; Acts 20:28–30.
62. See *Doctrine and Covenants* 20:1–4; 21:1–7; 27:12; 110; 135:3; Joseph Smith—*History* 1:1–20.
63. See *Doctrine and Covenants* 1:14, 38; 43:1–7; 107:91–92.

Divine Parenting Lessons

BY ELDER VALERI V. CORDÓN

Parents enter a partnership with their Heavenly Father to guide their precious children back to heaven.

1 Have you ever held a newborn in your arms? There is a light that emanates from every newborn, bringing a special bond of love that can fill their parents’ hearts with joy.¹ A Mexican writer wrote, “I have learned that when a newborn first squeezes his father’s finger in his tiny fist, he has caught him forever.”²

2 Parenting is one of life’s most extraordinary experiences. Parents enter a partnership with their Heavenly Father to guide their precious children back to heaven.³ Today I would like to share some parenting lessons found in the scriptures and taught by living prophets to help us leave our parental legacy.

3 **Climb to the Higher Ground of Gospel Culture**

4 We must climb to the higher ground of gospel culture with our families. President Russell M. Nelson declared: “Families deserve guidance from heaven. Parents cannot counsel children adequately from personal experience, fear, or sympathy.”⁴

5 Although our cultural backgrounds, parenting styles, and personal experiences may be valuable for parenting, these abilities are insufficient to help our children return to heaven. We need access to a more elevated “set of values and ... practices,”⁵ a culture of both love and expectations, where we interact with our children “in a higher, holier way.”⁶ President Dallin H. Oaks described gospel culture as “a distinctive way of life, a set of values and expectations and practices. ... This gospel culture comes from the plan of salvation, the commandments of God, and the teachings of ... living prophets. It guides us in the way we raise our families and live our individual lives.”⁷

6 Jesus Christ is the center of this gospel culture. Adopting the gospel culture in our families is critical to creating a fertile environment where the seed of faith may flourish. To climb to higher

ground, President Oaks invited us “to give up any personal or family traditions or practices that are contrary to the teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ.”⁸ Parents, timidity on our part to establish gospel culture may allow the adversary to establish a foothold in our homes or, even worse, in the hearts of our children.

7 As we choose to make the gospel culture the predominant culture in our family, then by the powerful influence of the Holy Ghost,⁹ our current parenting styles, traditions, and practices will be sifted, aligned, refined, and enhanced.

8 **Make Home the Center of Gospel Learning**

9 President Russell M. Nelson has taught that the home should be the “center of gospel learning.”¹⁰ The purpose of gospel learning is to “deepen our conversion to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and help us become more like Them.”¹¹ Let’s consider three crucial parenting responsibilities described by prophets and apostles that can help us establish a higher gospel culture in our homes.

10 *First: Teach Freely*

11 Heavenly Father instructed Adam concerning Jesus Christ and His doctrine. He taught him “to teach these things freely unto [his] children.”¹² In other words, Heavenly Father taught Adam to teach these things liberally, generously, and without restraint.¹³ The scriptures tell us that “Adam and Eve blessed the name of God, and they made all things known unto their sons and their daughters.”¹⁴

12 We teach our children generously when we spend meaningful time with them. We teach without restraint when discussing sensitive topics such as screen time, using resources that the Church has made available.¹⁵ We teach liberally when we study the scriptures

with our children using Come, Follow Me and allow the Spirit to be the teacher.

13 *Second: Model Discipleship*

14 In the book of John, we read that when several Jews questioned the Savior about His conduct, Jesus directed attention to His model, His Father. He taught, "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise."¹⁶ Parents, what do we need to model for our children? Discipleship.

15 As parents, we can teach the importance of putting God first when we discuss the first commandment, but we model it when we set aside worldly distractions and keep the Sabbath day holy every week. We can teach the importance of temple covenants when we speak about the doctrine of celestial marriage, but we model it when we honor our covenants, treating our spouse with dignity.

16 *Third: Invite to Act*

17 Faith in Jesus Christ should be the core of our children's testimonies, and these testimonies must come to each child through individual revelation.¹⁷ To assist our children with the building of their testimonies, we encourage them to use their agency to choose what is right¹⁸ and prepare them for a lifetime on God's covenant path.¹⁹

18 It would be wise to encourage each of our children to accept President Nelson's invitation to take charge of his or her own testimony of Jesus Christ and His gospel—to work for it, to nurture it so that it will grow, to feed it truth, and to not pollute it with false philosophies of unbelieving men and women.²⁰

19 **Righteous, Intentional Parenting**

20 Our Heavenly Father's divine intentions as a parent were made known in a revelation given to Moses: "For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man."²¹ President Nelson has added, "God will do everything He can, short of violating your agency, to help you not miss out on the greatest blessings in all eternity."²²

21 As parents, we are God's agents in the care of our children.²³ We must do everything we can to create an

environment where our children can feel His divine influence.

22 Heavenly Father never intended for us as parents to sit on the sidelines as spectators, watching the spiritual lives of our children unfold. Let me illustrate this idea of intentional parenting with a personal experience. When I was attending Primary in a small branch in Guatemala, my parents began to teach me about the value of patriarchal blessings. My mother took the time to share her experience of receiving her treasured patriarchal blessing. She taught me the doctrine related to patriarchal blessings, and she testified of promised blessings. Her intentional parenting inspired me to have the desire to receive my patriarchal blessing.

23 When I was 12, my parents helped me navigate the search for a patriarch. This was necessary because there was no patriarch in the district where we lived. I traveled to a patriarch that was in a stake 156 kilometers (97 miles) away. I distinctly remember when the patriarch laid his hands upon my head to bless me. I knew by powerful spiritual confirmation, without a doubt, that my Heavenly Father knew me.

24 For a 12-year-old boy from a small town, that meant everything to me. My heart turned to my Heavenly Father that day because of my mother and father's intentional parenting, and I will be forever grateful to them.

25 Sister Joy D. Jones, former Primary General President, taught: "We cannot wait for conversion to simply happen to our children. Accidental conversion is not a principle of the gospel of Jesus Christ."²⁴ Our love and inspired invitations can make a difference in how our children use their agency. President Nelson emphasized, "No other work transcends that of righteous, intentional parenting!"²⁵

26 **Conclusion**

27 Parents, this world is full of philosophies, cultures, and ideas competing for our children's attention. The great and spacious building advertises its membership daily using the most current media channels. "But in the gift of his Son," the prophet Moroni taught, "hath God prepared a more excellent way."²⁶

28 As we partner with God through covenants and become His agents in the care of our children, He will sanctify our intentions, inspire our teachings, and temper our invitations so “our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins.”²⁷ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. See Psalm 127:3.
2. Johnny Welch, “The Puppet,” reproduced at inspire21.com/theuppet; see also Johnny Welch, *Lo que me ha enseñado la vida* (1996).
3. This may seem like a daunting task, but as Elder Jeffrey R. Holland said, “With a Heavenly Father’s help we can leave more of a parental legacy than we suppose” (“The Hands of the Fathers,” *Ensign*, May 1999, 15; *Liahona*, July 1999, 18).
4. Russell M. Nelson, “Thou Shalt Have No Other Gods,” *Ensign*, May 1996, 15.
5. Dallin H. Oaks, “The Gospel Culture,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2012, 42; *Liahona*, Mar. 2012, 22.
6. Russell M. Nelson, “Peacemakers Needed,” *Liahona*, May 2023, 99.
7. Dallin H. Oaks, “The Gospel Culture,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2012, 42; *Liahona*, Mar. 2012, 22.
8. Dallin H. Oaks, “The Gospel Culture,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2012, 42; *Liahona*, Mar. 2012, 22.
9. See Moroni 10:5.
10. Russell M. Nelson, “Becoming Exemplary Latter-day Saints,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 113.
11. “Conversion Is Our Goal,” in *Come, Follow Me—For Individuals and Families: New Testament 2023*, v.
12. Moses 6:58.
13. See *American Dictionary of the English Language*, “freely,” webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/freely.
14. Moses 5:12.
15. See “Taking Charge of Technology”

and *For the Strength of Youth: A Guide for Making Choices* (2022), Gospel Library.

16. John 5:19.
17. See “Matthew 16:17–18. Individual Revelation Needed for a Testimony of Jesus Christ,” in *New Testament Student Manual* (2018), 52.
18. See Dale G. Renlund, “Choose You This Day,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 104: “Our Heavenly Father’s goal in parenting is not to have His children do what is right; it is to have His children choose to do what is right and ultimately become like Him.”
19. See “Appendix: Preparing Your Children for a Lifetime on God’s Covenant Path,” in *Come, Follow Me—For Individuals and Families: New Testament 2023*, Gospel Library.
20. See Russell M. Nelson, “Overcome the World and Find Rest,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2022, 97.
21. Moses 1:39. In this verse, Jesus Christ is speaking on behalf of Heavenly Father.
22. Russell M. Nelson, “Choices for Eternity” (worldwide devotional for young adults), May 15, 2022, Gospel Library.
23. See Russell M. Nelson, “Salvation and Exaltation,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2008, 10: “Do not try to control your children. Instead, listen to them, help them to learn the gospel, inspire them, and lead them toward eternal life. You are God’s agents in the care of children He has entrusted to you. Let His divine influence remain in your hearts as you teach and persuade.”
24. Joy D. Jones, “Essential Conversations,” *Liahona*, May 2021, 12.
25. Russell M. Nelson, “The Sabbath Is a Delight,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 131.
26. Ether 12:11.
27. 2 Nephi 25:26.

The Savior's Healing Power upon the Isles of the Sea

BY ELDER J. KIMO ESPLIN

Through temple blessings, the Savior heals individuals, families, and nations.

1 In the 1960s my father taught at the Church College of Hawaii in Laie, where I was born. My seven older sisters insisted my parents name me "Kimo," a Hawaiian name. We lived near the Laie Hawaii Temple when it served much of the Church membership of the Asia Pacific Area, including Japan.¹ At this time, groups of Japanese Saints began coming to Hawaii to receive the blessings of the temple.

2 One of these members was a sister from the beautiful island of Okinawa. The story of her journey to the Hawaii Temple is remarkable. Two decades earlier, she had been married in a traditional arranged Buddhist wedding. Just a few months later, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, thrusting the United States into a conflict with Japan. In the wake of battles such as Midway and Iwo Jima, the tides of war pushed the Japanese forces back to the shores of her island home, Okinawa, the last line of defense standing against the Allied forces before the heartlands of Japan.

3 For a harrowing three months in 1945, the Battle of Okinawa raged. A flotilla of 1,300 American warships encircled and bombarded the island. Military and civilian casualties were enormous. Today a solemn monument in Okinawa lists more than 240,000 known names of people who perished in the battle.²

4 In a desperate attempt to escape the onslaught, this Okinawan woman, her husband, and their two small children sought refuge in a mountain cave. They endured unspeakable misery through the ensuing weeks and months.

5 One desperate night amidst the battle, with her family near starvation and her husband unconscious, she contemplated ending their suffering with a hand grenade, which the authorities had supplied to her and others for that purpose. However, as she prepared to

do so, a profoundly spiritual experience unfolded that gave her a tangible sense of the reality of God and His love for her, which gave her the strength to carry on. In the following days, she revived her husband and fed her family with weeds, honey from a wild beehive, and creatures caught in a nearby stream. Remarkably, they endured six months in the cave until local villagers informed them that the battle had ended.

6 When the family returned home and began rebuilding their lives, this Japanese woman started searching for answers about God. She gradually kindled a belief in Jesus Christ and the need to be baptized. However, she was concerned about her loved ones who had died without a knowledge of Jesus Christ and baptism, including her mother, who died giving birth to her.

7 Imagine her joy when two sister missionaries from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints came to her house one day and taught her that people can learn about Jesus Christ in the spirit world. She was captivated by the teaching that her parents could choose to follow Jesus Christ after death and accept baptism performed on their behalf in holy places called temples. She and her family were converted to the Savior and baptized.

8 Her family worked hard and began to prosper, adding three more children. They were faithful and active in the Church. Then, unexpectedly, her husband suffered a stroke and died, compelling her to work long hours at multiple jobs for many years to provide for her five children.

9 Some people in her family and neighborhood criticized her. They blamed her troubles on her decision to join a Christian church. Undeterred by profound tragedy and harsh criticism, she held on to her faith in Jesus Christ, determined to press forward, trusting

that God knew her and that brighter days were ahead.³

and kindness than I had ever seen in my life.”¹¹

10 A few years following her husband’s untimely death, the mission president of Japan felt inspired to encourage the Japanese members to work toward attending the temple. The mission president was an American veteran of the Battle of Okinawa, in which the Okinawan sister and her family had suffered so much.⁴ Nonetheless, the humble sister said of him: “He was then one of our hated enemies, but now he was here with the gospel of love and peace. This, to me, was a miracle.”⁵

16 Upon the Japanese Saints’ arrival, the Hawaiian members welcomed them with countless strands of flower leis while exchanging hugs and kisses on the cheeks, a custom foreign to Japanese culture. After spending 10 transformative days in Hawaii, the Japanese Saints bid their farewells to the melody of “Aloha Oe” sung by the Hawaiian Saints.¹²

11 Upon hearing the mission president’s message, the widowed sister desired to be sealed to her family in the temple someday. However, it was impossible for her, due to financial constraints and language barriers.

17 The second temple trip organized for Japanese members included the widowed Okinawan sister. She made the 10,000-mile (16,000-km) journey thanks to a generous gift from missionaries who had served in her branch and had eaten many meals at her table. While in the temple, she shed tears of joy as she acted as a proxy for her mother’s baptism and was sealed to her deceased husband.

12 Then several innovative solutions emerged. The cost could be reduced by half if members in Japan chartered an entire plane to fly to Hawaii in the offseason.⁶ Members also recorded and sold vinyl records entitled Japanese Saints Sing. Some members even sold homes. Others quit their jobs to make the trip.⁷

18 Temple excursions from Japan to Hawaii continued regularly until the Tokyo Japan Temple was dedicated in 1980, becoming the 18th temple in operation. In November of this year, the 186th temple will be dedicated in Okinawa, Japan. It is located not far from the cave in central Okinawa where this woman and her family sheltered.¹³

13 The other challenge for members was that the temple presentation was not available in Japanese. Church leaders called a Japanese brother to travel to the Hawaiian temple to translate the endowment ceremony.⁸ He was the first Japanese convert after the war, having been taught and baptized by faithful American soldiers.⁹

19 Though I never met this wonderful sister from Okinawa, her legacy lives on through her faithful posterity, many of whom I know and love.¹⁴

14 When the endowed Japanese members living in Hawaii first heard the translation, they wept. One member recorded: “We’ve been to the temple many, many times. We’ve heard the ceremonies in English. [But] we have never felt the spirit of ... temple work as we feel it now [hearing it] in our own native tongue.”¹⁰

20 My father, a World War II veteran of the Pacific, was thrilled when I received my call to serve in Japan as a young missionary. I arrived in Japan shortly after the Tokyo Temple was dedicated and saw firsthand their love for the temple.

15 Later that same year, 161 adults and children embarked from Tokyo to make their way to the Hawaii Temple. One Japanese brother reflected on the journey: “As I looked out of the airplane and saw Pearl Harbor, and remembered what our country had done to these people on December 7, 1941, I feared in my heart. Will they accept us? But to my surprise they showed greater love

21 Temple covenants are gifts from our Heavenly Father to the faithful followers of His Son, Jesus Christ. Through the temple, our Heavenly Father binds individuals and families to the Savior and to each other.

22 President Russell M. Nelson declared last year:

23 “Each person who makes covenants in baptismal fonts and in temples—and keeps them—has increased access to the power of Jesus Christ. ...

24 “The reward for keeping covenants with

God is heavenly power—power that strengthens us to withstand our trials, temptations, and heartaches better. This power eases our way.”¹⁵

- 25 Through temple blessings, the Savior heals individuals, families, and nations—even those that once stood as bitter enemies. The resurrected Lord declared to a conflict-ridden society in the Book of Mormon that unto those who honor “my name, shall the Son of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings.”¹⁶
- 26 I am grateful to witness the ongoing fulfillment of the Lord’s promise that “the time shall come when the knowledge of a Savior shall spread throughout every nation, kindred, tongue, and people,”¹⁷ including to those “upon the isles of the sea.”¹⁸
- 27 I testify of the Savior Jesus Christ and of His prophet and apostles in these latter days. I solemnly bear witness of the heavenly power to bind in heaven what is bound on earth.
- 28 This is the Savior’s work, and temples are His holy house.
- 29 With unwavering conviction, I declare these truths in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

- 1. *The Laie Hawaii Temple was dedicated in 1919 by President Heber J. Grant. As an Apostle, he opened the Church in Japan in 1901. It was the fifth operating temple and the first temple built outside the continental United States.*
- 2. *As of March 2, 2023, there were 241,281 names inscribed on the monument.*
- 3. *See Gordon B. Hinckley, “Keep the Chain Unbroken” (Brigham Young University devotional, Nov. 30, 1999), 4, speeches.byu.edu.*
- 4. *Dwayne N. Andersen was wounded in the Battle of Okinawa. He served as mission president in Japan from 1962 to 1965 and was the first president of the Tokyo Japan Temple,*

from 1980 to 1982.

- 5. *I met members of her family while my wife and I served as mission leaders in Tokyo. They provided me with this information from her personal family history accounts.*
- 6. *See Dwayne N. Andersen: An Autobiography for His Posterity, 102–5, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.*
- 7. *See Dwayne N. Andersen, 104.*
- 8. *See Edward L. Clissold, “Translating the Endowment into Japanese,” in *Stories of the Temple in Lā’ie, Hawai’i*, comp. Clinton D. Christensen (2019), 110–13.*
- 9. *The translator, Tatsui Sato, was baptized July 7, 1946, by a US serviceman, C. Elliott Richards. Tatsui’s wife, Chiyo Sato, was baptized on the same day by Boyd K. Packer. Separately, Neal A. Maxwell fought in the Battle of Okinawa, and L. Tom Perry was among the first wave of Marines to go ashore in Japan following the peace treaty. Elders Packer, Maxwell, and Perry would become members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.*
- 10. *In Clissold, “Translating the Endowment into Japanese,” 112.*
- 11. *In Dwayne N. Andersen, “1965 Japanese Excursion,” *Stories of the Temple in Lā’ie, Hawai’i*, 114.*
- 12. *See Andersen, “1965 Japanese Excursion,” 114, 117.*
- 13. *Later in this session of the October 2023 general conference, President Russell M. Nelson announced 20 new temples, including the Osaka Japan Temple, which will be the fifth temple in Japan.*
- 14. *During our mission in Tokyo from 2018 to 2021, amid the challenges of the COVID pandemic, her family extended love and care for me and my family, which we will forever be grateful for.*
- 15. *Russell M. Nelson, “Overcome the World and Find Rest,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2022, 96.*
- 16. *3 Nephi 25:2.*
- 17. *Mosiah 3:20.*
- 18. *2 Nephi 29:7.*

Love Is Spoken Here

BY ELDER GERRIT W. GONG

May we each learn to speak and hear His love here, in our hearts and homes, and in our gospel callings, activities, ministering, and service.

- 1 Our Primary children sing, "Love is spoken here."¹
- 2 I once gave Sister Gong a small locket. I had it inscribed dot-dot, dot-dot, dot-dot-dash. Those familiar with Morse code will recognize the letters I, I, U. But I included a second code. In Mandarin Chinese, "ai" means "love." So, double-decoded, the message was "I love you." Susan, sweetheart, "I, ai (爱), U."
- 3 We speak love in many languages. I am told the human family speaks 7,168 living languages.² In the Church we speak 575 documented primary languages, with many dialects. We also communicate intent, inflection, and emotion through art, music, dance, logical symbols, and inter- and intrapersonal expression.³
- 4 Today, let us speak of three languages of gospel love: the language of warmth and reverence, the language of service and sacrifice, and the language of covenant belonging.
- 5 First, the gospel language of warmth and reverence.
- 6 With warmth and reverence, Sister Gong asks children and youth, "How do you know your parents and families love you?"
- 7 In Guatemala, children say, "My parents work hard to feed our family." In North America, children say, "My parents read stories and tuck me into bed at night." In the Holy Land, children say, "My parents keep me safe." In Ghana, West Africa, children say, "My parents help me with my Children and Youth goals."
- 8 One child said, "Even though she is very tired after working all day, my mother comes outside to play with me." Her mother cried when she heard that her daily sacrifices matter. A young woman said, "Even though my mother and I sometimes disagree, I trust my mother." Her mother cried too.
- 9 Sometimes we need to know love spoken here is heard and appreciated here.
- 10 With warmth and reverence, our sacrament and other meetings focus on Jesus Christ. We speak reverently of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, personal and real, not only of atonement in the abstract. We call Jesus Christ's restored Church in His name, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We use reverent prayer language when we address Heavenly Father and warm respect when we speak with each other. As we recognize Jesus Christ at the heart of temple covenants, we refer less to "going to the temple" and more to "coming to Jesus Christ in the house of the Lord." Each covenant whispers, "Love is spoken here."
- 11 New members say Church vocabulary often requires decoding. We chuckle at the thought that "stake house" could mean a nice beef dinner; "ward building" could indicate a hospital; "opening exercises" could invite us to do head, shoulders, knees, and toes in the church parking lot. But, please, let us be understanding and kind as we learn new languages of love together. New at church, a convert was told her skirts were too short. Instead of taking offense, she replied, in effect, "My heart is converted; please be patient as my skirts catch up."⁴
- 12 The words we use can draw us closer to or distance us from other Christians and friends. Sometimes we speak of missionary work, temple work, humanitarian and welfare work in ways that may cause others to think we believe we work on our own. Let us always speak with warm and reverent gratitude for God's work and glory and the merits, mercy, and grace of Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice.⁵
- 13 Second, the gospel language of service and sacrifice.

- 14 As we gather again at church each week to honor and rejoice in the Sabbath day, we can express our sacramental covenant commitment to Jesus Christ and each other through our Church callings, fellowship, sociality, and service.
- 15 When I ask local Church leaders what concerns them, both brothers and sisters say, "Some of our members are not accepting Church calls." Calls to serve the Lord and each other in His Church give opportunity to increase in compassion, capacity, and humility. As we are set apart, we can receive the Lord's inspiration to lift and strengthen others and ourselves. Of course, the changing circumstances and seasons of our lives may affect our ability to serve, but hopefully never our desire. With King Benjamin, we say, "If I had I would give"6 and offer all we can.
- 16 Stake and ward leaders, let's do our part. As we call (and release) brothers and sisters to serve in the Lord's Church, let's please do so with dignity and inspiration. Help each feel appreciated and that they can be successful. Please counsel with and listen to sister leaders. May we remember, as President J. Reuben Clark taught, in the Lord's Church we serve where called, "which place one neither seeks nor declines."7
- 17 When Sister Gong and I were married, Elder David B. Haight counseled: "Always hold a calling in the Church. Especially when life is busy," he said, "you need to feel the Lord's love for those you serve and for you as you serve." I promise that love is spoken here, there, and everywhere as we answer yes to Church leaders to serve the Lord in His Church by His Spirit and our covenants.
- 18 The Lord's restored Church can be an incubator for a Zion community. As we worship, serve, enjoy, and learn His love together, we anchor each other in His gospel. We may disagree politically or on social issues but find harmony as we sing together in the ward choir. We nurture connection and fight isolation as we regularly minister with our hearts in each other's homes and neighborhoods.
- 19 During member visits with stake presidents, I feel their deep love for members in every circumstance. As we drove past member homes in his stake, one stake president noted that whether we live in a home with a swimming pool or a home with a dirt floor, Church service is a privilege that often includes sacrifice. Yet, he wisely noticed, when we serve and sacrifice in the gospel together, we find fewer faults and greater peace. When we let Him, Jesus Christ helps us speak His love here.
- 20 This summer, our family met wonderful Church members and friends in Loughborough and Oxford, England. These meaningful gatherings reminded me how ward social and service activities can build new and enduring gospel bonds. For some time I have felt that, in many places in the Church, a few more ward activities, of course planned and implemented with gospel purpose, could knit us together with even greater belonging and unity.
- 21 One inspired ward activities chair and committee nurtures individuals and a community of Saints. Their well-planned activities help everybody feel valued, included, and invited to play a needed role. Such activities bridge ages and backgrounds, create lasting memories, and can be carried out with little or no cost. Enjoyable gospel activities also invite neighbors and friends.
- 22 Sociality and service often go together. Young adults know if you really want to get to know someone, then paint side by side on a ladder in a service project.
- 23 Young adults painting at a service project.
- 24 Of course, no individual and no family is perfect. We all need help better to speak love here. "Perfect love casteth out fear."8 Faith, service, and sacrifice draw us beyond ourselves closer to our Savior. The more compassionate, faithful, and selfless our service and sacrifice are in Him, the more we may begin to fathom Jesus Christ's atoning compassion and grace for us.
- 25 And that brings us to the gospel language of covenant belonging.
- 26 We live in a self-centered world. So much is "I choose me." It is as if we believe we know best our own self-interest and how to pursue it.
- 27 But ultimately it is not true. Jesus Christ personifies this powerful, ageless truth:

28 “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

29 “For what is a man [or woman] profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”⁹

30 Jesus Christ offers a better way—relationships founded on divine covenant, stronger than the cords of death. Covenant belonging with God and each other can heal and sanctify our most cherished relationships. In truth, He knows us better and loves us more than we know or love ourselves. In truth, when we covenant all we are, we can become more than we are. God’s power and wisdom can bless us with every good gift, in His time and way.

31 Generative artificial intelligence (AI) has made great strides in language translation. Long gone are the days when a computer might translate the idiomatic phrase “The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak” as “The wine is good, but the meat is spoiled.” Interestingly, repeating extensive examples of a language teaches a computer a language more effectively than does teaching a computer the rules of grammar.

32 Similarly, our own direct, repeated experiences may be our best spiritual way to learn the gospel languages of warmth and reverence, service and sacrifice, and covenant belonging.

33 So, where and how does Jesus Christ speak to you in love?

34 Where and how do you hear His love spoken here?

35 May we each learn to speak and hear His love here, in our hearts and homes, and in our gospel callings, activities, ministering, and service.

36 In God’s plan, we will each transition one day from this life into the next life. When we meet the Lord, I imagine Him saying, with words of instruction and promise, “My love is spoken here.” In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. “Love Is Spoken Here,” *Children’s Songbook*, 190–91.
2. See *Ethnologue*, [ethnologue.com/about/#comprehensive](https://www.ethnologue.com/about/#comprehensive).
3. See Howard Gardner, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (2011).
4. A similar experience appears in Alonzo L. Gaskill, *Converted: True Conversion Stories from 15 Religions* (2017), 3.
5. See 2 Nephi 2:8.
6. Mosiah 4:24.
7. J. Reuben Clark Jr., in *Conference Report*, Apr. 1951, 154.
8. 1 John 4:18; see also Moroni 8:16.
9. Matthew 16:25–26; see also Matthew 10:39–40; Mark 8:35–36; Luke 9:24–25; 17:33; John 12:25.

We Are His Children

BY ELDER CHRISTOPHE G. GIRAUD-CARRIER

We have the same divine origin and the same limitless potential through the grace of Jesus Christ.

- 1 Do you recall the experience the prophet Samuel had when the Lord sent him to Jesse’s house to anoint the new king of Israel? Samuel saw Eliab, Jesse’s firstborn. Eliab, it seems, was tall and had the appearance of a leader. Samuel saw that and jumped to a conclusion. It turned out to be the wrong conclusion, and the Lord taught Samuel: “Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; ... for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.”¹
- 2 Do you recall the experience the disciple Ananias had when the Lord sent him to bless Saul? Saul’s reputation had preceded him, and Ananias had heard about Saul and his cruel, relentless persecution of the Saints. Ananias heard and jumped to a conclusion that perhaps he should not minister to Saul. It turned out to be the wrong conclusion, and the Lord taught Ananias, “He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.”²
- 3 What was the trouble with Samuel and Ananias in these two instances? They saw with their eyes and heard with their ears, and as a result, they passed judgment on others based on appearance and hearsay.
- 4 When the scribes and the Pharisees saw the woman taken in adultery, what did they see? A depraved woman, a sinner worthy of death. When Jesus saw her, what did He see? A woman who had temporarily succumbed to the weakness of the flesh but could be reclaimed through repentance and His Atonement. When people saw the centurion, whose servant was sick with palsy, what did they see? Perhaps they saw an intruder, a foreigner, one to be despised. When Jesus saw him, what did He see? A man concerned for the welfare of a member of his household, who sought the Lord in candor and faith. When people saw the woman with an issue of blood, what did they see? Perhaps an unclean woman, an outcast to be shunned. When Jesus saw her, what did He see? A sickly woman, lonely and alienated due to circumstances she did not control, who hoped to be healed and to belong again.
- 5 In every case, the Lord saw these individuals for who they were and accordingly ministered to each one. As Nephi and his brother Jacob declared:
- 6 “He inviteth them all to come unto him ... , black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God.”³
- 7 “The one being is as precious in his sight as the other.”⁴
- 8 May we likewise not let our eyes, our ears, or our fears mislead us but open our hearts and minds and minister freely to those around us as He did.
- 9 Some years ago, my wife, Isabelle, received an unusual ministering assignment. She was asked to visit an elderly widow in our ward, a sister with health challenges and whose loneliness had brought bitterness into her life. Her curtains were drawn; her apartment was stuffy; she did not want to be visited and made it clear that “there is nothing I can do for anyone.” Undeterred, Isabelle responded, “Yes, there is! You can do something for us by allowing us to come and visit you.” And so Isabelle went, faithfully.
- 10 Some time later, this good sister had surgery on her feet, which required her bandages to be changed every day, something she could not do for herself. For days, Isabelle went to her home, washed her feet, and changed her bandages. She never saw ugliness; she never smelled stench. She only ever saw a beautiful daughter of God in need of love and tender care.
- 11 Over the years, I and countless others have been blessed by Isabelle’s gift to

see as the Lord sees. Whether you are the stake president or the ward greeter, whether you are the king of England or live in a shack, whether you speak her language or a different one, whether you keep all the commandments or struggle with some, she will serve you her very best meal on her very best plates. Economic status, skin color, cultural background, nationality, degree of righteousness, social standing, or any other identifier or label is of no consequence to her. She sees with her heart; she sees the child of God in everyone.

12 President Russell M. Nelson has taught:

13 “The adversary rejoices in labels because they divide us and restrict the way we think about ourselves and each other. How sad it is when we honor labels more than we honor each other.

14 “Labels can lead to judging and animosity. Any abuse or prejudice toward another because of nationality, race, sexual orientation, gender, educational degrees, culture, or other significant identifiers is offensive to our Maker!”⁵

15 French is not who I am; it is where I was born. White is not who I am; it is the color of my skin, or lack thereof. Professor is not who I am; it is what I did to support my family. General Authority Seventy is not who I am; it is where I serve in the kingdom at this time.

16 “First and foremost,” as President Nelson reminded us, I am a “child of God.”⁶ So are you, and so are all other people around us. I pray that we may come to a greater appreciation of this wonderful truth. It changes everything!

17 We may have been raised in different cultures; we may come from different socioeconomic circumstances; our mortal heritage, including our nationality, skin color, food preferences, political orientation, etc., may vary greatly. But we are His children, all of us, without exception. We have the same divine origin and the same limitless potential through the grace of Jesus Christ.

18 C. S. Lewis put it this way: “It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dulllest most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature

which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship. ... There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilization—these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit.”⁷

19 Our family has been privileged to live in different countries and cultures; our children have been blessed to marry within different ethnicities. I have come to realize that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the great equalizer. As we truly embrace it, “the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.”⁸ This amazing truth frees us, and all labels and distinctions that may otherwise afflict us and our relationships to each other are simply “swallowed up in ... Christ.”⁹ It soon becomes clear that we, as well as others, “are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God.”¹⁰

20 I recently heard the branch president of one of our multicultural language units refer to this, as Elder Gerrit W. Gong has done, as covenant belonging.¹¹ What a beautiful concept! We belong to a group of people who all try to place the Savior and their covenants at the center of their lives and to live the gospel joyfully. Hence, rather than our seeing each other through the distorted lens of mortality, the gospel raises our sights and allows us to see each other through the flawless, unchanging lens of our sacred covenants. In so doing, we begin to eliminate our own natural prejudices and biases toward others, which in turn helps them minimize their prejudices and biases toward us,¹² in a wonderful virtuous cycle. Indeed, we follow our dear prophet’s invitation: “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.”¹³

21 This afternoon, in the spirit of that invitation, I wish to add my pledge to that of our wonderful Primary children:

*If you don’t walk as most people do,
Some people walk away from you,
But I won’t! I won’t!*

*If you don't talk as most people do,
Some people talk and laugh at you,
But I won't! I won't!
I'll walk with you. I'll talk with you.
That's how I'll show my love for you.
Jesus walked away from none.
He gave his love to ev'ryone.
So I will! I will!*¹⁴

22 I testify that He whom we address as our Father in Heaven is indeed our Father, that He loves us, that He knows each of His children intimately, that He cares deeply about each one, and that we are truly all alike unto Him. I testify that the way we treat each other is a direct reflection of our understanding of and appreciation for the ultimate sacrifice and Atonement of His Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. I pray that, like Him, we may love others because that is the right thing to do, not because they are doing the right thing or fitting the "right" mold. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. 1 Samuel 16:7.
2. Acts 9:15.
3. 2 Nephi 26:33.
4. Jacob 2:21.
5. Russell M. Nelson, "Choices for Eternity" (worldwide devotional for young adults, May 15, 2022), Gospel Library.
6. Russell M. Nelson, "Choices for Eternity."
7. C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* (1949), 14–15.
8. Romans 8:16.
9. Alma 31:38.
10. Ephesians 2:19.
11. See Gerrit W. Gong, "Covenant Belonging," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2019, 80–83.
12. See Dale G. and Ruth L. Renlund, *The Melchizedek Priesthood: Understanding the Doctrine, Living the Principles* (2018), 112.
13. Russell M. Nelson, "Peacemakers Needed," *Liahona*, May 2023, 99.
14. "I'll Walk with You," *Children's Songbook*, 140–41.

Think Celestial!

BY PRESIDENT RUSSELL M. NELSON

Your choices will determine where you will live throughout eternity, the kind of body with which you will be resurrected, and those with whom you will live forever.

- 1 My dear brothers and sisters, I am deeply grateful to speak with you today. At my age, each new day brings wonderful as well as challenging surprises. Three weeks ago, I injured the muscles of my back. So, while I have delivered more than 100 general conference addresses standing, today I thought I would do so sitting. I pray that the Spirit will carry my message into your hearts today.
- 2 I recently celebrated my 99th birthday and thus commenced my 100th year of living. I am often asked the secret to living so long. A better question would be "What have I learned in nearly a century of living?"
- 3 Time today does not allow me to answer that question fully, but may I share one of the most crucial lessons I have learned.
- 4 I have learned that Heavenly Father's plan for us is fabulous, that what we do in this life really matters, and that the Savior's Atonement is what makes our Father's plan possible.¹
- 5 As I have wrestled with the intense pain caused by my recent injury, I have felt even deeper appreciation for Jesus Christ and the incomprehensible gift of His Atonement. Think of it! The Savior suffered "pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind"² so that He can comfort us, heal us, rescue us in times of need.³ Jesus Christ described His experience in Gethsemane and on Calvary: "Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore."⁴ My injury has caused me to reflect again and again on "the greatness of the Holy One of Israel."⁵ During my healing, the Lord has manifested His divine power in peaceful and unmistakable ways.
- 6 Because of Jesus Christ's infinite Atonement, our Heavenly Father's plan is a perfect plan! An understanding of God's fabulous plan takes the mystery out of life and the uncertainty out of our future. It allows each of us to choose how we will live here on earth and where we will live forever. The baseless notion that we should "eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die; and it shall be well with us"⁶ is one of the most absurd lies in the universe.
- 7 Here is the great news of God's plan: the very things that will make your mortal life the best it can be are exactly the same things that will make your life throughout all eternity the best it can be! Today, to assist you to qualify for the rich blessings Heavenly Father has for you, I invite you to adopt the practice of "thinking celestial!"⁷ Thinking celestial means being spiritually minded. We learn from the Book of Mormon prophet Jacob that "to be spiritually-minded is life eternal."⁸
- 8 Mortality is a master class in learning to choose the things of greatest eternal import. Far too many people live as though this life is all there is. However, your choices today will determine three things: where you will live throughout all eternity, the kind of body with which you will be resurrected, and those with whom you will live forever. So think celestial.
- 9 In my first message as President of the Church, I encouraged you to begin with the end in mind. This means making the celestial kingdom your eternal goal and then carefully considering where each of your decisions while here on earth will place you in the next world.⁹
- 10 The Lord has clearly taught that only men and women who are sealed as husband and wife in the temple, and who keep their covenants, will be together throughout the eternities. He said, "All covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations, that are not made and entered into and sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise ... have an end when men are dead."¹⁰

- 11 Thus, if we unwisely choose to live telestial laws now, we are choosing to be resurrected with a telestial body. We are choosing not to live with our families forever.
- 12 So, my dear brothers and sisters, how and where and with whom do you want to live forever? You get to choose.¹¹
- 13 When you make choices, I invite you to take the long view—an eternal view. Put Jesus Christ first, because your eternal life is dependent upon your faith in Him and in His Atonement.¹² It is also dependent upon your obedience to His laws. Obedience paves the way for a joyful life for you today and a grand, eternal reward tomorrow.
- 14 When you are confronted with a dilemma, think celestial! When tested by temptation, think celestial! When life or loved ones let you down, think celestial! When someone dies prematurely, think celestial. When someone lingers with a devastating illness, think celestial. When the pressures of life crowd in upon you, think celestial! As you recover from an accident or injury, as I am doing now, think celestial!
- 15 As you focus on thinking celestial, expect to encounter opposition.¹³ Decades ago, a professional colleague criticized me for having “too much temple” in me, and more than one supervisor penalized me because of my faith. I am convinced, however, that thinking celestial enhanced my career.
- 16 As you think celestial, your heart will gradually change. You will want to pray more often and more sincerely. Please don’t let your prayers sound like a shopping list. The Lord’s perspective transcends your mortal wisdom. His response to your prayers may surprise you and will help you to think celestial.
- 17 Consider the Lord’s response to Joseph Smith when he pleaded for relief in Liberty Jail. The Lord taught the Prophet that his inhumane treatment would give him experience and be for his good.¹⁴ “If thou endure it well,” the Lord promised, “God shall exalt thee on high.”¹⁵ The Lord was teaching Joseph to think celestial and to envision an eternal reward rather than focus on the excruciating difficulties of the day. Our prayers can be—and should be—living discussions with our Heavenly Father.
- 18 As you think celestial, you will find yourself avoiding anything that robs you of your agency. Any addiction—be it gaming, gambling, debt, drugs, alcohol, anger, pornography, sex, or even food—offends God. Why? Because your obsession becomes your god. You look to it rather than to Him for solace. If you struggle with an addiction, seek the spiritual and professional help you need. Please do not let an obsession rob you of your freedom to follow God’s fabulous plan.
- 19 Thinking celestial will also help you obey the law of chastity. Few things will complicate your life more quickly than violating this divine law. For those who have made covenants with God, immorality is one of the quickest ways to lose your testimony.
- 20 Many of the adversary’s most relentless temptations involve violations of moral purity. The power to create life is the one privilege of godhood that Heavenly Father allows His mortal children to exercise. Thus, God set clear guidelines for the use of this living, divine power. Physical intimacy is only for a man and a woman who are married to each other.
- 21 Much of the world does not believe this, but public opinion is not the arbiter of truth. The Lord has declared that no unchaste person will attain the celestial kingdom. So when you make decisions regarding morality, please think celestial. And if you have been unchaste, I plead with you to repent. Come unto Christ and receive His promise of complete forgiveness as you fully repent of your sins.¹⁶
- 22 As you think celestial, you will view trials and opposition in a new light. When someone you love attacks truth, think celestial, and don’t question your testimony. The Apostle Paul prophesied that “in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.”¹⁷
- 23 There is no end to the adversary’s deceptions. Please be prepared. Never take counsel from those who do not believe. Seek guidance from voices you can trust—from prophets, seers, and revelators and from the whisperings of the Holy Ghost, who “will show unto you all things what ye should do.”¹⁸ Please do the spiritual work to increase your capacity to receive personal

revelation.¹⁹

24 As you think celestial, your faith will increase. When I was a young intern, my income was \$15 a month. One night, my wife Dantzel asked if I was paying tithing on that meager stipend. I was not. I quickly repented and began paying the additional \$1.50 in monthly tithing.

25 Was the Church any different because we increased our tithing? Of course not. However, becoming a full-tithe payer changed me. That is when I learned that paying tithing is all about faith, not money. As I became a full-tithe payer, the windows of heaven began to open for me. I attribute several subsequent professional opportunities to our faithful payment of tithes.²⁰

26 Paying tithing requires faith, and it also builds faith in God and His Beloved Son.

27 Choosing to live a virtuous life in a sexualized, politicized world builds faith.

28 Spending more time in the temple builds faith. And your service and worship in the temple will help you to think celestial. The temple is a place of revelation. There you are shown how to progress toward a celestial life. There you are drawn closer to the Savior and given greater access to His power. There you are guided in solving the problems in your life, even your most perplexing problems.

29 The ordinances and covenants of the temple are of eternal significance. We continue to build more temples to make these sacred possibilities become a reality in each of your lives. We are grateful to announce our plans to build a temple in each of the following 20 locations:

- Savai'i, Samoa
- Cancún, Mexico
- Piura, Peru
- Huancayo, Peru
- Viña del Mar, Chile
- Goiânia, Brazil
- João Pessoa, Brazil
- Calabar, Nigeria
- Cape Coast, Ghana
- Luanda, Angola
- Mbuji-Mayi, Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Laoag, Philippines
- Osaka, Japan

- Kahului, Maui, Hawaii
- Fairbanks, Alaska
- Vancouver, Washington
- Colorado Springs, Colorado
- Tulsa, Oklahoma
- Roanoke, Virginia
- Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

30 The Lord is directing us to build these temples to help us think celestial. God lives. Jesus is the Christ. His Church has been restored to bless all of God's children. I so testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. See *John 6:38*.
2. *Alma 7:11*.
3. See *Alma 7:12*.
4. *Doctrine and Covenants 19:18*.
5. *2 Nephi 9:40*.
6. *2 Nephi 28:7*.
7. *It may prove to be easier to repent and progress spiritually here, while our spirit is united with our body, than in the next world between the time we die and are resurrected. As Amulek taught the apostate Zoramites, "This life is the time ... to prepare to meet God" (see Alma 34:32–35).*
8. *2 Nephi 9:39*.
9. See *Mosiah 4:30*, where King Benjamin admonishes his people, "If ye do not watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds, and observe the commandments of God, and continue in the faith ... , ye must perish."
10. *Doctrine and Covenants 132:7; emphasis added.*
11. *Of course, your agency cannot override another's agency and the attendant consequences. I was desperate to be sealed to my parents. However, I had to wait until they chose to be endowed, when they were more than 80 years of age. Then they were sealed as husband and wife, and we children were sealed to them.*
12. *The scriptures repeatedly testify that the gift of eternal life is only possible through the merits, mercy, and grace of the Savior Jesus Christ (see, for example, Moroni 7:41; see also 2 Nephi 2:6–8, 27).*
13. See *2 Nephi 2:11*.
14. See *Doctrine and Covenants 122:7*.
15. *Doctrine and Covenants 121:8*.
16. See *Isaiah 1:16–18; Doctrine and Covenants 58:42–43*.

17. 1 Timothy 4:1. The next verse continues, "Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron" (verse 2). Paul also declared that all who "live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12).
18. 2 Nephi 32:5; emphasis added. If we will ask, we may "receive revelation upon revelation, knowledge upon knowledge" (Doctrine and Covenants 42:61).
19. See Russell M. Nelson, "Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2018, 96.
20. This is not to imply a cause-and-effect relationship. Some who never pay tithing attain professional opportunities, while some who pay tithing do not. The promise is that the windows of heaven will be opened to the tithe payer. The nature of the blessings will vary.

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