

TALKS
AND
THOUGHTS

A Resource for Gospel Study and Teaching

Steve Dunn Hanson

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Orange Stake 1977

FORWARD

THIS BOOK CONTAINS MANY of my talks and thoughts since the early 1970's. Here is a brief history of where and when they were given and written.

I served in a bishopric when we moved to California in 1971. I was called into the Orange California Stake high council in 1974 and subsequently served on a second high council after serving in another bishopric. I gave several talks as a counselor in these bishoprics, but as a high councilor, I spoke in a ward sacrament meeting every month. I wrote virtually all my talks out then. In 1985 I was called as the stake executive secretary and in 1987 as second counselor in the stake presidency. I spoke many times in these callings and wrote out a number of those talks as well. I served as stake president from 1996 through 2006 and gave countless talks but rarely wrote them out. Sometimes, however, I would use a written outline.

From 2007 to 2009 Joyce and I served a two year mission to Romania, and I wrote thoughts I exchanged with my family and with my friend, Lloyd Rasmussen. I served in the presidency of the Spokane Temple and Joyce was assistant matron from 2010 to 2013, and we visited and spoke at sacrament meetings at virtually every ward and branch in the temple district—approximately 140 of them. We also spoke at dozens of stake conferences, firesides, and other Church meetings. For these, I generally used short notes.

In addition, I have spoken at dozens of funerals over the years and wrote my talks for a few of them. Furthermore, from time to time, I have written thoughts that were important enough for me to keep.

I have footnoted in this publication many hundreds of scriptural and other references that I have used. I have organized my talks and thoughts into these general categories:

CHARITY AND SERVICE

CONSECRATION

FAMILY

FUNERALS

GOVERNMENT THOUGHTS

JESUS CHRIST AND THE PLAN OF SALVATION

JOSEPH SMITH AND CHURCH LEADERS

MISCELLANEOUS THOUGHTS
PERSONAL LIFE IMPACTING EVENTS
THE BOOK OF MORMON
MISSIONARY WORK
TEMPLE AND FAMILY HISTORY

CHARITY AND SERVICE

It Was a Woman Thing

Romania 2008

I KNOW A WOMAN thing when I see one. And the activity that Sister Davison and Sister Lovell, two young sister missionaries in Ploiesti, Romania planned was definitely a woman thing. They were putting on a dinner at the Ploiesti branch chapel for several of their women investigators and inviting some of the Relief Society sisters in the branch to attend to assist in fellowshipping them. Joyce was also invited to come, and since I am permanently attached to Joyce, I was invited to come too. I thought this was a really nice thing for these sisters to do, but I would be the only man there. Something like my grandson being caught playing Barbie dolls with his sister. I thanked them, but planned on asking the elders in our district if they could use my company during this event. It's not that I mind being surrounded by women. That has been my fortunate lot for a good share of my life, but this was a woman thing and I was certain that I would feel awkward, outnumbered and out of place. You know, "one of these things is not like the other" moments. But there was a twist added to the activity. One of the women investigators asked to bring her husband. So the sisters nearly pleaded with me to come so there would be two of us who were not like the others. And I went.

To fully understand what happened that night you need to be aware that the two sisters who did all of this were both physically challenged within the past two weeks. One with wisdom teeth extraction and the other so sick she couldn't move. You also need to understand that no one here has any money. Not the members. And certainly not the missionaries. You also have to understand that missionary (and most member) transportation here is walking. Or maybe using a bus or tram or taxi if you are more than 2 or 3 miles away from where you are heading. The bottom line is that these sisters were going to put this event on regardless of their physical struggles and were willing to go without as a result of using their own scarce resources to make this event as good as they could possibly make it. Does this sound like Relief Society?.

Since the Church room was Spartan and no available linen or dishes to use, I thought we basically would be sitting around the plain white tables at the Church and the sisters would cook up something nice and we would eat and talk to each other and that would be about it. But I wasn't remembering what a woman thing in this Church really is. I was reminded.

The tables were transformed. The sisters had taped overlapping strips of crepe paper over the table tops and put out individual place settings, complete with handmade name tags, for each person who was invited. It was a formal setting using cheap plastic utensils, plates and cups. A thin paper napkin was neatly folded and placed inside each cup. And on a stacking chair in the corner of the room was a little battery operated CD player that one of the sister missionaries got as a kid years ago that was to be used to create mood music. I was impressed.

The food was simple and delicious. A salad was served first. Each plate was prepared individually and brought out to us, just like at Gulliver's in Irvine, California or any other fancy restaurant. You have to keep in mind that making a salad here is not just opening a couple of packages of vegetables and mixing them together. It is made from scratch. And to keep from making everybody sick who eats it, each vegetable has to be carefully washed and soaked in a chlorine solution before it is prepared. When we were through eating the first course, the salad plates were cleared and the second course was brought out.

It was a chicken/pineapple/rice goulash kind of thing that was also delicious. Then that was cleared and a great dessert – a cake with powdered sugar sprinkled on it – was brought out. I was really impressed.

The sisters had given careful and prayerful thought as to the seating arrangement. Investigators and missionaries and Relief Society sisters were all placed in a way to facilitate fellowshiping. There were four missionaries including the sister missionaries and Joyce and me. There were three Relief Society sisters, Sister Dobrin the district Relief Society President, Sister Simon a counselor in the branch Relief Society presidency and Sister Melan, a member of the Branch. And there were four investigators, including the other man that I was there to help make comfortable. None of the investigators spoke English and only one of the members did. So most of the time I just nodded and said, "Da." Da in Romanian means, "Yes."

The interesting thing was I didn't feel isolated at all. I couldn't understand most of the words that were being spoken, but I certainly could understand the feeling of fellowship that was going on. And I was glad I was there.

And then came the primary reason the sister missionaries had planned all of this. Sister Lovell went over to the little CD player and inserted a Jenny Oaks Baker CD. It served as the background music for the presentation we were about to witness. Sister Davison showed us a copy of *The Living Christ*, the testimony of the latter-day apostles of the Savior, and explained what it was. She then had Sister Melan come forward and read it in Romanian to the rest of us. And while Sister Melan read that sacred document, Sister Davison held up 5" x 7" pictures of the Savior that coincided with the testimony being born.

I have read that document many, many times. And I have heard it read many times. But never have I heard it read more powerfully, more sincerely, or with greater impact. I could barely

understand a word that Sister Melan read, but it didn't matter. The Spirit permeated the room and wrapped around every heart that was there. Tears were flowing freely. And none more than from the two men who were there. It was a singular experience. When composure was regained, one of the Relief Society sisters invited the investigators to come to Church Sunday where we would serve the sacrament in remembrance of the Savior. And another branch sister testified, "The feeling that you have felt here is the Holy Ghost." And it was.

It was a woman thing. And it was what being a missionary is all about. An experience I will never, ever forget.

Lost in Service

Orange Stake 1988

THEN SAID JESUS UNTO his disciples, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.”¹

The Savior often spoke in paradoxes or what Joseph Smith termed "contraries". And it was in "proving these contraries that is in finding out what they meant, said Joseph, that we come to know Jesus Christ and therefore ourselves. Perhaps there is no more important "contrary" in all of scripture than this statement by the Savior: that "whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." For I believe it holds the key to eternal life. To understand exactly what that concept is, I have come to find out, requires personal experience and personal revelation.

One scripture that can help us is found in the 17th chapter of John and is part of the beautiful prayer the Savior offered for his followers: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: That the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." ²

To be one with the Savior means to take upon ourselves his name. To take upon ourselves his name means to give up our own name. To lose it. To give up our own name means we develop in our own souls the kind of love for the Savior that would allow us to subjugate all of our own personal comforts and pleasures to the desire to magnify the Savior; to act in his behalf; to extend his influence and presence.

Mormon tells us that in order to have this kind of love, we must seek it with all of our hearts.³ We must plead for it, for it is a gift. And we must plead for the experiences that would bring that gift into our hearts.

But our hearts must be receptive. They must be prepared to receive Christ. And that preparation requires the development of true humility. Humility is the losing of ourselves and is the key to developing a Christ-like love. Sometimes a concept is best defined by explaining its opposite. The opposite of humility is pride.

Pride is the seeking of praise. We are motivated to action because of our anticipation of the potential recognition we will receive by our peers or the world. Pride is winning by causing or wanting someone else to lose. We use others as a yardstick rather than as an example. Their failures and inadequacies bring us a sense of satisfaction because it makes us look better in our own eyes. On the other hand, their successes bring us feelings of inadequacy because we perceive them as being or doing better than we are.

There is a pride that is a little more subtle, yet equally destructive. It is the selfish use of our time. We neglect performing the acts of service we should be doing because we are too busy doing the things we like to do. For example, a bishop or elders quorum president can easily justify his too much time away from his family. A financially struggling priesthood holder can rationalize away his lack of church involvement. A husband and wife bent on having a constant good time with their children have no qualms about spending all of their leisure with them with no time left for community or church service. Pride is self-serving. Pride is being a law unto ourselves. Pride is damning, for it allows no room for repentance. Pride will destroy our souls and keep us from becoming one with Christ.⁴

To be humble, then, means to lose ourselves. With humility, we are motivated to action because of love. We win by realizing our own nothingness as King Benjamin admonished and by overcoming ourselves through the grace of Christ; and we joy in the successes of our fellowmen. With humility, we rely upon the Lord to help us prioritize our lives so that we would do what He would do. So that we would at any point in time extend and magnify Him. And we become as the humble saints in Helaman's day, for "they did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, yea, even to the purifying and the sanctification of their hearts, which sanctification cometh because of their yielding their hearts unto god."⁵ Because of this, their humility, they began to become one with God and to cease being a law unto themselves. They literally lost themselves in Christ through service to Him. They understood that service to God was the ultimate manifestation of their love for Him and was the result of their desire to be one with Him. And they also knew "that when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your god."⁶ That humble service to their fellowman was the means whereby they served God. And it was the ultimate manifestation of losing ourselves for Christ's sake.

To lose ourselves in Christ-like service means to "serve him with all (of our)...heart, might, mind and strength."⁷ It means to willing to bear one another's burdens that they may be light. To

mourn with those that mourn. To comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death.”(Mosiah 18: 8) It means that we “will not have a mind to injure one another, but to live peaceably, and to render to every man according to that which is his due. And ye will not suffer your (family) that they go hungry, or naked; neither will ye suffer that they transgress the laws of God, and fight and quarrel one with another.... But ye will teach them to walk in the ways of truth and soberness; ye will teach them to love one another, and to serve one another. And...ye will succor those that stand in need of your succor; ye will administer of your substance unto him that standeth in need; and ye will not suffer that the beggar putteth up his petition to you in vain.”⁸ And to lose ourselves in service means that we will “feed the flock of god which is among (us) Taking no oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly..... Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.... (Becoming) subject one to another, and (being)...clothed with humility.”⁹

As we lose ourselves in humble service the Lord's spirit will be with us continually, distilling upon our souls even as the dews from heaven, to guide and direct us in the prioritization of our service, that we may be in the right place and at the right time doing the right things.

The effect of such service is twofold. First, we help those we serve find themselves. I have a great home teaching companion, Don Beck, and we love our home teaching families. All of them are less active. Or I should say used to be less active. Two of them are now coming out regularly and the third one sporadically. Several weeks ago we had a tremendous experience. One sister we home teach is a divorcee in her 60s. She had not been active in church since she was a girl. But she has been coming out regularly now for the last 5 or 6 months. We have been studying the Book of Mormon with her and you can literally see her life changing. In our last visit, I was impressed to challenge her to prepare herself to attend the temple. She looked at me and asked, "Why did you say that? I told her that I was prompted to by the Spirit. She looked at us for a moment and then said, "I just visited with the bishop last Sunday. There were some things in my life that I needed to get in order. This July I want to attend a family reunion. They will be spending a day at the temple, and I have been thinking about preparing myself for that. Don and I floated to our car.

Then we went to another one of our families. This couple has had chronic financial and family problems. The mother has been depressed and although married in the temple, she has been less active for years. Over the last few months she has been active and has even accepted a church position. As we visited with her, we asked her if she had a chance to see any of the sessions of conference. She smiled and said, "All of them." She had watched them on cable. Then her little grandson piped up, "Grandma, were those the things you were watching when you kept crying?" Tears filled her eyes as she smiled and nodded.

The second result of our service is that in the losing of ourself, we find ourself. It is the paradox of which Christ spoke. Perhaps there is no service that better exemplifies this principle than that of a full time missionary. I would like to read an excerpt from a letter we recently received from my 20 year old son, Will, who is serving as a missionary in Argentina.

“I am grateful for my Savior Jesus Christ this Easter day as I think of His great love for us. Because of Him we can be together as a family for the eternities; because of him we can become clean and pure from all our sins He has saved everyone and brought resurrection to all. But more than that he has made it possible that we through our obedience to his principles and ordinances can reach exaltation and receive all of the blessings of our father. As I think of my love for you and my love for Jesus Christ and my Heavenly Father, I want nothing less than to partake of his love and become like him. I testify that that potential is real. Come unto Christ and partake of his goodness. I love you all.”¹⁰

“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.”¹¹

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1. Matthew 16: 24-25
 2. John 17:20-24
 3. Moroni 7:48
 4. Jacob 2:16
 5. Helaman 3: 35
 6. Mosiah 2:17
 7. Doctrine and Covenants 3: 2
 8. Mosiah 4:13-16
 9. 1 Peter 5:2-5
 10. My son Will's letter, April 3, 1988
 11. Matthew 16: 24-25

The Love of God and Service

Rolf's Farewell 1990

IT WAS AROUND 19 years ago when Rolf came on the scene. (He was a lot shorter then.) What I specifically remember was the tremendous joy that his parents felt as he came to live with them. That same kind of joy exists today as they have watched him grow and make choices that have brought him ever closer to his Heavenly Father.

I have thought a lot about joy and love over these last years. I think they really are synonyms. A fulness of joy is a fulness of love. The one cannot only not exist without the other, I believe the one is the other. The scriptures say much about love, but yet not very much. Both Paul and Mormon describe several traits or attributes that are found with love, like patience, long-suffering, etc., but do not define what love is, I don't think they can. Love is one of those real things that must be experienced to be known. Something like the taste of salt. I know what salt tastes like, but it is impossible for me to describe that taste to someone who hasn't experienced it himself. And so it is with love.

Mormon tells us something about the importance of Christ's love. He says that charity, the pure love of Christ, is the greatest of all of the attributes of Christ and that if we do not have charity, we are nothing. He also admonishes us to "...pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ..." ¹ Nephi tells us that this love of God "is the most desirable of all things," and "the most joyous to the soul." ²

But if having charity or love is so important, how can we obtain it, when we can't even define it?

The other day I heard a man say this about love: In order for you to know what a man means when he talks about love, you have to know something about the man himself. I have come to see by my own experiences that the way to know what Christ's love is all about, is to come to know Christ. That is what John the Beloved said too: "...Everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love."³

How do we come to know God that this love may abide in us? The way is described many times in many different contexts in the scriptures. One that has had a particular impact on me concerns the conversion of the king of the Lamanites by Aaron, one of the four sons of Mosiah. "And it came to pass that after Aaron had expounded these things unto him, the king said: What shall I do...that I may be born of God, having this wicked spirit rooted out of my breast, and receive his Spirit, that I may be filled with joy (love.)? ...Behold, said he, I will give up all that I possess, yea, I will forsake my kingdom, that I may receive this great joy (love.). But Aaron said unto him: If thou desirest this thing, if thou wilt bow down before God, yea, if thou wilt repent of all thy sins...and call on his name in faith, believing that ye shall receive, then shalt thou receive the hope which thou desirest. And it came to pass that when Aaron had said these words, the king did bow down before the Lord, upon his knees; yea, even he did prostrate himself upon the earth, and cried mightily, saying: O God...wilt thou make thyself known unto me, and I will give away all my sins to know thee."⁴

That is how we come to know God and to have His love abide within us. We give up ALL of our sins. That is what is known as being born of God. And the gift that is ours in return for us laying our sins on the altar is love. Charity. "Which he bestows upon all who are true followers of Jesus Christ." This is no partial commitment on our part. We offer our "whole souls as an offering unto him" (Omni 26). We give up all of our sins. And the power of the transformation in our lives is so great that we lose our pride, our jealousies, our fears, our selfish motivations, our lusts and desires for the things of the world. For when you are spiritually reborn you not only make a change in what you are doing, but the reason why you do what you do is also changed as evidenced by the words of those who have experienced that transformation.

First Enos: "I began to feel a desire for the welfare of my brethren,...wherefore I did pour out my whole soul unto God for them."⁵

The sons of Mosiah: "Now they were desirous that salvation should be declared to every creature, for they could not bear that any human soul should perish" (Mosiah 28:3) And Alma, the younger: "From that time...I have labored without ceasing, that I might bring souls unto repentance; that I might bring them to taste of the exceeding joy of which I did taste; that they might also be born of God and be filled with the Holy Ghost."⁶

Over the last few years I have been fellowshiping a man, who at the time I met him was a prominent Protestant minister in Orange County where I am from. Some months ago he agreed to have the missionary lessons. After one of those sessions, he picked up his copy of the Book of Mormon and turned to the 2nd Chapter of Mosiah and quoted a statement from King Benjamin that we are all familiar with: "And behold I tell you these things that ye may learn wisdom; that ye may learn that when ye are in the service of your fellow beings you are only in the service of your God."⁷ He then told us this story.

Years ago before Mother Teresa of India was famous, he corresponded with her from time to time. She and her co-workers would go to a field that was muddy and mucky and reeked with a putrid smell. They would stand in a line holding hands and then stretch

their line so they could barely touch one each other's fingers. Then they would drop their hands and slowly walk forward. Listening carefully for the sound of a baby. And when they heard it, they would dig through the muck and pick up the baby. A baby that had been thrown away by its mother. They would take it back to their facility, clean it up and either put it up for adoption or raise it themselves. Mother Teresa would walk through the sea of humanity that flooded the streets of Calcutta, looking for the dying. And they were plentiful. She would have them carried back to her home, wash them, try to give them nourishment and then sit for hours with the stranger's head upon her lap to give comfort and consolation in their last moments here on this earth. To her it didn't matter what they looked like, what their religion was or who they were. My friend wrote her a letter. He asked how she could do this day after day. How she could be so totally immersed in self-sacrificing and under such horrible, revolting circumstances.

The letter he received back simply said: "Dear Pastor, don't you understand? When I am holding a baby covered with slime or a ragged beggar's head in my lap, I am holding Jesus Christ." As we are called upon to serve in the church and in our families. As Rolf leaves for his mission, each of us are required to make some choices. One of those choices is whether or not we will serve at all. The other is even more important: in whose name will we serve. Is it in our name for our honor and glory and prestige and notoriety? Or is it in the name of Christ and done out of pure love for Him and our fellowmen. That choice says everything about who we are, the extent to which our own lives are changed and the degree to which we are able to taste of the gift of love which "is the most desirable above all things" and "the most joyous to the soul. That choice says everything about the ultimate effect of our acts of service. It is my testimony to you that if we will give up all of our sins to know Christ and take upon ourselves His name, then His love will be in us and round about us and radiate from us. Our joy will be full and we will be recipients of the promise given by Ammon to all who will surrender themselves to Christ: "Unto such it is given to know the mysteries of God; yea, unto such it shall be given to reveal things which never have been revealed; yea, and it shall be given unto such to bring thousands of souls to repentance, even as it has been given unto us to bring these our brethren to repentance."⁸

1. Moroni 7:46-48

2. 1 Nephi 11:22

3. 1 John 4:7-8

4. Alma 22:15-18

5. Enos 1:9

6. Alma 36:24

7. Mosiah 2:17

8. Alma 26:22

Reaching Out To The Less Active

Orange Stake 1987

I INVITE ALL WHO have, as members of the church, been less active to stand. And those who were non-members of part-member families to stand.

Thank God someone loved you enough to reach out and bring you in. Some 50 years ago a young man living in Salt Lake stopped going to church. His mother had taken him and the other children to church, but his dad didn't attend much. The young man was ordained an elder but was far from committed. He got married to a fine woman, but not in the temple. They moved often throughout their marriage as he advanced in the business world and were never what you would call active. They attended church from time to time but there was really no commitment.

Some 11 or 12 years ago, now as a 60 year old senior executive preparing for retirement, they moved to the Tustin area. Shortly after, he was called to serve as a counselor in the T3 ward elders quorum presidency under Jack Larsen. He accepted the call even though he had never been through the temple. With that call, he and his wife decided to take a temple preparation class, but he was still hesitant to commit himself. Then one day President Rasmussen, who was the stake president then, called him in. "There are two things I want you to do," President Rasmussen told him. "The first thing is to have you and your wife attend the temple and be sealed. The second thing is for you to become the Elders quorum president in the Tustin 111 Ward."

And that's what he did. His life changed and so did his wife's. He proceeded to be one of the best elders quorum presidents in the stake. Several years later, he was called as a High Councilor and a temple worker. Now Brother Allan Searle is serving as the Stake Executive Secretary and as a supervisor at the Temple. I asked Brother Searle that why after over 40 years of inactivity did he finally become active and committed. He thought for a minute and then replied that although he didn't participate much over those 40 years, he never felt very far away from the church. That he had almost always had home teachers that visited him and leaders and church friends that loved him and were concerned about him and that both he and his wife always knew that

the time would come when they would go to the temple and be involved in the church again. It was this constant caring on the part of members over the years that made them feel wanted and loved. He said, "I guess all I really needed was somebody to give me a shove to get me off the dime and doing what I needed to be doing." He is grateful for leaders who loved him enough to challenge him.

There's another fine woman raised in Utah about the same time as Brother Searle. Her folks were active, but as a young woman she became so heavily involved in sports that the church became secondary. She married outside of the church and continued her sports involvement becoming one of the best women's softball players in the United States. Many years ago she moved into our stake with her husband and lived close to her mother. Her mother remained active up until her death some years ago. But the woman continued less active and her husband remained a non-member. She has received home teachers through the years and in some instances home teachers that spent the time to teach her and her husband and even get them out to church on occasion. But for the most part, home teachers have not been consistent and she and her husband remain just about where they have been for the last 40 years. A name on the membership rolls of their ward and known only as a name. She was born in the covenant, but of course, her children weren't. And this good woman and her husband remain without the blessings of the temple and without the blessings of the church. Is there a home teacher or a visiting teacher or a priesthood Leader in her ward who is willing to love them enough to find out what the Lord would have them do to bring them back?

Some 35 years ago a young teenager along with two other members of her family joined the church. She loved the church and participated fully. However, she married a man who was not active. She remained active herself until her mid-twenties. Then they moved to a small town in Nevada where they lived a long way from the church and she became less active. For the next 20 years they moved several times and she would sometimes attend church and then go for long spells when she didn't attend. When she and her husband moved to our area in 1976, she was totally less active as was her husband. Her first contact with the church here was a letter they received from the bishop to attend a budget meeting. They came and they paid some funds to the budget. But there was no follow-up contact by the priesthood. The Relief Society visiting teachers, however, started to call on her and she appreciated their visits. But she attended church only infrequently.

Then in 1980, her husband contracted a potentially fatal brain illness and was expected to die. She called her bishop both for comfort and to make arrangements for the funeral. He was great. It was obvious that he cared and spent many hours counseling with her. The Elders quorum president worked with her as well and assigned a home teacher who took care of their every need. Mowing lawns, running errands, and blessing her home with the priesthood. It was only after he had been doing all of these things for her and her husband for some time that she found out that her home teacher had had a serious cancer operation himself just before being assigned

to be her home teacher and had served her and her husband without regard to his own physical difficulties.

She was overwhelmed with his kindness and love and her desires to be fully involved in the church were rekindled. Sister Donna Gilger is now serving as a counselor in the Tustin 2 ward Relief Society presidency. I asked Sister Gilger that why after 30 years of vacillating and inactivity did she finally catch the spirit and have the desire to become committed. She replied that she had always been happier when she was attending church and the love and help that the priesthood and Relief Society gave her when her husband was so ill was probably the catalyst.

Five or ten minutes after I got through talking with Sister Gilger, she called me back. She said she had been thinking about the question as to why she finally became active. "I know why," she said. "It's because after all these years I finally had priesthood support. I had home teachers wherever I lived, but they were generally last of the month types. They really never took an interest in me or my husband. It was my home teacher, Bob Atkinson, who brought the priesthood into my home. It was his love and caring for us that made me want to do more in the church than I had been doing. It was priesthood support that brought me back.

Back in the 1950's a young man returned home after serving an outstanding mission for the church. He had been faithful and had served as a counselor in the mission presidency. He married a beautiful young woman in the temple and went to school. Because of his capabilities, he was serving in six positions in his ward and he was finding it impossible to do his school work with all of those responsibilities. He went to his bishop and asked to be released from some of them. The bishop told him he needed to get his priorities in order. This hurt his feelings so he quit all of his church callings and basically stopped his church activity. Over the next nine years, he remained less active. Upon finishing medical school, he and his family moved to Inglewood. His daughter became seriously ill and he felt helpless knowing that he was unworthy to give her a blessing. That seemed to be a turning point and he decided that he had to make a change. But it was slow in coming. He attended church off and on for a year and a half without serving in any callings to speak of. Finally, his bishop called him to serve as the head of the adult Aaronic Priesthood program in his ward, which back in those days was the title of the man who was assigned to work with the less active.

For months he served in that calling without doing much of anything. The interesting thing was the bishop didn't get after him. In fact, one day he told him, "I appreciate the job you are doing." That statement struck him to the core. He knew he was doing a lousy job and he felt horrible. From that moment on he made a commitment to magnify his callings and to serve the Lord.

Later, when his bishop was made the stake president, he was called to serve as his counselor in the stake presidency. Some ten to twelve years ago, he and his family moved into our stake. Since that time, Bishop Keith Merrill has magnified all of the callings he has been given including his

present calling as bishop of the Orange Third Ward and has been a great blessing in the lives of the members of this stake. I asked Bishop Merrill why he went less active in the first place and what brought him back. He said simply that he got his feelings hurt and he reacted in a wrong way. He said that his wife loved him all the way through and was a constant inspiration to him setting the right example by being faithful herself. The catalyst, he said, was this good bishop, who, rather than judging, had only kind words. On behalf of the members of the Orange Third Ward and of this stake, I thank a kind, patient wife and a loving bishop for helping our friend Bishop Merrill come back.

There is a young woman who presently lives in our stake. A divorcee, she was raised in a large, close LDS family who were all very active. Up until her early teens, the church and her family were her life and she loved them both. And then something happened. She began to make choices that pulled her away from her family. Away from the church. Away from all that she had been taught and had believed. Choices that brought great sorrow to her family and to herself. For the last seven or eight years there hasn't been a family prayer offered by that family, or a secret prayer uttered by her mother or father or brothers or sisters or grandparents that has not begged the Lord to bless her and to bring her back. Back to them. And back to the Lord. Is there A bishop or a Relief Society president who would be so in tune that the Lord could work with them in reaching her? Is there a visiting teacher or a home teacher who would be so filled with the love of Christ, that they would reach out and lead her back?

You see, those who we call less active or no contacts are people. They aren't just names on our ward list. They are just like we are. Sons and daughters of God whose hearts once burned bright with the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ. But for whatever reason that light has grown dim over time and they are not receiving the blessings of the temple, the blessings of church association and service, and the blessing of knowing Christ.

I testify to you that we are the means of bringing them back, if we will. In this stake, there are some 1200 men, women, and children ke those I have talked about this morning whose lives can change if we are committed to loving them. Are we ready to extend that kind of love? It is the work of those who take upon themselves the name of Christ. In our premortal life, we are told, there was a great council in heaven. God the Father, after explaining the plan of salvation and the need for someone to sacrifice themselves on behalf of all of the rest of us and be a Savior, asked, "Whom shall I send? And one answered like unto the son of man: Here am I, send me."¹

Likewise, the Lord through his appointed servants is asking those of us here, is asking the membership of this stake, "Whom shall I send? Whom shall I send to bring my children back to me?" I pray that in answer to that petition our very souls may be consumed with the love of Christ as we reply, "Here am I, send me."

A thought about service: Hell is about not serving others. The great paradox of losing oneself to find oneself is clearly basic to a meaningful, eternal existence. The isolation that defines a "black

hole” mentality is both depressing and damning. That is Hell. We simply need one another, and we need to be about helping one another to have a fullness of joy. Perhaps the degree to which we are willing to do this defines how God-like we really are.²

1. Abraham 3:27

2. Moses 1:39

Service

Orange Stake 1976

IN RESPONSE TO A lawyer's question as to which was the greatest commandment, Jesus replied: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."¹

Following a dispute among His disciples as to who should have the privilege of sitting on His right hand and on His left, the Lord admonished: "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you let him be your servant; even as the son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister."²

In the beautiful revelation given to Joseph Smith on truth, intelligence and light the Master explains, "I called you servants for the world's sake, and ye are their servants for my sake."³

And King Benjamin in his powerful and spiritually moving sermon to his people said: "And behold, I tell you these things that ye may learn wisdom; that ye may learn that when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God."⁴

And I believe that it is equally true to say that *unless* we are in the service of our fellow beings we are *not* in the service of our God. Service is not something extra. It is not an appendage to the gospel of Jesus Christ; it is the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the pure love of Christ. It is that charity which Paul spoke of to the Corinthians and Mormon spoke of to the few members of the church who remained faithful in his day: "If ye have not charity ye are nothing...and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him."⁵

An attitude of service is what distinguishes a celestial person from one of a lower order. And service is an attitude. It is a way of life.

The strength of our individual testimonies of the gospel is mirrored in our acts of constant, every day service or lack of service. And our testimonies of the gospel, likewise, are strengthened

as we serve. Our Prophet Spencer W. Kimball has testified: "God does notice us, and He watches over us. But it is usually through another person that He meets our needs."⁶

Let me repeat that: "It is usually through another person that (God) meets our needs." Another way to put that is, God meets the needs of other people through me. He needs me to bring about his purposes on this earth. *He needs me.*

President Kimball goes on to say: "If you were to select just 2 or 3 individuals in your life who have been most influential, what specifically did they do that was most helpful to you at critical or important times in your life? On reflecting for a few moments, you are apt to conclude that such a person really cared for you, that he or she taught you something you needed to know. Most often someone has served and helped us by giving us love and understanding, by taking time to assist us and by showing us the way through the light of his own example. Reflect now upon your performance...as to whether or not we now embody in our own ministry those same basic attributes. I cannot stress enough the importance of our doing these same things for those who now depend upon us, just as we have depended upon others to serve us in the past."⁷

I would like for the next few minutes to share with you several acts of service, every day acts of kindness which have had a direct impact on me. And as I review these rather personal incidents I would ask you to reflect upon similar acts of kindness and service that have been rendered to you and to your family.

For a number of years now I have watched one member of our ward conscientiously and faithfully fulfill his assigned responsibility without murmur or hesitation, even though he has suffered intensely with severe arthritis. I've seen the pain in his face as he would do something simple like pick up a pencil and write some notes. Not only has this individual not complained but has exerted every effort to help others who have had physical or spiritual setbacks. I know of at least one situation where he made nearly weekly contact for the last several years with a member who has been physically unable to attend church. Encouraging him and checking on his health.

Another family in our ward has acted as foster parents to no fewer than four children over the last few years, providing physical and spiritual guidance on a long term basis. And although this mother and father have been kept busy church-wise with their callings, they have constantly been on the lookout for other service opportunities as well.

There are a number of families in this ward who are or who have either partially or fully financially supported young missionaries who were not of their family. Again, without fanfare, without notice. There are others who make it a practice to send some money to all of the missionaries in the ward at Christmas time.

There are home teachers in this stake who take their responsibility seriously. I know of one who was assigned to a family having marital problems. He stayed in daily contact with that couple

over a period of two months, helping them to straighten out their problem. This same home teacher met on a long term basis with another family having financial problems and helped them get themselves on a sound fiscal footing.

There was another sweet woman from this ward who since has moved, who was the epitome of service and love. She possessed what I call anticipatory charity. She seemed to possess almost a sixth sense to know when people needed help. Sometimes she would send just a cheer-up card at the right moment to someone who was depressed. Other times she would write a funny poem that made you laugh and feel all warm inside because you knew she really cared about you. She would never call to ask if you needed help, she would simply say "I have made you a casserole and a cake, can I bring it on over?" Her greeting always told you she loved you. It was a squeeze on the hand and a twinkle in her eye—and every once in a while, a kiss on the cheek.

There is another woman in this ward who never tires of helping others. She has a large family of young children and has virtually no spare time. Yet she takes the time to talk to those who need someone to talk to. For the last several months she has been in daily contact with her sister-in-law who is going through the trauma of a marriage separation and her husband leaving the church. This woman is sharing her sister-in-law's burden and has been doing everything humanly possible to lighten her load and make her feel loved even though it has increased her own burden.

There are many other examples of service I have observed and could relate. But to me one of the most perfect examples of true charity is my mother-in-law. This beautiful woman is the most other-oriented person I have ever known. For the birth of each of our seven children, she has come to stay with us and take care of our needs while Joyce was healing. And at the birth of our last child when Joyce had difficulties, Mother Swenson spent 1 1/2 months with us. Cooking, sewing, cleaning, teaching, and loving. She has spent countless hours helping me with my genealogy and always brings boxes of home-canned fruits and vegetables every time she visits. This attitude of others first permeates her every action even in little things that most of us would not even think about. She makes certain that everyone is served at the dinner table before she begins to eat. If she sees one of her children or grandchildren need something she gives it or makes it or finds it. Her whole world is living for others.

My mother and father have been a constant example to me of service. As early as I can remember their lives seemed to be "other"-oriented. I cannot emphasize enough the powerful influence their attitude and actions have had on their children and grandchildren. As a small boy in Shelley, Idaho, I remember one particularly severe winter. The highway coming into and out of Shelley was snowed in and the blizzard continued to rage. A family from Canada who were traveling through were trapped in our town. There were no motels or hotels in Shelley, and this family was literally stranded without shelter or food. My father upon hearing of this, immediately invited them to stay with us until they were able to go on. For nearly a week we had the privilege

of being good Samaritans. The thing that made the deepest impression on me was the way my parents viewed the experience. It was not seen as an inconvenience. On the contrary, it was looked upon as an opportunity, a chance to help someone who needed it.

When my father was 35 (I used to think that was old.) and there were six children in our family, he and mother made a decision to sell their small farm implement business in Shelley and go back to school in order for him to become a dentist. That meant five years of school, and we figured that if everyone pitched in and were willing to sacrifice, we could just make it through on our savings, on what we could get for selling the business and our house, and what we could pick up through part-time jobs.

What a tremendous experience that was. And through those years of personal sacrifice I saw my mother and father increase their individual acts of service to others. In spite of the time and monetary pressures that were placed upon them in this difficult situation, mother and father accepted every single church calling they were given. Everyone. And carried out their responsibilities to the best of their ability without complaint or murmuring.

Regardless of their own problems and hardships they took time to empathize with and assist anyone who needed help. Whether the need was a listening ear, some advice, or some physical action, they provided it. They wanted to provide it. And I know of at least two occasions during that period of time when Dad took a substantial amount of money out of our own scarce and tightly budgeted resources to lend to members of his own family when he felt their need was greater than ours.

When we had just a few months of dental school left, we had run totally out of funds. There wasn't one penny left. The Branch President upon hearing of our condition called into his office five brethren from our branch and briefly explained the situation. Each man took out his check book and wrote out a check made out to Dad and handed it to the Branch President. The Branch President in turn called Dad in and handed him the money. Mother and father told us children about it because they wanted us to be aware of and to remember that act of service and love given to our family.

Mother and Dad raised their family to serve others. Of paramount importance to them was to have each of their five sons serve missions for the church. Both parents had served on full time missions in their youth. And over a period of ten years, they sent all five of their boys on missions with two of them out simultaneously several times during that period. I appreciate my parents and am so grateful for their example and for their countless acts of service and love to me.

My children have also been great examples to me of this Christ-like love. Several weeks ago my son Will, who is in the first grade and just learning to read and write, decided to practice his writing skill on the face of my five year old's Raggedy Ann doll. She came to us with tears in her

eyes to show us what had happened. We decided that the only way Will could make restitution for what he had done was to let Jayne select one of his toys to become hers permanently. Will reluctantly agreed. We asked Jayne which of Will's toys she wanted to take. After thinking a moment she chose the cowboy and horse Will always had standing by his bedside. In a quivering voice Will replied, "She can have it." As Jayne went out of the room to get the cowboy and horse Will began to sob. A moment later Jayne was back in the room with the cowboy and horse in her arms. Without hesitating she handed them to Will and said, "I don't want to take your cowboy and horse, Will."

A five year old and six year old taught a mother and father that day a lesson in true charity.

Several years ago, my oldest daughter Laura, who was then about seven years old had a special Primary teacher. This teacher was extremely thoughtful to the children in her class and Laura loved her. For health reasons, the teacher gave up her Primary class, but Laura didn't give her up. For the last two years Laura totally and completely on her own has been a special friend to her former teacher. She calls her teacher periodically on the phone to see how she is doing and writes her notes telling her how much she loves her. She draws and colors lovely pictures and gathers special mementos to take over to her special friend to cheer her up. Laura is this woman's main contact with the church. "And a child shall lead them."

This series of examples of acts of service that have had an impact on me would not be complete without mentioning my wife. Joyce is service personified. She is always one of the first ones there with food for a sick family. It seems that there is hardly a week passes by that she isn't tending someone else's children while the mother runs an errand or because the mother is sick. And her greatest service is to her husband as she not only provides him her domestic service, but more importantly is a constant supporter, encourager, and uplifting influence to him. No matter how discouraging the outlook, she buoys him up and stands by him. For that example and that service I am eternally grateful.

What tremendous acts of service have been rendered to each of us and to our families. And as we contemplate what others have done for us, let us resolve to "go and do likewise." Service opportunities are all around us. A sure sign of our progress toward a Christ-like life is our increased awareness of the needs of others.

Little things. Everyday things that we can do can make all the difference in the world to others. A "Thank you" can literally brighten someone's day. A note expressing our love to our husband, wife, children, or friends can make them try harder. A letter to a parent, to a grandparent or an acquaintance, especially to someone who has few people who care about, can make them feel worthwhile and wanted.

A want ad in the register the other day was a sad indictment of the world's lack of concern for their fellowman. In bold letters were the words: "Letter writing service." The ad then went on

to say: "It's nice to receive a personal handwritten letter regularly. Let us brighten your day. For details send self-addressed envelope to..."

To think that there are people who are so lonely, so neglected that they would pay to have a stranger write them a letter regularly, tears at the heartstrings.

There are so many ways we can help meet the needs of others. A thoughtful Sunday School lesson, prepared with prayer and humility, can change the life of someone in the class. The resolve to always say "Yes" to the Bishop can ease his burden and make the ward function better.

The list is endless. The opportunities for true service abound.

"To miss the chance of service, to fail to speak the word of kindness, not to impart something of our strength and goodwill to those who need them. This is the sin that finds little chance of atonement."

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1. Matthew. 22: 37-39
 2. Matthew. 20:26-28
 3. Doctrine and Covenants 93:46
 4. Mosiah 2 : 17
 5. Moroni 7:46-47
 6. The New Era Sept. 1974, p. 5
 7. The New Era, Sept. 1974

Single Sisters and Loneliness

Orange Stake

WHEN I WAS SERVING as the high council adviser to the single adults we held a pot luck social in the stake with perhaps a dozen or so attending, mostly elderly sisters. We had a spiritual part of the meeting where individuals were given an opportunity to express their feelings about one another, etc., not unlike a testimony meeting. I made some remarks and in the process talked about how busy it was at times and how constantly the phone seemed to be ringing with Joyce on the school board and the teenagers at home, and that sometimes I wouldn't even answer it.

One sweet sister perhaps in her 70's responded to that comment in all seriousness. "I sit near my phone all day long just hoping it will ring. I just want someone to talk to." My sudden awareness of my insensitivity to the loneliness of these sisters came flooding out of me in the form of tears. Another sister in her late 50 's, early 60's said, "When my husband first passed away, I was so lonely I would go down to the Orange Mall every night and just walk around until closing time so I wouldn't be alone," I gained an insight and awareness of the most difficult part of being a single adult in the church that night.

Charity: The Saving Of Others

Orange Stake 1979

SOME YEARS AGO A counselor in the bishopric was assigned to home teach the Robinsons, a no contact family. Brother Robinson was a member of the church; his wife and two teenage boys were not. After the initial coolness of that first meeting wore off, the relationship between the home teacher and the family became warm and friendly. The husband, however, seemed to take no interest in the church, while his non-member wife, on the other hand, became particularly interested, but more from her teenage boys' standpoint than her own. Both of the boys were fine young men and were priest age. They knew a number of LDS boys at school and were impressed by them. They expressed interest in mutual and at one point the mother even talked about baptism for her sons.

The home teacher contacted the Priest quorum adviser and presidency and told them about the situation and urged contact and fellowship. The two boys came out to mutual a couple of times and seemed to enjoy themselves, but after a while they never came anymore. The home teacher continually invited them and urged follow-up on the part of the adviser and the active priests in his ward who knew the Robinson boys at school. He would always get the same answer: "We'll try." As it turned out everybody seemed too busy, too involved in running the quorum and planning activities, too set in already existing friendships to do anything but extend a half-hearted invitation to these two boys to participate, and to do anything more than give a pleasant, but brief welcome to them when they came.

The boys did not join the church. The father continued less active and the mother lost interest.

There was another young man who served as a member of the Teacher's quorum presidency. His mother was active, but his father was a less active elder. Every Sunday morning his adviser would come by to pick him up for church, and he would come. Then he turned sixteen. His Teacher's quorum adviser still offered to pick him up, but he would reply: "No thanks. I can drive now so I'll just drive myself over to the church." And he did for a couple of months. This young man was a loner. He didn't like basketball; he didn't like outdoor activities. But he did like music. His new adviser had a program planned out for his quorum that involved doing all

of the things the adviser and most of the boys liked to do. Music wasn't part of it and this young man just didn't fit in. Again there was only superficial interest shown in this boy and no follow up. It was not long before he drifted into total inactivity.

I had a friend when I was fourteen or fifteen who just joined the church. His name was Gil Atkinson. And in our branch, a new member our age was about as exciting a thing as could happen. We were good friends and did a lot of things together and then the newness began to wear off. It wasn't that I didn't like him anymore, but I just enjoyed being around the other kids more. I always said "Hi. " and asked him how things were going and then I would leave him and go over and talk "fun talk" with the others.

I can still see Gil standing by himself on the steps of the church. It wasn't too long after that he became sporadic in his attendance and then stopped coming all together. "It's too bad about Gil," we would say. "I wonder why he doesn't come out any more."

It is unfortunate, but the stories I have related are only too typical of what takes place in many of the Melchizedek and Aaronic Priesthood quorums in the church. And I would dare say that each of us here have been participants in similar incidents.

What is the most effective way that individuals in our Stake can be activated or converted and otherwise helped along the way to happiness and eternal life? The answer itself is simple: by us developing the attribute of charity. Charity is nearly a one word description of the Savior. And to save souls, we must love them; we must be interested enough in them and concerned enough for them that we will put forth the time and effort and prayer necessary to save them. This kind of interest is of the highest magnitude and truly is the pure love of Christ. And without it, we fall short of the mark. Not only in saving the souls of others, but our own souls as well. For it is only in losing our life in the work of our Heavenly Father that we find it. And it is only in escaping from the confines of our own greed and self-centeredness through Christ. Like interest in and service to others that we participate in the joys of exaltation.

May we understand that the only way to save others is by possessing a Christ-like love for them and all that that implies.

CONSECRATION

Competition and Consecration and Prosperity

My Thoughts

I WOULD DEFINE PROSPERITY as having “sufficient for our needs” (we’ve heard that statement before.) as opposed to being “rich” as measured against what others may have. I believe that (emotional, spiritual, physical and temporal wellbeing) is what Nephi and the Book of Mormon prophets meant when they promise prosperity in the land. And that promise is only valid to the extent that commandments/covenants are kept. My logic then takes me to the thought that the only way consistent prosperity will ever come is when *everyone* is keeping their covenants and that seems to define Zion.

Capitalism, I believe, is the “best” economic system when the pride of man is the ubiquitous driving force (i.e. competition). Just like democracy is the best political system in such an environment. *This kind of market or political system keeps individual selfishness in check and ultimately working for the good of the whole while preserving the agency of man.* As long as all participants play by the rules, their “greed” will ultimately work for the good of the whole. Of course everyone does play by the rules, but as long as those who do not are in the minority, the system will still ultimately work. However even when everyone is playing by the rules there will be significant disruptions in “prosperity” because of the innate fatal flaw in being motivated by selfishness. This absorption in self-interest causes cracks and crevices in the system.

Neither capitalism nor democracy exists in Zion. They are not needed. In Zion each individual is motivated by charity, a pure love of Christ, and therefore a pure love for every son and daughter of God. There is no selfishness. There is no competition. Therefore a theocracy governs and consecration is the foundation of the economy. This is the most efficient and effective societal and economic form and can only exist when *everyone* is of one heart and one mind.

On a micro level even in the telestial world, there can be significant consistency in ones prospering temporally, spiritually, emotionally and even physically as promised by Nephi and

other Book of Mormon prophets, by following the Lord's directions. I believe that means we as individuals and as families strive to live the law of consecration as we covenant to do in the temple. Inherent with that covenant, I believe, are four important principles:

1. Everything we have, including time and talents and material wealth, we have been given. They do not belong to us. We have been entrusted with them by the Lord and we are His stewards over them. The measure of the success of our stewardship is not the *quantity* of what we have stewardship over, but what we are *doing* with that stewardship to magnify the Lord and bring about His purposes. We must root out any pride-driven motivation.¹
2. We have a special responsibility to seek out and assist the poor and needy. Those who are poor and needy temporally, spiritually, physically and emotionally. One's willingness and desire to do this is, perhaps, the single most important indicator of the degree to which one is living a consecrated life.²
3. It is not only appropriate, but important that we seek to expand the quantity and quality of that which we have been given. But the reason for doing so must always be to build up God's kingdom here on this earth and to ultimately bring a Zion condition – never, ever for our own self-aggrandizement or to bring to us personally more than is “sufficient for our needs.” Whether that talent/gift is making money, singing, playing a musical instrument, learning languages, speaking, writing, playing basketball, intellectual, etc., it doesn't matter. That talent is a gift and belongs to the Lord not to us. And if we seek to use and magnify that gift in His behalf, then we are blessed as we bless.³
4. We are to multiply and replenish the earth. We must care for it. We must not take more from it than what we need. We must be mindful of its fragile nature. We must enhance and protect its beauty. We must not pollute it. We must recognize it as a “living thing.” A place for eternal habitation.⁴

I believe that we who have made covenants with the Lord help prepare this earth for His coming by seeking to make the space around us a “Zion space.” And this through His grace, we can do. I believe that the degree of our collective consistency in striving to do this not only determines the “timing” of the Lord's ultimate return to the earth and renewing the earth's paradisiacal glory but allows us to individually deal with the personal and general tsunamis that are inherent with our telestial tour.

Not an easy task. But in the process of striving to do this, we not only ultimately assist in bringing about a celestialized earth, we also become like our Heavenly Father. And that, I believe, is what existence is all about.

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 104:12-18, 54-57 for example
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 104:16-18 and the whole Book of Mormon for example
3. See Jacob 2:17-19 for example
4. See Moses 7:48-49 for example

The Blessings Of The Fast Offering

Orange Stake 1974

BROTHERS AND SISTERS, IT is a pleasure to be in your ward this afternoon at the request of the Stake presidency. It is customary in our Stake to deliver a message on a subject assigned by the Stake presidency and my subject this afternoon is The Blessings of the Fast Offering. Brother Ted Money, the assistant stake executive secretary has provided much of the material for this talk and I would like to express my appreciation to him for his efforts. Several years ago a young married woman found herself confronted with almost insurmountable obstacles. Her husband was convicted of armed robbery and sentenced to state prison for 5 to 10 years. She had three children ranging in age from less than a year to 8 years old. She had no skills and no job training whatsoever. Yet, here she was with her husband in prison and herself facing the responsibility of raising and providing for her children. She had no family nor friends who could or would give assistance. It was about this time she was introduced to the church through her neighbors who were LDS She felt immediately the spirit of the church and a "good feeling" when she was around the members

She decided to take missionary lessons and after a rather extended period of time joined the church. She was sincere and had a true desire to conform her life to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And for her part she made a conscientious effort to fulfil her role as a daughter of God by faithfully attending meetings, developing spiritual habits of prayer, fasting and reading the scriptures; and in general striving to live a Christ-like life. You could see a miracle taking place in her life. There was a new, brighter light shining from her eyes; and purpose and dedication emanating from her actions. But she needed more help than this. And the church welfare program, that divinely inspired conduit of true charity, came into play. Fast offering funds were used to subsidized the meager cash resources she was able to accumulate through baby sitting and other unskilled jobs she was able to obtain.

Commodities, food, and clothing were provided through the Bishop's Storehouse. A much needed refrigerator was donated by a member of her ward, and the various priesthood organizations and ward auxiliaries did their part. The elders helped with plumbing needs and painted the house. The high priests provided carpeting. The teacher's quorum cleaned up her yard and

came every two weeks to mow her lawn and weed. The Relief Society provided her training in housekeeping and many sisters of the ward babysat her children while she visited her husband at the prison.

The effect these efforts had on the lives of the members of this family was inspiring. Both husband and wife were filled with new hope. The husband while in prison wrote the Bishop a beautiful, repentant and grateful letter expressing his love and appreciation to the members of the church for the help they had given his family. He indicated that he wanted to become a part of the church upon his release and that he desired to live a meaningful, productive life. He also emphasized his intentions to pay back the church for this true act of charity. Every single member of that ward who paid fast offerings was to a real extent responsible for the change that occurred in the lives of this young couple. And this is what the fast offering program is all about.

The fast offering program is founded upon the two basic principles of action operative in all inspired welfare programs:

1. Those who have are to give and;
2. Those who receive it are to work.

The obligation of the receiver to labor, to the extent of his ability, to sustain himself and dependents, is just as great in God's economy, as is the obligation to contribute to the care of the needy. When the Lord expelled Adam from Eden, he said: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground."¹

This divine command is still in force. In the revealed "Law of the Church", the Lord said in this dispensation, "Thou shalt not be idle: for he that is idle shall not eat the bread nor wear the garments of the laborer."² Later He added, "The idle shall not have place in the church, except he repent and mend his ways."³

As positive as is this commandment against idleness, a disregard by the receiver does not justify the church members in failing to impart their substance. We are warned: "Therefore, if any man shall take of the abundance which I made and impart not his portion, according to the Law of the Gospel, unto the poor and the needy, he shall, with the wicked, lift up his eyes in Hell, being in torment."⁴

The origin of the fast offering in the LDS church is very interesting. The winter of 1855-1856 was a critical period in the history of the church. Grasshoppers came in hordes to practically devour the crops of 1855 particularly south of Salt Lake City. (The seagulls had not managed to totally eliminate the grasshopper menace in 1848) A drouth came the same year to reduce the yield materially. The same winter was one of heavy immigration to Zion and of much migration

through Utah Territory by gold-seekers in route to California. A writer of the time gave this description:

"Measures were taken to supply those who were unable to furnish themselves. A fast day was proclaimed for the church on the first Thursday of each month, and the food saved in that way was distributed among the poor; and thousands of persons who had an abundance of bread put their families on rations, in order to save the same for those who could not otherwise obtain it. And so wise were the regulations during these periods of scarcity, incident upon settling the territory, that no one perished or even suffered materially for want of food."⁵

Brigham Young later described the formation of the fast offering program in these words: "You know that the first Thursday in each month we hold a fast day.. Before tithing was paid, the poor were supported by donations. They came to Joseph and wanted help, in Kirtland, and he said there should be a fast day, which was decided upon. It was to be held once a month as it is now, and all that would have been eaten that day, of flour, or meat, or butter, or fruit, or anything else, was to be carried to the fast meeting and put into the hands of a person selected for the purpose of taking care of it and distributing it among the poor. If we were to do this faithfully, do you think the poor would lack for flour, or butter, or cheese, or sugar, or anything they needed to eat? No, there would be more than could be used by all the poor among us. It is economy in us to take this course and do better by our poor brethren and sisters than they have hitherto been done. Let this be sent forth to the people, that on the first Thursday of each month, the fast day, all that would be eaten by husbands and wives and children and servants should put in the hands of the Bishop for the sustenance of the poor. I am willing to do my share as well as the rest, and if there are no poor in my ward, I am willing to divide with those wards where there are poor. (If you do this) You will find that we will possess more comfort and more peace in our hearts and our spirits will be buoyant and light, full of joy and peace."⁶

In Biblical times fasting was also practiced. As should be done today, the people were encouraged to use fasting as a means for building spirituality and helping the poor. Not as a means to show superiority over others. Isaiah warned Israel: "Is not this the fast I have chosen? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? When thou seest the naked thou cover him."⁷

"Today, the first Sunday of the month is set aside as fast day. It is expected that all members of the church, as far as possible, abstain at least from the morning and noon meals on that day. A sum of money equivalent to that saved by this abstinence should be given to the Bishop of the ward for the support of those in need."⁸ The fast offerings are used by the Bishop to help those in need in his ward. If the help can better be given in the form of commodities, the Bishop will write an order on the Bishop's storehouse, but if cash is needed, it comes from the fast offering fund. It may be used to pay some delinquent bills or some medical expense. Or, it may be used to purchase some items not available from the storehouse. If the ward does not need all the

funds collected, they are sent to the Stake at the end of the month for distribution to other wards in need. Any excess funds in the Stake are sent to Salt Lake City for redistribution.

How much should we pay as a fast offering? As much as you can afford, but not less than the cost of two meals for your family. If the average fast offering funds received are all that is spent for two meals, we either have a lot of people on diets or more people who need to go on welfare. The recent inflation has placed a severe strain on the fast offering resources of the church. We have been asked in this stake to double the average per capita contributions made last year in order to meet these increasing needs. I would like to challenge you to pay an honest, generous fast offering. The Lord has promised rich blessings to those who give fully and unselfishly of their offerings. And I can testify to you that through my own experiences in living the Law of Fast and giving of my substance I have been blessed.

The fast offering can and should be a religious experience. Prayer is always associated with fasting and should be a part of your family's fast day. Prayer and fasting will cultivate a spirit of humility so the gift can be given with the proper attitude.

The Law of the Fast and the fast offering were given by the Lord as a blessing to the church. Fasting builds character. Sufficient self—denial is engendered to cultivate self-control and also appreciation for the blessings of life. The fast offering is associated with the spirit of worship and public expression of faith and gratitude in the testimony meeting. It can become a religious experience and we learn to give in the true spirit of charity. The fast offering and related welfare plan, properly applied, will eliminate want and poverty in the church. The program is designed to help members to help themselves so that when the aid ceases, the recipients can care for themselves. Our idea of charity, therefore, is to relieve the present wants and then put the poor in a way to help themselves so that in turn they may help others.

And finally, we owe it to our Heavenly Father and to our fellowman to pay a generous fast offering. Let me read what King Benjamin told his people regarding their responsibilities to the poor: "For behold, are we not all beggars? Do we not all depend upon the same being, even God, for all the substance which we have? And now if God, who has created you, on whom you are dependent for your lives and for all that ye have and are, doth grant unto you whatsoever ye ask that is right, oh then, how ye ought to impart of the substance that ye have one to another."⁹

And even more than an obligation, our very salvation depends on our living this law: "And now, for the sake of these things which I have spoken unto you, That is, for the sake of retaining a remission of your sins from day to day, that ye may walk guiltless before God, I would that ye should impart of your substance to the poor, every man according to that which he hath."¹⁰

1. Genesis. 3:19

2. Doctrine and Covenants 42
3. Doctrine and Covenants 75: 29
4. Doctrine and Covenants 104: 18
5. The Religion of the Latter Day Saints, Lowell L. Bennion, 1940, p. 187
6. Journal of Discourses, v. 12, pp. 115-116
7. Isaiah 58:6-8
8. Priesthood and Church Government, John A. Widtsoe, 1954, p. 359
9. Mosiah 4:19, 21
10. Mosiah 4:26

Consecration and Idols

Orange Stake 1990s

SEVERAL YEARS AGO I became acquainted with a man who is a Biblical scholar and, who at the time I first met him, was a prominent Protestant minister. He subsequently left the ministry and over many months, we had a number of gospel conversations. He finally decided to take the missionary discussions. I contacted the missionaries in my ward, gave them some background and set up a time for them to teach him.

A few days before we were to meet, the senior companion called me. He was nervous and wanted to know how I thought they should handle the meeting. I suggested that they give their discussion like they would to anybody else and listen to the Spirit.

My response didn't seem to give him much comfort.

The day arrived and the elders did their best to look relaxed but were not too terribly successful. Finally my friend said, "Elders, before you begin I just want you to know that everything you are going to tell me, I already believe." There was almost an audible sigh of relief and the elders proceeded with renewed confidence.

After several meetings, the missionaries asked my friend for a commitment to be baptized. In the course of that presentation, they did not talk about the experience of Alma baptizing at the waters of Mormon. I felt impressed to read that passage to emphasize the covenant nature of baptism and of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

"And now as you are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another's burdens and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death, what have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with him, that ye will serve him and keep his commandments, that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon you?"¹

My friend pondered that passage for a moment. Then he said he would like to tell us about his understanding of covenants. He told us that during the time of the Old Testament, a covenant

was often made between one who was greater and one who was lesser. The greater usually had lands, flocks, servants and sufficient manpower to defend against potential enemies. The lesser had none or little of these things. He was weak and incapable of defending himself or his family. So he would enter into a covenant with the greater. For his part, the lesser would give up all that he had and become a steward to the greater. In exchange, the greater would make certain that the lesser had sufficient for his needs and he would protect him. The greater would bring the lesser into his own family and the lesser would be called after the name of the greater. To symbolize or seal this covenant, there was a ceremony. The greater would place a ring on the finger of the lesser. He would take a robe representing his family and place it upon the shoulders of the lesser. He would take a belt or sash and tie it around the waist of this steward who was being brought into his family and place shoes or slippers upon his feet. Then my friend with some emotion said, "I believe I understand covenants. When the time comes for me to be baptized, my covenant will mean that I too will give up things. Traditions, friends, a way of life, and even family. For covenant also means sacrifice."

Since that experience I have thought much about the covenants I have made with the Lord at baptism and in the temple. Particularly, I have reflected on what it means to "consecrate" to the Lord. I have read with interest statements made by some of the early leaders of the Church regarding this covenant.

"We are called with a special calling, and we have a special mission to perform. There is not a soul in this Church but it has a mission. We are called out of the world to be the people of the Lord, to be Saints of the Most High, to consecrate and dedicate ourselves body and soul, with all that we have - the fruits of the labors of our hands, the fruits of the efforts of our minds - to the work in which we are engaged, the work of the Great God in the earth, He (is) using us as instruments. This is the kind of people we are."²

"The best investments and bargains that you can make and the best thing you can do for yourselves here while in time and for eternity is to let the kingdom absorb all your interests and all that pertains to you. It is the best bargain that any son and daughter of Adam can make, to consecrate their time, their talents, and all that they possess to the advancement of the cause of our Redeemer."³

"We... covenanted before God, holy angels, and one another, that we would consecrate ourselves and all that we had to God, that we would follow his counsel and the counsel of his holy Priesthood in all things, temporal and spiritual. Well, what does it mean or what do any of these things mean. The ordinances, the priesthood, the gathering, temples, endowments and the light, intelligence and privileges that we have received from the hands of God? What do they mean? Are they a sacred reality that have emanated from God? Are they things in which our present, future and eternal happiness is concerned, or are they a mere phantasm? It seems

they are very little more to many, although, perhaps, the(y) appreciate them according to the best of their understanding, light and intelligence."⁴

It is possible that obedience to this principle of consecration may be what distinguishes one who is willing to abide in Zion from one who is not. "Anciently, the Zion of Enoch was made up of people who were of one heart and one mind and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them."⁵ These features have characterized the Lord's people who have accepted and applied the fulness of the gospel in their lives."⁶

In fact, the unwillingness on the part of many members of the church to keep this covenant may have prevented Zion from being established at Joseph Smith's time. There are a number of references to this by the early leaders of the church. For example, Brigham Young said, "No revelation that was ever given is more easy of comprehension than that on the law of consecration, which the Christians had acknowledged all their days, and we are all Christians by birth, and all believed that we owned nothing, but that all belonged to the Giver of all good. We believe in God the Father, and in His Son Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, and we believe that he was actually going to possess the earth, and reign with his people on the earth; that all is his, and forever will be. Yet, when the Lord spoke to Joseph, instructing him to counsel the people to consecrate their possessions, and deed them over to the Church in a covenant that cannot be broken, would the people listen to it? No, but they began to find out that they were mistaken and had only acknowledged with their mouths that the things which they possessed were the Lord's."⁷

This realization has triggered some rather intense introspection for me. Am I, in fact, striving to live this covenant I have made? My first thought, undoubtedly in an attempt to justify my status quo, was that the "formal" institution of the law of consecration in the Church was put on hold over a century ago² and I have to live in the "real world." I pay my tithing and offerings, I accept church callings, and I go to the temple. What more could I be doing? Yet the question would not leave. Am I living the law of consecration?

Then came other questions. How do I spend my time? How do I use my resources? Do I see these "possessions" as mine or His? Where is my mind and what usually occupies it? Where is my focus day in and day out?

Rather than seeing the law of consecration as a set of rules that have been set aside for a time by the Lord until we, as a Church, are capable of living them, I am beginning to see this law as applying to me here and now. It has to do with who I really am and what I desire to be. In essence, whether I choose to worship the true and living.

Will we worship God or idols? I believe the experience that Christ had with Satan following his forty day fast in the wilderness typifies our own struggle with who or what we will worship and, therefore, the part the law of consecration will play in our lives. After forty days of no food,

Christ was hungry. Starving, in fact. Satan's temptation was to try to get the Savior to worship the idol of physical gratification. "Use your power to make these stones bread. Use your power to satisfy your physical desires," Satan seemed to say. The Savior's reply: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God."

The Spirit took Christ to the top of a mountain "where he beheld all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time." Satan appeared and said, "All this power will I give unto thee, and the glory of them." The implication was clear. Make telestial treasures your priority and you can have them. Worship the idols of power and money. There was nothing ambivalent about the Savior's response: "Get thee behind me, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

Then came the most subtle and, at least for me, the most difficult challenge of all: The appeal to worship the idol of pride. The Spirit brought Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple at Jerusalem. Once again Satan appeared (doesn't he always?). "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down and you will be saved" (Emphasis added). There is no question what Satan was saying: "Concern yourself with how the world views you, prove that you are superior." Again Christ's response was simple and direct: "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."⁸

Unfortunately, my response to similar temptations that divert me from my covenants are not always so simple and direct. There are times, unlike the Savior, that I find I pay all too much heed to my temptations.⁹ And where my heart really is, seems to have much to do with how well I am keeping my covenant of consecration with the Lord. For consecration, I am finding, has much more to do with our "here-and-now" and our "day-to-day," than our hypotheticals or our tomorrows.

For example, I am convinced I would respond readily if the prophet asked me to turn over all of my property and money to the Church, and I think many of us would. But that probably will not happen in my lifetime. What our prophets since President Spencer W. Kimball have asked us to do (in addition to paying a full and honest tithe) is to pay a generous fast offering that may represent many times the cost of the two meals we go without on fast day. Paradoxically, that request, I suspect, turns out to be a real challenge to many of us, even among those who express willingness to deed over their properties to the Church if asked.

One reason for this is that the counsel is now. It is something I have to deal with today, not in the future and not in the hypothetical. In addition, I have to determine what I give, in essence, how much is enough? That puts "where my heart is" right on the line. This isn't so much demonstrated by the amount I pay (although it may be) as by the reason I pay it.

Do I view myself "as a steward over earthly blessings" that God has given me to manage on His behalf?¹⁰ Or do I see these possessions as mine because I have earned them and, therefore, can do with them as I please? I believe that the distinction between these two perspectives is what

the spirit of the law of consecration is all about. It is the difference between an Abel offering and a Cain offering.¹¹ And it is the difference between worshipping God and worshipping the idols of this world.

If I have a spirit of stewardship, I don't give the Lord what I have left over, I return to Him what is rightfully His, keeping for my own use only what is necessary to meet my "wants and needs."¹² And I see my stewardship as all encompassing, including not only my possessions, but my time and talents as well. The allocation of these resources becomes a deeply personal affair between me and the Lord. Only He knows with completeness what my stewardship and wants and needs are. Only He knows with certainty how I can best use what He has given me to magnify Him and bless His children.

I am learning to make these determinations on a daily basis by relying on His Spirit for guidance and by seeking, in line with my covenants, to offer my "whole soul" to Christ.¹³ And while the temptation to worship this world's idols is not totally eliminated as a result, I am finding that the very striving to keep my covenant of consecration brings me strength beyond my own.¹⁴ And the fact that I must do this with bills to pay, with job demands, with prideful struggles, with TVs and beaches and skis and grandkids and cruises and the unceasing allure of money, power and self-gratification all around me, helps to define who I really am and who I want to be.

Elder Erastus Snow, a 19th century apostle counseled: "We are called to set our hearts upon the living God, who has called us to be his people, and to worship him with full purpose of heart. If he gives us houses and lands, goods and chattels, gold and silver and the precious things of the earth, receive them with thanksgiving, and hallow and sanctify them and dedicate and consecrate them to the building up of Zion, the preaching of his Gospel to the ends of the earth, and the accomplishment of the great work, whereunto God has called us in the latter days."¹⁵

Perhaps to live the law of consecration is simply to take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ; to act in His behalf, using whatever He has given us to magnify Him. As I have tried to do this, I have found peace, I have found joy, and I have felt of His presence.

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1. Mosiah 18:8-10
 2. Penrose, Charles W. Journal of Discourses 25:227
 3. Wells, Daniel H. Journal of Discourses 9:84
 4. Taylor, John. Journal of Discourses 18:201
 5. Moses 7:18)

6. Hirschi, Frank W. "Law of Consecration." In *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 1:312. New York, New York, 1992
7. *Journal of Discourses* 2:305
8. See JST Luke 4:1-13
9. See *Doctrine and Covenants* 20:22
10. See *Doctrine and Covenants* 104:13-18
11. See *Moses* 5:17-23
12. See *Doctrine and Covenants* 51:3
13. See *Omni* 1:26
14. See *Ether* 12:27 and *Moroni* 10:32-33
15. *Journal of Discourses* 16:208

The Law Of Consecration And The Law Of Sacrifice

Orange Stake 1980s

WE ARE FAMILIAR WITH the terms The Law of Consecration and The Law of Sacrifice. Those of us who have received our endowments recognize these as laws we have specifically and solemnly covenanted to obey, Although not mentioned by name, obedience to these laws forms the basis of the oath and covenant of the priesthood as described in the 84th section of the Doctrine and Covenants. The obedience to these two laws is part of the covenant we made with the Lord when we were baptized, and which we renew as we partake of the sacrament,

The Law of Consecration as it applies to us in this day is that we do consecrate our time, our talents and all that the Lord has or will bless us with to the Kingdom of God here on earth. We dedicate our possessions and abilities to His work and make available to Him, without restriction or limitation, all that we have, the quantity and substance of the requirement to be determined by Him through His appointed leaders here on the earth. With this covenant there is an implicit recognition that “the earth is the Lord’s and the fulness thereof,” All that we have, we have been given, We have been appointed stewards over a portion of the Lord’s possessions, The acceptance of the Law of Consecration is the recognition of and acceptance of this fact and embodies our willingness to serve as obedient, diligent stewards to whatever extent and in whatever capacity we are called,

When one understands this principle, he becomes aware that the church is not a volunteer organization, One does not volunteer for a position in the Church of Jesus Christ. He is called 0 The difference between the two processes is fundamental to the genius and ultimate success of the Kingdom of God here on this earth. A volunteer retains the decision as to how much of his time or how much of his resources he will use in accomplishing the specific task he has volunteered to undertake. He is under no obligation to go any further than he wants to go.

When one Who has solemnly promised to live the Law of Consecration is called by one of the Lord’s representatives to assume a position in the kingdom, to perform an assigned task

or to supply material resources, he approaches that calling with a vastly different attitude, The amount of time he will devote to performing his assigned task and the amount of effort he will put forth will be determined by the position/calling itself and what it will require, He will do what is necessary to magnify that calling and all that that implies. To do less is to break his covenant with his Heavenly Father.

The Lord has told us, “Oh ye that embark in the service of God, (that is you that have made this covenant with Him), see that ye serve Him with all your heart, might, mind and strength, that ye may stand blameless before God at the last day.”¹ We can reasonably conclude that if we do not serve with all of our “heart, might, mind and strength” we will not be held blameless before Him. The Lord delineates clearly in The Doctrine and Covenants what He means by serving with all your heart, might, mind and strength. First, He says, we must be qualified for the work, He doesn't require of us that we necessarily be wealthy or that we have an advanced education or that we possess outstanding talents and abilities, But He did say, “If you have good desires, a desire to lay up treasures for yourself in heaven, then shall you assist.”² “And faith, hope, charity and love, with an eye single to the glory of God, qualif(ies) (you) for the work.”³

If we are willing to be not of the world, if we are willing to place our future in the hands of the Lord, if we truly desire to serve others and if we can throw aside our own vain ambitions to work for His glory and His purpose then we are called to the work.

In the 4th section of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord outlines what else is required in order for us to magnify our callings. Faith heads the list. Faith is a spiritual, motivating force based upon an anticipated, unseen, future result, We are thus expected to be motivated by the anticipation of future rewards, Rewards that are seemingly intangible; rewards that are somewhat generally defined; and rewards that are spiritual in nature, The degree of faith we exhibit is, therefore, a manifestation of our desires and our willingness to rely upon the Lord and His promises to the faithful,

Virtue is another requirement. “Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distill upon thy soul as the dews from heaven.”⁴

We cannot feel comfortable doing the Lord's work if we are not keeping His commandments. We cannot utilize the power of the priesthood in our callings if we are not righteous, “(For) the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness.”⁵

Knowledge is necessary if we are to magnify our callings. We have been told plainly how we gain Knowledge. “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.”⁶

When we have begun our search for knowledge in this manner we will receive it through the words of His representatives here on the earth, through the words of other wise men; through our own experiences, and through personal revelation. The amount of wisdom we harvest from each of these sources is dependent on the effort we exert in obtaining knowledge through that source, and the degree to which we have trained our spiritual eyes to see and our spiritual ears to hear, It is inconceivable that any one of us could possibly magnify our calling without learning all we can about what that calling entails. "Oh let every man learn his duty (commanded the Lord)... And he that learns not his duty shall not, be counted worthy to stand."⁷

Temperance is another requisite. Balance and moderation are synonyms for temperance, We must keep our lives on an even keel. We must take care of ourselves physically and mentally as well as spiritually. We must have times of relaxation as well as times of work. We must avoid fanaticism and fetishes.

Patience is yet another requirement, As the Lord was sending out His apostles to preach the gospel, He warned them of the trials and tribulations they would be called to undergo. "You will be persecuted," He told them. "You will be cast into prisons, you will be betrayed by parents and brethren and relatives and friends, And some of you will be put to death for my name's sake." And then He said simply, "In your patience possess ye your souls."⁸

Do not anger, do not lose courage when there seems no end to your problems and difficulties. Self-control and perseverance are God-like qualities that must be developed, and can only be developed under trying circumstances.

Brotherly kindness is another attribute mentioned by the Lord. Tolerance for others is the mark of a wise steward. The recognition that all of us are learning, that each of us are at different levels of growth will temper our reaction to "less than perfect" performances by those serving under us, which will in turn lace the Lord's judgment of us and our performance with the same degree of mercy. "Let every man esteem his brother as himself; (for) if ye are not one ye are not mine."⁹

Godliness is also necessary if we are to truly live the Law of Consecration. Godliness is the recognition that we are sons and daughters of God; that His seed is in us; and that we are here to learn to become as He is. This Divine awareness must be reflected in our carriage, our speech, our thoughts and our actions.

Humility is closely tied to the attribute of godliness. An awareness of who we are is at once an elevating and a humbling thought, To see where we are in relation to where we can be should be a motivation for us to be teachable, unprideful and grateful for the mercies of the Lord.

Charity is yet another quality we must possess as we magnify our calling. Charity is an attitude, We must be doing the right things for the right reasons because we love our Heavenly Father and we love our fellowmen, Mormon makes it plain that "a man being evil cannot do that which is good; for if he offereth a gift, or prayeth unto God except he shall do it with real intent it

profiteth him nothing. ...For behold, if a man being evil giveth a gift, he doeth it grudgingly; wherefore it is counted unto him the same as if he had retained the gift, wherefore he is counted evil before God."¹⁰

Diligence is the Lord's concluding requirement. He has told us, "I give unto you a commandment that every man, both elder, priest, teacher and also member, go to with his might, with the labor of his hands, to prepare and accomplish the things which I have commanded."¹¹

Condensed into a single word, the Lord is telling us we must work. To labor with our might means we work, plain and simple. To be diligent also means we go the extra mile. "It is not meet that I should command in all things (said the Lord); for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful servant. Men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause and do many things of their own free will... But he that doeth not anything until he is commanded, is damned."¹²

To live the Law of Consecration means, then, that we are but the stewards of the Lord's possessions and that we desire to serve Him with all of our heart, might, mind and strength, That with an eye single to His glory we seek to magnify our callings through faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, godliness, charity, humility and diligence.

Now the Law of Sacrifice is closely tied to the Law of Consecration and is that we are willing to sacrifice all that we have, including our lives if necessary for the upbuilding of the Lord's kingdom. We are willing to allow ourselves to suffer mentally, financially, physically, emotionally and to be pained spiritually if by doing so it will contribute to the furthering of the Lord's work. To sacrifice means to give up something of a desirable nature. Why is sacrifice necessary? Because it is the ultimate manifestation of God-like selflessness, or charity, the pure love of Christ. To give up personal comforts and pleasures to meet the needs of others is precisely what being a god is all about.

Again our great Exemplar is Jesus Christ. His avowed purpose like that of His Father, is purely altruistic in nature, to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of His Father's children. He realized the personal sacrifice that was involved and He was willing to pay the price. "(For). Christ (did) come among the children of men to take upon Him the transgressions of His people and (to) atone for the sins of the world. For it (was) expedient that an atonement should be made; for according to the great plan of the Eternal God there must be an atonement made, or else all mankind must unavoidably perish. Ye all are fallen and are lost and must perish except it be through the atonement which it is expedient should be made. For it is expedient that there should be a great and last sacrifice...an infinite and eternal sacrifice. For there can be nothing which is short of an infinite atonement which will suffice for the sins of the world. ...And that great and last sacrifice (was) the Son of God, yea infinite and eternal, And thus He shall bring salvation to all those who shall believe on His name; this being the intent of this last sacrifice."¹³

Christ is our shadow and type. Prior to His atonement, this principle of sacrifice was symbolized by an altar offering of the first fruits of the flocks or fields so that the children of Israel could physically feel what it meant to give something of value for a more sublime end. The Law of Sacrifice as it applied to altar offerings was done away with after Christ's atonement. A new sacrifice was required of the Lord. s elect: "Ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit."¹⁴ Meaning that we were to develop a compassion and love toward our fellowmen and Jesus Christ of such great intensity, that whatever we might be called upon to do by the Lord through His appointed servants, whatever we might be called upon to give up to build up the kingdom, or whatever sacrifice we might have to make to bring about the salvation of the Lord to His children (including our own salvation) we would be willing to do it.

By living the principle of sacrifice, Jesus became a God. Shouldn't i t we expect to abide by this same principle if we are to be as He is? Referring to His own sufferings and sacrifices He has said, "The Son of Man hath descended below them alle Art thou greater than He?"¹⁵

The Law of Consecration and the Law of Sacrifice are Divine laws, the obedience of which is required of all those who would enter the presence of the Lord. For He has said, "If you will that I give unto you a place in the celestial world, you must prepare yourselves by doing the things which I have commanded you and required of you."¹⁶

And then with full understanding of our fleshly limitations and conditions, He made this promise, "I say unto you, ye are little children, and ye have not as yet understood how great blessings the Father hath in His own hands and prepared for you; and ye cannot bear all things now; nevertheless, be of good cheer, for I will lead you along. The kingdom is yours and the blessings thereof are yours, and the riches of eternity are yours. And he who receiveth all things with thankfulness shall be made glorious; and the things of this earth shall be added unto him, even an hundred fold, yea more. Wherefore, do the things which I have commanded you, saith your Redeemer.... And he that is a faithful and wise steward shall inherit all things."¹⁷

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1. Doctrine and Covenants 4: 2
 2. Doctrine and Covenants 6:27
 3. Doctrine and Covenants 4: 5
 4. Doctrine and Covenants 121: 45
 5. Doctrine and Covenants 121:36
 6. James 1:5-6

7. Doctrine and Covenants 107:99-100
8. Luke 21:19
9. Doctrine and Covenants 38:25
10. Moroni 7: 6-8
11. Doctrine and Covenants 38: 140
12. Doctrine and Covenants 58: 26—29
13. Alma 34:3-15
14. 2 Nephi 9:20
15. Doctrine and Covenants 122:8
16. Doctrine and Covenants 78: 7
17. Doctrine and Covenants 78: 17-22

Consecration

Romania 2007

IT IS COLD HERE (Ploiesti, Romania). Very cold. At least for us. Morning temperatures are in the teens and sometimes it doesn't get any higher than mid 20's during the day. That may not seem too cold to some of you. But when you are walking 3 to 5 miles a day in it, it is pretty cold. Last Tuesday morning as I got out of my shower, Joyce called me over to the window overlooking the garbage area (We are on the 7th floor). And there sat a little woman in rags by a fire she had made from the paper and cardboard she found in the garbage bins. The temperature was in the teens and my heart was broken. I decided I was going to break a mission rule – to not give to the beggars who are plentiful here. I guess technically, she wasn't begging – just sitting by her little fire trying to keep from freezing to death.

I dressed quickly and took some garbage with me to throw in the bin. And then walked over to this woman and handed her three 10 lei bills – about \$12. That is many times what is normally given. She just looked at it as if she couldn't believe it. Mom was watching as I walked away and she said the woman just kept looking at me and crossing herself. As I took the elevator up to our apartment I began to think about the surprise gift that we had received last night when I discovered large insurance commissions had been deposited into our account, hundreds of times more than what I had given to this woman. In relationship to that, I had given her nothing.

And as I came into our lovely apartment with its warmth and furnishings and food and kitchen range and oven and refrigerator and bathroom and hot and cold running water and bedroom and comfortable bed and me dressed in my warm overcoat and waterproof shoes I just broke down and wept. And wept. This woman and all of the countless ones like her here in Romania and throughout the world are, like me, a child of God. My brother and my sister. And for whatever reason, they have nothing of this world's goods. Often times not even enough to survive.

And me...

And I was overwhelmed with the feeling that I had no right whatsoever to take or use more of the bounties of this earth than what is sufficient for my needs. And that everything I have ever been given or will be given belongs to the Lord and I have, by covenant, the responsibility to use it as He would use it if He were where I am, doing what I am doing. And I was saddened by how inadequately at times I have done this.

The great equalizer, of course, is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Our time here on this earth is so very fleeting. To know who we are and to be striving to become who we are capable of becoming through the Savior's grace is all that ever counts. The warm coats and the comfortable bed and the bank accounts and the fires made out of paper and cardboard from the trash bins will all pass away. And all that will be left is who we have become. A result of who we have *wanted* to become. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ that makes sense of all of this. And without it, there is nothing.

Letting the Church Bless our Lives

Orange Stake Early 2000s

THE LORD GIVES TO His Church through His prophets doctrines, and commandments relative to those doctrines. For the most part these doctrines and commandments are contained within the Standard Works of the Church that the body of the Church has voted on and sustained as representing the mind and will of the Lord. That means then that every person by becoming a member of the Church, likewise, sustains these doctrines and agrees to abide by these commandments and that all leaders are to teach and testify of them.

From time to time additional revelations are received by the prophet that has to do with doctrine and/or commandments and when that occurs, the body of the Church will have the opportunity to sustain it. For example the revelation on priesthood in 1978, or the Proclamation to the World on the Family in about 1995. This becomes scripture and is binding on the whole Church. In some instances there is a good deal of specificity in these declarations. In other instances, not so much. The Lord really does allow us to work out our own salvation and our understanding of doctrine increases as our own proximity to the Lord increases. So certain doctrines can mean different things to different people depending on their understanding and closeness to the Spirit.

In some instances, the First presidency has felt it important to give to the Church more specifics concerning a doctrine or commandment than was included in the actual revelation. For example, the First presidency has defined “hot drinks” in the word of wisdom (Doctrine and Covenants 89) to be coffee and tea – because they contain caffeine. Those specific drinks were not mentioned in the original revelation. And because they have done that, the whole Church is responsible to abstain from the use of coffee and tea that contain caffeine, just as they are to abstain from the use of tobacco or alcohol.

In essence, the Lord has spoken through his prophet to specifically bind the Church to a particular action that is required if we are to consider ourselves keepers of the Word of Wisdom. But importantly, there are many aspects of the Word of Wisdom where there is no definitive word from the Lord to the Church and *where each member must determine for his or her self*

what behavior constitutes abiding by the Word of Wisdom. And that determination can come by the Spirit and according to the level of understanding the individual may have of the doctrines of the restored gospel.

For the time being the Lord is saying, “Other than what I have specifically given you in this revelation and through my prophets as clarification, it is an individual choice as to how to “interpret” what I have given you as far as a guide for how you live. For example, If the reason we aren’t to drink coffee and tea is because it contains caffeine, should the cola drinks be prohibited too? Or what about “eating meat sparingly?” Or what about hunting wild animals? The Lord has left the answering of those questions up to us as individuals.

Another example is keeping the Sabbath holy. There are a few specific things the Lord has included in that commandment as a guide as to what we should be doing.¹ But He clearly doesn’t want us to become Pharisaic about this or He would have given us more details as to what we should and what we shouldn’t do on the Sabbath. The Lord wants us to figure this out for ourselves based upon our own level of understanding and commitment.

Now I’ll share with you how Joyce and I view each of these two commandments and what we decided as a family to do about them *in addition to what was specifically mentioned in the revelations that contain the commandments*. With respect to the Word of Wisdom, among other things we never had cola drinks in our home and we chose to eat meat sparingly. We abhorred hunting. With respect to the Sabbath day, we decided that we would not watch television (other than conference or a Church broadcast) on that day as we felt it brought the world into our home on a day we were striving to come out of the world. We never watched video movies, etc. We did not allow our children to go over to the neighbors to play nor have the neighbors over to our house to play with our children, because we felt that Sunday should be a family day, a time for uniting our family.

For us, what we did relative to the Word of Wisdom and what we did relative to the keeping the Sabbath day holy, were absolutely the right things to do. It blessed our family in so many ways. As a result of what we did, for example, our children who are grown and have their own families now are still each other’s best friends. And most of them (not all of them) have continued to view these principles in the way we interpreted them.

As strongly as we felt about what we were doing, I *never* preached this over the pulpit in my 40+ years of leadership in the Church. And I never insisted that others look at this the same way we looked at it. Why? Because I understood that it was a matter for each person to decide. If the Lord wanted it otherwise He would have had His prophet tell us. Joyce and I feel we were absolutely right in doing what we did. But we knew that that revelation was for us. Others would have to receive their own revelation.

As a priesthood leader as far as what I would expect of the members under my jurisdiction, I felt the responsibility to not go beyond the policies, doctrines and commandments that were declared or interpreted by the Brethren in the scriptures, in the Church Handbook of Instructions, and other documents and communications sent out by the First presidency -- my own views on things notwithstanding. On the other hand, when I was counseling someone and I felt impressed to do so, I would share with them my views but not seek in any way to impose those views on the other person. I sincerely believe that that is the way the Lord would want it.

Following the Counsel of our Church Leaders

As a result of my experience in the Church I believe that no principle is more important than this one. The willingness of any leader called in the Church to follow the counsel and direction of his or her file leader is what allows the Church to function as it does. A spirit of cooperation and submissiveness was demonstrated by the Savior. He continually stated that He sought to do the Father's will, not His own. How many times, for example, has he counseled us to be as a little child and to have a broken heart and a contrite spirit?

Our willingness, as leaders, to follow this pattern and to be submissive to those who are called to be our leaders, literally brings the Spirit to our call and brings order to the Church. Are we to blindly obey? No. Are we to obey when we believe our file leader is wrong or that there is a better way of doing it than what he is saying? Yes. It is appropriate, however, to discuss with him our feelings. And if he decides to continue with that which we disagree with, we should obey.

There is one possible exception here. If our file leader is asking us to do something that is clearly in conflict with a commandment or doctrine *unmistakably* delineated in the scriptures, or policy stated in the Handbook of Instructions, or declared as policy by the Brethren, then we have the right and responsibility to question it with our file leader. If our file leader decides to proceed anyway and we *feel strongly* about it being in violation of what the Brethren are intending, then we are justified in going directly to the file leader of our file leader. They can take it from there and we have done what we need to do. Whatever that leader counsels us to do, we should do.

When our file leader makes a decision that we disagree with does it mean that we should change our mind about it and agree with it? Not necessarily. But following the principles of submissiveness and Church order, we need to sustain that decision and support it so there will be harmony in the Church.

There are two important associated principles here, I believe.

1. Whenever we correct someone (or disagree with a file leader) it should always be in the spirit of love. And if we have felt impressed to use "sharpness" we must always follow

that with an increase of love so they will know our real intent was pure and for their benefit.²

2. We should always recognize and be conscious of the agency of others. The instruction and direction to us by the Brethren is always by way of invitation, not by way of demand. Those who are submissive and desirous of following the Spirit will also follow their invitation. Those who aren't won't. In their kind direction the agency of man is acknowledged and honored.

Being Patient with Leaders and with Ourselves

We are learning to be like Jesus Christ and that is hard. He is our type and shadow. He is our pattern. And His life on this earth was terribly difficult. So we are going to be challenged every step of the way including with our own imperfectness and the imperfectness of those around us. That's just the way it is. That is the way we become like the Savior. And part of the challenge comes in being faithful in Church involvement. Being faithful in going to Church, partaking of the sacrament and sustaining the other members and leaders. And being faithful in our own service. It is hard – especially when we sometimes see imperfect leaders and imperfect saints. And for me there have been a number of times I have just had to face myself and say, “I could have done better than I did here. Please help me Father to be better.” And then move on. The letting go of things that distract us from doing all that we know we should be doing is part of the process. We need to do that and get on with becoming like our Heavenly Father.

For Joyce and me, we look back over our years with its sometime frustrations and challenges and are so grateful for our consistent decision to be faithful and true. We can testify that it is all worth it. We look at a posterity now that for the most part are true and faithful and being of service in the Church of Jesus Christ. Who have made covenants and are striving to keep those covenants. And we are filled with joy and peace. We are absolutely certain that our decision to be faithful has affected our posterity in the most wonderful ways and as a result *our whole family* is united and filled with love. And it is becoming an eternal family. Importantly peace has been with us. And, I believe, we are learning to love as the Savior loved.

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 59 for example

2. Doctrine and Covenants 121:43

Keeping Our Covenant to Live the Law of Consecration

Orange Stake 1990

I HAVE THOUGHT MUCH about the covenants that I have made with the Lord at baptism and in the temple. Particularly about my covenant to live the law of consecration, and I have reflected on scriptures in the Doctrine and Covenants that apply to me here. "For it is expedient that I, the Lord, should make every man accountable, as a steward over earthly blessings, which I have made and prepared for my creatures I, the Lord... built the earth, my very handiwork; and all things therein are mine. And it is my purpose to provide for my saints, for all things are mine. But it must needs be done in mine own way; and behold this is the way that I, the Lord, have decreed to provide for my saints, that the poor shall be exalted, in that the rich are made low. For the earth is full, and there is enough and to spare Therefore, if any man shall take of the abundance which I have made, and impart not his portion, according to the law of my gospel, unto the poor and the needy, he shall, with the wicked, lift up his eyes in hell, being in torment."¹

"And again, a commandment I give unto you concerning your stewardship which I have appointed unto you. Behold, all these properties are mine, or else your faith is vain, and ye are found hypocrites, and the covenants which ye have made unto me are broken; And if the properties are mine, then ye are stewards."²

"Behold, this is what the Lord requires of every man in his stewardship, even as I, the Lord, have appointed or shall hereafter appoint unto any man. And behold, none are exempt from this law who belong to the church of the living God."³

As I have pondered these things, I have come to see the law of consecration as a great separator. The obedience to this law is what distinguishes one who is willing and able to abide in Zion and one who is not. In fact, it was the unwillingness on the part of most members of the church to abide this law that kept Zion from being established at Joseph Smith's time. I am coming to understand that to live the law of consecration is not just to abide by a set of rules and laws. It

has to do with who we really are and what we desire to be. It has to do with choosing to worship the true and living God or worshiping the idols of this world.

"For behold, God hath said a man being evil cannot do that which is good; for if he offereth a gift, or prayeth unto God, except he shall do it with real intent it profiteth him nothing. For behold, it is not counted unto him for righteousness."⁴ Where our heart is, is what the law of consecration is all about. "And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, thou knowest the commandments. Do not commit adultery, do not kill, do not steal, do not bear false witness, defraud not, honour thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, one thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions."⁵

But with us, of course, it is different isn't it? For we have covenanted to live the law of consecration. We have made that decision. We know that all that we possess is the Lords, and if the prophet asked us to turn over all of our property and money to the church, we would gladly do it. But, on the other hand, what do we think about his appeal for the members of the church to pay a generous fast offering that may represent many times the cost of the two meals we go without?

We know that our time belongs to the Lord. That's what we 've promised. If He wants us to serve him full time for the rest of our lives we will do it. Why, if we were to receive a phone call today from President Hinkley calling us as a full time officer in the church we would go. Oh, it would mean some sacrificing all right. We'd have to sell our home and we would have to wind up our business affairs. But we would go. But, on the other hand, what about our home teaching? Our church callings? Holding prayer and scripture reading and family nights with our families? Well, we of course, do our best. We've got to make a living you know. We've got to get ahead. It's important to be successful and we're doing this for our family. And when we make enough, we'll be able to spend all of our time serving the Lord, and we'll have gobs of time for our family too.

We will go anywhere the Lord wants us to go. We've told Him we would. We are even willing to move permanently to Jackson County. All the prophet needs to do is ask, and we're on our way. But, on the other hand, what about his current plea for mature couples to serve a 12 month or 18 month mission? Well, of course, our case is a little different. We've got the home to worry about and the grandkids and we've worked hard and all and the Lord's not going to fault us for taking things a bit easy now. Maybe down the road things will be a little different.

The actual timing of the implementation of the law of consecration in our individual lives seems to have always been the problem with us saints. For some reason, we never think that that time is now. We think of our covenant here as only applying to hypotheticals and ifs" and the future. But that's not the way it is at all. The law, which is a celestial law, is given to us to learn how to become one with God here in our terrestrial state. With babies crying around us, with bills to pay, with job demands, with prideful struggles, with TV's and beaches and grandkids and cruises and money. For you can buy anything in this world for money. The law of consecration is to be written in our hearts. Our willingness to abide this covenant that we have made in sacred places is reflected every day of our lives by how we choose to use the time and talent and resources the Lord has given to us.

To exist is to choose. And the fundamental choice is to serve God or the gods of this world. In the preface to the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord speaking to many of us who are members of the church warned,. "They have strayed from mine ordinances and have broken mine everlasting covenant; they seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own God, whose image is in the likeness of the world, and whose substance is that of an idol, which waxeth old and shall perish in Babylon.. e which shall fall."⁶

On the other hand, to abide by the law of consecration is to take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ. To do all that we do, in His name. As we come to understand our stewardship relationship to Jesus Christ and choose to use these gifts to serve our fellowmen in His name, we will have peace; and we will have the sweet joy that only comes when we are in the service of our God. For the promise is, "we will retain a remission of our sins from day to day and will walk guiltless before God."⁷ We will "be blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual." We will be "received into heaven" and "dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness."⁸ "Wherefore, lift up thy heart and rejoice, and cleave unto the covenants which thou hast made."⁹

1. Doctrine and Covenants 104 : 13-18

2. Doctrine and Covenants 104:54-56

3. Doctrine and Covenants 70: 7-10

4. Moroni 7:6-7

5. Mark 10: 17-22

6. Doctrine and Covenants 1: 14-16

7. Mosiah 4:26

8. Mosiah 3:41

9. Doctrine and Covenants 25: 13

Coming Unto Christ Through Living The Law Of Tithing

Orange Stake 1988

I LOVE THE CHRISTMAS season. The spirit of kindness and compassion; of giving and comforting ; of thanksgiving and cooperation, at least for a brief time, becomes the rule among the peoples of the western world, rather than the exception. As we draw our thoughts to Christ and all that He represents, the pattern of our own lives fits a little closer to His Divine example. And for us, His promise of Peace and Joy becomes a greater reality. Each commandment that we keep; each Divine law we willingly obey brings us ever closer to that state of ultimate freedom that He desires for each of us: a Oneness with Him and our Father in Heaven.

One such commandment is particularly on our minds this time of year because we are called to an accounting regarding it by our bishop. That, of course, is the law of tithing. And the accountability comes in our scheduled tithing settlement meeting with him. For the few minutes I have this morning, I would like to talk about the blessing of tithing and how our willingness to pay a full and honest tithe will bring us unto Christ.

By consistently paying a full tithe we become ever more aware of our steward relationship to God. "For it is expedient that I, the Lord, should make every man accountable, as a steward over earthly blessings, which I have made and prepared for my creatures. I, the Lord, stretched out the heavens, and built the earth, my very handiwork; and all things therein are mine. And it is my purpose to provide for my saints, for all things are mine. But it must needs be done in mine own way; and behold this is the way that I, the Lord, have decreed to provide for my saints, that the poor shall be exalted, in that the rich are made low. For the earth is full, and there is enough and to spare; yea, I prepared all things, and have given unto the children of men to be agents unto themselves. Therefore, if any man shall take of the abundance which I have made, and impart not his portion, according to the law of my gospel, he shall, with the wicked, lift up his eyes in hell, being in torment ... And again, a commandment I give unto you concerning your stewardship which I have appointed unto you. Behold, all these properties are mine, or else your faith is vain, and ye are found hypocrites, and the covenants which ye have made unto

me are broken; And if the properties are mine, then ye are stewards... And let not any among you say that it is his own; for it shall not be called his, nor any part of it.”¹

To fully recognize this stewardship role is, of course, to live fully the law of consecration. To live fully the law of consecration is to become one with Jesus Christ. The law of tithing is given to us to assist us in learning to live the law of consecration and is, indeed, part and parcel of that law.

Elder James Talmage wrote the following: "As the matter presents itself to my mind, it is as though there had been a contract made between myself and the Lord, and that in affect he had said to me—you have need of many things in this world, food, clothing, and shelter for your family and yourself. The common comforts of life, and the things that shall be conducive to refinement, to development, to righteous enjoyment.

"You desire material possessions to use for the assistance of others and thereby gain greater blessings for yourself and yours. Now, you shall have the means of acquiring these things, but remember they are mine, and I require of you the payment of a rental upon that which I give into your hands. However, your life will not be one of uniform increase in substance and possessions; you will have your losses, as well as your gains; you will have your periods of trouble as well as your times of peace. Some years will be years of plenty unto you, and others will be years of scarcity And now instead of doing as mortal landlords do require you to contract with them to pay in advance, whatever your fortunes or your prospects may be you shall pay me, not in advance, but when you have received; and you shall pay me in accordance with what you receive. If it so be that in one year your income is abundant, then you can afford to pay me a little more; and if it so be that the next year is one of distress and your income is not what it was, then you shall pay me less; and should it be that you are reduced to the utmost penury so that you have nothing coming in, you will pay me nothing.

“Have you ever found a landlord on earth who was willing to make that kind of a contract with you? When I consider the liberality of it all, and the consideration that my Lord has had for me, I feel in my heart that I could scarcely raise my countenance to His heaven above if I tried to defraud Him out of that just rental. Consider further how therein and thereby he has provided that even the humblest may receive abundantly of the blessings of his house. The wealth of heaven is not reserved for the rich people of earth; even the poorest may be a stockholder in the great corporation of our God, organized for the carrying on of his purposes, in spreading the gospel, in the building of temples and other houses of worship to his name, and in doing good to all mankind.”²

One of the great blessings of living the law of tithing, therefore, is to become aware of our stewardship role in relationship to God. To become aware that we don't give God anything. Everything is already His. We simply return to Him that which He requests. And as we

demonstrate this willingness on our part to serve as a faithful and just steward, we in fact participate with Him in bringing about His eternal purposes.

Another blessing of living the law of tithing is that we learn the principle of sacrifice. To become one with Christ requires the ultimate sacrifice of us losing ourselves in Him — to offer our whole souls as an offering unto Him (Omni 1:26). This is the sacrifice of a broken heart and a contrite spirit. This follows the example of the Savior Himself, for "he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law But in order for His sacrifice to have an effect in our lives we too must sacrifice our whole souls to Him, for His sacrifice applies "unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit and unto none else."³

In one sense, our paying tithing is symbolic of our willingness to give up the world; to subject the flesh to the spirit; to forgo earthly pleasures and conveniences as a witness to our Heavenly Father that we are willing to lose ourselves in Him. In another sense, it is the very embodiment of the sacrifice of a broken heart and a contrite spirit. As we give to the Lord a substantial portion of our material increase in the form of tithing, in essence in a real sense, putting our financial and material salvation in His hands, we are in fact putting our own pride on the sacrificial alter. This is precisely what the sacrifice of a broken heart and contrite spirit is all about.

Obviously, the mere act of paying a full tithe is not sufficient to bring us to the Savior. President David O. McKay advised, "Tithing should not be given with a selfish end in view. A man who pays tithing just to keep his name on the record will receive his reward, of course; he will have his name on the record. Verily, he hath his reward, as the man who prayed to be seen and heard of men. But he who gives because he loves to help others and to further the cause of righteousness, who gives cheerfully with thanksgiving in his heart, also has his reward; for in giving he is really obtaining. In losing his life for Christ's sake, he finds it."⁴

I am aware of an individual who because of severe business losses one year, literally had a large gross negative income. His business losses that he was personally responsible for, far exceeded his total income. He had to borrow substantially just to put food on the table and keep a roof over his family. When it came time to go to tithing settlement he was concerned about what he should do. He had always paid a full and honest tithe. He knew that by any measure, he owed no tithing, but yet to declare himself a full tithe payer without paying any tithing seemed more than a little incongruous. And he was concerned about what his bishop and even his stake president would think of him. His first thought was to pay something just to save face. But after pondering and praying he knew that the right thing to do was to live both the letter and spirit of the law of tithing. He went to tithing settlement. The bishop looked at the blank space on his tithing record and asked, "Are you a full tithe payer?" And the answer was, "Yes." And so he was.

Over the years that brother has paid a substantial amount of tithing, but at no time has his sacrifice been so great and so meaningful as the year he paid no tithing at all and honestly declared himself to be a full tithe payer. For it was that year that he put his pride on the sacrificial altar. It was that year that he offered up to the Lord a broken heart and a contrite spirit.

Both Abel and Cain submitted offerings to the Lord. "And Abel "brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering; but unto Cain, and to his offering, he had not respect" And why? Because "Cain loved Satan more than God," we are told; and Cain made his offering to appease Satan, not to please God.⁵ Likewise if our offerings are made to satisfy pride or vain ambition, verily we likewise have our reward. But if our offerings in fact represent our broken heart and contrite spirit, then the promise is that His grace is sufficient for us.⁶

There is one other blessing of tithing that I would like to touch upon. The first principle of the gospel is faith. One aspect of faith is our willingness to rely upon the word of God without really knowing what the outcome will be but hoping that it will be as He said it would be. Such a willingness on our part to obey without full knowledge is key to coming unto Christ. And the law of tithing provides each of us with an ideal opportunity to develop the quality of faith in our lives.

First of all the Lord has pronounced a very specific blessing for those who will obey this law. "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house; and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the fields, saith the Lord of Hosts."⁷

That is the promised blessing. We are challenged by the Lord to "prove him" to see if this blessing will in fact result because of our willingness to obey the law of tithing. If we pay a full tithe and if this blessing is forthcoming, then our faith is strengthened and increased. In this light, President Gordon B. Hinckley tells the following story. "I recall an experience I had as a stake president some years ago. A man whom I knew came to get his temple recommend signed. I questioned him in the usual way and asked, among other things, whether he was paying an honest tithing. He candidly replied that he was not, that he could not afford to because of his many debts. I felt impressed to tell him that he would not pay his debts until he paid his tithing. He went along for a year or two in his normal way and then made a decision. He talked about it sometime later and he said, 'What you told me has proved to be true. I felt I could not pay my tithing because of my debts. I discovered that no matter how hard I tried, somehow I could not manage to reduce my debt. Finally, my wife and I sat down together and talked about it and concluded we would try the promise of the Lord. We have done so. And somehow in a way we can't quite understand, the Lord has blessed us. We have not missed that which we have given

to Him and for the first time in many years we are reducing our debt. We have come to the wisdom of budgeting our expenditures and of determining where our funds have been going. Because we now have a higher objective, we are able to curtail some of our appetites and desires. And above all of this, we feel we can now go to the house of the Lord with clear consciences as those deserving of this wonderful blessing.”⁸

There are many in this congregation who can bear similar testimony to the material blessings associated with paying a full tithing and the resultant increase in faith. However, there is much misunderstanding regarding this blessing and consequently there are many who deny themselves the blessing of faith associated with consistent obedience to the law of tithing. For example, I know of a family that were converted to the church. They paid a full tithing from day one. He was ordained an elder and he, his wife and family were sealed in the temple. He remained active for several years and served in responsible priesthood callings. All the while abiding by at least the letter of the law of tithing. However, he had interpreted the blessing promised by the Lord to those who kept this law as meaning a degree of wealth greater than he then possessed; and an economic life free from any upheavals. Since he did not experience what he had in mind he should have experienced, he ceased to be involved anymore in the church and stopped paying tithing all together.

I have another friend who had chronic financial problems and like the good brother, President Hinckley speaks of, could not "afford" to pay his tithing. Accepting a challenge from his bishop, he paid his tithing for one or two months. But his personal finances were still in disarray, and he stopped paying again. "It didn't work. he glumly rationalized.

Neither one of these brethren understood the promises associated with the law of tithing, or indeed, the law of tithing itself. First, as we have discussed, there is far more to the law of tithing than simply paying 10% of our increase. An attitude of consecration and sacrifice is an integral part of this law and without our minds and hearts being right with the Lord, we are not a full tithe payer regardless of how much we may contribute. Second, by definition, a blessing is something that will do us good. With our mortal myopia we are often incapable of knowing ahead of time just what kind of situation and circumstance will do us good.

For example, all of us have had experiences where what first seemed to be a setback ended up being a real blessing. The promise by the Lord is that we will be blessed by living the law of tithing. Where we get into trouble is by trying to second guess the Lord who loves us and who desires to give to us that which will in fact bless us. With damning short sightedness, many of us try to tell the Lord with His infinite perspective just what His timing and output should be, instead of exercising faith in His judgement. Consequently, all of the blessings associated with living the law of tithing, including the development of the saving attribute of faith, are forfeited.

King Benjamin placed everything in perspective when he said: “If ye should serve (God) who has created you from the beginning, and is preserving you from day to day, by lending you breath, that ye may live and move and do according to your own will and even supporting you from one moment to another—I say, if ye should serve him with all your whole souls yet ye would be unprofitable servants. And behold, all that he requires of you is to keep his commandments; and he has promised you that if ye would keep his commandments ye should prosper in the land; and he never doth vary from that which he hath said; therefore, if ye do keep his commandments he doth bless you and prosper you. And now, in the first place, he hath created you, and granted unto you your lives, for which ye are indebted unto him. And secondly, he doth require that ye should do as he hath commanded you; for which if ye do, he doth immediately bless you; and therefore he hath paid you. And ye are still indebted unto him, and are, and will be, forever and ever.”⁹

Living the law of tithing is both our debt and our blessing; and paying a full and honest tithe will help us come unto Christ.

1. Doctrine and Covenants: Section 104: 13-18; 54-56; 70
2. Articles of Faith, pp. 527—528
3. 2 Nephi 2:7
4. Era, June 1970, pp. 142—43
5. Moses 5:18
6. Moroni 10:32
7. 3 Nephi 24:10-11
8. The Ensign, May 1982, pp. 40-41
9. Mosiah 2:21-24

Welfare in the Church of Jesus Christ

Orange Stake 1976

WHEN I WAS A young man, my father was called to be a bishop in Fresno. One day I was looking out the window, and a car with out-of-state license plates pulled up in front of our house. It was an older model car and was dirty and somewhat banged up. Inside sat a man, his wife and a large number of children. They were haggard looking and their dress unkempt. My father went out and talked to the man for some time. Then he came in and made some phone calls. He went back outside and talked to the man some more. The man was becoming visibly upset as they talked. Finally, the man in obvious anger got in his car and drove off. I learned later what had happened.

The man and his family were members of the Church, but they were transients. They had come to my father who was the bishop in that area assigned to look after members of the church who were not residents of Fresno, but who needed special help. The man wanted food and clothing for himself and his family and he made this request of my father. Dad found out from him that they had no home nor permanent residence. However, the man did give the name of the bishop where they last resided. When Dad called this man's former bishop, he learned that this man had a habit of living off the church. That he went around from town to town depending upon the church to meet his and his family's needs. He learned that this man, far from being a good, active member of the church, seemed to use the Church for his own personal benefit.

With this information in hand, Dad again went out to talk to the man. It was obvious that the family was in need, but it also was not right to continue to encourage this man in his unrighteous actions. Dad made him a proposal. Our stake had a grape farm. Dad offered to provide the man and his family with the food and clothes they needed at this time if the man would consent to work on the church farm as long as they received assistance.

At this proposal, the man became very indignant and said that he didn't think it right that he had to go out on a farm and do that kind of work to get sustenance from the Church when

he needed it. Dad replied that the man had his choice. That as far as Dad was concerned, the Church would provide his wife and children with the food and clothing they needed whether or not the man agreed to work on the church farm. But the man would not receive any food for himself unless he agreed to work for it. That is when he drove off in anger.

For a few minutes, I would like to discuss the Lord's program for taking care of his people and the principles upon which this program are based. Much of the information I will relate was gleaned from Bishop Victor L. Brown's talk given at the welfare session of the October 1975 general conference.

The Lord has established some form of welfare program in every gospel dispensation from the first to this the last dispensation. It should be noted that these welfare programs have only been as complete and as effective as the saints have been prepared and willing to make them. During the first part of this dispensation, the members of the church were given the opportunity to live the law of consecration and in some cases were organized into what we refer to as the united order. But our they were not able to abide this celestial law and united order was temporarily suspended until we became prepared to live the higher law. In 1936 the church was introduced to a new so called "church security plan" to help look after the needs of its members. The name of this program was later changed to the "Church welfare plan".

"Since that time, the Church Welfare Department has developed and assigned to the stakes of the church as an annual commodity budget, supervised the production and distribution of commodities, encouraged the establishment of local production projects and bishops storehouses, supervised church employment centers and established Deseret Industries.

"During this period and even earlier, the church continued to develop a variety of other services. In 1919 foster care and adoption were introduced Indian placement was introduced... in 1953. Services for those who had emotional and mental problems...were formally organized in 1960. In 1970 the Health Services Corporation was organized (which) was also given responsibility for the worldwide health needs of church members."¹

In 1973 all aspects of church welfare were brought together under the general welfare services committee with the Presiding Bishopric of the church serving as chairmen. This committee is responsible for the three major welfare departments in the church.

1. Welfare Production. This distribution department has basic responsibility for the economic aspects of welfare services including bishops storehouses, Deseret industries, farms, etc.
2. The Personal Welfare service department has responsibility for the social, emotional areas, and the employment centers.
3. The developing Welfare Services department is the third area. Since the church no

longer owns hospitals, this department is concerned with the health of the church members worldwide. Their efforts are concentrated, however, in providing health care and health training for church members in developing areas of the world.

That in a nutshell is a description of our present church welfare program. But what is its purpose? Bishop Brown has stated that, "The mission of welfare services (is) to assist priesthood and relief society leaders to ensure that individual members and families provide appropriately for their own needs; they are, therefore, self-sustaining and able to share with others preparatory to living the full law of consecration."²

Put in another way, the purpose of church welfare services is to help church members become totally self-reliant and prepared to live the celestial law of consecration. With this basic understanding of church welfare and its purpose, I believe it is important to recognize those gospel principles that must also be understood and developed by each of us individually and collectively before this purpose can be realized. These principles are charity, stewardship, self-reliance, and family responsibility.

Charity is defined by Mormon as the "pure love of Christ. To have charity is to be other oriented, "for...charity suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not, seeketh not her own (and) is not easily provoked."³

Paul succinctly described this godly attribute when he said, "for all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (Galatians 5:14) And "bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ."⁴

Basic to the Lord's welfare program is this desire and attitude on the part of all church members, both the "haves" and the "have nots," the "receivers" as well as the "givers." King Benjamin in his beautiful sermon on service made it clear that all of Christ's saints regardless of their economic situation must develop the attribute of charity. Speaking plainly and directly to the "have nots" he said, "I say unto the poor, ye who have not and yet have sufficient, that ye remain from day to day: I mean all of you who deny the beggar because ye have not; I would that ye say in your hearts that: I give not because I have not, but if I had I would give. And now, if ye say this in your hearts ye remain guiltless, otherwise ye are condemned; and your condemnation is just for ye covet that which ye have not received."⁵

A second key principle of the welfare program is stewardship. We must realize that all we have, we have been given by our Father in Heaven. We have been temporarily appointed stewards of our properties and our material goods. We are to use them for the upbuilding of the kingdom. They are not ours to do with as we see fit. The Lord has made this principle very clear.

"It is expedient that I the Lord should make every man accountable, as a steward over earthly blessings, which I have made and prepared for my creatures. I the Lord, stretched out the

heavens and built the earth, my very handiwork; and all things therein are mine. And it is my purpose to provide for my saints, for all things are mine. But it must needs be done in mine own way; and behold this is the way that I, the Lord, have decreed to provide for my saints, that the poor shall be exalted, in that the high are made low. For the earth is full, and there is enough and to spare; yea I prepared all things, and have given unto the children of men to be agents unto themselves. Therefore, if any man shall take of the abundance which I have made, and impart not his portion, according to the law of my gospel, unto the poor and the needy, he shall with the wicked, lift up his eyes in hell, being in torment."⁶

King Benjamin emphasized this principle of stewardship when he said: "Succor those that stand in need of your succor; ...Administer of your substance unto him that standeth in need; ...Suffer (not) that the beggar putteth up his petition to you in vain Perhaps thou shalt say: The man has brought upon himself his misery ; therefor I will stay my hand, and will not give unto him of my food, nor impart unto him of my substance that he may not suffer, his punishments are just—But I say unto you, O man, whosoever doeth this the same hath great cause to repent. For behold, are we not all beggars? do we not all depend upon the same being, even God for all the substance which we have, for both food and raiment...and for all the riches which we have of every kind? ...And now, if God, who has created you, on whom you are dependent for your lives and for all that ye have and are, doth grant unto you (these things), O then, how ye ought to impart of the substance that ye have one to another."⁷

Another key principle that is basic to any welfare program established by the Lord is self-reliance. Indeed, as Bishop Brown stated, developing self-reliance is one of the very purposes of the welfare program. Welfare in the Church of Jesus Christ is not a dole and members who receive welfare assistance from the church are expected to work for that assistance if they are at all physically able.

From the very beginning the Lord commanded, "by the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread."⁸ Paul in his epistle to the Galatians said, "Every man shall bear his own burden."⁹ And to the Thessalonians he emphatically commanded, "If any (among you) would not work, neither should he eat."¹⁰ Allowing an individual to receive sustenance without teaching him the principle of self-reliance by requiring work at his hand for that sustenance if he is able, is contrary to the purpose of the welfare program in Christ's church and makes a mockery of it.

One more principle associated with the welfare program should be mentioned. The responsibility of the family. When anyone in the church has needs that he himself cannot meet, his first course of action is to approach his own family and ask for their help in meeting his needs. Paul in his first epistle to Timothy, a bishop in the church, stated that: "If any provide not for his own and specially for those of his own kindred, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel."¹¹

Bishop Brown said, "It is first an individual and family responsibility to need (personal welfare needs). then as is needed, the ward welfare services committee acts as a back—up to the family's efforts."¹²

Bishop Brown goes on to emphasize the importance of the family being prepared to meet the needs of its members by planning for the future when welfare type problems may arise. This preparation should be made in the areas of career development, sound financial management, home food and clothing production and storage, physical health, and social/ emotional strength.

This then is the Lord's welfare program. Built upon the principles of charity, stewardship, self-reliance and family preparedness and responsibility. It is the Lord's way of providing for all of His saints in an equitable way while teaching them, molding them, and refining them that they may become even as He is.

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1. Victor L. Brown, The Ensign, November 1975, p. 113
 2. Brown, Ibid 113-114
 3. Moroni 7:45
 4. Galatians 6:2
 5. Mosiah 4: 24-25
 6. Doctrine and Covenants 104:13-18
 7. Mosiah 4:16-21
 8. Moses 4:25
 9. Galatians 6:5
 10. II Thessalonians 3:10
 11. I Timothy 5:8
 12. Brown, Ibid, p. 115

FAMILY

By-Laws For Parents of Adult Children

Parenting of Adult Children Book 2004

From Steve and Garth Hanson's book on parenting adult children.¹

1. I will remember my eternal responsibility to be a parent.
2. I will do whatever I can do for my adult children as long as they do whatever they can do for themselves.
3. I will respect my children's right to make choices, and expect them to honor my right to do the same.
4. I will take full responsibility for my actions, and insist my children take full responsibility for theirs.
5. I will love my children.
6. I will exercise patience and compassion according to the experience and understanding of each child.
7. I will not be involved in unwarranted self-blame.
8. I will not allow any child to detrimentally affect my marriage or any other family member.
9. I will not give beyond my ability to give.
10. I will choose to be happy.
11. When necessary, I will use extended family, spiritual leaders and friends to help me.

12. I will make good communication with my children a priority.

13. I will strive to live a Christ-like life.

14. I will listen to the Spirit.

15. I will do my best, then seek the grace of Christ to do the rest.

16. I will not sacrifice my peace.

17. I will never, ever, ever give up on any child.

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1. Principles of Love 10 Parenting Principals You Can't Ignore In seeking to bless your adult children, Garth A Hanson, Steve Dunn Hanson, Covenant Communications Press, 2004

Becoming Heavenly Parents

Orange Stake 1974

THE MOST IMPORTANT MISSION we as fathers and mothers will ever be given is to raise our children to the Lord. In the 93rd section of the doctrine covenants the Lord chastens the leaders of the church because of their neglect and teaching their children about Jesus Christ and his restored gospel. Father defines God. Who is our heavenly father? Just who his name implies. He is a father and as a father he has vowed that his work and his glory is to bring about the immortality and eternal life of his children.¹

His whole purpose and reason for existence is to lead his children to light, truth, and eternal happiness. As members of the Church of Jesus Christ of latter day Saints we have been blessed with special knowledge. One of the great mysteries of heaven has been revealed to us. We know who we are. And we know that our purpose is to become like our own Father in Heaven and our own Mother in Heaven. To become like them in every way. That means then that our goal, our work, and our glory is also to bring about the eternal life of our children. To lead them to light, truth, and eternal happiness.

Our Heavenly Father has given us an opportunity to become as he is by placing us in a family environment here on this earth. Our family is a type or shadow of God's family. Our family is a microcosm. A vehicle whereby we learn to become as He is. We cannot become as God who is a loving and devoted father to multitudes without first learning to be a loving and devoted parent to the few choice spirits who have come to dwell with us in our family here.

Our responsibility is, therefore, to provide our children with the most conducive atmosphere for accepting and abiding by right principles that we can. We must establish in our homes and administration of the pure love of Christ. Now we recognize the principle of agency. And I firmly believe that our responsibility is not so much to force our children to be heavenly children as it is for us to become heavenly fathers and heavenly mothers. We prepare for this responsibility by becoming totally aware of our responsibilities by learning our duty as parents.

We prepare by getting our own lives in order. Remember, whether we like it or not, we as parents are leaders in our families. Our children do not obey us so much as follow us. What kind of a

life are we leading? Do we have our own personal prayers at least night and morning? Do we make a habit of reading the scriptures every day? Are we honest, real truth tellers, in business and in our home? Are we conscientiously trying to develop patience? What kind of an example are we? That takes some real soul searching and honest self-evaluation. And it takes repentance.

The key to our becoming a heavenly father or mother is desire. Desire is the opposite of rationalization. Rationalization tells us to be satisfied with our humanness. It tells us that falling short is expected. Rationalization is our greatest enemy. The committed parent understands that he or she is human, but they also understand that they are a child of God. Their desire is to become as their Father and Mother in heaven and they know that they can. Our mistakes are recognized and repented of. They are used as stepping stones to perfection, not as weights to pull us down to mediocrity and failure. That recognition is to realize the need for the grace of the Savior in order for us to become like He is. And we seek it.

The committed parent literally makes a covenant with his Father in Heaven that might be something like this perhaps. *From this day forth I will strive with all my heart to keep Thy commandments to learn of Thee and to raise my children unto Thee.* As potential heavenly parents what can we do to fulfill our responsibility to our children?

1. Time is our most precious commodity when one is fully committed as a parent, they give their children their most valuable gift. Their time.
2. As committed parents we must be alert to teaching opportunities. We must create them. A father or mother reading well written moralistic stories to their children before they go to bed, for example. A family reading the scriptures out loud in the morning together before breakfast. The family singing a hymn before family prayers both night and morning. A mother and father constantly telling each child they love them. A mother and father bearing their own testimonies to their children often. These are all teaching opportunities and committed parents continually seek to create their own most meaningful for their own families.
3. Committed parents show respect and trust for their children. Your children are just like you, sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father. True you have been placed on this earth just a little before them, but in the eternal continuum you are the same as your own children. Treat your children as friends, not as servants. Give them credit for intelligence. You may have a prophet or a wife of a prophet in your home. You absolutely have sons and daughters of God who will become mothers and fathers themselves one day. President Tanner said, "It is so important that we always keep in mind that we are teaching spirit children of God, who will be tomorrow's leaders and who will hold the responsible positions in our church, communities, and nations. What a tremendous responsibility. And while we are training the children for their

heavy duties and responsibilities we want to teach them those things that will give them the happiness for which they search.”²

4. A committed parent is a disciplinarian, but for the right reasons. Children must be taught the principle of obedience, and discipline is necessary to teach that principle. But its purpose is to work for the betterment of the child. To help him or her, and not to be a reactive outlet for the parents emotions and frustrations. Parents are judges in their own home, but they must be just, fair, and merciful. We discipline out of love, not out of anger. And we always must remember, to show forth afterwards “an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reproved.”³
5. Learn to look beyond your children’s actions to their intentions. We expect our peers to judge us not just by our words and actions by what we intended by them. A committed parent always seeks to learn why before he or she acts.
6. We need to be open with our children. We need to learn to know them and to let them learn to know us. Talk to them about our problems and ask their advice. Admit our mistakes. Learn to use the word sorry. Do we ever tell our children I am sorry when we have acted unwisely or unjustly? Remember we are learning too, and we make mistakes. Admit them. Our children will love us for it. And they will not mark us down as a hypocrite.
7. A committed father exercises his patriarchal priesthood. He makes certain that his family kneels at family prayer night and morning. He establishes the tradition of family home evening and seeks constantly to make this a meaningful family experience each week. He blesses his family often when they are sick, when they begin school, or any time they are in need of special spiritual or physical strength.
8. Committed parents realize the power of the Holy Ghost. They know that as they strive to personally keep the commandments and seek spiritual guidance with all diligence they will receive revelation through the Holy Ghost in making decisions crucial to their family’s welfare. They will receive through the same source spiritual strength and support as they carry out their God like responsibilities.
9. Finally, and above all, committed parents create an atmosphere of love in their home. The First Presidency wrote: “In a day when the sanctity of the home is being invaded and where the care of children has been regarded lightly, we have endeavored to impress upon parents the importance of developing a love in the home so that in the future, should those children thus taught stray away, they would eventually return again.”⁴

Becoming heavenly fathers and mothers is our challenge and our opportunity and our blessing. Our work, our glory, our joy, and our happiness comes through bringing about the eternal life of our family. That is the purpose for us being on this earth and the justification for our existence. If we are to become as our Heavenly Father and our Heavenly Mother we must be aware of the solemn obligations and responsibilities of parenthood and become fully committed to fulfilling them.

I have been most blessed, for I have had parents, grandparents, great grandparents and second great grandparents who have been diligent in magnifying their calling as parents given their knowledge and understanding of the gospel. I have read histories of my ancestors as they have borne testimony to me through those histories of the truthfulness of the gospel. I have played games with a great grandparent and as we played she related church and other moralistic personal experiences to me. I have gone on fishing trips with grandfathers and listened to their stories by the hour growing ever closer to them and observing their love for me and for the gospel. I have been disciplined by a father who loved me and spent time with me. I was taught to desire and strive for my own testimony of the gospel by a mother who was always at home and always available to her children.

It was because of this family influence that I made the right decisions at crucial crossroads in my life. And although at times my actions led me into situations which threatened to pull me away from my Heavenly Father, the heavenly influence and love that I felt from my mother and father and grandparents which had existed throughout my entire life acted as an anchor to my soul as I began to be tossed to and fro by the winds of temptation. This influence, I am convinced, was my salvation. And ultimately shaped my decision to go on a mission and to spend my life serving the Lord. I cannot adequately express the influence my mother and father, my wife and my children, have on me. They are the molders of my life and my reason for being. They are the uplifting force in my life. They are the reason I desire to become one with God.

Joyce and I have been given the opportunity by striving to implement these principles outlined today of creating a forever family. A family whose members can learn to withstand adversity. Whose members can develop a Christ-like love for each other and for all mankind. Whose members can be powerful instruments of service in the hands of the Lord here upon the earth. Whose members can receive of the fullness of the Lord in the world to come, together as a whole complete family unit. Striving to be a forever family brings a joy and happiness unmatched by any other involvement. And the protecting and ever present family influence of love and belonging created in each family member will help them come back to their Heavenly Father's presence and be part of a forever family.

1. See Moses 1:39

2.

3. Doctrine and Covenants 121:43

4. See the 1974 Family Home Evening manual

Charity And Marriage

Orange Stake 1989

MORMON TELLS US THAT "charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him."¹ We are further told that "if we have not charity (we are) nothing, wherefore we must needs have charity."² Indeed, if there was one attribute that we could use to describe God; one characteristic that embodies every other characteristic, it would be love. It is clear that this pure love must be in us too, else we are nothing.

God loves perfectly and infinitely. To love means to want to become one with, From God's perspective, it means that He will do everything in His power to lift us to Him. Jesus prayed, "That they all may be one; as thou Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us:... And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."³

God's love is that He desires to be a part of every living soul and that every living soul be part of Him; not by condescending to man's level, but by lifting man up to His level that together our joy may be full and complete. Apparently it is only through this oneness that our joy can be full, for the Lord has said, "(He that) seeketh to become a law unto (himself)..cannot be sanctified."⁴ In other words, to the extent we refuse to lose ourselves in Christ and obey eternal laws, to the extent we refuse to become one with Him, to that extent we cannot participate in His joy and to that extent His grace is insufficient to bring us to His perfection because we do not want it.

On the other hand, we both develop God's love in our own lives and mirror God's love as we desire to become one with Him; losing ourselves in Christ by literally taking upon ourselves His name, his feelings, his compassion. In a word, His love.

The Lord has given us the perfect vehicle to develop His love in our lives. We hear in a sacred place that "it is not good for man to be alone." And "Therefore shall a man cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one."⁵ It is not a coincidence that Christ refers to his relationship with

the church as a marriage, for that condition, more than any other, symbolizes the oneness that Christ desires to have with each of us, The whole purpose of marriage is oneness. The marriage relationship teaches us how to become one with Christ as we learn to become one with our mate.

There are those, who through no fault of their own, do not at present enjoy a marriage relationship, For you, I can reiterate the promises made by our prophets: that you will receive every blessing and opportunity for personal growth that a marriage brings, if you will seek to develop in your own life, the pure love of Christ that losing your life to Him in service will bring.

In practical terms, both Mormon and Paul have outlined for us the kind of day-to-day actions and thoughts that both lead to and reflect the pure love of Christ. I would like to discuss these manifestations of charity in a marriage setting, with a desire that each of us may re-commit ourselves to following these inspired steps toward a perfect oneness with our spouses and consequently with Christ. Mormon tells us:⁶

Charity Suffereth Long. When two different personalities, with different backgrounds, upbringing and in some cases, values, are joined together, often there is more grinding of gears than meshing. It is not automatic that a blissful oneness is achieved either at once or even years down the road. It is the willingness to be tolerant of one another, to work at overcoming the obstacles to that oneness that ultimately bring it about. In order for our marriages to work, our love cannot be conditional, The pure love of Christ does suffer long; not in a martyr sense perhaps, but as one who loves their spouse enough to allow them time to work out obstacles to a perfect unity.

Long-suffering is being motivated by a desire to bless our spouse and to seek revelation as to what we can do to bring Christ's oneness into our marriage, As we do this, our own life begins to conform more closely to the Savior's and as a result of our example and love, our spouse, in all likelihood will ultimately respond accordingly.

Long-suffering means just that: *long* suffering. How long should we expect to be tolerant of a spouse's less than perfect ways? The answer may be, as long as we expect Christ to be tolerant of our own less than perfect ways.

Charity Is Kind. I believe our consistent acts of small kindnesses to our spouse indicates the greatness of the degree of pure love we possess, The seemingly insignificant acts of kindness and consideration done on a consistent basis are indicative of a life mastered, of a respect, a love, that is God-centered.

On the contrary, small inconsiderate, unthoughtful, self-centered acts of commission and omission reflect a selfishness that is devoid of true love. We know we are coming unto Christ

and our marriage is becoming one in Him, when our day-to-day, hour-to-hour actions and reactions, without hardly even giving them a thought, bespeak kindness and consideration,

Charity Envieth Not. To the world, winning means beating someone else; being better than another. That is Satan's way. It is becoming a law unto oneself and its fruits are envy and jealousy, As we seek to become one with our spouse, we glory in their accomplishments, Indeed, as they expand, so do we, because they are part of us and we of them. A husband or wife who truly loves will not cast their mate in a stereotype role, thus limiting their opportunity for growth and development. But instead, they will encourage their spouse to perfect all of the talents the Lord has given, for in so doing, both are blessed and the Lord is magnified,

Charity Seeketh Not Her Own. To be motivated by self-interest is damning, It literally eliminates our opportunity for expansion since we are the only ones working for us. Ultimately our sphere of influence becomes an impenetrable bubble reaching no further than the end of our soul, as Satan has so tragically demonstrated. In a marriage, perhaps the most obvious example of "seeking our own" and its result is the decision to put off, limit or even eliminate having children for selfish reasons. Surely such a decision has eternal implications since exaltation is a "fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever." The promise being "then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue."⁷

The result of selfishly restricting our seed is clear. "Verily, verily I say unto you, except ye abide my law ye cannot attain to this glory."⁸ The pure love of Christ is both developed and manifested in bringing spirits to this earth, And our joy is full as our posterity continues forever and ever.

Charity Is Not Easily Provoked. Notice that Mormon does not say "never" provoked. If we are to take the scriptures literally, we know there are occasions when God has been "angry". The Lord admonishes us to "reprove betimes (that is when needed or necessary) with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost."⁹ In these instances, our motivation is to help and bless the one who we are reproofing. On the other hand, when we are "easily provoked" ours is a selfish reaction. It is not based upon a desire to help another but is a result of our own frustrations and lack of self-control; even feelings of inadequacy and jealousy, It most certainly is not a manifestation of love.

The opportunity for oneness to exist is seriously impaired in a marriage where either one or both of the partners is easily provoked, The marriage workshop provides a unique opportunity to bridle our tongue and to master our temper. As we learn to do this, the Holy Ghost finds place in our hearts and whispers if and when a sharp reprove will in fact bless our mate, Such an admonition, if we will "show forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reproofed" is motivated by charity and will serve to bring a husband and wife into a Christ-centered oneness.¹⁰

Charity Thinketh No Evil And Rejoiceth Not In Iniquity. To watch sex oriented movies or TV shows regardless of their so called ratings; to read books or look at pictures that are sexually explicit; to tell or listen to lewd stories; or to engage, even in a marriage, in sexual practices that are deviant, is to think evil and rejoice in iniquity. Such practices not only can lead to adultery, but in a real sense are acts of infidelity themselves. How can the spiritual and fleshly oneness that a marriage is ordained to achieve come about when our minds and hearts are constantly turned to our own physical self-gratification. How can the fidelity and loyalty that is the hallmark of a celestial marriage be in place, when we are filling our souls with lustful thoughts. And they shall be one flesh, which means exactly that. Anything that we would do, say or think that would take away from that oneness will also take us away from Christ and His pure love. On the other hand, as we lose ourselves in our mate, stripping from our lives all that is unclean and impure, we begin to taste the fulness of joy that surely will come to a husband and wife who selflessly become one flesh.

Charity Beareth All Things, Hopeth All Things, Endureth All Things. To become one with Christ means we literally must have those experiences in our lives that will allow us to know Him. "All these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good," Joseph Smith was told. "The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than He?" (Doctrine and Covenants 122:7-8) If we are desirous of bearing all things, hoping all things and enduring all things, then the Lord can and will bless us and our spouse with those experiences that will bring us to Christ, and Christ to us. Experiences that will teach us about joy and sorrow. About faith and doubt. Experiences that will take us to the heights and the depths, to the lengths and the breadths. And as we struggle through our own unique set of experiences, trials, and tribulations, we will develop in our own lives the attributes of the Savior. As a result of sharing these experiences with our spouse, our oneness becomes complete because our capacity to love becomes infinite.

Charity Is Not Puffed Up. A popular song some years ago had a line that said, "Love means you never have to say you're sorry." I believe that in order to have the pure love of Christ in our marriage, exactly the opposite is true: "Love means you always say you're sorry." Love means repentance. Indeed, repentance is the key to oneness - in a marriage and with Christ. It is not demeaning, it is not loss of face, it is not weakness, to say and mean: "I am sorry. Please forgive me." And then to seek to change your life accordingly. This must be done on a daily, even hourly basis. Indeed, the only way we can become like Christ is to remove, through His grace, those less-than Christ-like imperfections we possess. A man or woman who readily recognizes their own weakness or wrong act is constantly at peace. For even though not perfect, they are making progress and are doing what they were sent here to do. to *become* perfect even as our Father in Heaven is perfect."¹¹

There has been no one, other than perhaps Christ Himself, that has not had need of change. Constant change, constant repentance. Yet we are told, He did not "receive of the fulness at

first but continued from grace to grace until he received a fulness."¹² We grow the same way. Step by step, line upon line and precept upon precept. But if and when we allow our own pride to keep from our minds and hearts those changes in our life that need to be made in order for us to receive of His fulness, we are literally damning ourselves, The Savior told Moroni: "Because thou hast seen thy weakness thou shalt be made strong."¹³ And so it is with us. To refuse to see the error of our ways, to be puffed up, is the antithesis of the pure love of Christ. Consistent repentance will remove from our lives *all* of the barriers that would keep us from being one with our spouse and one with Christ.

The Lord has given us the marriage vehicle to develop charity in our lives. For "charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him."¹⁴ As we become one with our spouse, we likewise become one with Christ. And as we become one with Christ, we likewise become one with our spouse, "Wherefore, ...pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ."¹⁵

"Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God (and I would add, your husband or wife) with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ."¹⁶

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1. Moroni 7:47
 2. Moroni 7:44
 3. John 17: 21-23
 4. Doctrine and Covenants 88:35
 5. Genesis 2:24
 6. Moroni 7:45
 7. Doctrine and Covenants 132:19-20
 8. Doctrine and Covenants 132:21
 9. Doctrine and Covenants 121:43
 10. See Doctrine and Covenants 121:43

11. Matthew 5:48

12. Doctrine and Covenants 93:13

13. Ether 12:37

14. Moroni 7:47

15. Moroni 7:48

16. Moroni 10:32

The Church & Family are as True As the Gospel

Orange Stake 1987

AS A YOUNG FATHER with a number of small children, I suddenly came to the realization that the family was the crucible in which Gods are made. Where else, I reasoned, could I have the patience-trying experiences that I received as I struggled to maintain some sort of order and self-control while being constantly surrounded by a seeming army of babies and adolescents each with their own wants, levels of understanding, and imperfections "By the time I get through this," I would say to myself, "I will have mastered patience."

However, it wasn't until a number of years later that I came to an equally important discovery. If I were ever to master the quality of patience, I would have to do it *while* I was in the middle of "patience-trying" experiences. Not after they were over. It became painfully clear to me that my concerns and observations about my need for patience usually occurred *after* a patience trying event, not during. And the progress I fancied myself making in this area was minor indeed. For me, that discovery has made all the difference.

As I have since worked at being patient in the middle of turmoil, the blessings to me and to my family have been tremendous. For one thing, I have come to understand that my primary responsibility in my family is to become a Heavenly Father rather than to *make* my children Heavenly Children or make my wife a Heavenly Wife or Heavenly Mother. When all is said and done, I am the only one I have control over and, therefore, the only one I have responsibility for in the eternal scheme of things.

With that perspective, I have much more time to be concerned about developing my own attributes of kindness, compassion, patience, honesty, cleanliness, and diligence because I spend much less time worrying about others failings in these areas. The repentance process has become more continual, more meaningful, because my eye is looking more and more inward to find areas that need to be corrected. The interesting thing is that as I have tried to withdraw from *compelling* righteousness on those around me by concentrating on my own weaknesses

and inadequacies, the righteousness of my own family members has increased on a parallel with my own positive changes.

“I teach them correct principles,” the Prophet Joseph Smith said, “and let them govern themselves.” By teaching, he meant, of course, not just by word, but by example. And that is the Lord’s way of governing or presiding.

In an outstanding contemporary essay entitled, “Why The Church Is As True As The Gospel,” Eugene England compared the experiences we have as we serve in the church to those we have as members of a family. “The refining process of working with imperfect men and women (like ourselves) with their varying personalities, levels of spiritual, emotional, and mental (maturity) and differing needs and wants is in every respect an extension of the God-making crucible that we know the family to be. And, I believe, every bit as essential.” And Brother England said, “I bear witness that the church can do those same frustrating, humbling, but ultimately liberating and redeeming things for us (as does the family). If we can see that its assaults on our lonely egos, its bonds and responsibilities which we accept willingly, can push us toward new kinds of being in a way we most deeply want and need to be pushed.”¹

It is likewise true that to receive the full benefits from our current experiences in the church, we must be mindful of what we can and should be doing *now*. We must be constantly looking inward to make those changes that would bless us and bless those we serve. We must see our present involvement as a unique and singular experience, perhaps never to pass our way again, at least in its present context. And if we are to maximize our opportunity we must look upon it in its most positive light. We must learn and grow from it not in spite of its mundaneness or boredom or frustrations but *because* of them. And we must understand that we will most bless those who serve with us by teaching them correct principles through our own example of diligence, patience, compassion, and righteousness.

The church, like the family, is as true as the gospel and both will help us come back to be with and be like Jesus Christ and our Heavenly Father. And as we do this, we show *The Way* to those whom we love and associate with.

1. Why the Church is as True as the Gospel, Originally published: Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1986, .**Author:** Eugene England

Eternal Marriage Is Ordained Of God

Orange Stake 1977

SEVERAL WEEKS AGO I sat in an exceptional Sunday School class. It was the concluding lesson in our family relations course. The instructor was a marvelously sensitive man who possessed the ability to verbalize the feelings, both good and bad, that occur in a marriage, and to leave with his class members the desire to make their marriage better by applying gospel principles as they interacted with the members of their family. Then the instructor bore his testimony, expressing the love and tenderness he felt for his family and particularly for his wife. He turned the time over to the class members to express their feelings about their marriage. I would like to relate a few of these testimonies. In doing so, I pray I may portray to you something of the spirit and love that existed in the room at that time. And I pray that we may better understand the positive impact that a righteous marriage relationship will have on the husband, the wife, the children and their continuing posterity.

A husband stood up, and looking down at his wife who was by his side, expressed to her the love and gratitude he felt for her. When he sat down, she stood up. "I came from an unhappy home," she related. "I met my husband when we were teenagers. Until I met him, I had nothing to live for. We were married young, and I kept him from going on a mission. I have always felt bad about this, but I vowed I would raise our son to fulfill an honorable mission. He has done this and is coming home tomorrow." Then turning to her husband, she told us, "He has never spoken an unkind word nor ever spoken in anger to me."

Another man stood up and took the hand of his wife. He began to speak, but all that came out were tears. "I love my wife," he finally said, and sat down. His wife then stood and told us about the transformation that took place in their lives some six or seven years ago. Although members of the church, they were less active and did not have a temple marriage. She testified of the happiness that was now theirs as they had conformed their lives to the gospel of Jesus Christ and became worthy to be married for time and all eternity.

Then a man on the back row stood up. "As most of you know," he began, "I don't talk very much. But I want my wife to know how much I love her and how grateful I am for her patience with me." Almost exactly one year ago, this man had left his wife. He had committed a moral transgression and had professed that he did not love his wife. But she was patient with him. She loved him and she wanted her family to be together. She worked on it and with the help of an understanding, compassionate home teacher, a reuniting took place and repentance and restitution followed.

Another man stood. He had been a member of the church less than a year. "I've never told my wife this," he began, "but when I was in the depths of alcoholism, she was the one that gave me reason for living. She was the one who saved me." I was this family's home teacher before he joined the church. And I also know it was her righteous example, it was her diligence in reading the scriptures, it was her patience and love that led him into the church.

There was an older brother, a visitor, who also bore his testimony. "In a few weeks, my sweetheart and I will celebrate our 50th wedding anniversary. I thank her for all she has done for me. I thank her for raising two sons to be bishops. I thank her for raising a daughter to be a Relief Society president. I thank her for helping me to become a more patient, tolerant man, worthy to be called to the position I now hold as a patriarch.

I wanted to bear my testimony too, but time ran out. I wanted to tell the class how much I love my wife. How grateful I am for her support and love for me as we have been called upon to go through trying times. I wanted to tell them how much I appreciated my wife not being a quitter. That regardless of the difficulties of raising seven small children with a husband who seemed to be always away with his new business or his church responsibilities, regardless of her own health problems and regardless of momentary periods of depression and feelings of inadequacy, she always came bouncing back, better than ever. I wanted to tell the class about a great heartache in my life, and the lesson it has taught. I wanted to remind them of the warning that Satan gives us in the temple. "If you do not walk up to every covenant you have made in the temple this day, you will be in my power." After being raised by righteous parents, after going on a mission, after being married in the temple, after being blessed with two precious children, a man I dearly love, left his wife and the church. I wanted to tell them that nobody has it made. That in order for us to receive and maintain the blessings of marriage and the church, we have to continually work at it. We have to work at being righteous. We have to work at being spiritual. We have to work at being a good husband or a good wife. We have to work at being a heavenly father or a heavenly mother to our children.

Love not only begets understanding but comes as a result of attempting to understand. Tolerance not only begets empathy but comes as a result of trying to empathize. The Lord has provided the marriage relationship as the avenue whereby full salvation and exaltation may be obtained. It is only in a righteous marriage format that we can learn to become heavenly fathers

and heavenly mothers. It is only in that relationship we can feel and experience the depths of sorrow and the heights of joy that a God experiences.

We cannot fully develop the qualities of selflessness and charity without following this basic commandment of the Lord. He has said: "Marriage is ordained of God unto man. Wherefore it is lawful that he should have (a) wife, and they twain shall be one flesh, and all this that the earth might answer the end of its creation."¹

There is no substitute for marriage. And there is no substitute for temple marriage. To consciously choose to live a single life when through effort one could be married to a worthy mate in the temple is to forfeit the blessings of exaltation. To seek divorce as the answer to marriage problems is to disregard the cause of those marriage problems sin on the part of either or both marriage partners. It is true there are circumstances where divorce seems to be the only alternative. But in my opinion, never is divorce justified because of so called incompatibility or personality differences or even because one of the marriage partners is a member of the church and the other isn't.

President Stephen L. Richards said, "The remedy for domestic problems and irritations is not divorce, but repentance. I am thoroughly convinced in my heart that this is true."²

Make no mistake, we will not be exalted without a marriage partner and a family, and a marriage that has been solemnized in the temple for time and all eternity. There are individuals where, through no fault of their own, they have died or will die without this marriage and/or without children. Our loving Heavenly Father will make the appropriate opportunities available to these individuals *who desire it* to participate in this exalting relationship after their mortal stay here. For the Lord has said, "I reveal unto you a new and an everlasting covenant (speaking of temple marriage); and if ye abide not that covenant, then are ye damned; for no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory. For all who will have a blessing at my hands shall abide the law which was appointed for that blessing, and the conditions thereof were instituted from before the foundation of the world. And as pertaining to the new and everlasting covenant; it was instituted for the fullness of My glory; and he that receiveth a fullness thereof must and shall abide the law or he shall be damned saith the Lord God."³

What the Lord is saying to you young people is to seek out worthy mates who can go with you to the temple. Date those young men and young women who are worthy to go to the temple. What he is saying to those who find themselves in a part member marriage is to be patient and to love your partner. After all you made the decision to marry him or her and you have a responsibility to do all you can to bring the gospel into your partner's life. If you are humble, if ; you are righteous, if you are obedient to the commandments of the Lord, if you are long-suffering and do all you can in love, to unite your family in an eternal bond, then you will be blessed. Time will be on your side.

What the Lord is saying to those members who have not put their lives in order enough to be sealed together in the temple, is to not put eternal happiness in jeopardy by putting worldly pleasures ahead of developing Godlike qualities. For that decision in and of itself is an indication that one's desire is to not participate in either the responsibilities nor the joys of exaltation. And what He has said to those of us who have been married for time and all eternity is, "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... even unto the end of your lives, ye must perish. And now.. remember, and perish not."⁴

Now there is one other aspect of marriage I would like to touch upon. The commandment that God gave to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden was to "be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth."⁵ And we are told that in order for the earth to answer the end of its creation, it must "be filled with the measure of man, according to his creation before the world was made."⁶ The major purpose of marriage is to have children. And to have as many children as the Lord is ready to bless you with. The number of inhabitants that will be sent to this earth is fixed. Overpopulation is no justification for birth control. For a Latter-day Saint couple to *purposely* limit their families for reasons other than physical or mental health is to either misunderstand or to disregard their opportunity to be a heavenly father and heavenly mother.

Our prophets have been very explicit about this. President Joseph F. Smith said, "I think it is a crying evil that there should exist a sentiment or feeling among many members of the church to curtail the birth of their children. I think that is a crime where it occurs, where husband and wife are in possession of health and vigor and are free from impurities that would be entailed upon their posterity. I believe that where people undertake to curtail or prevent the birth of their children that they are going to reap disappointment by and by."⁷

I will never forget the sadness in the face and voice of a middle aged woman I was talking to some time ago. "One of my major regrets," she confided, "was that I didn't have more children. I love the few I have, and I could have had more. But I didn't want more at the time. And now it is too late. Curtailing the size of our family for reasons other than those mentioned is perhaps in a real sense, trading our birthright for a mess of pottage.

Of course our responsibility does not end with simply having children. The Lord has told us that, "Inasmuch as parents (with) children... teach them not to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands, ...the sin be upon the heads of the parents."⁸

The responsibilities associated with the law of eternal marriage are great. But the blessings are virtually infinite in their scope. The Lord has promised, "If a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant and it is sealed unto them by the holy spirit of promise, (they) shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities and powers, dominions, all heights and depths, and if (they) abide in my covenant...they shall pass by the angels, and

the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things...which glory shall be a fullness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever. Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting because they continue; then shall they be above all because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power."⁹

All of this we cannot do and all of this we cannot be, without an eternal temple marriage, without children and diligently teaching them by word and example of their Divine worth, and without us personally enduring to the end. Marriage, eternal marriage, is ordained of God and defines our Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother.

1. Doctrine and Covenants 49:15-16
2. Eternal Love, Boyd K. Packer, p. 14
3. Doctrine and Covenants 132:4-6
4. Mosiah 4:30
5. Genesis. 1:28
6. Doctrine and Covenants 49: 17
7. Relief Society Magazine, June 1917
8. Doctrine and Covenants 68:25
9. Doctrine and Covenants 132:19-20

The Family and Exaltation

Orange Stake 1977, 1984

THE LORD HAS PROVIDED the family relationship as the avenue whereby full salvation and exaltation may be obtained. It is only in a righteous family format that we can learn to become Heavenly Fathers and Heavenly Mothers. It is only in that relationship we can feel and experience the depths of sorrow and the heights of joy that a God experiences. We cannot fully develop the qualities of selflessness and charity outside of the family context. We cannot fully adopt the Christ-like attributes of patience, tolerance, humility, and endurance without the refining, daily involvement in the family environment.

The family unit is indeed the workroom where Gods are made. Being parents is a calling. Our duties as parents are well defined through the scriptures and through our latter-day prophets and leaders. We learn through our own experiences and through instruction from our own parents, our leaders and the Holy Ghost how to carry out these responsibilities. But we carry them out ourselves. No one does it for us or we would not learn. And the whole emphasis is on learning and growth. We are in essence being trained by the Lord to become family leaders and eventually to become as He is. This process is eternal.

As parents our responsibilities are awesome and complex for they are akin to the responsibilities of Godhood. Our work, like our Father in Heaven's, is to bring to pass the eternal lives of our children. We recognize that they are agents unto themselves, and we do not, we must not, usurp their right to make decisions. But we outline for them their duties. We train them. We back them up. Not as a crutch, but as a resource of strength, righteousness, and knowledge that our children know they can tap as often as they need to as they are learning to develop their own independent source of strength and knowledge. We are training sons and daughters of God and in the process are being trained to assume the duties of a heavenly parent. We are being given those experiences which will help us develop His qualities in our own lives.

True love begets forgiveness. Because of the close personal relationships that exist in a family, strife, envy, and hurt often raise their ugly heads. The family relationship, therefore, provides a unique opportunity to develop a forgiving nature. We have a great example of the development

of this quality in Nephi as he was continually persecuted and haunted by his older brothers. On one occasion after his brothers tried to take Nephi's life, Nephi records that they "were sorrowful because of their wickedness, insomuch... they did bow down before me and did plead with me that I would forgive them of the thing that they had done against me. And it came to pass that I did frankly forgive them all that they had done, and I did exhort them that they would pray unto the Lord their God for forgiveness." (1 Nephi 7:20-21)

The mastering of this trait is not easy and is learned over a lifetime. Through the family we are given those experiences necessary to teach us this Godlike characteristic. I know a mother who is a chosen daughter of our Heavenly Father. She has had great heartache in her life. In the last few years she has seen her son-in-law excommunicated from the church and then her own son leave the church. We received a letter from her some years ago that read in part: "We all choose where we want to be. Where we are uncomfortable and unhappy we don't go. It will be so in the kingdom of our Heavenly Father. He has been so kind as to arrange this...that if we cannot bear the goodness and light, we will not be forced there. But surely as we look towards the light, if we have failed, there will be the greatest anguish possible. The spiritual living lesson, endure to the end, says it well. "When (my daughter's baby) was blessed by (my husband) and tears flowed a year and a half ago, my heart was very bitter. I almost hated her husband for doing this to her.. Not being worthy to bless their child. And the things he had done.... But through my tears, as I looked at that sacred circle I saw that the rest was up to my daughter's husband. And if the (Lord) had forgiven, I had to as well. And so after the first shock (of learning about my own son), there has been no other course for me but to love him and hold open the door. Forgiveness is the Lord's way and it has to be ours."

Not only can we learn to be forgiving, the family context also gives us the opportunity to enlarge our capacities if we will. As we are blessed with children and more children, each a free agent, a different personality, we are challenged as we attempt to meet that individual soul's needs. The family experience is indeed a "line upon line" growth experience. We are stretched to our limits and like an adolescent, often experience growth pains as our spiritual muscles are worked and stretched to keep up with our ever increasing responsibilities. But when we are in the midst of this experience, we often don't realize that our capacity for work, for righteousness, for understanding, for patience and for endurance has been increasing.

Some years ago after a frustrating day, my wife remarked, "I could be a tremendous mother to four or five children." And as I thought about that statement, I responded, "But that is because you have had seven. Your capacity is enlarged and your ability expanded because of the gradual increase of your responsibilities." And so it is, I believe, on to Godhood. Through the family, we are pulled and stretched to our true potential.

As the head of a family unit, we also learn to become righteous and merciful judges. We learn that a wise judge makes those decisions that will work for the best good of he or she who is being

judged. We learn to disassociate our own passions. To make decisions that have as their sole purpose the refining and molding of the child we are called upon to judge. We learn also that intent is much more important than apparent outward actions. We learn to judge in context and to take into consideration the age, the maturity, the circumstances, and the desire. But we also learn that the demands of justice require that certain consequences result from errant behavior and that as a judge in Israel, we must "(reprove) betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost." Lest our children be deprived of Godly guidelines as they seek to come back to Him.¹

And then fully understanding their role as judges in the family, a reproving father or mother will put their arm around the child and "(show) an increase of love toward him (who) has (been) reproved " ²

So that the child will understand that the judgement rendered was for their benefit and not simply a reactive action on the part of the parent. Notice the admonition to "reprove when moved upon by the Holy Ghost. As a family judge we learn to judge by the spirit. To judge in the light of personal revelation. With the Holy Ghost as our guide, we become aware of both the conditions of the offense and the appropriate solution or judgement relative to the offense. We learn a great deal about the responsibilities of a father in judging his sons and daughters from Alma the younger as he judges his son Corianton. As he reproves, admonishes, instructs, and loves.

"And now my son, I have somewhat more to say unto thee than what I said unto thy brother; for behold have ye not observed the steadiness of thy brother, his faithfulness, and his diligence in keeping the commandments of God? Behold, has he not set a good example for thee? For thou didst not give so much heed unto my words as did thy brother... Now this is what I have against thee; Thou didst go on unto boasting in thy strength and thy wisdom. And this is not all my son, thou didst do that which was grievous unto me; for thou didst forsake the ministry, and did go over into the land of Siron, after the harlot Isabel."³ As a father and therefore as a judge, Alma called his son Corianton to repentance and spelled out to him in specific terms what the offenses were. He then continued: "Know ye not, my son, that these things are an abomination in the sight of the Lord; ...I would not dwell upon your crimes, to harrow up your soul, if it were not for your good. But behold, ye cannot hide your crimes from God; and except ye repent they will stand as a testimony against you at the last day."⁴

Alma explained to Corianton why he as his father had to deal thusly with him. That his actions at this time were out of love and for Corianton's own good. Then Alma admonished his son. "I would that ye should repent and forsake your sins and go no more after the lusts of your eyes but cross yourself in all these things; for except ye do this ye can in nowise inherit the Kingdom of God. Oh remember, and take it upon you, and cross yourself in these things. And I command you to take it upon you to counsel with your elder brothers in your undertakings; for behold,

thou art in thy youth, and ye stand in need to be nourished by your brothers. And give heed to their counsel.”⁵

Then after instructing his son on the meaning of restoration, justice, and mercy, Alma concludes this judgment session with a caution. “Do not endeavor to excuse yourself in the least point because of your sins, by denying the Justice of God; But do...let the Justice of God, and his mercy, and his longsuffering have full sway in your heart; and let it bring you down to the dust in humility.”⁶

This process of judging we learn and we perfect in the family relationship. There is one other area that I would like to touch upon and it relates directly to learning to become as our Father in Heaven. God is, above all else, master of himself. He has learned total self-control. Regardless of the circumstances in which He may be placed, He will totally and completely act in harmony to those eternal laws, the obedience of which ensures infinite happiness and joy. The Savior learned to overcome by allowing himself to be placed in extremely adverse circumstances and in the midst of those conditions maintaining the composure and righteous self-will that characterized him as a God.

This does not mean that we go out actively seeking temptation and hardship. But it does mean that we remain “in the world” although “not of the world. A monastic, celibate life is a “no-growth” life. One does not fully develop the attribute of patience by living a quiet, secluded life. Patience is literally the possession of one’s own soul and is developed by learning to control ourselves when confronted with trying, exasperating circumstances. By descending below all things. Anyone who has lived with a large family will understand that there is no better place to develop this attribute. Likewise, the quality of charity is underdeveloped if the giver of his time and means is not required to sacrifice. A father who gets up night after night to rock a sick child to sleep, or a mother who consoles a friend day after day in the middle of changing diapers and taking care of her own almost awesome housekeeping responsibilities is learning charity.

Spirituality is another quality that can only be developed to its fullest extent in the family structure. Spirituality is maintaining a constant closeness to ones Father in Heaven regardless of the circumstance one is in. It is one thing to piously reflect a supposed spiritual countenance after having artificially shut off the pressures of the world. It is quite another thing to meditate, to contemplate an assigned spiritual living lesson and to receive revelation while you are scrubbing the kitchen floor. The family experience allows us to, in a very Christ-like way, descend below all things, thereby developing to a virtually infinite extent the qualities and characteristics which He possesses. Within this framework, we are privileged to experience the heights of joy and depths of sorrow that exist for those who choose to become as their elder brother, Jesus Christ.

Since the family is, in fact, the vehicle to Godhood, is it any wonder that Satan has unleashed such devastating barrages in our day against the family structure? To destroy the family is to destroy God’s purpose. It is to destroy our divine potential. And this we must guard against

with everything we have. President Kimball said, "The time will come when only those who believe deeply and actively in the family will be able to preserve their families in the midst of the gathering evil around us."⁷

Our commitment to our children, to our wives and husbands, and to ourselves will preserve our families. I am grateful for the family I was raised in. I am grateful for the family that Joyce and I head. And I am grateful for the experiences and growth opportunities that are mine through this potential forever family.

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 121:43

2. Doctrine and Covenants 121:43

3. Alma 39:1-3

4. Alma 39:5, 7-8

5. Alma 39:9-10

6. Alma 42:30

7. Ensign 10-4-80

Fathers

Orange Stake 1989

NOT TOO LONG AGO a friend of mine was complimenting me on one of my children. He commented on my child's maturity and spirituality and then complimented me on the way I had raised him, giving me credit for how he turned out. My response surprised him. I thanked him for the compliment, but said, "In all fairness, though, if I get to take credit for the good things my children do, I must also take full responsibility for the bad things they do."

If I understand the principle of agency, however, I can do neither. At least not in the eternal sense. While it is true that what I say or do as a parent can and often does have an effect on my child's short term behavior or can even influence generations as in the case of Laman and Lemuel, when all is said and done my child will make the eternal choices he *wants* to make. Just as I will make the eternal choices I *want* to make. No outside force can really have any telling effect on that choice, otherwise there is no agency. My children and I are in reality, eternal peers.

What then is my responsibility as a father if I really don't have anything to do with the eternal outcome of my children? The Savior while teaching the Nephites and Lamanites after His resurrection asked a similar question. "What manner of men ought ye to be?" And his response, "Verily I say unto you, even as I am. (3 Nephi 27:27) And so it is. I cannot make my children become "heavenly children." What I can do, through the grace of Christ, is to become as He is. And to become a heavenly father. As I strive to be a heavenly father, that in turn blesses my children to the extent I am capable of blessing them. How does one who strives to be a heavenly father bless their children?

A heavenly father is righteous. As I strive to take upon myself the name of Jesus Christ I will develop meaningful communication with my Heavenly Father. I will learn of him by daily scripture reading, pondering, and study. I will attend the temple regularly to gain further light and knowledge and to remember who I am. I will keep all the covenants I have made therein. I will keep the commandments and avoid all that is unclean and impure in my life. As I become more and more like He who I am striving to follow, at least two blessings are forthcoming to my children.

First, they see on a first-hand basis the results of righteousness. They see the fruits of joy and peace and light that come to one who chooses that path. And they see what that path is. That experience will be juxtaposed against their experiences with the world. Goodness knows they will have many examples there. As they see the consequences of the living like the world compared to the fruits of living a Christ centered life, they will be able to make their choices with knowledge. They will be able to make meaningful and eternal choices early in this mortal stage of their existence and consequently be more serviceable to the Lord and avoid pitfalls of sin. If that is their desire.

Secondly, as a result of my own nearness to Christ, I will have the Holy Ghost as my constant companion and guide. That light will be in me. I will receive revelation on a consistent basis to know just what I need to say and do with each child to bless their lives and lead them to Christ.

As I strive to be a heavenly father, I develop the quality of patience. As the Lord sent his apostles forth into the world he both admonished them and blessed them as he said, "In your patience, possess ye your souls." (Luke 22:17) And so it is. Patience is understanding what this earth life is all about and that both my children and I have been placed here to learn by our own experiences to discern good from evil. Since my knowledge comes as a result of having experiences, I can't expect to have that knowledge before I have the experience or have been taught and understand that teaching. That means that my experiences are going to bring mistakes on my part.

My son Ben has never been 13 before. He has never had such a flow of hormones coursing through his body before. He has never grown 8 inches in 8 months before. He has never had the peer pressures, the self-doubts or struggling with adult behavior before. I have. I need to patient with him as he gains knowledge through his experiences. My patience will give him assurance about his path and will encourage him through his struggles. It will help him understand and gain meaning and knowledge from his own experiences.

If I need to be patient with my children, I likewise need to be patient with myself. I too am still learning from my experiences. And while it is true I have had other 13 year old children, it is also true I have never had a 13 year old Ben before. And every day I have experiences with Ben that I have never had in quite the same way before. My previous experiences should help me to face these new experiences in more acceptable ways than I did without them. Nevertheless, mistakes are made because this is in reality my first time through that particular experience. I need to be patient with myself as I make mistakes and follow the procedure for learning from those mistakes and repenting of them. That means I must seek forgiveness from my child if I have made a mistake in our relationship. It means I must strip myself of pride so that I can constantly see that which I have done that is wrong. It means I beg for forgiveness from my Heavenly Father and for the grace of Christ to be with me that I may have the strength to do better in the future. My example of patience with my children and myself will show my children

the purpose of life and the way to make it through. In my patience I will not only possess my soul but show to my children how to possess their own souls.

There is another characteristic of a heavenly father. It is love. That is the hallmark, even the definition of God. Love means our sole motivation for all that we do in relation to our children and spouse is for their spiritual and physical wellbeing. Our own self-interest is subjugated. I believe the ultimate manifestation of love that our Heavenly Father has shown to us is by giving us our agency. As a result of our ability to choose for ourselves, we have the opportunity to have those kinds of experiences that will allow us to become as He is. "Now has the man become as one of us, to know good from evil."

As a heavenly father, I too must allow my child to have his agency, if I indeed love him. I believe that means that when the child is young, we act as a protector and teacher. We provide to them that which is needful that they cannot provide for themselves. We protect them from both physical and spiritual consequences that would be devastating, until they understands fully those potential consequences of their actions. For example, I would not let my two year old son play in the street or place his hand on a hot stove. I would not let my 12 year old daughter attend an unchaperoned party with older and unknown friends. While I am protecting my child, I also need to be teaching my child correct principles so they may learn to govern themselves. (Joseph Smith) For that is his ultimate destiny and my ultimate responsibility as a father to them. To both prepare them for that day and allow them the opportunity to exercise their agency. I, in essence, move from a protector and teacher to an adviser and counselor.

The time must come, if I love my child, that I will let go and back off. I will let them, by their own experiences to learn good from evil. I will need revelation to do this at the right moment and in the right way. For each child arrives at those stages at different times. But do it I must. I become an advisor. Perhaps my role then becomes like a flashlight. I will be there when my child needs me for advice and direction. But they will need to ask me. They will need to turn the flashlight on themselves to lighten the way. Sometimes they will and sometimes they won't. But I must always be there and my light must always be bright and my batteries fully charged when they need it.

My love for my children must be constantly expressed by word and action. I must diligently weave a cord of love that will bind them to me so that it will become stronger than the bonds of death. If and when the day comes that a child chooses to try the way of the world and becomes immersed in its abyss, that cord of love we have so carefully woven will serve as their life line to bring them back to us and back to their Heavenly Father.

It is not my responsibility to make my children heavenly children. I am not capable of doing it. And to attempt to do it is to deny them their agency and to follow one who in our pre-mortal existence would have done that to us all. That same being who would have denied us the opportunity of becoming as our Heavenly Father in order to give himself all of the glory and

honor. Indeed those who would seek to force their children to conform to their own likeness and image, will taste of the same misery and inward fall, for the only possible motivation to take away another's agency is one's own honor and glory.

Instead, it is my responsibility and opportunity as a father in Zion, to make myself a heavenly father through the grace of Jesus Christ. And by doing so, my righteous example, my patience, and my love will light the path that can lead my sons and daughters to their own Divine destinies. If that is their choice.

Gift of Family History

Orange Stake 2004

A LETTER TO MY children explaining the Gift of Family History that we implemented in our stake and used for the Newport Beach temple Open House.

I would like to summarize what this Gift of Family History represents and how it has come about. The “complete” details are in my journal, and I will likely not refer to them directly in my life time. Needless to say, this packet and CD are an extremely important part of what I shared with you in April of this year. It seems that my mission or assignment was not complete with developing concepts to implement the Spirit of Elijah in our stake and then passing those observations and applications on to the Sacramento mission.

With these tools in hand and with substantive modifications of them, the Sacramento mission began to open a flood gate of convert baptisms through the tie-in of the Spirit of Elijah in finding the Lord’s elect and teaching them who they are. Already this approach has spread to virtually all of the missions on the west coast of the United States and to missions throughout the world.

But there was to be more participation on my part. It became known to me that I was to be involved in using this Gift in conjunction with our Newport Beach Temple open house, and I was given by the Spirit specific instruction as to how to approach this with the temple open house and to have it become a permanent part of our members’ way of life. The specifics unfolded as if someone was dictating them to me. In April I was literally looking forward with an “eye of faith” as to what was going to happen. And now, in December, it has come about virtually as I saw it would.

Looking back I have been placed exactly where I needed to be (in Orange County), have been serving in exactly the calling I have needed to be serving in (stake president) so I had access to the “right ears,” and serving at the exact time that was necessary in order for this mission to be completed (just prior to Craig Hansen of the Sacramento mission serving as mission president and then at the time when a temple was being built in Orange County). In addition, the Lord has given me the specific experiences I have needed in order to do this

including writing opportunities, organizational assignments, involvement with the stake Spirit of Elijah approach five or so years ago, and writing and producing the PowerPoint presentations and flyers/brochures for our business. What has taken place simply could not have happened without the timing, circumstances, and all of these experiences. They have combined together to give me the tools and put me in the position to do what the Lord wanted me to do.

It has been a journey fraught with challenges, nay-sayers, stumbling blocks, conversions of key people, and revelation after revelation and miracle after miracle. We did not receive approval for our proposal from the temple department until mid-September of this year. And what you have here was literally developed and produced within 1 ½ months. It includes some 30,000 copies of the Gift of Family History packet and 20,000 of the training CD, along with 450 copies of a presentation DVD that is being used to introduce the Gift of Family History to the members. In fact, the training CD, from the moment of its conception to pretty much the completed form, was done in no more than one week. All of this was presented to 27 stake presidents the last week in October and now is being implemented throughout Orange County and many stakes surrounding it. Already there are stakes outside of these 27 who are requesting materials. When we were presenting this to the 27 stake presidents, Don Laws, who is chairman of the Newport Beach Temple Open House and Dedication committee, was sitting next to me and whispered: "I can't believe this is happening. I can't believe we have done this." It was and is a miracle.

It has been an extraordinary blessing for me to have been part of this. Elijah has everything to do with the preparing of this earth for the coming of the Savior. Why? Because his mission is to plant in the hearts of the children the *promises* made to the fathers. These are the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Promises of eternal life. Or, in other words, the knowledge of our eternal nature and our divine destiny, and the realization of that destiny. We can only begin to see this divinity in ourselves as we see ourselves in the context of our fathers and our children. I have often asked the question of the members of my stake: "What would your lives be like if you remembered who you are. That you are sons and daughters of a King, and you are literally kings and queens in the making? And what would your lives be like if you remembered that every day and every hour?"

Our lives would be changed in the most dramatic way, and to that extent so would this world be changed. The Church would become an extraordinary power of righteousness and the Lord's elect would flock to it in numbers not even now imagined. Both our children and we would be protected from telestial tugs. We would have peace and have joy in our ancestors as well as our posterity. This I know.

As you become immersed in the histories of those who loved you and prepared the way for you, you will begin to remember who *you* are. As you continue to see yourself in this context, you

will be empowered to overcome this world. No power, no influence can sway you from your course. That is my promise.

I love you. It is my testimony to you that Jesus Christ lives, that His gospel has been restored and that the keys of His priesthood reside within The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. My love for you is infinite because I am beginning to see you through the eyes of Jesus Christ whom I have loved first.

Dad

Our Responsibility As Parents

Orange Stake 1974

THE MOST IMPORTANT MISSION we as fathers and mothers will ever be given is to raise our children to the Lord. The Lord chastened and instructed the first presidency in the early days of the church with respect to their solemn obligations as fathers.

"And that wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth, through disobedience, from the children of men, and because of the tradition of their fathers. But I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth. But verily I say unto you, my servant Frederick G. Williams, you have continued under this condemnation; you have not taught your children light and truth, according to the commandments; and that wicked one hath power, as yet, over you, and this is the cause of your affliction. And now a commandment I give unto you, if you will be delivered you shall set in order your own house, for there are many things that are not right in your house. Verily, I say unto my servant Sidney Rigdon, that in some things he hath not kept the commandments concerning his children: therefore, first set in order thy house. I say unto Joseph Smith, Jun. you have not kept the commandments, and must needs stand rebuked before the Lord; your family must needs repent and forsake some things, and give more earnest heed unto your sayings, or be removed out of their place. ...My servant Newel K. Whitney also, a bishop of my church, hath need to be chastened, and set in order his family, and see that they are more diligent and concerned at home, and pray always, or they shall be removed out of their place."¹

Who is our Heavenly Father? Just who his name implies. A father. And as a father he has vowed that his work and his glory is to bring about the immortality and eternal life of his children. His whole purpose and reason for existence is to lead his children to light, truth, and eternal happiness. As members of the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we have been blessed with special knowledge. One of the great mysteries of heaven has been revealed to us. We know who we are. And we know that our purpose is to become like our own Father in Heaven. To become like Him in every way. That means, then, that our goal, our work, and our glory is also to bring about the eternal life of our children. To lead them to light, truth and eternal happiness.

Our Heavenly Father has given us an opportunity to become as He is by placing us in a family environment here on this earth. Our family is a type or shadow of God's family. Our family is a microcosm for us to learn to become as He is. We cannot become as God who is a loving and devoted Father to multitudes without first learning to be a loving and devoted parent to the few choice spirits who have come to dwell with us in our family here.

Our responsibility is, therefore, to provide our children with the most conducive atmosphere for accepting and abiding by right principles that we can. We must establish in our homes an administration of the pure love of Christ. Now we recognize the principle of agency. And I firmly believe that our responsibility is not so much to force our children to be heavenly children as it is for us to become heavenly fathers and mothers. We prepare for this responsibility by becoming totally aware of our responsibilities. By learning our duty as parents.

We prepare by getting our own lives in order. Remember, whether we like it or not, as parents we are leaders in our families. Our children do not obey us so much as follow us. What kind of a life are we leading? Do we have our own personal prayers at least night and morning? Do we make a habit of reading the scriptures every day? Are we honest, a real truth-teller, in business and in our home? Are we conscientiously trying to develop patience? What kind of an example are we? That takes some real soul-searching and honest self-evaluation. And it takes repentance.

The real key to our becoming a heavenly father or heavenly mother is commitment. Commitment is the opposite of rationalization. Rationalization tells you to be satisfied with your humanness. It tells you that falling short is expected. Rationalization is your greatest enemy. The committed parent understands that they are human. But they also understands that they are a child of God. Their desire is to become as their Father in Heaven and they know they can. Their mistakes are recognized and repented of. They are used as stepping stones to perfection, not as weights to pull them down to mediocrity and failure. A committed parent literally makes a covenant with their Father in Heaven: From this day forth I will strive with all of my heart to keep thy commandments; to learn to know thee; and to raise my children unto Thee.

As potential heavenly parents what can we do to fulfill our responsibilities to our children? Time is our most precious commodity. When one is fully committed as a parent, he gives his children his most valuable gift. His time. Richard L. Evans eloquently emphasized this need. "We shall not pass again this way and in these swift-passing scenes and seasons there seems to come insistently, almost above all else, this compelling cry: Take time for your children. More and more, professional people are telling us that children are shaped and molded at a very early age so early that it is a sobering fact to face. Home, parents, early impressions set the pattern for the future and the evidence is overwhelming that nothing in this world is ever going to take the place of wholesome, happy, homes. And there is more to this than food/ shelter, and physical sustenance. There is the shaping of attitudes, of minds, of morals; opening avenues of interest

and activity; instilling honesty, respect, reverence; prayers at a mother's knee; correction with fairness and firmness, "showing forth afterwards an increase of love" and kindness.

All this we cannot be, all this we cannot do, by not being there, by living separate lives, by an over-absorption in outside interests. Take time for your children. They are so soon grown, so soon gone. "Is mother home?" "Where is mother?" are the questions asked when they come home from anywhere. Oh, let them have the blessing of your being there. Take time for open arms; for talking, for reading, for family prayer; for home evenings and hours. As one discerning poet put it: "Richer than I you can never be. I had a mother who read to me." Take time for making memories; for fixing sure foundations that will last long after less essential things are far forgotten. Mothers need to be home. A mother, a father waiting is a source of safety and assurance. Parents need to give their children wholesomeness and wholeness by the very lives they live. Oh, the blessedness of coming home and finding mother there, with love and kindness and encouragement. Life goes quickly. Don't brush them off and turn them over to others. Take time for your children — before they're grown, before they're gone. Oh, take time for your children."²

As committed parents we also must be alert to teaching opportunities. We must create them. A father reading well written, moralistic stories to his children before they go to bed. A mother taking time out during the day (or while she is working) to play a Bible or Book of Mormon personality guessing game with her children. A family reading the scriptures out loud in the morning before breakfast. A family singing a hymn before family prayers both night and morning. A mother and father constantly telling each child they love him. A mother and father bearing their own testimonies to their children often. These are all teaching opportunities and committed parents continually seek to create their own which are most meaningful for their own families.

Committed parents show respect and trust for their children. Your children are equals with you. True, you have been placed on this earth just a little before them, but in eternity's continuum, you are equals. Treat your children as friends, not as servants. Give them credit for intelligence. You have sons and daughters of God in your home. President Tanner said, "It is so important that we always keep in mind that we are teaching spirit-children of God, who will be tomorrow's leaders and who will hold the responsible positions in our church, communities and nations. What a tremendous responsibility. And while we are training the children for their heavy duties and responsibilities we want to teach them those things that will give them the happiness for which they search."³

A committed parent is a disciplinarian but for the right reasons. Children must be taught the principle of obedience; and discipline is necessary to teach that principle. But its purpose is to work for the betterment of the child. to help him. Not to be a reactive outlet for our own emotions and frustrations. We are judges in our home. But we must be just, fair, and merciful.

Discipline out of love, not out of anger, and always remember to, “show forth afterwards an increase of love toward him who thou has reproved.”⁴

Learn to look beyond your children’s actions to their intentions. We expect our peers to judge us not just by our words and actions, but by what we intended. A committed parent always seeks to learn why before he acts. Be open with your children. Learn to know them and let them learn to know you. Talk to them about your problems and ask their advice. Admit your mistakes. Use the word, “sorry”. Do you ever tell your children, “I’m sorry,” when you have acted unwisely or unjustly? Remember, we are learning too and we make mistakes. Admit them. Your children will love you for it and won’t mark you down as a hypocrite.

A committed father exercises his patriarchal priesthood. He makes certain that his family kneels in family prayer night and morning. He establishes the tradition of family home evening and seeks constantly to make this a meaningful family experience each week. He blesses his family often. When they are sick, when they begin school, or anytime they are in need of special spiritual or physical strength.

Committed parents realize the power of the Holy Ghost. They know that as they strive to personally keep the commandments and seek spiritual guidance with all diligence, they will receive revelation through the Holy Ghost in making decisions crucial to their family’s welfare; and receive through the same source spiritual strength and support as they carry out their God-like responsibilities.

Finally, and above all, committed parents create an atmosphere of love in their home. As an introduction to the new family home evening manual, our first presidency has said: “In a day when the sanctity of the home is being invaded and where the care of children has been regarded lightly, we...have endeavored to impress upon the parents the importance of developing a love in the home so that in the future, should those children thus taught stray away, they would eventually return again, lest they lose their place in the eternal family circle.”⁵

Becoming heavenly fathers and mothers is our challenge. We do it by living God-like lives and becoming fully committed parents. Our work, our glory, our joy, and our happiness comes through bringing about the eternal life of our family. If we are to become as our Heavenly Father, we must become aware of the solemn obligations and responsibilities of parenthood and become fully committed to fulfilling them.

I have been most blessed, for I have had parents, grandparents, great grandparents and great great grandparents who have been diligent in magnifying their calling as parents, given their knowledge and understanding of the gospel. It was because of this family influence that I made the right decisions at crucial crossroads in my life. And although at times my actions led me into situations which threatened to pull me away from my Heavenly Father, the influence and

love that I felt from my family, which had existed throughout my entire life, acted as an anchor to my soul when I was tossed about by the winds of temptation.

This influence, I am convinced, was my salvation. And you and I have the responsibility and blessing to be that kind of influence on our children and grandchildren. We can have a family whose members can learn to withstand any adversity. Whose members can develop a Christ-like love for each other and for all mankind. Whose members can be powerful instruments of service in the hands of the Lord here upon this earth. Whose members can receive of the fullness of the Lord in the world to come, together as a whole, complete family. Striving to be a forever family brings a joy and happiness unmatched by any other involvement and is key to becoming one with our Heavenly Father.

1. Doctrine and Covenants 93: 39-44, 47-48, 50
2. The Improvement Era, November 1970, Richard L. Evans
3. Church News, 8-10-74
4. Doctrine and Covenants 121:43
5. Family Home Evening Manual, 1974-75, p. 2

Turning Hearts of the Fathers to the Children

Orange Stake 1976

WE HAVE BEEN HEARING about the importance of turning the hearts of the children to the fathers; and that the whole earth would be literally wasted at the Savior's coming if this was not done. But as we contemplate the great responsibility each of us have in fulfilling this assignment and calling, we must not forget that our responsibility does not end with our hearts turning to our fathers. The Lord told Malachi, "I will send...Elijah the Prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall turn the *heart of the fathers to the children*, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."¹

And to Zacharias, father of John the Baptist, Gabriel, an angel of the Lord appeared and prophesied concerning Zacharias' future son, John, that, "He (should) go before (the Savior) in the spirit and power of (Elijah) to turn the *hearts of the fathers to the children*...to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."²

The link is not complete without our children. And while we cannot be saved without our kindred dead, it is also true that we cannot ultimately be held responsible for what our progenitors did or did not do, and our responsibility to them is to make certain they are included in our family unit and that the sealing ordinances are performed for them in the temples of the Lord. Our relationship with our descendants is different, however, for our actions and our decisions will affect them at least temporarily, either for good or for ill. Jacob the brother of Nephi emphasizing this relationship, admonished his people to, "Remember that ye may, because of your filthiness, bring your children unto destruction, and their sins be heaped upon your heads at the last day."³

Turning our hearts to our children means that we carefully, consciously, and systematically develop habits, perform actions, make decisions, and record thoughts, testimonies and histories that will tend to draw our children and their descendants to our family unit and to the Lord. It means that we continually seek our Heavenly Father's guidance that we might be this kind

of influence on our future family, and that we pray for them constantly. As Nephi ended his record, he expressed his feelings for the yet unborn generations that would descend through his loins. "I Nephi have written what I have written, and I esteem it as of great worth and especially unto my people. For I pray continually for them by day, and mine eyes water my pillow by night because of them; and I cry unto my God in faith, and I know that he will hear my cry. And I know that the Lord God will consecrate my prayers for the gain of my people. And the words which I have written in weakness will be made strong unto them; for it persuadeth them to do good; it maketh known unto them of their fathers; and it speaketh of Jesus and persuadeth them to believe in Him, and to endure to the end, which is life eternal."⁴

And Nephi's younger brother, Jacob, with this same love for his posterity wrote, "We labor diligently to engraven these words upon plates, hoping that our beloved...children will receive them with thankful hearts, and look upon them that they may learn with joy and not with sorrow, neither with contempt, concerning their first parents. For for this intent have we written these things that they may know of Christ, and that we had a hope of His glory."⁵

It seems to me that this is basically the feeling that we too must have toward our future generations. And that we through our own lives and through our written personal histories must seek to influence our descendants as Nephi and Jacob sought to influence theirs. As I have contemplated what I can and must do in fulfilling my responsibility to my children, my heart has turned again to my fathers for an example.

I think of my own mother who constantly bore her testimony to me. Who every week while I was away from her either in the army, on my mission, at school, and even during my married life, without fail wrote me a letter expressing love and keeping me informed of family activities. I think of my father who spent his spare time at home with his family. Who went fishing with his boys. Who taught his children to love and appreciate music, hard work, and perseverance. I think of my wife's mother who unselfishly has stayed with us and taken care of us each time we have had a new baby. Who has spent countless hours and days in genealogical research and compiling family histories, and who presents to each of my children when they are baptized their own complete book of remembrance. I think of my wife's father, an ardent temple worker who has a love and compassion for all men, and particularly for his children and grandchildren, and who expresses constantly that love through his words and his outward show of affection.

I think of the influence my grandparents and great grandparents and great great grandparents have had on me directly and indirectly. How their sacrifices were for me. How their decisions to accept the gospel and live it were not only for their salvation, but for my salvation as well. And I am grateful for those who thought enough of me to write to me through their own personal histories to let me know what they were like, how their experiences affected them, and most importantly how they felt about Jesus Christ and His church.

I would like to share with you some very personal and inspiring testimonies written to me and to my descendants by some of my ancestors whose hearts were truly turned to their children and whose desires were to influence them to live lives worthy of their rich heritage.

My great great grandfather John Welch wanted to make certain that his testimony was not only recorded for his future posterity, but that it was legally verified as coming from him. He had the following testimony attested to by the county clerk of Cache County Utah: *I, John Welch, being of mature years, desire to leave to my friends and associates and to my descendants, the following statement: I was born January 6, 1823, at Derbyshire, England, and I served as an apprentice at the cutlery trade in Sheffield until I reached the age of majority. I was baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the year 1841, emigrated to Nauvoo, Illinois, in 1842, and to Salt Lake City in the year 1852. I was well acquainted with the Prophet Joseph Smith and heard him speak both in public and in private, many times. I was present at the meeting in the grove at Nauvoo, August 8, 1844, when Sidney Rigdon made the claim that it was his right to assume the leadership and presidency of the church. I saw, Brigham Young, then the president of the Twelve apostles, stand up to speak to the people, and he spoke with the voice of Joseph Smith, and I further testify that he, Young, was talking; that I was convinced then, and have never doubted in all the intervening years, from that time up to the present, that Brigham Young was the right man and the man chosen of God, to lead the church. And I further testify that all his successors, down to Joseph F. Smith who at present stands at the head and presides over the church, were called, chosen and ordained of God, so to do.*⁶

My great grandfather Charles Oscar Dunn wrote a personal history and kept a journal. He recorded the following testimony: *April 5, 1879, I was taken with a severe fever, which terminated with a large abscess in my left shoulder, which kept me bedfast for about five weeks, and the pain and torture were indeed severe. The Elders administered to me, but I received no relief until about the first week in May, when President Lorenzo Snow came on Saturday night and blessed me. On Sunday morning I was very bad, and the room seemed to be filled with evil spirits. I prayed that the Lord would protect me from them, as they seemed determined to destroy me. But the Lord heard my prayers and a light appeared in the room. As a personage entered the room, the evil spirits vanished, all but one, who seemed to have been their leader, and who remained crouched in a corner of the room. The personage who came in pointed to the evil one, and then looking at me, said, 'You have conquered and you shall get ell. With that the evil one left the room, and I was released from the power that had held me. This personage then told me that all of the revelations given to the Prophet Joseph and recorded in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants were true. He gave me other information and instructions which have been of use to me during my life. After he left, I asked for my clothes, got out of bed and walked into the front room, a thing I had not done for over one month. I know I was healed by the power of God.'*⁷

And then on his 70th birthday he wrote in his diary: *October 13, 1925. This is my seventieth birthday. Some of the children came and had dinner with us. We had a good time both on*

*Saturday and on my birthday. I am feeling fine. Am thankful I have a standing in the church and that I have a testimony of the gospel; for my wives and children and pray that the Lord will bless them and keep them in the faith.*⁸

Some years ago, shortly before her husband died, my grandmother, Emily Knecht Dunn wrote a letter to each of her grandchildren. Her letter to me began: *We love you very much and wish for every opportunity to come your way in this life, and with the help of our Heavenly Father and the Priesthood of God, there is no end to our advancement.* She then proceeded to give me wise counsel by outlining my responsibilities as a son of God and enumerating the blessings I had been given. She described the circumstances under which her family joined the church and related a very personal spiritual experience. Then she stated the following: *This opened to me a desire for a greater life. When eighteen I had a great desire for a testimony of the gospel that would carry me through (the) thick and thin of the trials of this life. Through earnest prayer God gave me a testimony and through the Holy Ghost I know that God lives and Jesus Christ is the very Son of God. That He was the only perfect being to live upon the earth. That He died for the original sin and the sins of the world, for all those who were obedient to his command(ments) And that Joseph Smith was indeed a true Prophet and an instrument in God's hands in bringing forth this glorious gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, to earth in these latter days.*

A few years later, I received from this same grandmother another letter. She had been in the hospital and one day while contemplating the great missionary effort being made in the church and the new temples that were being built, she had the following experience: *I was so inspired that I lay on my bed and looked out into the hall and looked at the white light and the white uniformed nurses going rapidly back and forth until my understanding was opened and a glorious white brilliant highway was before me, and it became more exceedingly white and those who were traveling that highway became so exceedingly white beyond any earthly thing and beyond my description, and I looked and it seemed so bright that everything was illuminated with that exquisite brightness. All were traveling at a fast pace and didn't seem to get tired. It showed it was a great highway that they were rushing on to get the Lord's work done before the wicked were destroyed and the great millennium was ushered in. The temple work was going forth and the hearts of men were touched and everyone was getting a chance to hear the glorious gospel before the end. There was so much to be accomplished that they had to go at such a rapid pace. In 1910, I went with my parents to Salt Lake so they could get their endowments and have us children sealed to them. (She and her family lived in New York at the time) While there, we all had our patriarchal blessings by Elder John Smith, Patriarch of the church (and son of Hyrum Smith). One of the things that he promised me was that if I was faithful, I would have visions by day and dreams by night. I have often wondered if I had lived worthy of these blessings. Now after 50 years, I have seen a marvelous manifestation, which was beyond any word description, and my eyes beheld that exquisite whiteness described by the head of the church. It was worth all the pain and suffering just to behold it and I was wide awake when I did behold it.*

As I have contemplated the impact the recorded experiences and testimonies of my progenitors have had on me, I have become more aware of the spirit and power of Elijah. For truly as my heart has turned to my fathers and I have seen their concern for me and have learned to know them and feel of their testimonies through their written histories, my heart has turned to my own children and my yet unborn posterity, and my desire is to do for them what my ancestors have done for me. And I realize that I must begin now with my children.

They must be aware of my testimony and my love for them. I must spend time with them. I must teach them of their rich heritage and introduce them to their progenitors through pictures, stories, and family histories. I must develop family traditions and create pleasant family memories. I must teach them the Gospel of Jesus Christ by helping them to know and love the scriptures and through my own words and example, and I must record for them and for their children and their children's children my own experiences, my own thoughts, and my own testimony.

As we seek to gain an appreciation for and knowledge of our ancestors, that can spark within us a resolve that we will not waste their sacrifices but give to our children and grandchildren what our parents and grandparents have given to us. And through our unique experiences pass that on to them improved and refined by our positive contributions.

That is heart turning to our fathers and to our children so that we might have joy in our eternal context. And “the whole earth would (**not**) be utterly wasted at (the Lord’s) coming.”⁹

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1. Malachi 4:5-6
 2. Luke 1:17
 3. Jacob 3:10
 4. 2 Ne. 33:3-4
 5. Jacob 4:3-4
 6. John Welch Sr. Family Book of Remembrance, p. 11
 7. The Charles Oscar Dunn Clan, p. 25
 8. Dunn, Ibid, p. 41
 9. Doctrine and Covenants 2:3

Families Are Forever and So Is Parenting

Ensign Article 2003 - Steve & Garth Hanson

“THERE IS ONLY ONE way to handle adult children. You teach them while they are growing up that they are no longer a part of your family after they turn. They are to pack their things and be ready to leave the house at that time. We are through with responsible relationships after that.”

That statement kind of grates, doesn't it? We have heard such comments, though, and have observed parents who feel their parental charge ends when their children are grown up. This may seem to be the easy solution, but by establishing a self-imposed time limit parents often push their God-given responsibilities onto the shoulders of other people. Bishops' offices are frequently visited by adult children in need of parental guidance. While we know that priesthood, Relief Society, and youth leaders are willing to assist, what a change we would see in leadership workloads if these adult children felt they could go to their parents for assistance and counsel. As difficult as this may seem at times, some degree of parental accountability lasts until the day we die, and beyond.

The following four principles may be helpful to parents who are struggling in their relationships with their adult children. Although each family situation is unique, these principles may help parents determine how involved to be in their adult children's lives, how to deal with issues of agency and accountability, and how to maintain their own spiritual and emotional well-being in the face of stressful circumstances.

Principle One: Parents never outlive their responsibility to their children.

Our leaders have been forthright about this. One quote representative of many will be sufficient here. President Ezra Taft Benson said: “Fathers [and certainly mothers too], yours is an eternal calling from which you are never released.... [A] father's calling is eternal, and its importance transcends time. It is a calling for both time and eternity.”¹

While parental responsibility never ceases, parental responsibilities do change. After the birth of a child, parents provide for its every need. As the child grows, the amount of parental involvement necessary for the child to sustain life decreases. Over time, the degree of involvement becomes harder for parents to determine. That challenge is complicated even more as children have increasing input into just how much parental involvement they want (or will allow). By the time children have reached adulthood, the escalating complexity of the timing, extent, and direction of parent involvement in their children's lives sometimes causes parents to give up. As a result, they either assume a very passive role in their relationships with their adult children or stop those relationships altogether. When this happens, everybody loses.

Parents will spend many more years with their offspring as adults than as young children or adolescents. They will be involved not only with their adult children, but also with those who come into the family as their children marry and have children of their own. This expanded circle includes sons- and daughters-in-law, grandchildren, and perhaps even step-grandchildren. Each of these relationships creates additional challenges for parents of adult children.

A number of years ago, Raymond Hanson (Garth's father and Steve's grandfather) stood before family members who were gathered at a reunion. He was in his 90s at the time and had outlived three wives. His posterity then numbered over 200, most of whom were present. While physically feeble, Raymond spoke clearly and with power. He expressed his love for all of his family, including the in-laws and the steps. He bore a strong testimony of the gospel and invited those who were having spiritual challenges to change their lives so that the family could be together eternally. It was an emotionally charged moment for all who were there, as we watched the patriarch of our family magnify his role as a parent right up to the end of his life.

We believe this is the way it ought to be.

Principle Two: Parents and adult children have the ability and the right to make choices independent of each other's decisions and actions.

Several years ago Bob (not his real name) was talking to his stake president following an interview the leader had recently had with Bob's 21-year-old son who had just returned from a Church mission. The stake president was glowing in his compliments about the son and concluded by saying to Bob, "You must be a marvelous father to have raised a son like that." Bob's first impulse was to accept the compliment as well deserved. After all, he and his wife had always spent lots of time with their children, had tried to do everything the Lord expected of them, and had encouraged their son to go on a mission. They were good listeners, talked out problems, and were reasonable and consistent in their discipline. But then the face of his daughter Enid flashed into his mind. She was ending her second marriage, had challenges with dishonesty, promiscuity, and drugs, and had never been able to hold a job for longer than a few

weeks. She had been raised in the same home and had been treated, as far as Bob knew, the same as his other children.

Bob didn't take the compliment. Instead, his response surprised his stake president: If you give me credit for what my son is doing, you have to give me the blame for what my daughter has done. I don't think I deserve either one.

To what extent, if any, are parents responsible for their children's deeds? That's not an easy question to answer. In fact, it's an ongoing question that experts debate all the time. Why are we the way we are? To what extent do our genes influence our behavior? How influential is the environment in which we are raised?

As Latter-day Saints, our gospel perspective requires that we add two additional considerations as we seek to determine ultimate responsibility for actions and choices: the eternal nature of man and man's God-given moral agency. To understand that we did not begin with our earthly birth and that we have an innate moral agency is to know that our personalities and dispositions may be affected by our family environment (as well as a million other things) but not ultimately determined by it (or them). Parents who have more than one child intuitively know this to be the case. They can see that each child is different. Very different. And they came into the world that way.

Recognition of the right and ability of both parents and children to make choices independent of each other's decisions and actions is critical in establishing and maintaining a viable relationship between parents and adult children. Please consider the following:

- Children's actions do not necessarily make a statement about how they were raised.
- Parents' actions may affect their posterity for good or for ill.
- Parents can influence but ultimately cannot control what their children do.
- Parents' actions will not determine their children's eternal salvation.
- Children's actions will not determine their parent's eternal salvation.
- Neither children nor parents can take the right to choose away from the other.

Principle Three: Positive change generally does not occur until parents allow their adult children to experience the consequences of bad decisions.

Lance Smith (not his real name), a young adult living at home, was doing just about everything wrong he could possibly do. He lied, stole, cheated, and used drugs and alcohol. He was unchaste and seemed completely indifferent to how his actions affected his parents. His mother

and father had tried everything they could think of to help him. For several years they had been patient and forgiving. They convinced him to see a professional counselor, but after a session or two he refused to go. He never did agree to see his bishop. No matter what they tried, nothing worked. Finally, the inevitable happened. Lance was arrested.

The phone rang at Lance's home, and his mother answered.

"Hi Mom, this is Lance. I'm in jail, and they won't let me out until you come and get me. Please hurry!"

Mom was shocked, even panicked, but didn't say anything.

Lance pleaded again, "Mom, please hurry. This is not a nice place!"

Mom didn't say anything for a long time, then quietly asked, "Lance, are you guilty of the charges?"

"Well, Mom, I really wasn't as involved as the police say I was."

"Lance, are you guilty?"

"Well, Mom, I guess I am."

Then, with all the courage she could muster, Sister Smith replied, "Well, Lance, I'm sorry that you are. I guess you will have to work through this by yourself. Call me when you get it all worked out." She hung up the phone and fell apart.

Two very long days passed. Finally, Lance called, and Brother and Sister Smith went to the police station to pick him up. A few more days passed, and the phone rang again. This time it was an attorney.

"Hello Mrs. Smith. I am Mark Johnson. I helped Lance with his legal problems while he was in custody. I just wanted to speak with you to see how you wanted to work out my compensation for helping Lance get out of jail."

At first Lance's mother was troubled. Finances were tight, and she was surprised at the call. She paused a minute, then said, "Mr. Johnson, I appreciate what you did to help Lance, but you are talking to the wrong person. I did not hire you. You did not help me. You helped Lance. If you want compensation for your efforts, I think you ought to talk to Lance." She hung up the phone.

Sometime later, Lance came to his parents asking for a "donation" to pay his legal bill, but the donation did not come. Lance had to go back to the attorney and work out a pay-back plan, which he followed. After many months of payments, Lance paid Mr. Johnson off. He eventually returned to activity in the Church, served an honorable mission, and is doing very

well as a student at a major university. He is paying for much of his education himself, and his relationship with his parents couldn't be better. He will tell you today that the actions of his very brave and very frightened mother turned his life around.

Obviously, not all stories have such a happy ending. However, many stories do, if you wait long enough, and if you are trying to do the right thing.

Parents are accountable to teach their children responsibility for their actions. This is almost always a very hard thing to do and often may involve what seems to be a temporary abandonment. In a very real sense, parents can interfere with their children's progress if they try to protect them from the consequences of their actions. Our prototype here is Heavenly Father and His response to Adam and Eve after they had partaken of the forbidden fruit. He cast them out of the Garden of Eden and allowed the ground to be *cursed for their sakes*. (See Moses 4:23)

But what about parental grace? If we mirrored our Heavenly Father, we would extend grace to our children, as He does to His. After all, He did provide us with a Savior. Is there a contradiction here? The whole intent of the Atonement seems to be to keep us from suffering the natural consequences of our actions. Shouldn't parents be willing to offer that same grace to their children?

The seeming contradiction between receiving grace and being allowed to experience consequences is resolved when we consider the qualifications God places on His grace. God's grace comes only after:

- We have done all we can do for ourselves (see 2 Nephi 25:23).
- We have recognized our own mistakes and want to change (see Moroni 10:32 and Doctrine and Covenants 19:17).
- We are humble because of our weaknesses (see Ether 12:27).

He promises that His grace will be sufficient for us. This seems to indicate that grace will never replace an experience that is necessary to teach us something we need to know. Grace will be used only when it will improve our spiritual or physical well-being.

Principle Four: Choosing to be happy brings peace and increases parents' ability to deal effectively with their adult children.

The Lord's plan for us has been designated "a plan of happiness." (See Alma 42:16). If we are not happy for the most part, we are obviously not letting the plan work for us. Our happiness needn't be dependent on what is happening to us externally.

Ward and Estelle Roberts had been fretting for many months over the behavior of their oldest daughter, Becca, who was in her late teens. While they still allowed her to live in their home

(they felt they could best influence her if she was in their home), she was nearly impossible to live with. She was verbally abusive to them and to her younger siblings. She obeyed house rules only marginally (just enough to keep from being asked to leave), and Ward and Estelle suspected she was involved in immoral behavior and drug use.

Their worries about Becca consumed them. Usually they were depressed, and they seldom laughed. Their involvement with their other children became perfunctory at best, as their thoughts were almost always centered on Becca. It was as though a dark cloud had settled upon their home.

Finally, they saw what was happening and talked about it. They could see that they were not allowing the light of the gospel to lift them or their children. They discussed how their personal examples should demonstrate the results of living the principles of the gospel so that Becca and the rest of their children could see firsthand that happiness comes from following Jesus Christ. They vowed they would change and pleaded in their personal prayers for the strength to be happy.

They did change. It did not happen overnight, and there were still periods of despondency, but by working to be happy, they began to see many things they should be happy about. They also talked with their children about this, and all agreed to try to be better examples to Becca. Gradually the tension in the home subsided. While Becca did not noticeably change her behavior, the other children and Ward and Estelle became more comfortable around each other, and the joking and laughter that had been absent for so long began to return.

Becca ultimately moved out, got married, and lived a life quite different than the other family members. Her lifestyle was not gospel-centered, but she loved to come home because of the love and happiness that existed there. After a number of years, she began to go to church again, and her nonmember husband asked to take the missionary lessons. He said he wanted to have in his home what he felt in Ward and Estelle's home.

How are children to know that the gospel of Jesus Christ brings happiness if their parents are not happy as they try to live it? How can they know that peace comes from righteousness, regardless of one's external circumstances, if parents are not at peace in the midst of their own stresses? Parents who partake of the fruits the gospel offers not only portray openly the blessings of living the Savior's teachings, they also are in a position of strength to help their children because of their own spiritual and emotional well-being.

It is easy to say we should all be happy, but how do we do it? Can we just say, "From now on I am going to be happy?" Not quite, but almost. Happiness is a frame of mind, a perspective, a desire. To want to be happy is mandatory before one can ever be happy or at peace. Here are some things you can do to increase your happiness:

- Dictate your own happiness. Don't let a problem child dictate it for you. Parents do

not need to be dragged down emotionally, financially, spiritually, or physically by what their children do or do not do.

- Realize that time is on your side. Most challenges with adult children are not resolved quickly, but time often works in favor of ultimate resolution.
- Don't be overly concerned about what other people think. Realize that only you and your Heavenly Father know your family's circumstances and are the only ones who are qualified to make any kind of judgment.
- Take a break from your challenges. Don't cancel your weekly spouse dates. If you have been putting off a vacation until things get better, go now so things *can* get better.
- Lose yourself in service. In some profound way, the act of service relieves the burdens of those who are serving.
- Take time to be still. It is usually only in spiritual solitude that we are able to hear the quiet whisperings of God (see Psalms 45:10). Appropriate stillness can be obtained through pondering the scriptures, taking quiet walks, attending the temple, partaking of the sacrament, and offering up our oblation of a broken heart and contrite spirit through prayer in our closets and silent places.

Happiness is a decision. If we truly want it, we will do what is necessary to obtain it.

Conclusion

As Latter-day Saints, we should realize the importance of life-long parenting and find appropriate ways to be involved in the lives of our adult children. When we focus our lives on Jesus Christ and seek to offer our "whole souls" to Him,² we manifest His character more and more consistently in our thoughts and actions. Our ability to love our children with His pure love is enhanced, and this, in turn, increases our sensitivity to the promptings of the Holy Ghost. We are more likely then to make decisions that will bless their lives. By trying to do what is best for our families, the Lord will help us, and we can feel good about our efforts, regardless of the choices our children may make.

No matter what our experiences with our children may be now, by keeping our covenants we can rely upon the promise that "all things shall work together for [our] good."³ Time will be our ally, and we can take constant comfort in the ultimate assurance that we will have joy and rejoicing in our posterity in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. To the Fathers in Israel *Ensign*, November 1987, 48
2. See Omni 1:26
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 90:24

Jo & Dale Trumbo And Their 12 Children

Orange Stake 1980s

AN EXAMPLE IN PARENTING. The Trumbo's lived in the Tustin II ward.

Jo Trumbo talked on adversity. She said before they had children, they were great to offer counsel to parents. They ultimately adopted 12 children of different nationalities and at different ages some coming from horrendous circumstances. Their first child was ideal. After two weeks she was sleeping through the night and gave them no problem whatsoever. Jo said, "I'm sure that if she was the only child we had given how perfectly she has turned out, we would have considered ourselves perfect parents and would be on the circuit telling other parents 'how to do it.' When our oldest child was six we had six children. I didn't think myself such an expert on young children, but I had plenty of advice for parents with teenagers. During the teenage years, I was looking for anyone and everyone who could give me advice and counsel. We had adversity and trials with drugs and even prison for one of our sons. Some were great and some were not so great. Some went on missions, some didn't. But through it all we loved them but often felt like we had failed. Until we realized that they could choose just like we could choose."

For Jo and Dale's anniversary, their son who had been in prison and was in his late 20's early 30's, gave them a bronze eagle. His reason: "I understand that the eagle mother never leaves its young, no matter what the circumstances."

Steve and Joyce Hanson Reunion

2009

WRITTEN TO CHILDREN & grandchildren after our 1st reunion after coming home from Romania.

We were so grateful to see so many of you a few weeks ago and missed seeing the rest of you. It won't be long and we will be together again. We wish we were with you now, but we are where we should be. Our thoughts are with you. They always are. You each are in our prayers constantly. We think about each one of you. Each one of you individually. Each of you our children, including those who have married into our family. You are just as much a part of us as if you were born to us and we love you just as dearly. And each of you, our dear grandchildren. We think of you and see your faces and hear your voices and feel your spirits and love you and are so grateful for you. Each of you are such a blessing to us.

We pray for all of you. We pray for your health. We pray for your safety. We pray for your happiness. We pray for your financial success. We pray that you will have love and harmony in your marriages and your family. We pray that you will be close to your Heavenly Father and that you will have faith in Jesus Christ and that you will be humble so that the Holy Ghost can bring you comfort and peace in your trials and challenges. We pray that you will remember your heritage. And that our love and sacrifice and the love and sacrifice of your grandparents and all who have gone before you will sink deep within your hearts and will anchor your souls to the gospel of Jesus Christ. That is our prayer for you. And that is the prayer that all who have gone before us have for you. Because we all love you.

We loved listening to general conference. We hope you were able to hear the talks. We were particularly affected by Elder Christofferson's talk (Todd's □) and President Eyring's talk. They both spoke about becoming one. Elder Christofferson talked about us becoming Zion. About us becoming a Zion family where there are no poor among us and where we are helping one another and where there is not contention among us and where we are kind to one another and where we are not talking evil about one another and we are lifting each other. We think you are like that. We are so grateful you want to be together and are friends with each other. Even best

friends. We are grateful you want to help each other and love each other. We are so grateful you love us.

We were struck when President Eyring said that we can't become one solitarily. We have to be willing to give of ourselves to be united. He said that pride is the great enemy to unity. It is. We believe that we are close as a family because each of you has often forgotten about yourself and has taken an interest in the well-being of each other. Thank you for doing that. That has made the family stronger and each of you stronger individually.

We pray that we will be even closer as a family and that we will be even more loving and helpful to one another. We know that this will happen as we each try to become more like Jesus Christ. He has told us He will help us do this if we will try. We know that He will. We love you all so very, very much. Thank you for loving us.

Mom & Dad, Grandma and Grandpa

FUNERALS

Richard Causey Funeral Talk

Orange Stake 1989

THE FIRST TIME I ever saw Dick Causey was in a High Priest Group Meeting in our ward a number of years ago. In trying to think of the word that describes my reaction when I heard his first comments in that meeting, the only word that seems to fit is "startled." I can't remember what he said, but I do remember that it was the most bizarre, off-the-wall, unexpected comment I had ever heard in any priesthood meeting in my life. And I remembered I laughed. My first actual conversation with him was the following Sunday. I saw him in the foyer as I was heading into sacrament meeting. I id, "How are you doing, Brother Causey?" He looked at me, his eyes enlarged half-again their regular size through his glasses, and without any kind of a hint on his face that he was kidding, replied tersely, "Worse."

I looked right back at him and without any hint on my face that I was kidding, I responded, "You couldn't be." It was his turn to be startled for a second, and then that grin broke out and his laugh came, and we became fast friends.

To say that Dick was one of the most unforgettable characters I ever met would be an understatement. His irreverent comments for anyone and anything that wasn't truly sacred kept attendance at our High Priest meetings high. You just didn't want to miss what he was going to come up with next. His sometimes reckless but always refreshing brand of humor prompted me one day to ask him why his parents hadn't named him "Kama" rather than Dick. He took on a perplexed look and he repeated the name: "Kama?" "Kama?" "Kama Causey?" And then came his laugh. His wonderful, infectious, ingratiating laugh.

However, it has been since he discovered he had cancer that I have come to really know Dick Causey. We have talked many times in the last few years on an intimate level. Sometimes in an "official" interview capacity, but most of the time just as friends. I have discovered what I think I knew all along: Dick Causey is not an unforgettable character because of his sense of humor. He is unforgettable because of his character. I would like to spend a few minutes talking about that character and the example he has been to me.

First of all, I have been impressed with his love. I suppose none of us will ever know how much he has done to assist those who needed help and had nowhere else to turn. His money, his time, his means, his counsel, have always been freely and kindly given without judgement or condemnation. I am certain that there are many in this congregation who have been recipients of his silent, Christ-like generosity. I know of no one who has more friends than Dick.

We are his friends because there is no question in our minds but that he loves us. He wanted to be around us and talk to us and listen to us and tease us and rub spirits with us, And we felt that love and wanted to be around him, His love for his own family was intense. He worshipped his grandchildren and talked of you often. You were indeed lights in his life. And I don't suppose I had a conversation with him during these last months, that he didn't talk about you, Jesse. It was almost as though his sole concern about this death business was you. He didn't want you to be unhappy or sorrowful or lonely. He wanted you to understand that it was okay and the timing was right. As we talked I came to see his deep and abiding love for you. And over these last few months, that love and his appreciation for you and your service and love for him, deepened and broadened and brought to him a peace and tranquility that only such love can bring.

I have likewise been impressed with Dick's sense of order and responsibility. I suppose that knowing of your impending death some months ahead of time, for many of us would be depressing, devastating, and emotionally and mentally debilitating. It was indeed a shock for Dick, but he was anything but emotionally and mentally debilitated. He has used his limited time in a most admirable way to get every aspect of his life fully in order. He made trips far and near to see his dear friends and loved ones for a last time. He and Jesse traveled to some of the most sacred places on the earth, including Israel and Book of Mormon lands, to refresh his soul and reaffirm his testimony. He got his financial affairs in order and a plan set so that Jesse would not have to worry about those kinds of things. His acts of service and kindness and generosity, if anything, increased. Even while unable to get around physically, he could be found preparing copies of his precious Book of Mormon to be distributed by the missionaries.

He liked to have all of his "i's" dotted and his "t's" crossed and the preparation for his funeral was no exception. He planned out exactly how he wanted it, including the day of the week, and left instructions that no one was to mess around with his requests. To my knowledge, the only thing that has been changed was the day of the week, and under the circumstances I am sure he concurred with that. He was especially adamant about the music, and those of us who are LDS will notice a decidedly different kind of music here than we find at most LDS funerals. Both because of his desire to plan ahead as well as his unexpected longevity, it has been months ago that he asked Dixie and her trio to sing his selected songs for this funeral—and they have been practicing ever since. Certainly no one has been better prepared to sing at a funeral than this trio. His orderliness notwithstanding, he never let a sense of propriety get in the way of his sense of humor, right up to the end.

One day several months ago, I guess when Dick figured the trio was sufficiently practiced, he decided he wanted to hear what his funeral music was going to sound like. He went over to Dixie's place and feeling weak, he laid down on the couch while they sang his funeral songs. When they finished, he said, "Very nice girls." Then while slowly elevating himself to a sitting position, he continued, "What do you think the congregation would do if I raised up like this at my funeral?"

There were some things, however, that he really didn't joke much about. Things that were sacred and holy to him. One was his standing before the Lord, Part and parcel of him getting everything in order before his death, involved a great deal of introspection and candid appraisal of his life. Weaknesses both real and imagined were brought forth and laid on the table with humility. Changes were made, and forgiveness sought.

The last request he made of me was to interview him for his temple recommend. I did. He was worthy in every respect to attend the temple and participate in the ordinances therein. He died with a current recommend. Worthy to enter the temple. Worthy to enter into the presence of the Lord.

There was one other thing he did not joke about. His testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ as found in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and his faith in the reality and efficacy of the atonement of the Savior and the actuality of His resurrection. Dick knew "that (God) granteth unto men according to their desire, whether it be unto death or life. ...He alloteth unto men according to their wills, whether they be unto salvation or unto destruction.... Good and evil have come before all men. He that knoweth good and evil, to him it is given according to his desires whether he desireth good or evil, life or death, joy or remorse of conscience."¹

Notwithstanding his knowledge that he had the ability to choose how he would live his life, Dick also understood that salvation was not possible by oneself. That our righteous choices alone could not satisfy the demands of justice, nor bring about an ultimate eternal welding of spirit and body in a glorified, resurrected state like Heavenly Father's. For it was known from the beginning that we would all make mistakes while on this earth, as we learned to control our bodies and as we lived in ignorance of His laws.

And there would come the time when these bodies would cease to function and decay and die. It seemed to be a paradox. In this impure state, we could not regain our Father's presence nor achieve His status. Yet the impure state was necessary for us to receive a body and learn to control it under the most adverse circumstance, so that we could become as Heavenly Father.

To solve this dilemma, an infinite and atoning sacrifice would have to be made. Only one was qualified to make it. Jesus Christ, the Savior, the Holy One of Israel, the Son of God. Dick knew this and constantly testified of it. He testified that Jesus came to the earth in the meridian of

time, physically begotten of God the Father, and born of a mortal mother, that He might have both the seeds of death and immortality within Him. He experienced what we experience, that he might have compassion for us.

He suffered, far beyond what we could possibly be called upon to bear, that He might feel and know and heal our pain. He took upon Himself our sins if we would allow it. He met the demands of justice for us, as a result, and became that link which would bring us back into the presence of God.

I suppose as much as anyone I know, Dick knew that this great gift could only be offered to the truly penitent and strived to prepare himself accordingly. To fully accept into his life the gospel of Jesus Christ. To be born of the Spirit and taste of the joy that results.

He also knew that Jesus Christ freely lay down his mortal body and then took it back up again in its immortal form, thus holding the keys of resurrection. And that that act provided the way for each of us to ultimately be reunited to our physical bodies, perfected and whole, immortal and indestructible. And with our bodies and spirits eternally fused, we would be capable of being a Holy temple wherein God's Spirit could dwell and thus receive of His fulness and all that that implies.

Dick knew without question, "that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do." (2 Nephi 25:23) That Eternal Life is both a gift and a choice. That the gift is there for the choosing, and this life is where that choice is made. Furthermore, Dick had full faith in the power and force of the priesthood and the eternal nature of the covenants that he made and the temple ordinances that he participated in. That his was indeed a forever family. Not to be separated by death. And that you, Jesse, would be his wife for the eternities, For he did, indeed, love you.

As a result of both Dick's absolute knowledge of the truthfulness of these things and his choice to live them, to him death had no sting. And for him, death held no fear, likewise testify that these things are true. That because Christ lives, Dick lives. That because of the reality of Christ's cleansing love and blood, Dick has left this life as innocent and pure as he entered it. Only with knowledge. Knowledge that he was sent here to receive. Knowledge that will bring to him the greatest of all of God's gifts to men—Eternal Life.

Donna Nelson Funeral Remarks

Orange Stake 1987

SEVERAL WEEKS AGO AT the funeral of a young husband and father in the Tustin Third Ward, I watched as this chapel filled up and the curtains to the cultural hall opened to accommodate the extra large crowd that came to pay respects to Brother Pollard and his young widow and baby. I glanced outside and saw the TV newspeople and their cameramen as they set up their equipment and prepared for their interviews with the family as soon as the funeral was over. I thought it interesting at the time that the way a person died, in Brother Pollard's case as an observer in a police helicopter as it was tracking down a police suspect, seemed to determine how interested the public would be in the death. Brother Pollard, rightly so, was considered a hero, and the funeral was lovely and of great consolation to his wife, family, and friends.

As I prepared my remarks for Donna's funeral today, I knew it would be different. I knew there would be no newsmen snapping pictures. There would be no uniformed honor guard smartly marching with the casket. There would be no TV cameras and no tape recorders and no interviews conducted for broadcast. And I also guessed that the chapel wouldn't be quite full. Certainly no need to open the doors to the cultural hall. Those who would be here would be close friends and family members. And that would be about it. I surmised that there probably wouldn't be too many members of the ward in attendance since Donna really hasn't been able to come out to church to any extent for the last few years, and Dick has been limited in his participation socially and otherwise because of the need for him to take care of his wife. Many of the ward members just didn't know them and consequently wouldn't be here.

And I thought, "That's a shame. It's a shame, not because there would be any more comfort given to Dick and the family if the chapel and cultural hall were filled, but because only a few people would know and understand what a true hero Donna was. For among other things, Donna was a hero because of the way she died. But since her death wasn't quick and spectacular the world would pay little attention to the passing away of Donna Nelson. Quite significantly, her death was slow and agonizing. For she literally died a small piece at a time. And that in and of itself is enough to classify her in my mind as an extraordinary person. One who the Lord loved. But in addition, probably as much as she was humanly capable, she took it in stride by

not only coping, but by seeking to help her family and friends understand compassion and kindness as she suffered.

You see, she had ample time to think about not seeing her grandchildren grow up. About not being able to go on a vacation or walk again. About the humiliation of losing control of her body and being dependent on someone else to provide her basic body needs. About being a huge restriction on her husband and on her family and on church members. About her embarrassment as her mind and tongue would momentarily succumb to the torture her body was constantly subjected to from the pain and the drugs, and her words slipped out uncontrolled or her mind drifted into a hallucination. And about when death would come and release her from this terrible bondage. And these thoughts and this pain were with her every day and every week and every month for years.

And for the most part, regardless of whether or not someone else was in the room with her, she suffered alone relieved only momentarily by the comforting spirit of Jesus Christ when she would reach the point where the pain could not be borne by herself alone. In a word, she suffered, and she suffered horribly. And now comes the \$64 question: *Why?*

Was she unrighteous? Of course not. Did she lack faith? Anyone who knew Donna knows that this was not the case. Then how could a just, merciful God allow a good person like Donna to suffer as she did? And in the same breath we might also ask, how could a loving, compassionate Heavenly Father allow His only Begotten Son to suffer agony so intense that blood dripped from every pore. To be spat upon and mocked. To undergo the humiliation and pain of a purging. To hang ignominiously on a cross between thieves as the full weight of his body sagged against the nails driven through his hands and feet. And to leave him by himself in his suffering which caused His son to exclaim, "My God, My God, Why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

The answer to that extraordinarily hard question was given by Jesus Christ. "***I am the way,***" He said. "The truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me." (John 14: 6) That statement means far more than a need to keep His commandments and accept Him as the Son of God and the literal Savior of the world. It means that to become one with Him and our Heavenly Father, we *must be willing* to follow Him. And being willing to follow Him means that we are willing to have the experiences that are necessary in order for us to be like Him. In fact, it is inconceivable to me that we could literally become as the Savior, as we believe we can, without following the path that He followed. And part of that path included acute suffering. Joseph Smith learned that truth in the Liberty Jail as he pleaded to know where the Lord was during his tremendous suffering and deprivation. "Oh God, where art Thou?" he cried. "And where is the pavilion that covereth Thy hiding place?... How long shall (Thy People) suffer these wrongs and oppressions, before Thine heart shall be softened toward them, and Thy bowels be moved with compassion toward them?"¹

The Lord's simple answer to Joseph's pleadings holds the key to our understanding the whole purpose of our earthly sojourn with its unpredictable turns, events, challenges, and, yes, sufferings. "Know thou, my son," the Spirit whispered to Joseph's soul in response, "that *all* these things shall give thee *experience*, and shall be for thy good. The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than He?"²

For to be as God who is above all, requires a descension below all. "For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things. If not so, righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither holiness nor misery, neither good nor bad. Wherefore, all things must needs be a compound in one; it must needs remain as dead, having no life neither death, nor corruption nor incorruption, happiness nor misery, neither sense nor insensibility, wherefore, it must needs have been created for a thing of naught.... Wherefore, this thing must needs destroy the wisdom of God and his Eternal purposes and also the power, and the mercy and the justice of God. And if these things are not there is no God. And if there is no God we are not, neither the earth; for there could have been no creation of things. Neither to act nor to be acted upon; wherefore, all things must have vanished away."³

There has to be an opposition in all things, and I am convinced that the heights of our joy are directly related to the depths of our sorrows and that God is God because He has experienced and, as a result, *knows* the infinite heights and the infinite depths and the infinite widths and the infinite breadths. He has infinite or a fulness of joy because he also has infinite or a fulness of sorrow. And He has, through His Son Jesus Christ, offered that same opportunity to us. For He has declared, "This is my work and my glory to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man."⁴

We, like Him, have no beginning and no ending and were with Him in a pre-mortal state. There, one "like unto God" said unto us, "We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell; and we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them."⁵ And so the plan of salvation was set into motion and the way was provided whereby we could literally be as our Father.

The first man of all men was Adam, who with Eve was placed in the Garden of Eden, a Terrestrial state. "And to bring about his eternal purposes in the end of man, after he had created our first parents...it must needs be that there was an opposition; even the forbidden fruit in opposition to the tree of life; the one being sweet and the other bitter. Wherefore, the Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself. (2 Nephi 2:15-16). And Adam and Eve chose to partake of the forbidden fruit, which was the fruit of the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil And in so doing, were cast out of the Garden of Eden into the Telestial World, or the world in which we now live. With all its sufferings, sorrows, sins, and miseries. And this was no accident or mistake. It was part and parcel of the great plan of salvation. It could be no

other way. "(For) if Adam had not transgressed he would not have fallen, but he would have remained in the Garden of Eden. And all things which were created must have remained in the same state in which they were after they were created; and they must have remained forever and had no end. And they would have had no children; wherefore they would have remained in a state of innocence, *having no joy, for they knew no misery*; doing no good, for they knew no sin. But behold, all things have been done in the wisdom of Him who knoweth all things. For Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy."⁶

And Eve, with complete insight spoke to Adam saying, "It is better that we pass through sorrow." (Portrayal of Adam and Eve in the temple) And here we are, in a lone and dreary world, estranged from God by the fall of Adam and Eve and the death and corruption that that fall has brought. And as we sojourn here, we see and experience that which can only exist out of the presence of God. Sin. Misery. Corruption. Fear. Mental, emotional, and physical anguish and pain. And death. Death of our bodies, which is a separation of our eternal spirit from this mortal, corruptible tabernacle, and the death of our spirits which is a separation from the presence of God. And in this state, our agency bears full sway.

"Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life. Through the great mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death. According to the captivity and power of the Devil."⁷

This world is anything but manipulated by some capricious God pulling strings like the ultimate puppeteer. For we are free to choose. We are free to sin. We are free to bring misery upon ourselves and upon others. And the righteous and the unrighteous, the wise and the foolish, are all subjected to the diseases, ravages, wars, pain and agony that results from the wickedness of men. And it is this very descension below all things that provides the proving ground for the sons and daughters of God.

How we are affected by it, whether we become actors or are acted upon, whether we choose these experiences as the means to strip ourselves of pride and jealousy and fear is our choice. We can learn through our individual challenges, patience, compassion, obedience, faith, humility, and love, which are all key attributes of God. They can be learned and mastered at no other time nor place in the eternities than here in our mortal state. We can also choose to allow these experiences to control us and use them to justify and give us excuse for our sins, our envying, our selfishness, and carnality. What we choose to do here says everything about who we are and who we want to become. For in this descension below all things, we not only gain knowledge of the heights and the depths, the good and the evil, but in the process, we learn about our eternal selves as well.

I believe Donna understood all of this and could consequently exclaim regarding her "thorn in the flesh" what Paul the Apostle exclaimed about his. "There was given to me a thorn in the

flesh, lest I should be exalted above measure. And (the Lord) said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities. That the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christs sake: For when I am weak, then am I strong.”⁸

Should we feel sorry for Paul because of his afflictions? Was he dealt a bad hand? His words would belie that concept. In fact, he knew he was only following the Savior and that the Lord was *blessing* him with those experiences that would allow him to come to know Jesus Christ *because* he *desired* to become one with the Savior. Should we feel sorry for Donna or for anyone else, who like Donna, has suffered or is suffering or will suffer and who draws nearer to the Lord as a result?

Perhaps our feelings should be quite the opposite.

I can assure you that Donna's faith in Christ was firm. She knew, as I know, that her experience was the unique path she needed to follow to reach her own divine destiny and that through Christ's atoning sacrifice and resurrections, she would be cleansed and purified, and her emaciated, disease-ridden body would rise from the grave, perfect and whole, to be united eternally with her spirit. And that as a result of her earthly experience, her joy would be full and her capacity for love and compassion would, like His, be infinite. Donna truly is a hero. For like her mother Eve, she chose the better part.

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1. Doctrine and Covenants 121:1-3
 2. Doctrine and Covenants 122:7-8
 3. 2 Nephi 2:11-13
 4. Moses 1: 39
 5. Abraham 3: 24-25
 6. 2 Nephi 2:22-25
 7. 2 Nephi 2:27
 8. 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

Karl Warnick Swenson Funeral

Manila, 1979

THOUGH NOT A BLOOD-SON, I write to you as a son, grateful for my near fifteen years as part of your family. Even though I have expressed to you verbally on a number of occasions the love and gratitude I feel for you, it has taken your death for me to put my feelings in writing. It is sad that it seems one must die to receive the tribute he deserves. To have feelings expressed about him that would have brightened his life here on this earth if they had just been related to him while he was here. I apologize for this inconsideration on my part. But I am comforted in the knowledge that somehow my thoughts will be conveyed to you even now.

Father, I am thankful for your example of loyalty. To my knowledge, you never let anyone down. Ever. I watched you as you worked long, hard hours at the training school. When you were needed, you were there. Vacations were missed and sick days not taken, because you were needed. I watched you take care of your mother and father. I heard of educational and vocational opportunities you missed. I observed personal conveniences sacrificed, as you faithfully sought to meet the needs of the mother and father you loved so dearly. And I saw you exemplify the same spirit of reliability and loyalty in your church work. You never missed your home teaching. You never missed completing an assignment. And as much as you loved to visit us in California, the temple came first. Visits to us were squeezed in on the days the temple was closed. Such fidelity, such consistency in commitment indeed set you apart from the self-centered variableness that seems to be the prevailing attitude in our world today.

Father, I am grateful for your example of love. A true Christ-like selflessness and concern for others. I always noticed when we visited your ward how freely you put your arm around old and young alike. And you were continually doing something for me. I don't think there was ever a time when you came to our home that you, Mother, and Shirley didn't bring cases of canned fruit and vegetables for us. While visiting us, you would busy yourself by going through my house, seeing what needed to be done (and there was always plenty.) and then doing it. More often than not spending your own resources to buy the part or paint or whatever else was needed to do the fix-up. Then refusing my offer of compensation. I felt the intense love you had for me, Joyce, and our children, and for your wife and your other daughters, sons-in-laws,

and grandchildren. It radiated from you and warmed our home when you were with us. I also observed the love you had for other living things. Things of a lower order. Animals, insects, and particularly your plants. Such all-encompassing love is rare in a man and is a characteristic of the Lord's chosen.

Father, I am thankful for your spirituality. You had an overpowering desire to become as your Heavenly Father. You were an ardent student of the scriptures. You were consistent, frequent, and sincere in your prayers. You bore your testimony often, and especially to those who would be most affected—your own children and grandchildren. You shunned evil, avoided its very appearance. You refused to be tainted by the offerings of the world. You were a light of righteousness to me, to your family, and to your friends and associates.

One of the most remarkable men I have known was your father, Grandpa H. V. He radiated purity and goodness. When he died, I told my wife that he may have been the most nearly perfect man I had ever been acquainted with. Over the years I have seen you resemble your own father more and more, until the likeness has become striking. The physical features molding into a oneness as the spiritual characteristics became perfected in their conformity. And now like your father before you, I can say, you are one of the most nearly perfect men I have known.

Father, for your life and example, I am most grateful. I love you as a son.

Grandma Dunn Funeral Talk

Logan 1984

MY MIND HAS OVERFLOWED with memories these last few days. I walked again with Grandma to Grandma Knecht's immaculately kept apartment, Then played a game of Flinch and Domino's with both of them before eating a light lunch on Grandma Knecht's beautiful, blue transparent plates. I listened spellbound as they told stories about New York, and I got the giggles as they laughed their way through the story about wrapping up a dead rat as if it were a fresh fish and giving it to their housekeeper.

I went shopping with Grandma to Penny's and Woolworths. She pulled me along. I had to run to keep pace. We sat down at the lunch counter in Woolworths and had a tuna fish sandwich and a glass of milk.

Then I smelled the turkey and ham and grandma's canned beans and mashed potatoes and pumpkin and mincemeat pie as I sat at the round oak table she had painted white for another Thanksgiving dinner. I watched her snooze off while viewing a movie on TV. I waited until the commercial then woke her up and told her she missed the movie again. She laughed at herself with her grandma Dunn laugh and got up to shut the TV off just as the movie started back up. She squinted her eyes at me. "You old kid, you tricked me again." She laughed her laugh and sat back down and finished watching the movie.

I went with her to church. She put goo all over my hair to keep it in place. When it dried, my head felt like it was covered with wood splinters. I kept bending my hair and it felt like it was going to break.

We played caroms. She got out the special hard, shiny caroms her father gave her back in the early 1900s. She always chose red. She arranged the caroms for me to break, then rearrange them just as I was ready to shoot. I frowned at her and she laughed her Grandma Dunn laugh. She always beat me.

I rode to the Dunn reunion with her and Grandpa Dunn. Everybody else had gone. Grandpa started to back out of the driveway and Grandma told him he had to stop, that she had forgotten

something. She ran up the steps, unlocked the door, and disappeared inside the house. Before we got away, she went back in twice more.

I reread all of the letters she sent me. They all started the same. My darling Steve. And I remember too that Grandma never so much as spoke an angry word to me.

The years have passed since those memories began. I have become a father and now a grandfather. The cycle for me matures as hers ends. And I have come to understand that life is a thread of decisions interwoven within a tapestry of seeming randomly placed events. Events that are often unbidden, usually unexpected, and many times unwanted. Events that may elicit joy. Or sorrow. Pleasure. Or pain. Comfort. Or suffering. Peace. Or frustration. Patience. Or anger. Compassion. Or bitterness. Love. Or hate. I have come to see that the event is not nearly so important as my agency. My God-given opportunity to choose how I will respond. And that the reason for the event occurring is not nearly so meaningful as my response to the event.

Indeed, I believe the very unpredictability of the occurrence, of its timing and intensity, provides us with the perfect surrounding in which to exercise our agency. That we cannot see too far ahead, nor too far behind, allows our agency and our desire full sway, for in this proving ground we call earth, we have been placed by a loving father to learn by our own experiences to discern truth from error, good from evil. And to make our choices accordingly. Choices that ultimately reflect who and what we desire to become. Choices that always draw us closer or take us further away from who we can become.

“And we will prove them herewith,” said the Lord before the world was, “to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them. And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon.”¹

I cannot remember when I wasn't. I have always been. And I, like you, like Grandma, am a literal child of God. We lived before we came to this earth. And we were, in that premortal state, in the presence of our Heavenly Father who loves us so dearly. His desire was that we become like him. In every way. That we might participate in his fullness. And a plan was established whereby this could be accomplished. We are here upon this earth as part of this plan and as a result of our choice to participate in it. Our birth into this existence was a death from our previous existence. And our death from this existence, is a birth into our future existence. Birth and death. Death and birth. Synonyms really. Human words that simply mean transition.

We are here now. Grandma was here. She has left. And we will follow at our appointed time. Grandma has accomplished what she needed to accomplish. She received a body of flesh and bones. A most significant step on our path to becoming as Heavenly Father. For we are told, “man is spirit. The elements are eternal, and spirit and element, inseparably connected, receive a fullness of joy. And when separated man cannot receive a fullness of joy.”²

Grandma also received experience. Experience in a telestial state. The experience that has taught her to discern between good and evil. A second step toward becoming as her father. For God said, “behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil.”³

But in taking these two steps: receiving a body and gaining experience so as to discern good from evil, Grandma has been no different than all the other sons and daughters of God who have been placed here upon this earth. Where Grandma differed from the multitude was how she exercised her agency. For it is a simple fact of existence. All do not desire to become as our Father in Heaven. All do not desire to become perfected. I believe Grandma did.

Grandma had her bouts with adversity, sickness, affliction, and sorrow. Bitterness was not the result. She had overcome. Even more than overcome, she understood. She learned. She recognized the blessing of her trials and sought to teach those lessons to her children and grandchildren. Her intense love for us mirrored to a high degree that parental love our Heavenly Father has for us.

Sometimes, those of us who were closest to her, allowed her mannerisms, that special group of human failings that she and all of us possess and have difficulty overcoming, to hide from our view the wisdom and deep insight she possessed. May I share with you excerpts from a lengthy letter she wrote to each of her grandchildren just two months before Grandpa Dunn’s death.

“We love you very much and wish for every opportunity to come your way in this life, and with the help of our Heavenly Father and the priesthood there is no end to our advancement. Choose good companions with high ideals. Life is too precious for us to fool around with anything but the best. We must always lend a helping hand to those who are weak. Choose good books to read, they elevate the mind and make for better character. Books are good companions, if chosen properly. We cannot be saved in ignorance. Always be honest and true to yourself, then you cannot be false to others, and you will be obedient to your parents and to your God. We must read and understand the standard works of the church so we cannot be deceived. Keep your bodies clean and pure because there is a choice spirit from God who is clothed with this body. We should cherish it dearly. The greatest way to honor father and mother is to do this. It is the things that we do that will cause misery or joy to generations that come through you. We must always think of this if we are tempted to do things that would displease God. God has commanded us to honor the Sabbath day and keep it holy. The Sabbath is to help men to be more obedient. When we conquer ourselves in this life, we are greater than the man who conquers the country. For then we have no enemies. Love covers a large field but has no tolerance for unrighteousness. If our minds are always in the path of righteousness, it is not hard to pass by the evils in the world. I am so thankful that through prayer the Lord saw fit to give to me a good companion who led me to the House of the Lord. I am so thankful for the three choice spirits that God has given to us, to cherish, love, and mold into womanhood and manhood. And they in turn adhered to God’s commandments and chose wise companions and

were sealed in the House of the Lord to give their children the privilege of being born under the new and everlasting covenant. And choice spirits were sent to adorn their homes. And if we seek the glory of God and set good examples to the world and adhere to all that God would have us do, we will all have cause to rejoice over our righteous posterity, which is the greatest gift and blessing that God can bestow upon the children of men.”

Grandma Dunn practiced what she preached. If I could use one word to describe her, it would be obedient. She was completely faithful in keeping the commandments that her Heavenly Father had given her. She was faithful in magnifying her callings. And her life was a life of service. Virtually all she did, she did for others. Her children. Her mother. Her husband. And her grandchildren. Even her painting, which she derived much satisfaction from, was generally being done for someone else.

Choices. Like us, and like all those who have gone before, Grandma made them. And like us, mistakes were made too. Sometimes it took some convincing, but I noticed that once Grandma recognized her error a change and an apology was forthcoming. For Grandma truly wanted to become like her Father in Heaven.

Her choices both reflected that desire and brought her nearer to that end. As a result, she became eligible to feel and see things of and by the spirit while on the earth. She wrote about the following experience in a hope that her posterity would have their own testimony strengthened as a result. She was in the hospital in January of 1961 when it occurred.

“My understanding was opened and a glorious white brilliant highway was before me. And it became more exceedingly white and those who were traveling that highway became so exceedingly white beyond any earthly thing and beyond my ability to describe it. I looked and everything was illuminated with that exquisite brightness. All were traveling at a fast pace and didn’t seem to get tired. They were rushing on to get the Lord’s work done before the wicked were destroyed and the great Millennium was ushered in. The temple work was going forth and the hearts of men were touched and everyone was getting a chance to hear the glorious gospel before the end. In 1910, I went with my parents to Salt Lake so they could get their endowments and have us children seal to them. While there we all had our patriarchal blessings by Elder John Smith, patriarch of the church (and son of Hyrum Smith). One of the things that he promised me was that if I were faithful, I would have visions by day and dreams by night. I have often wondered if I had lived worthy of these blessings. Now after 50 years, I have seen a marvelous manifestation which was beyond any word description. And my eyes beheld that exquisite whiteness described by the prophets. It was worth all the pain and suffering just to behold it, and I was wide awake when I did behold it.”

Grandma believed and taught “that God granted unto men according to their desire, whether it be unto life or death. He allotted unto men according to their wills, whether they be unto salvation or unto destruction. Good and evil have come before all men. And he that knoweth

good and evil, to him it is given according to his desires whether he desireth good or evil, life or death, joy or remorse of conscience.”⁴

My grandma also understood that salvation was not entirely possible by oneself that choices alone could not satisfy the demands of justice, nor bring about an ultimate eternal welding of spirit and body in a glorified, resurrected state, like Heavenly Father’s. For it was known from the beginning that we would all make mistakes while on this earth as we learn to control our new bodies and as we lived in ignorance of his laws. And there would come the time when these bodies would cease to function and decay.

It seemed to be a paradox. In this impure state, we could not regain our father’s presence nor achieve his status. Yet the impure state was necessary for us to receive a body and learn to control it under the most adverse circumstances so that we could become as Heavenly Father.

To solve this dilemma, an infinite and atoning sacrifice would have to be made. He who is chosen to affect the sacrifice, to be the Savior, was the Holy One. The Son of God. Our elder brother. The greatest of all intelligences. It was Jesus the Christ.

He came to the earth in the Meridian of time, physically begotten of God the Father, and born of a mortal mother, that he might have both the seeds of death and immortality within him. He experienced what we experience, that he might have compassion for us. He suffered far beyond what we could possibly be called upon to bear that he might feel and know and heal our pain. For he took upon himself our sins. The sins that are not reflective of our desires, that are committed out of ignorance as we learn to control and master our bodies. He met the demands of justice for us through an infinite atonement. That upon the condition of our repentance and through his own unfathomable suffering, those transgressions will be fully paid for. The demands of justice will be met. That we may enter back into the presence of God, refined and purified by our experiences and sanctified by his sacrifice. And he freely laid down his mortal body. Then took it back up again in its immortal form. Thus holding the keys of resurrection, he provided the way for all of us, his brothers and sisters, to ultimately be reunited to our physical bodies in an immortal and indestructible state. And Grandma, as Nephi of old, labored diligently to persuade her children, her grandchildren, her great grandchildren, and friends and associates, to believe in Christ and to be reconciled to God. For she also knew, “that it is by grace that we are saved after all we can do.” (2 Nephi 25:23)

Grandma wrote the following. “When I was 18, I had a great desire for a testimony of the gospel that would carry me through the trials of this life. Through earnest prayer, God gave me a testimony and through the Holy Ghost I knew that God lives and Jesus Christ is the very son of God. That he was the only perfect being to live upon the earth. That he died for the original sin and the sins of the world, for all those who were obedient to his commands.”

Where is Grandma now? She is in what we have come to call, the spirit world. A world of disembodied spirits. Our physical bodies are really tabernacles to a spirit body. Our spirit inhabits our physical body while on this earth. Ultimately it will permanently possess such a body that has become glorified and perfected. However at our mortal death, our spirit leaves the physical body. That body goes back to the earth from which it came. Our spirit which is us continues to exist in consciousness, in form and substance. For there is no such thing as immaterial matter we are told. However, we in this mortal state are generally unaware of this spirit's existence, even though the spirit world is, in fact, right here. The reason? Spirit matter is much more refined and purified than what our mortal eyes, ears, or touch can discern.

Our activities in the spirit world are similar to what they are here. We have family relationships and associations. And we have opportunities to serve and progress and overcome imperfectness as we prepare for our ultimate resurrection and reuniting with our Heavenly Father.

At times, the veil that separates us from this world of spirits is rent, and our eyes see. Grandma related the following. "Dad joined the church in 1901. My mother, my sister Edna, and myself were baptized in 1903 in the Hudson River. My sister passed away in November of that same year. It was a very hard blow to all and that night she appeared to me in the lighted room adjoining the sitting room where her body lay. She left the message with her smile to let me know she was happy."

Just over 27 years ago, as a boy of 16, I stood in Grandpa Dunn's bedroom along with some of you as he lay dying. He described seeing his mother and father and brothers and friends who had pre-deceased him. And then he spoke to my mother. Referring to my twin sisters who died as infants, he said, "Don't worry about your daughters, Isabelle, my mother is taking care of them for you."

As certainly as I know I exist, I know that Christ lives. That God our Father lives. That Grandma lives. That Grandpa lives. That my twin sisters live. And that my own son, Jacob, taken in his infancy, lives. Like Alma, I declare, "I have all things as a testimony that these things are true."⁵

I have the testimony of men who have seen God and who have talked to him, as one man talks to another. Enoch, Abraham, Moses, Peter, James, John, Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon, Nephi, Alma, the brother of Jared, Lorenzo snow, Joseph F Smith, Harold B Lee, and many others. Reliable, honest, truth seeking and truth telling men who were consistent in their describing and witnessing of this divine personage. I have the testimony of the scriptures. The Book of Mormon, the Bible, the Pearl of Great Price, and the Doctrine and Covenants, are prima facie evidence of the divinity of Jesus Christ their very existence, consistency, doctrine, and circumstances surrounding their coming forth testify unequivocally that Jesus Christ is the Savior of mankind.

I have the testimony of all that I can see or hear or touch. For “all things denote there is a God. Yes, even the earth, and all things that are upon the face of it, yes and its motion, yes and also all the planets which move in their regular form to witness that there is a supreme creator.”⁶

My intellect, my logic, tell me that Jesus Christ is that creator. That His plan is the only philosophically sound, eternally meaningful justification for existence. And my own experiences witness of His divinity. Like Grandma, I have tried the great experiment. I have asked if these things were not true. I have received a witness of the Spirit, precisely as described by Grandma and countless others who have followed this procedure that has indelibly been imprinted on my soul. Jesus Christ is the Redeemer of this world. He is the creator of worlds without number. He is my rock, my salvation, and my purpose for existing. It is He to whom we owe our all, and it is like Him that we are destined to become if that is our choice.

1. Abraham 3:25-26
2. Doctrine and Covenants 93:33-34
3. Genesis 3:22
4. Alma 29:4-5
5. Alma 30:41
6. Alma 30:44

Grandpa Hanson Funeral Talk

Shelley 1989

SEVERAL YEARS AGO DURING one of Grandpa's frequent stays at our home, my son Ben, who was 8 or 9 at the time, asked Joyce and me if he could take Grandpa for show and tell" at school. Grandpa went and for 30 minutes held the kids and their teacher spellbound as he told what it was like when he went to school as a boy. He talked about riding his horse to school, about having no electricity and no cars and being eleven years old when the Wright Brothers flew the first airplane. He quoted his dad's remarks at the time: "If God wanted man to fly, he would have given him wings instead of arms." Here was a walking piece of history. Our living link to a world and time and a way of life that we can only try to imagine.

151 years ago, August 9, 1838, "while holding meeting with the saints...Wilford Woodruff received a letter informing him that he was called to serve as a member of the quorum of the twelve apostles." (The Presidents of the Church, p. 140, Nibley). He had previously joined the church in 1833, just three short years after the church was restored. For nearly 6 years he served as an apostle under the leadership of Joseph Smith. After the prophet was murdered, he continued to serve in that capacity under the leadership of Brigham Young. He was intimately involved in those events associated with the coming forth of the gospel of Jesus Christ in this, the last dispensation: the revelations, the driving of the Saints from Kirtland, Ohio, from Missouri, and from Nauvoo. The martyrdom of the Prophet and the fleeing of the saints to the safety of the Rocky Mountains. In fact, it was from his carriage that Brigham Young first viewed the Salt Lake valley.

When Grandpa Mints was born in 1893, that same Wilford Woodruff was president of the church. Grandpa's life overlapped President Woodruff's by nearly 5 years. Grandpa was our living link to the very foundation of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and allowed us on a firsthand basis to feel of the energy, spirit and testimony of the early saints.

But to us, Grandpa was more than a physical link to the past. More than a link to the foundation of the Church. He provided each of us with a spiritual heritage that is truly unique. He took seriously the Lord's admonition "to bring up your children in light and truth."¹ And we stand

here today without excuse. He has taught us correct principles both by precept and by example. And what we do with that heritage, to what extent we will pass that on to our own posterity, we will indeed be held accountable. I would like to talk about two aspects of that heritage.

First, was his unqualified love for his family and his absolute knowledge of the efficacy of the sealing power of the priesthood. Grandpa loved his family and was proud of each of them. Nearly two years ago he attended a special Grandfathers Day at the grade school of Bruce's kids, Nathan and Brad. He sat in an assembly as they gave out awards to the grandpas. The first award was for the grandpa who came the furthest distance. Grandpa came from Orem, but there was a grandfather from India. The next prize was to the oldest grandpa. Grandpa was 94, but there was another grandfather who was born just 2 weeks before Grandpa. So he didn't get that prize. The next award was for the grandfather with the most grandchildren. One grandfather immediately shot up, confident he would take the prize. "I have 15 grandchildren," he proudly exclaimed. Then another grandfather stood up who was LDS. "I have 23," he said. Bradley and Nathan were nudging Grandpa to stand up.

Finally he did, and you can just picture him saying this: "Well, I have 44 grandchildren, 105 great grandchildren and 5 great-great grandchildren. He won a \$15 gift certificate to Toys-r-us. Parenthetically, we all know what a competitor Grandpa is. Last year the boys invited him again to Grandfathers Day. He agreed to come. His comment was, "I hope the guy who beat me out in age last year isn't around this year."

But Grandpa's family was not just a matter of numbers to him. He knew each child and loved them dearly. He knew with certainty that his was a forever family and he was bound and determined to do everything he could to help each child, each grandchild and each great grandchild make those decisions that would not only keep them part of his family here, but for eternity as well. For to him, his family would not be complete if even one were lost.

No grandchild, no great grandchild, can forget the image of their 90 year old+ grandfather standing before them at the reunions blessing them, expressing love for them, counseling them, and bearing unqualified testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And no child or grandchild or great grandchild who had chosen paths divergent from that which they were taught can forget his unqualified love for them and his desire that they live their lives worthy to be part of his eternal family.

One of the most poignant incidents I have ever experienced took place last September in one of the sealing rooms of the Los Angeles Temple. Five generations were there. Grandpa and Earl J. served as witnesses as Earl J and Olive's son Doug was sealed to his wife June. Their children were then sealed to them. Then Doug and June's daughter, Heather, was sealed to her husband, Paul. And their children sealed to them. The links were all in place. And this event, a touching example of the effect of Grandpa's unqualified love on each generation of his posterity.

Like many of you, I had the opportunity to talk to Grandpa shortly before he died. Literally his last remarks to me had to do with my own family : "How are the children doing? In that simple statement he reflected the role his family played in his life. Nothing was more important to Grandpa right up to his last moments on earth than his beloved family. And there was nothing he knew more than that we would all be together, forever, if that was our choice.

The second aspect of our legacy I would like to briefly touch upon was Grandpa's unwavering testimony of Jesus Christ and the truthfulness of the Gospel. If Grandpa didn't have a trumpet in his hand, he had the scriptures or some other church book. He was an avid reader of anything that pertained to the restored gospel right up to the end. Grandpa believed and taught, "that (God) granteth unto men according to their desire, whether it be unto death or life.... He alloteth unto men according to their wills, whether they be unto salvation or unto destruction. Good and evil have come before all men.... (And) he that knoweth good and evil, to him it is given according to his desires whether he desireth good or evil, life or death, joy or remorse of conscience."²

But Grandpa also understood that salvation was not entirely possible by oneself. That choices alone could not satisfy the demands of justice, nor bring about an ultimate eternal welding of spirit and body in a glorified, resurrected state like Heavenly Father's. For it was known from the beginning that we would all make mistakes while on this earth, as we learned to control our new bodies and as we lived in ignorance of His laws. And there would come the time when these bodies would cease to function and decay. It seemed to be a paradox. In this impure state, we could not regain our Father's presence nor achieve His status. Yet the impure state was necessary for us to receive a body and learn to control it under the most adverse circumstance, so that we could become as Heavenly Father. To solve this dilemma, an infinite and atoning sacrifice would have to be made. Only one was qualified to make it: Jesus Christ, the Savior, the Holy One of Israel, the Son of God. Grandpa knew this and constantly testified of it.

He testified that Jesus came to the earth in the meridian of time, physically begotten of God the Father, and born of a mortal mother, that He might have both the seeds of death and immortality within Him. He experienced what we experience, that he might have compassion for us. He suffered, far beyond what we could possibly be called upon to bear, that He might feel and know and heal our pain. He took upon Himself our sins, if we would allow it. He met the demands of justice for us, as a result, and became that link which would bring us back into the presence of God.

Grandpa knew that this great gift could only be offered to the truly penitent and urged his children and grandchildren to prepare themselves accordingly. To accept into their lives the gospel of Jesus Christ. To be born of the Spirit and taste of the joy that he tasted. To know what he knew. To be part of his eternal family.

He taught that Jesus Christ freely lay down his mortal body and then took it back up again in its immortal form, thus holding the keys of resurrection. Christ provided the way for each of us to ultimately be reunited to our physical bodies, perfected and whole, immortal and indestructible. And Grandpa diligently labored to persuade his posterity of the truthfulness of these things. To believe in Christ and to be reconciled to God. For he also knew, "that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do."³

Eternal life is both a gift and a choice. The gift is there for the choosing. And this life, it seems, is where that choice is made.

Grandpa had absolutely no fear of death. He had undisputed knowledge of the existence of our eternal existence. And after over 95 years of experience on this earth, he knew what his choice was. As I talked to him about death the other day, to him it was just a matter-of-fact thing. "I am looking forward to it," he said. And added, "I'm quite curious as to what it will be like."

"And it shall come to pass that those that die in me shall not taste of death, for it shall be sweet unto them."⁴ And so it was.

Love of family and testimony of Jesus Christ are the legacy that Grandpa has given to us. I suppose the real question each of us must ask is not unlike the question that Grandpa himself asked: What will I do with what I have been given? We have seen his answer by the way he lived his life. Our lives too, will be our ultimate answer to that question.

*In timeless eternity, Grandpa, we are equals,
Yet here you were first.
We were sired by the same Eternal Father,
Yet here you are our father.
You lived for us.
We live because of you.
You sacrificed for us and
we are the product of that sacrifice:
For our purpose, like yours,
is to bring to pass the Eternal Life of man.
Thank you Father.
Thank you Grandfather.
Thank you Great Grandfather.
Thank you Great-Great Grandfather.
Thank you.*

1. Doctrine and Covenants 93:40
2. Alma 29: 4-5
3. 2 Nephi 25: 23
4. Doctrine and Covenants 42: 46

Kaye's Funeral Talk

Provo 2016

YOU GRANDCHILDREN HAVE JUST heard about the kind of grandmother you have. Some of the great women of the Church have told you the impact and the blessing that she has directly had on each of them. Those of you who are here today who have been taught either in a class, or tutored one-on-one or in a group by Kaye please stand. (Virtually everyone in the chapel and cultural hall stood. At least 700 people.) You grandchildren take a look. Multiply what you see by many hundreds and you will get an idea of the effect, the impact, and the blessing that your grandmother has been in the lives of countless.

I think it was last December that Kaye and my wife, Joyce, and I decided we would hold daily scripture reading study class. We were in Spokane and Kaye of course was here in Provo, so it was by phone that we conducted these discussions virtually every weekday beginning at 7:15 in the morning Spokane time. I will admit that we were having conversations mingled with scripture perhaps rather than the other way around. Because we were such good friends.

I thought for just a minute I would talk about one of the discussions we had during those sessions. Moses Chapter 1 was a scripture that we spent a lot of time on. Moses had gone up on a high mountain that symbolized his elevation into the presence of our Heavenly Father. He spoke with God and God said to Moses, "Moses my son." That statement defines exactly who you and I are. We are literally sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father. That truth was dominant in Kaye's life. Everything she did was a result of her knowing that she was a daughter of God. She knew that without any question she possessed the seeds of divinity. She also knew without question that she was not in God's presence here on this earth. And she did everything within her power to remember her divine nature, her eternal nature, the temporary nature of where we are now.

God then said to Moses, "Thou art in the similitude of mine only begotten who was full of grace and truth." In other words you and I have within us the potential to be like Jesus Christ. We follow Him. We love Him. And we will become like Him. That is what Mormon told us in Moroni Chapter 7. He said that charity was the pure love of Christ. I believe that that meant

that we were to love Christ purely. And if so our gift would be that we would be able to see Him as He is and that we would become like Him. Without question this was Kaye's focus. She knew that God told Moses that he would place him here on this earth and he would be left alone so he could learn first-hand who he was. When Moses was left alone he made a statement like this. "Now I know that man is nothing which thing I never before had supposed."¹

Some 40 years ago Kaye was in our home and was experiencing a devastating heartbreak. Her husband had just walked out on her. She said, "What am I going to do? I can't even get a job at McDonald's." Can you imagine that coming from Kaye? But that is how she felt. It was the nothingness that Moses felt and that maybe most of us feel from time to time in our lives.

All the extraordinary work that Kaye has done since then, the blessing she has been to us in this room likely would not have come about if that had not happened to her. For the last 40+ years, Joyce and Kaye and I have cried together and laughed together. We have embraced each other, comforted each other, encouraged each other, and loved each other. And she has been my tutor in many ways, but especially as I have sought to become a meaningful writer. What I have produced is the result of many of Kaye's red marks on my working manuscript.

Above all of Kaye's accomplishments and purposes has been her love for Rolf and Gretchen and her grandchildren. She saw them as sons and daughters of God and loved them accordingly. And she saw all of you for who you were and loved you. In the thousands of conversations I have had with Kaye, I cannot remember a single time when she made a derogatory statement about anyone.

In God's conversation with Moses he said that His work and glory was to bring about the immortality and eternal life of man.² That statement perhaps sums up our reason for being on the earth and God's singular purpose. We are here to choose and to learn to become like God if that is what we choose. And through His grace we can become one with Him and literally as He is. As we have heard this day and as Kaye's children and grandchildren have testified, this was Kaye's purpose as well. She lived her life to bless her posterity. She helped them understand their Divine lineage, that they were literally children of God and that they could become like their Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother. She taught them that the false gods of money and clothing and houses and worldly power and prestige are temporary and will get you nowhere. They will be gone, but you are eternal. You are who you are. Sons and daughters of God. You children and grandchildren will show your love for your grandmother by living your lives as she taught you.

Joyce's sister, Shirley, passed away last Thursday. Kaye called us Friday morning for our regular scripture discussion. I told her that Shirley had died, and that Joyce was on the phone with her sisters planning for the funeral. For the next half-hour or so, I had a remarkable one-on-one conversation with Kaye. I told her how much I loved her and thanked her for the singular blessing she had been in my life. Neither she nor I had any idea that this was probably the last

conversation she would have with anyone in this life. She likely passed away that evening or sometime Saturday. When Rolf came to her home on Sunday, she had passed away. She had been reading a book that I had recommend to her. *The Chosen* by Chaim Potok. That title describes perfectly my eternal friend, Kaye Terry Hanson.

1. Moses 1:9-10

2. Moses 1:39

The Miracle of Lucia -Lucia Cooper Funeral Talk

Long Beach 1989

TIME IS A VEIL in many ways. Among other things, it causes us to put artificial limits on our existence. It induces us to emphasize the sequence of events rather than the events themselves. And because in our myopia we seem to most remember those events that are both excruciatingly intense and that occur in the shortest time frame, we tend to define miracles in the same way. In doing so we miss some of the most important miracles of all. For example, to Lucia and to most of us, her friends and family, the miracle we were looking for was the purging of her body of the AIDS virus. A singular, instant, and from the world's perspective, impossible occurrence. While that would have been a miracle by any definition, it would have paled in significance to the miracle of Lucia herself.

And it is entirely possible that if the Lord had allowed Lucia's physical healing to have taken place, the greater miracle, the miracle of Lucia, would have been obscured in our minds and its effect for good in each of our lives and the lives of all who we can now touch as result of our experience with Lucia would have been diminished and, perhaps, erased. But the Lord, in His wisdom, has seen fit to take Lucia, and the miracle of Lucia stands before us unobscured and glowing as a light that can, if we will, lead us to that truth that brought to Lucia a peace that surpasses all understanding.

One aspect of the miracle of Lucia was faith, I have never known anyone who manifested greater, more consistent faith than Lucia, A favorite quotation of hers was from Bruce R. McConkie: "Faith is a gift of God bestowed as a reward for personal righteousness. It is always given when righteousness is present, and the greater the measure of obedience to God's laws the greater will be the endowment of faith."¹

"I felt too pure in heart to have this affliction hold me down," she once said, And because of her absolute purity, the gift of faith was hers in abundance. And it made all of the difference in how she confronted her dread disease. She shunned the standard treatment for AIDS. Her doctors

were frustrated. They could not understand. When her T-cell count dropped to 55, with a normal reading being in the 200's, they were insistent on her taking AZT. Lucia's response, with her smile and infectious laugh, was, "Doctor, I don't want the medicine. I know it sounds crazy, but I don't want your medicine."

As her doctor looked at her healthy glow with no outward signs of an immune system gone haywire, he replied: "You're obviously putting your faith somewhere else. I guess it's not in medicine." Lu's answer was direct and unwavering: "You're right, I'm using my total faith in the Lord Jesus Christ to get me through this."

Lucia's formula was simple. Her faith, living the gospel of Jesus Christ to the extent that was humanly possible, and being immersed in the work of the temple. Her weekly work in the temple was a blessing in her life and became a sanctuary in which to cast her burden. As she explained it, "(Through my work in the temple) I can serve God and demonstrate my gratitude for the love He has shown me. It is my spiritual medicine. I have spent hours in this holy place in fervent prayer, talking to my Heavenly Father about this overwhelming challenge. I continually commit to Him that I will do His will."

It was her faith that preserved her body so long. It was her faith that gave her the physical and spiritual and emotional strength to walk out of the hospital when, according to the doctors, she should be dead. And it was her faith that took her up to her last conscious moments, fully relying upon the will of Him whom she loved, "My Father is watching me and knows of my trial," she had said earlier, "I know I am a chosen daughter of my Heavenly Father." Her passing seemed to be pain free. I am convinced that was as a result of her faith as well,

But there was one thing her faith could not do. Nor if she saw everything in its proper perspective would she have wanted it to do. And that was to have kept her from passing on into the presence of her Heavenly Father at this time. The Lord's promise is, "that he that hath faith in me to be healed, and is not appointed unto death, shall be healed."²

Having been an eye witness to such incredible faith, I can only reasonably conclude that the time had come for Lucia to be about her work beyond the veil. The other part of that promise is "that those that die in me shall not taste of death, for it shall be sweet unto them."³ And with Lucia, so it was.

The miracle of Lucia was also manifest in the way she faced her adversity. "There is purpose in this life," she said, "no matter what affliction we may meet. If we turn our obstacles around, they can be to our advantage. We can grow from them. We can also develop. Our spirit can even elevate to the highest degree if we will allow it." Hers was a trial of almost incomprehensible proportions. Hers was a trial of betrayal, of dashed dreams of what may have been, of motherly anxieties for a daughter who would be raised by someone else, of a day to day, hour to hour coping with a decaying body and inevitable death.

And hers was a trial of feeling the hurt, ostracism, and futility of a 20th century leper. And yet with all this she declared, "I'm not ready for this challenge to end yet. I'm in love with the change that is taking place in me. I'm beginning to realize my potential. Thank Thee Father for this fabulous experience, I love Thee."

"The man has become as one of us," said the Lord referring to our divine potential as a result of our earthly sojourn with all of its pits and stumbles. And with Lucia, this too has come to pass. The miracle of Lucia is what has happened to those of us who were so close to her. As we have visited with her and been touched by her example, we have been involved in serious introspection. We have been inspired to try to follow her pattern. Our own trials have lost their appeal for self-pity. And, in many instances, we have raised ourselves from inward fall as we have sought to bless her life.

On the wall of the hospice where she spent her last moments is this thought. "With every death we may not see any rewards. But there is one. People grow closer through love, warmth, and caring. This cannot be bought. Only given." Lucia has given to each of us that priceless gift.

There is another miracle of Lucia. One that transcends all others. One that literally defines God and those who would be like Him. It is the miracle of love. Lu loved everyone. She did not have a bad thing to say about anybody. A Godly gift of compassion that she claimed to have received from her own loving mother. The limitless breadth and depth of her love was demonstrated in her feelings about the man who was solely responsible for this great trial and tragedy in her life. Her husband Dick.

"What is it really like to give of charity, the pure love of Christ?" That was the question she asked as she reflected back on the last time she saw her husband before he died. He was comatose and shrunk to the skin and bones that is the inevitable result of AIDS. Unlike Lucia, his last days had been sheer agony. There was no peace, only pain. No solace, only distress and anxiety.

"I felt it stronger than ever that night," she continued, speaking of charity, "We took our standard positions on each side of his bed, and had prepared ourselves to give it all we had, for we were sure it was his last night. We sung to him sweet, peaceful church hymns to comfort his soul. We read him scriptures. But more than anything that night, I needed to talk to him. As I held his hand I said, "Dick, if you love me, squeeze my hand." And for the first time in nine days, I felt a manifestation of life. He feebly squeezed my hand. 'Oh, God in heaven, he can hear me. He squeezed my hand,' I shouted. And now it was my responsibility to tell him some important last words."

What would have been the last words that you or I would have said if we were talking to one who had been unfaithful to us. One who had ruined our life by giving us AIDS. Here's what Lu said: "Dick, now I know you can hear me, I want you to know that I'm not mad for what happened. I'll never be mad. You know I still love you and wished you didn't have to go through

this. Seek the church, Dick. Ask for Joseph Smith and President Kimball. Please remember to seek the missionaries to teach you because you don't understand. Please let go now. You'll be better on the other side."

Her total lack of animosity or bitterness, her complete forgiving and undeviating compassion for this man who by the world's standards merited her wrath and scorn, was as great a miracle as I have ever witnessed. A miracle that she manifested right up to her own last moments.

I would like to talk about one more miracle. It is the miracle that made Lucia's miracle possible. It is the miracle that makes life possible. It is the miracle of Jesus Christ. Lu's relationship with Jesus Christ was personal and real. Her undying testimony was of the truthfulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ as found in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. She had complete faith in the reality and efficacy of the atonement of the Savior and the reality of His resurrection. Lucia knew "that (God) granteth unto men according to their desire, whether it be unto death or life. ...He alloteth unto men according to their wills, whether they be unto salvation or unto destruction.... Good and evil have come before all men. (And) he that knoweth good and evil, to him it is given according to his desires whether he desireth good or evil, life or death, joy or remorse of conscience."⁴

Notwithstanding her knowledge that she had the ability to choose how she would live her life and that literally to the extent of her ability she was keeping all of the commandments, Lu also understood that salvation was not entirely possible by herself. That our righteous choices alone could not satisfy the demands of justice, nor bring about an ultimate eternal welding of spirit and body in a glorified, resurrected state. Like Heavenly Father's. For it was known from the beginning that we would all make mistakes while on this earth, as we learned to control our new bodies and as we lived in ignorance of His laws.

And there would come the time when these bodies would cease to function and decay and die. It seemed to be a paradox. In this impure state, we could not regain our Father's presence nor achieve His status. Yet the impure state was necessary for us to receive a body and learn to control it under the most adverse circumstance, so that we could become as Heavenly Father. To solve this dilemma, an infinite and atoning sacrifice would have to be made. Only one was qualified to make it. Jesus Christ, the Savior, the Holy One of Israel, the Son of God. Lucia knew this and constantly testified of it.

She testified that Jesus came to the earth in the meridian of time, physically begotten of God the Father, and born of a mortal mother, that He might have both the seeds of death and immortality within Him. He experienced what we experience, that he might have compassion for us. He suffered, far beyond what we could possibly be called upon to bear, that He might feel and know and heal our pain. Lucia took great solace in that knowledge. Lu also knew that Christ took upon Himself our sins, if we would allow it, He met the demands of justice for us, as a result, and became that link which would bring us back into the presence of God.

I suppose as much as anyone I know, Lucia knew that this great gift could only be offered to the truly penitent and not only strived to prepare herself accordingly, but it was her constant prayer that Dick, in the spirit world, would also. That he would come to feel the joy and peace that she felt as a result of surrendering himself to Christ.

Lucia did not want to talk about death. But she knew with certainty that Jesus Christ freely lay down his mortal body and then took it back up again in its immortal form, thus holding the keys of resurrection. And that act provided the way for each of us to ultimately be reunited to our physical bodies, perfected and whole, immortal and indestructible. And with our bodies and spirits eternally fused, we would be capable of being a Holy temple wherein God's Spirit could dwell and thus receive of His fulness and all that that implies.

She knew without question, "that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do."⁵ That Eternal Life is both a gift and a choice. That the gift is there for the choosing. And to the extent we have knowledge and understanding, this life is where that choice is made. Furthermore, Lucia had full faith in the power and force of the priesthood and the eternal nature of the covenants that she made and the temple ordinances that she participated in. That involvement was her blessing and balm and salvation throughout her struggles. And the hope of a forever family was what sustained her through her darkest moments.

As a result of both Lucia's absolute knowledge of the truthfulness of these things and her choice to live them, to her, death had no sting. And for her, death held no fear. I bear witness that Christ lives. Lucia lives. That because of the reality of Christ's cleansing love and blood, Lucia has left this life as innocent and pure as she entered it, only with knowledge. Knowledge that she was sent here to receive. Knowledge that will bring to her the greatest of all of God's gifts to men. Eternal Life.

This last summer, Lucia's close friend Kitty Billings asked her, "If you had it to do over again, would you be willing to go through the trials you have had to learn the things you have learned?"

Without a pause, Lucia replied, "I don't like being ill. I'm a young woman. I love dancing and dating and all the things that every woman enjoys. More than anything, I want to have a happy marriage and raise my daughter. I didn't ask for this disease and I don't want it. But yes. I would go through it all again to have gained the growth I now have. I like me as I now am."

Thank God for the miracle of Lucia. Thank God for the miracle of Jesus Christ.

(NOTE: All quotes from Lucia are taken from her book she wrote about her experience that I have in my possession. Her quote to Kitty Billings was given to me by Kitty.)

1. *Drawing on the Powers of heaven*, p. 12

2. Doctrine and Covenants 42:48
3. Doctrine and Covenants 42:46
4. Alma 29:4-5
5. 2 Nephi 25:23

Ralph Jack Funeral Talk

Orange Stake 2003

NOTE: FOR MOST OF the time I served as stake president I did not write out my talks. Sometimes, like in this instance, I used an outline. Also, Ralph's funeral was held just a few days after I had been diagnosed with terminal cancer.

1. Patriarchal blessings he gave to 6 of our 7 children
 - a. He sealed two of our children w/spouses
 - b. He and I rode to temple together for nearly 4 years
 - c. Close family interface with Joyce & me/Maryann & Marilyn
2. Ralph's love for the temple – The gospel of Jesus Christ
 - a. Doctrine and Covenants 84:19-22
 - b. The journey/The destiny/potential (O My Father – “When I’ve completed....”)
3. His life of purity – type of what we need to do to come back (e.g. temple experience w/Ralph-sister not worthy came and bishop was inspired to be there to keep her from entering)
4. Ultimate promise of the gospel of Jesus Christ pertains to our posterity—the Temple first & last ordinances promise us Joy & rejoicing in our posterity in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ
 - a. Brought about by learning to love Jesus Christ purely – then we can love our family and others purely. The 1st & 2nd commandments. Reason why 1st is 1st. Ralph loved the Savior
 - i. We cannot truly love one another until we 1st love Christ. We see through His

eyes. Lives are filtered through His light. The measure of one's proximity to Christ, is the love that he or she has for family and fellow man as a result.

ii. Lehi's Tree¹ and the great desire of Lehi's heart was that his family partake of it. There would be no rebelliousness, no anger, no jealousy, no hatred. They would see each other through the Savior's eyes.

b. Ralph's life was fully centered around all that the Savior is about: family & posterity. He gave patriarchal blessings; he was a sealer in the temple; he was a pure Father

1. 1 Nephi 11:21-23

Shirley's Funeral Talk

Pleasant Grove 2016

IT'S A REALLY GOOD thing that I'm the unemotional type. My heart is filled with gratitude today. I am grateful for those at Stonehenge who were so loving and caring for Shirley over the past year and a half or so. And for Milton and Susan Lee and Melissa who cared for her so tenderly. She loved the Lee's. I'm grateful for Barbara and Carol and Joyce. Over the last few years they have given us an extraordinary example of love for their sister. Carolyn and Joyce would have done the same thing for Shirley if they were as nearby as Barbara, but I would especially like to thank Barbara. As I was standing by the relief society door before the service started. Someone came out and said. Barbara and Karolyn and Shirley and Joyce are just beautiful. And they are because of the light that radiates from them. The heritage that they have and. that many of you have is extraordinary. The Swenson's. The Warnick's. The Eldredge's, the Lamberts. The Nebeker's. They made choices that allow us to be here. They showed us by their lives and by their works, who we are and what we're here to do.

And the Swenson sisters with Shirley's prolonged illness have demonstrated to all of us what it is like to live Christlike lives of compassion, kindness, and service as they have cared for her and loved her. Nephi wanted to know what his father, Lehi, saw in his great vision of the tree of life. An angel showed him, then asked him, "What desirest thou?"¹

I've come to realize that that perhaps is the key question for all of us. What do I want, really? Who am I? Who do I want to become? In answer to the angel's question, Nephi said that he wanted to know the meaning of his father's vision. Then Nephi was shown Mary and the birth of the Savior. The angel asked another question. "Knowest thou the condescension of God?" And in that question and in finding out the answer to that question, I believe we answer the question about who we are, why we are here, and what our destiny will be. To know the condescension of God is to know about us who are in His image.

Perhaps we have birth and death mixed up. The death of Christ occurred when he came down here to this telestial world. He left the presence of His Heavenly Father just like you and I did. And that is death. When we leave this world and go back into our Heavenly Father's presence,

that is as a birth. In a real sense, then, we are celebrating Shirley's birth here. So why do we have to die. That is leave God's presence in the first place?

As His sons and daughters, in order to become as He is, we need to have the experiences that only a temporary telestial stay can bring. That was our desire too, and here we are making choices and having experiences that will determine and prepare us to receive the eternal degree of Light and Truth we choose. we are here And our choice has been to come here in a celestial world. That is the most personal of all choices. A choice that only we can make as a result of our experiences and our desires.

The angel asked Nephi what the fruit of Lehi's Tree of Life he saw was. Nephi knew. "It is the love of God," he responded.² But what does "the love of God" mean? Over the years. Mormon's description of charity and definition of charity found in Moroni 7 has affected me deeply. For me now, defining charity as the pure love of Christ means that I must first love Christ purely in order to love others with His love. To focus my life on Jesus Christ I am able to see with His eyes and love with His heart. Only by making Him first in my life am I able to love others purely like He loves us.

For the many decades I have known Shirley, I have witnessed her love for Jesus Christ. Her seeking to love Him purely. His image has been in her countenance as she has lived a life of service. A life of love for her ancestors, her parents and grandparents, her siblings, her in-laws and nephews and nieces, and virtually all she has worked with from her students in school, her friends, and those she served in her myriad Church callings.

She was also Shirley. A one of a kind. And I loved being around her. The examples that Mary gave you are poignant illustrations of who she was. It was Shirley who was at our home and who put her arms around me when I came home from the hospital where our baby, Jacob, had died shortly after birth. It was Shirley who went on our family trip across the United States. We learned that she did not like McDonald's food very much. She was just fun to be with. It was Shirley who went with my family to Israel and shared with us her testimony and love of the Savior as we traversed the land where Jesus lived.

Shirley has been my sister. My peer sister. Time and time and time again in my life. Shirley has been there for me. Her middle name could be, "tender mercies." Importantly, Shirley recognized the necessity of linking families through the ordinances of the holy priesthood in the temple. She understood that as we become one with our family who came before us and who will come after us, we become one with God. Her whole adult life was spent in creating that linkage. She helped her nephews and nieces to understand and know their heritage. To connect them mentally and emotionally and spiritually with those whose blood coursed through their veins. So they could be one with them and receive the strength and help that those on the other side can give to us here if we are receptive.

I am a sealer in the temple and at the conclusion of a sealing of a couple who are physically there, I have them stand at one side of the alter and their parents and grandparents who are there stand on the other side. Looking at one of the two facing mirrors on the walls of the sealing room makes it look like the image will go on forever and ever. Symbolizing the eternality of that sacred sealing ordinance. I have everyone at the alter first look at the mirror on the side where the parents and grandparents are standing. I tell them that they are there because of the love and lives of those who have gone before them. Then I have everyone turn toward the mirror on the side where the couple is standing. I tell them that that scene represents the posterity that they will have and that they, the couple, are the link between the future and the past. They are what links their heritage with their posterity. And my admonition? Do not ever do anything that will break that link.

In the 93rd section of the Doctrine and Covenants. John said that Jesus Christ did not receive of the fulness at first but received grace *for* grace. Then he says to us that we likewise receive *for* grace. There is a reciprocal relationship between giving grace and receiving grace. Shirley understood that. Her whole life was spent giving grace. To you and to me. Helping and assisting us in areas and ways which we couldn't do by ourselves. As a result, her own spirit blossomed and grew in the image and likeness of Jesus Christ. When we are doing what He does, we come to know and understand who He is. We become more like Him. I thank my Heavenly Father for Shirley who has consistently shown us the way to the Savior. She is my sister. I am so grateful that I've been adopted into the Swenson and the Eldredge family. I love you, Shirley.

1. 1 Nephi 11:2
2. 1 Nephi 11:21-22

Tributes to Grant Inkley

Orange Stake 2005

NOTE: I SPOKE AND then related tributes to Grant from each member of my family

Steve

Grant was my friend and all that word implies. Outside of my own family, there was no one I was closer to than Grant. I have observed that it is extraordinarily rare to have the kind of friend Grant was to me. I am literally eternally grateful for that blessing. Grant's effect on my life covered virtually every corner of it. He loved my family and blessed in specific and selfless ways Joyce and each of my children. And even many of my grandchildren. He provided the way for us to become financially secure and meet the costs of putting children through college, going on missions, and getting married. He was my confidant. How many times did he listen to my sorrows and my joys? How many times did he provide comfort and solace and shed tears on my behalf? Grant was one of the most giving people I have ever known. As a member of the stake presidency and as a stake president, Grant was always responsive when I came to him for a request for monetary help for someone in need or a worthy project. Always. And in his business dealings, his motto was to give a bushel brim and running over. He was scrupulously honest. Everyone knew he could be trusted. Grant was an example to me of what a husband and father should be. His consistent deference to Jeannie was legendary and his love and devotion to his children unexcelled. Grant made my life fun. We laughed together. Nearly every day for 20+ years. His humor was never at the expense of someone else. And sometimes, he was really funny. Always, he was a joy to be around. Not just because of his humor, but because of his depth of knowledge and his ability to clearly articulate his views and observations. He could carry on a meaningful conversation on just about every topic of substance. Most importantly, for me at any rate, was his focus on the Savior. Everything he did was dictated by his covenants with Jesus Christ. His membership in the Church, the priesthood that he held and the covenants he had made defined every aspect of his life. He loved the Savior and was bold in his testimony of him

in word and in deed. Grant was a singular personality. I am grateful to have been part of his life. I love him.

Joyce

Grant was a wonderful friend. He saw the best in people and people wanted to be their best around him. We have had many wonderful talks. He was very well informed about a wide variety of subjects and was so interesting to be around. Grant was great to kid around with and strangers felt comfortable around him in a short time. He made life fun.

He always showed his love and admiration for Jeannie. They had a great relationship.

He was a deep thinker and was full of integrity. When I ran for my first elected office, Grant was my campaign manager. He was always so supportive of me and encouraged me to do the things he believed I could do. That gave me strength and courage. He had a lot of courage in the way he faced life and the end of his life. He was always an example of how one should live. Grant loved music. When he was bishop he called me to be choir director. He not only sang in and supported the choir, but he made sure no other ward meetings were held during choir practice. As a result we had over 50 members in our ward choir and he made us feel we were the best around. I loved having him sing in my choir because he felt the spirit of the songs we sang and reflected that spirit to all around him. He mentioned a number of times to me in the last years when his illness prevented him from singing how much he missed being able to sing in the choir. Grant's love and life will continue to influence my life.

Laura

I have two strong memories of Grant. The first is from when I worked at the office with him and my dad. Every morning Grant would come in with a new joke or funny experience to tell and then the two of them would spend the next 30 minutes or so talking and laughing. I used to wonder how they got any work done as one of them was always in the other's office, and they always seemed to be laughing. The second is of a compassionate bishop whose constant love for me was shown over and over again. I remember sitting in his office during a time in my life when the church wasn't all that important to me. I was sure that after he'd heard what I had to say, I would at the very least be released from my calling in the ward. His response is something I'll never forget. He put his arms around me and told me how much he loved me. Then he said that his number one priority was to keep me close and going to church. He knew the only reason I was even coming to church lately was because of my calling and felt inspired not to take that reason away, so he would not be releasing me at that time. I always knew that I was important to him and for that, I will be eternally grateful.

Will

One of the things I really admired about Grant was all of his positive energy. Grant really cared about people and enjoyed being around them and it showed. Whenever you were with him he always had a funny story to tell and he knew how to make you feel good. As a younger boy, our family shared season tickets with the Inkleys to the Angels baseball team. It was always fun to go to the games with my dad, Grant and Kenny (or Jeannie). As I grew older, I had the opportunity to work with my dad and Grant for a number of years at their office and it was always a fun place to be. In fact, to this day I still wonder how they ever got any work done. Grant was successful. He was successful in business, he was successful in his Church and most importantly, he was successful in his family life. I always admired how much he loved Jeannie and how he treated her so well. When I think of Grant, I think of a good man who lived life to its fullest.

Jayne

I have many memories of Grant. Memories from baseball games, memories from his and my dad's office, and memories of him at church. Grant always made me smile, probably because he always seemed to have a smile on his face. I remember him as my bishop. I remember my interview with him before I was married in the temple. He always made me feel important and special. He always had a kind word for my family and me. He is a great man.

Amy

He was a wonderful loving man who always made everyone laugh. He was such a fun and caring bishop. All the youth loved him. Sabrina said your youth/bishop interview would last about 5 minutes. but you would be at his home for about an hour laughing and joking with him. He had a great ability to let you know he loved you and tease you at the same time. He is a great son of God.

Liza

My memories of Grant as a kid mostly include going to the Angels' games and sitting by Grant. and that he was always so much fun and was always cracking jokes and making everyone around him happy. As I got older I remember him as my Bishop. Most of my church memories from high school and college include him as my bishop. I remember him as being the first bishop that I really had a connection with. I knew that he knew who I was and that he cared about me. When I was in Young Women and would go to BYC meetings I remember his concern and love for the youth of our ward. As I prepared for my mission, he was a great strength. He would talk to me regularly, and he always made me feel special and helped instill the confidence

in me to be a good missionary. I remember the interview I had with him to send in my mission papers. After the interview he told me that to be a good missionary the most important thing to remember was to love the people. Well I knew that he was a great bishop because he did just that. He loved the people in the ward. Throughout my mission that is exactly what I tried to do, love the people. I had a great example to follow. He truly was a wonderful man.

Mary

I have always felt close to Brother Inkley since I was a little girl. He always made me feel loved and cared for. When he was my bishop, I would interview with him regularly as a youth, and I remember one time having a question I felt I should ask my bishop about. I was a little hesitant but I knew that Bishop Inkley loved and cared for me. I remember leaving his office full of thankfulness for him, for his love, and for the Savior's love which I felt through him. He is a wonderful man.

Ben

Whenever I think about Grant I think about his sense of humor. I remember him always telling jokes at priesthood opening exercises when he was a bishop. It made me want to be there. He was good man.

GOVERNMENT

Changes in the Election Process

Tustin 1990s

SOME THOUGHTS I HAD probably mid 1990's.

1. The election process will be based on the election by the general electorate of "electors" who in turn will select the candidates at all levels of government. The general electorate will then vote among the selected candidates.
2. One elector would be elected from every population area representing approximately five to ten thousand people. Electors would be elected every two years and could succeed themselves up to a maximum of 3 terms.
3. They would not be compensated, although their convention expenses would be met. Their campaign expenses would be limited as well as size of contribution from any one source.
4. Elector districts would be contained wholly within existing political units, e.g. county, city, legislative district, congressional district, etc.
5. 50 Nominating conventions will be held on each level (i.e. city, county, state, etc.,) at designated times no later than two months prior to primary elections.
6. Each elector will have one vote at such nominating conventions. There will be at least two candidates nominated. Any candidate who receives at least 25% of the elector vote will be on the primary ballot. A nominee must receive at least 25% of the elector te to qualify for the primary ballot. If on the first elector ballot at least two candidates do not receive 25% of the vote or more, another ballot will be conducted with the top four vote getters, or all of those who have received at least 10% vote on the first ballot being voted upon. If a third ballot is required, the top four vote getters will participate. This process will continue until at least two nominees are elected but no more than four. If at least two nominees have been selected and 25% or more of the electors did not vote for either of the nominees, balloting will continue until less than 25% of the electors

have voted for an unsuccessful candidate, or a maximum of ballots past.

7. When an elector votes for a candidate who receives 25% of the vote and is therefore nominated, that elector may not vote on any further ballots. To be nominated a candidate must receive 25% of the total elector vote--not just 25% of the vote on any particular ballot,
 8. In order for a candidate's name to be put on the convention ballot to be voted upon, a petition must be given to the chairman containing a minimum of two elector signatures or 5% of the total number of electors, whichever is greatest. An elector's signature can only appear on one candidate petition.
 9. Each candidate who qualifies to be on the first ballot will be given thirty minutes to address the convention. Each candidate who qualifies for the second or additional ballot will be given an additional twenty minutes for each succeeding ballot he or she qualifies for.
 10. A candidate can circumvent the elector nominating process and get his name on the primary ballot through a petition by obtaining a minimum of % of the signatures of the registered voters in his/her election area.
 11. At the primary election, anyone receiving over 50% of the total vote cast is elected. Otherwise the top two vote getters will run off in the general election.
 12. The same procedure will be used at all levels from the local to the state level with electors participating whose areas are
- within the geographic areas of the candidates being selected. Basic parliamentary procedures will be followed with temporary officers elected by the electors conducting the convention.
13. Nominating conventions will be staggered with local/city/county conventions being held on odd years, and state/national conventions held on even years. Electors are to be elected during odd-year general elections.
 14. National electors who will participate in a national convention to select presidential and vice presidential candidates, are selected from the state convention electors. On the first ballot, any elector receiving at least 10% of the vote is elected as national electors. On the second ballots anyone receiving at least 5% of the vote on the first ballot will be voted on. The top vote getters necessary to fill out the quota will be elected. Electors may vote only as long as "their" candidate has not been selected, (Basically the same procedures as when nominating candidates)

15. National conventions will follow the same format/procedures as the state/local conventions.
16. All general and primary campaign funds will be provided by government and will be restricted to a designated amount based upon the electorate participating. Strict accounting of funds will be required and no additional funds may be utilized, although non-compensated volunteer labor may be used without restriction. Prior to nomination a potential candidate may spend a maximum of \$2000 or \$50 per elector within his election area (in 1980 dollars adjusted for inflation), whichever is greatest. Campaign finance laws as determined by congress would apply relative to private contributions in this case.
17. Although an elected official would normally serve a 6 year term, he/she is subject to re-call. In order for recall to be put to a vote of the electorate, a petition for recall would have to be signed by at least 10% of the voters in the area represented by the elected official prior to the bi-annual elector convention. The question of re-call would then be presented at the nominating convention. If two-thirds of the electors cast a ballot for recall, a primary election for that office will be held with the elected official automatically on the primary ballot. The other candidates would be chosen using the regular process. A general election would then be held, if necessary, with the top two vote getters in the primary.

Ideas On Government Reorganization

Tustin

MY THOUGHTS LATE 1990'S.

1. No elected official will serve more than one term in any office, nor more than 6 years in any combination of elected or appointed offices on the city/ county level; no more than 12 years in any combination of elected or appointed offices on the state level; and no more than 12 years in any combination of elected or appointed offices on the national level. These restrictions do not include time spent as an elector.
2. Compensation will be set at a "livable" rate. If an elected official receives outside compensation (other than from investments) for labor performed. (e.g. speaking engagements) he must report it and it will go against his government compensation.
3. Retirement benefits will be limited to a "re-adjustment fund. " For a specified period of time after he is out of office (say up to two years) the government will ensure that the official receives a salary approximately equal to what he was receiving as an elected official. This will allow him to find employment satisfactory to himself. Any earnings received during this re-adjustment period would be subtracted from the "guaranteed minimum" given by the government. After the re-adjustment time compensation stops, This same rule will basically apply to the president of the United States, except expenses necessary for security and transition will be covered by government.
4. Judges at all levels (except Federal Supreme Court) will be limited to a maximum 6 year term (whether elected or appointed.) In every case a judge is subject to recall by the electorate. A judge's remuneration and "retirement" benefits will be the same as any other elected official.

King Men

Romania 2009

STEVE'S RESPONSE WHILE ON his mission in Romania to an email from Lloyd Rasmussen

Price (democracy) will ultimately right the ship in a reasonably free society where competition is the primary driving force. Individual and collective self-centeredness and greed which is the fuel for competition, is *controlled* by “price.” The system almost always adjusts itself to excesses and even seems to advance because of the “catalyst” for improvement these excesses become, although the ride can be precarious with a substantial number of “innocent victims” scattered about in the process. I believe it is the only societal system that can work in a telestial world (See Mosiah 23:8-14, for example). But because of the roughness of the ride, it also provides a breeding ground for king-men who arise to advance their own selfish ambitions by taking advantage of the weaknesses of the system. And I believe our country has an inordinate amount of them now among the judges, the media, the politicians, the unions, and the corporations who appear to be gathering into powerful “secret combinations” that could potentially destroy our price/democracy controlled society if an ambivalent citizenry allows it. The parallels between our day and the days of Captain Moroni are extraordinary – complete with a vast external force made up of people who hate us and want to destroy us (Lamanites/nations of Islam) and an internal force (king-men) who destroy our unity and make it difficult, if not impossible, to contain the external forces which are bent on our destruction or capitulation.

I don't know what the next chapter in this book will be. I do know what the end of the story is though – thank goodness.

Bottom-line of all of this is if price is allowed free-sway, I agree that an equilibrium will come about and the excesses we have seen will bring about substantive improvements. But I fear that the people in the United States as a whole are becoming more and more susceptible to the wiles of the king-men and that puts the outcome in doubt. I wonder if there is a Captain Moroni or Teancum or Helaman on the horizon to rally the majority against the danger. The Church collectively may fill that role. They/we certainly did in the Prop 8 battle. But if/when the time comes that the majority will not heed the warning, then... We have seen what happens to a

government/society when that happens too. The Nephite/Lamanite nations just before the coming of the Savior decayed into tribes/family clans with no central government.

Whatever happens around us, though, we will survive and thrive as the kingdom of God on this earth. Safety in every respect comes through righteousness and following the prophet. This I am absolutely certain of and that brings me great peace.

Our Economy

Romania 2009

EMAIL CONVERSATION WITH LLOYD Rasmussen when Steve was in Romania.

Bold: Lloyd

Italics: Steve

The practical (perhaps micro) of the economy now has not been addressed adequately.

You are right and I'm not sure I am capable of doing that. Maybe no one is, I don't know. In my days as an economics student at BYU I lived in the world of ceteris paribus. A Latin term meaning "all other things being equal or held the same." By doing this one could examine the relationship between supply and demand, for example, and the role that price had in bringing about equilibrium. And in that world of ceteris paribus one could make accurate predictions about the economic future. But there are a zillion other variables that affect price that are not quantifiable and many that are not even known. History has proven our gross inability to either manage price or to allow it to freely operate in a way that rectifies our economic or social situations without external help and without leaving countless numbers of innocents crippled in the chaos. That is why I believe that our ability both on a micro and macro level to deal with the practical challenges brought to us as a result of us living in a telestial world depends on our understanding of who we are, why we are here and what forces are at play in this relatively even playing field as far as good and evil are concerned. Understanding these things and acting in concert with that understanding is, I believe, the way that we successfully turn our challenges into blessings. I believe the specific "right" answers only come to us individually and collectively as we do that. And that is why I have rambled on about "context" as I have done without addressing your specific questions directly. To me the context is everything. The specific, individual answers for surviving and thriving come as a result of our understanding the context and our reliance upon righteousness and revelation and "studying it out in our minds" to deal with it.

Economic growth has become the secular religion of advanced societies (our telestial world) and the source of individual motivation (measured personal achievement) the basis of political solidarity (Democratic & Republican) and the ground for mobilization of societies for common purpose. Economic growth is not bad because it encourages praise-worthy qualities such as tolerance, social mobility, hopefully fairness and a dedication to freedom and democracy.

*I believe economic growth has the **potential** to encourage these praise-worthy qualities, but that it will do so is certainly not a given. I do not believe it will do that automatically or “magically.” Again, we have abundant historical evidence that prosperity can also breed intolerance, social restriction, and personal and societal destruction. The Book of Mormon is filled with these examples as is modern history. Seeking riches for the **right** reasons is always the key. (See Jacob 2:12-19 for example). It seems the first step to lasting success and prosperity must be to seek Christ. Then our prosperity becomes meaningful and widespread and lasting.*

For us this should mean that freedom becomes an experience not an abstraction. That's why Adam and Eve partook

I agree. And it is the fundamental choice of whether we lose ourselves in Jesus Christ or seek to become a law unto ourselves (or something in between) that determines how and why we do everything that we do. This fundamental choice is inseparable with all practical (economical or otherwise) decisions we make here. While our actions are consequential in the short run, the why we do what we do is everything in the long run and in an eternal sense. And our (individual's or society's) successfully navigating through telestial shoals depends on our own proximity to Jesus Christ. No meaningful analysis or prediction of the future economic or social condition can possibly be made without taking this key variable into consideration.

If because of personal growth economically a person becomes more charitable (ability to give is enhanced) then we should not describe his motivation by the stereotype selfish or greed. Poverty is not a virtue to be sought after. Poverty is the antithesis of growth. Depression (opposite of growth) is frustrating and causes feelings of covetousness. This is not good. Growth approximates righteousness.

*I basically agree, although I don't think I would necessarily say that economic growth approximates righteousness. I would say that righteousness brings about sufficient for ones needs and if God has given one a specific talent to “make money” and he/she has sought Christ first, then he/she will be able to use that talent to become “extra prosperous” and use it to further the Lord's work here, recognizing that he/she is a steward over the Lord's possessions and will act accordingly. But my observation is that such a relationship between righteousness and material wealth is an exception. An often-quoted passage from Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* is: “It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love,*

and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages.” I believe it is this kind of motivation that is more or less ubiquitous among the economically wealthy (and poor for that matter) and it is this motivation that ultimately brings the system crashing down around us. For what it is worth, for a long time I have admired you as one who sees his responsibilities inherent with wealth and the covenants he has made. Your lack of extravagances in your life and use of your resources to magnify the Savior speaks worlds about this. Thank you for your example.

It is with this background that I repeat the original question,...Will inflation be the villain or the savior depending on how one adjusts to it? The new administration and congress will push spending and bailouts to the limit to stop unemployment. Will inflation result as the only solution to spending and full employment or will government ownership (socialization) result in profits and payback that will curb inflation?

These are questions that for me are unknowable and can only be conjectured upon. I do have an opinion. I believe that because of our extravagances that government’s ability to direct our economy by using fiscal and monetary tools has been drastically restricted/reduced. I believe that the Fed has nearly blown its wad by lowering interest rates as close to 0 as you can. It seems that their only remaining monetary policy tool to enhance growth is to expand the money supply. And while that is a substantial tool, it is by definition effective for tweaking rather than bringing about substantial modification. So fiscal tools are all we have left to “solve” our problem. And fiscally we are dangling on a precipice and we may well go over with the proposed economic stimulus plan that appears will be enacted. The percent of the federal budget in future years that will be used for debt repayment will be approaching undoable and could put an extraordinary burden on the forthcoming generations. We (the government) simply have never ever approached this kind of scale with our fiscal tools – increasing government spending, lowering taxes and bailing out failing institutions. So who knows what will result?. Before this is over the federal government will likely commit at least 2 trillion dollars to this. That’s over and above the cost of wars and health and services, etc. What are the ramifications of that?. What if it “doesn’t work?” What do we have left to use to “right the ship?.” What if it does work in increasing employment, freeing up money for loans, etc. and we are then faced with rampant inflation as a result? How do we handle that without causing a recession again since the power & effectiveness of our tools will have been diminished? Our selfish excesses have brought such volatility into the system that our ability to handle that volatility short of near government control of our economy (and us) has been greatly impaired. So, I don’t know what will happen. But our individual and collective “moral” state will determine what happens, I am convinced. From an individual investment standpoint though (if I were still interested in that kind of thing) I think I would bet on inflation.

Social Security Revision

Tustin Early 1980's

SOME THOUGHTS

1. Beginning at specified calendar date, employee/employer social security contributions will be paid directly to an employee account at a federally insured savings institution.
2. The account will receive the maximum rate of interest allowed by law on the highest yielding time certificates of deposit (rate to be set by federal government still) and the account will be insured IN FULL by the federal government
3. The savings institution will submit annually a statement to the Social Security administration, to the employer and to the employee stating: the amount of total contributions to the account over the past 12 months; the amount of interest earned over the past 12 months, and the total amount in the account
4. When an employee changes jobs, employee's social security account will be transferred to the savings institution being used by current employer. Proper notification will be given to the employee, past and present employer and the social security administration.
5. All employers/employees including those serving in any level of government (including military) will participate in the social security program, There will be other pension/retirement programs offered by government to non-elected personnel.
6. Upon eligibility, social security recipients will be paid benefits as follows: a minimum monthly amount set by the social security administration, or a monthly amount equal to 1/240th of the principal balance in the account at the time payments begin *plus* 1/12th of the interest the account received the previous 12 month period,--whichever is greatest. If the social security minimum payment is greatest, that amount will be paid out of the employee's account until he dies or the account is depleted.

7. In the case of two member families, the amount received will be either the amount set by the social security administration as the minimum amount for a two member family, or the same as the second alternative above using *both* husband and wives social security accounts whichever amount is greatest.
8. Upon the death of the husband and wife, the balance in the account goes to the social security reserve fund. It is not passed on nor inheritable
9. If the funds in an individual's or couples account are totally utilized before their death and first or second line descendants (sons/daughters or grandsons/granddaughters) are still living:
 - a. Living offspring are required to take care of them if financially able. They will receive a tax *credit* equal to the minimum social security income for providing this service.
 - i. In the case offspring who are not able to take care of the individual or couple and upon certification from the social security administration that this is the case, funds from the social security reserve fund can be used to provide partial or full support,
10. Funds paid into the social security administration prior to this program taking affect will be used to pay current social security obligations to recipients and provide social security reserve funds for future.
11. General tax funds will be used in case of shortage as the new program is phased in over the next 10 to 20 years.
12. Funds currently in present government pension programs would be transferred to this social security reserve fund meeting current payment obligations to retirees until the new program takes complete affect.
13. Administration costs will be met out of social security reserve funds and/or subsidized out of general tax funds.
14. Social security benefits to citizens will be paid at the same rates regardless of any outside income to the recipient. However, when the citizen's personal social security fund is depleted and offspring cannot provide support, the social security administration will evaluate the citizen^t's assets and other income and adjust the recipient's social security payments accordingly.
15. The employee/employer social security contribution will each equal 6% of the employee's gross wage up to \$25, 000 salary per year. This figure can be adjusted by congress

to account for inflation.

16. Medical assistance for the elderly would be taken care of out of Medicare and/or state medical plans as part of an overall national health insurance program.

JESUS CHRIST AND THE PLAN OF SALVATION

Scriptures About the Atonement

Spokane Abt 2020

WHILE NOT ALL INCLUSIVE, these scriptures have particularly impacted me in my life.

2 Nephi 2:27

27 Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil;

Ether 12:27

27 And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them.

Omni 1:26

26 And now, my beloved brethren, I would that ye should come unto Christ, who is the Holy One of Israel, and partake of his salvation, and the power of his redemption. ...Come unto him, and offer your whole souls as an offering unto him, ... and endure to the end; and as the Lord liveth ye will be saved.

Doctrine & Covenants 82:8-9

8 I give unto you a new commandment, that you may understand my will concerning you;
9 Or, in other words, I give unto you directions how you may act before me, that it may turn to you for your salvation.

Doctrine & Covenants 93:11-13

11 And I, John, bear record that I beheld his glory, as the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, even the Spirit of truth, which came and dwelt in the flesh, and dwelt among us.

12 And I, John, saw that he received not of the fulness at the first, but received grace for grace;
13 And ... continued from grace to grace, until he received a fulness;

Doctrine & Covenants 109: 14-15

14-15 And do thou grant, Holy Father, that all those who shall worship in this house ... may grow up in thee, and receive a fulness of the Holy Ghost

Abraham 2:12

12 Now, after the Lord had withdrawn from speaking to me, and withdrawn his face from me, I said in my heart: Thy servant has sought thee earnestly; now I have found thee

Alma 26:22

22 Yea, he that repenteth and exerciseth faith, and bringeth forth good works, and prayeth continually without ceasing—unto such it is given to know the mysteries of God; yea, unto such it shall be given to reveal things which never have been revealed; yea, and it shall be given unto such to bring thousands of souls to repentance, even as it has been given unto us to bring these our brethren to repentance.

Helaman 14:15-19

15 For behold, he surely must die that salvation may come; yea, it behooveth him and becometh expedient that he dieth, to bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, that thereby men may be brought into the presence of the Lord.

16 Yea, behold, this death bringeth to pass the resurrection, and redeemeth all mankind from the first death—that spiritual death; for all mankind, by the fall of Adam being cut off from the presence of the Lord, are considered as dead, both as to things temporal and to things spiritual.

17 But behold, the resurrection of Christ redeemeth mankind, yea, even all mankind, and bringeth them back into the presence of the Lord.

18 Yea, and it bringeth to pass the condition of repentance, that whosoever repenteth the same is not hewn down and cast into the fire; but whosoever repenteth not is hewn down and cast into the fire; and there cometh upon them again a spiritual death, yea, a second death, for they are cut off again as to things pertaining to righteousness.

19 Therefore repent ye, repent ye, lest by knowing these things and not doing them ye shall suffer yourselves to come under condemnation, and ye are brought down unto this second death.

3 Nephi 28:10

10 Ye shall have fulness of joy; and ye shall sit down in the kingdom of my Father; yea, your joy shall be full, even as the Father hath given me fulness of joy; and ye shall be even as I am, and I am even as the Father; and the Father and I are one

4 Nephi 1:17

17 There were no ... manner of -ites; but they were in one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God.

John 17:18-23

18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

Doctrine & Covenants 84:19-20

19 And this greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God.

20 Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest.

Moroni 7:47

47 But charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him.

Moses 1:39

39 For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.

Doctrine & Covenants 88:34-35

34 And again, verily I say unto you, that which is governed by law is also preserved by law and perfected and sanctified by the same.

35 That which breaketh a law, and abideth not by law, but seeketh to become a law unto itself, ... cannot be sanctified by law, neither by mercy, justice, nor judgment. Therefore, they must remain filthy still.

Doctrine & Covenants 76:5-10; 114-119

5 For thus saith the Lord—I, the Lord, am merciful and gracious unto those who fear me, and delight to honor those who serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end.

6 Great shall be their reward and eternal shall be their glory.

7 And to them will I reveal all mysteries, yea, all the hidden mysteries of my kingdom from days of old, and for ages to come, will I make known unto them the good pleasure of my will

concerning all things pertaining to my kingdom.

8 Yea, even the wonders of eternity shall they know, and things to come will I show them, even the things of many generations.

9 And their wisdom shall be great, and their understanding reach to heaven; and before them the wisdom of the wise shall perish, and the understanding of the prudent shall come to naught.

10 For by my Spirit will I enlighten them, and by my power will I make known unto them the secrets of my will—yea, even those things which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor yet entered into the heart of man.

114 But great and marvelous are the works of the Lord, and the mysteries of his kingdom which he showed unto us, which surpass all understanding in glory, and in might, and in dominion;

115 Which he commanded us we should not write while we were yet in the Spirit, and are not lawful for man to utter;

116 Neither is man capable to make them known, for they are only to be seen and understood by the power of the Holy Spirit, which God bestows on those who love him, and purify themselves before him;

117 To whom he grants this privilege of seeing and knowing for themselves;

118 That through the power and manifestation of the Spirit, while in the flesh, they may be able to bear his presence in the world of glory.

119 And to God and the Lamb be glory, and honor, and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Doctrine & Covenants 132:19-20, 23-24□

19 It shall be done unto them in all things ... in time, and through all eternity; ... as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever.

20 Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; Then shall they be gods, because they have all power...

23 If ye receive me in the world, then shall ye know me, and shall receive your exaltation; that where I am ye shall be also.

24 This is eternal lives—to know the only wise and true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent. I am he.

Mormon 7:10

10 And ye will also know that ye are a remnant of the seed of Jacob; therefore ye are numbered among the people of the first covenant; and if it so be that ye believe in Christ, and are baptized, first with water, then with fire and with the Holy Ghost, following the example of our Savior, according to that which he hath commanded us, it shall be well with you in the day of judgment.

Abraham 3:24-25

24 And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and he said unto those who were with him: We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we

will make an earth whereon these may dwell;

25 And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them;

Mosiah 5:7-9; 12, 15

7 And now, because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters.

8 And under this head ye are made free, and there is no other head whereby ye can be made free. There is no other name given whereby salvation cometh; therefore, I would that ye should take upon you the name of Christ, all you that have entered into the covenant with God that ye should be obedient unto the end of your lives.

9 And it shall come to pass that whosoever doeth this shall be found at the right hand of God, for he shall know the name by which he is called; for he shall be called by the name of Christ.

12 I say unto you, I would that ye should remember to retain the name written always in your hearts ... that ye hear and know the voice by which ye shall be called, and also, the name by which he shall call you.

15 Therefore, I would that ye should be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in good works, that Christ, the Lord God Omnipotent, may seal you his, ... that ye may have everlasting salvation and eternal life, through the wisdom, and power, and justice, and mercy of him who created all things, in heaven and in earth, who is God above all.

Helaman 5:12

12 And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; ... which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall.

2 Nephi 31:20

20 Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life.

A Legacy Of Christ

Orange Stake 1995

JOYCE SHOWED OUR YOUNG granddaughter, Hannah, a picture of Jesus Christ and asked her, “Do you know who this is?” She answered, “Jesus.” Joyce asked her, “Do you know about Jesus?” She replied, “Yes. He has lots of bread.”

We were grateful that Hannah’s mother was teaching her and her other children about the Savior. And I asked myself what can I do that will be of most worth to my posterity? And my answer? To teach and testify of Jesus Christ so that they may be tethered to the Light while they are seeking to know themselves. I will keep my covenants that I have made with Christ so that they may see on a first-hand basis the fruits of following Jesus Christ.

When we testify of Christ to our children, that will help them withstand the storms of youth. As a teenager I did not feel I had a testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I believed it, and I wanted to live it, but I did not know that it was true. What I did know was that my mother knew it. She bore her testimony to me often, and I knew she would not lie to me.

President Harold B Lee used to urge the young people to rely upon his testimony until they developed their own. But isn’t that my role as a father and a grandfather? I think so. My testimony needs to be part of my legacy to my grandchildren and to my children. As I keep my covenants, my posterity see Christ. When my foundation is sure, that helps my children build theirs.¹

We must learn to listen to, recognize, and understand the right voice. I was in a Sunday school class when a member of the class related this experience. She said when I was the Sunbeam teacher in Primary I told the children the story of Samuel, then I ask, have you heard God’s voice? A little boy raised his hand and said, “Nope. But the devil talks to me all the time.”

Are the scriptures part of our daily lives? Do we seek communication with the Lord night and morning and throughout the day? Are we letting the temple and its teachings and the spirit we feel there play an integral part in our lives? I believe that all of this has something to do with our listening to the right voice.

In addition we must be aware of widely accepted practices and philosophies that would take us away from Christ. We must have the courage to not only not follow them, but to condemn them. There was a young man in rural central Utah who as a prank painted a crosswalk across a little used county road. Basically the crosswalk connected two grain fields. A few days later his mother said, "I see someone has painted a crosswalk over on the county road. The young man thought his mother was going to ask him if he did it, and he was going to get in trouble. Instead she said it's about time they did that. We sure needed it. A few years later, the county resurfaced the road and painted the crosswalk back in.

We must not blindly follow the shifting morays of our society just because that's the way it is. The Lord has made it abundantly clear what our responsibility as mothers and fathers and followers of the covenant in this World of Darkness is to be. We are to be our children's light. We can only do that as we follow the Light rather than the world. We cannot lead where we are not going.²

The path to Christ is to lose ourselves in him. To make him the focus of our lives. To seek constantly to know his will, to know his way, to know his love, and to follow him. I am finding that real progress is made as I seek to recognize my weaknesses and beg for his grace to overcome them. It is wanting to be like Him that brings about this perfecting process. Christ-like qualities are developed almost automatically as we take upon ourselves Christ's name and all that that means.³

Our desire then becomes one that represents Him and not ourselves. And our lives begin to conform to Him whose name we answer to. We become more and more faithful in keeping the covenants and commandments because we are seeing more and more clearly the kind of person we want to be. This process seems to bring about a subtle change in our motivation and therefore our power to do good. Rather than have as our consuming objective our own salvation and exaltation, we begin to do what we do so that Christ can be extended and magnified. We desire to represent him so that His elect can be brought back to him to receive of the love and joy and peace that can only be found in Him. In other words we do what we do so that our posterity will be led to Jesus Christ.

Our responsibility as parents and grandparents is to provide our children and grandchildren a righteous example. In my patriarchal blessing the Lord admonished me to guard my virtue as I would my life so that my children would have a pure and Holy Father. I believe that is a directive to every man and woman who is a father or mother or grandfather or grandmother.

So the question becomes, am I leaving my children a legacy of Christ?. Since our testimony and example are directly dependent on our own proximity to the Savior, perhaps that proximity is the only thing that really matters.

*Two questions now define this life for me:
How near am I to Christ?
Am I where I want to be?*

Those are questions that require us reaching into the innermost sanctum of our souls. Those are questions that at some time sooner or later each of us must ask and answer.

Shortly after the establishment of the church, the Lord gave a revelation to Emma Smith. He counseled, “Thou shalt lay aside the things of this world, and seek for the things of a better. Lift up thy heart and rejoice and cleave unto the covenants which thou hast made. Keep my commandments continually, and a crown of righteousness thou shalt receive. And except thou do this, where I am you cannot come. Verily, verily I say unto you that this is my voice unto all.”⁴

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1. See Helaman 5:12
 2. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:47-53
 3. See Omni 1:26, Ether 12:27
 4. Doctrine and Covenants 25:10, 13, 15-16

The Atonement-1

Orange Stake 1995, 2003

TO BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND the atonement on the most personal and real basis (which is the only way we can understand it) we must understand the great dichotomy: On the one hand, our nothingness and on the other, our exalted nature.¹ How do we get from here to there?

We must understand the eternality of man—where we came from; why we are here, and where we are going. The elect of God are eternal beings and were with God the Father in the beginning.² We know that there are three separate kingdoms in the eternities: the celestial, the terrestrial, and the telestial. Since God the Father is only in a celestial state, that means that His elect were likely also in a celestial state before they came here, because they were with Him.³

It is God's will that we become like Him.⁴ Therefore, there was a plan presented that would allow us to do this.⁵ The plan *required* a *descending* to the lowest of God's kingdoms which we know is a telestial order and the world in which we now live:

- **To see** “if (we) will do all things whatsoever the Lord (our) God shall command (us).”⁶ In essence, this “proving herewith” allowed us to manifest our Godly desires even when we were surrounded by an “ungodly” environment. How could we become like God unless we could ultimately overcome all things? That is the definition of God. And it required a descending to the lowest of the kingdoms to take place.
- **To gain knowledge**, to “(know) good from evil” and, therefore, to be able to “act for (ourselves) and not to be acted upon” in essence to “become free forever.”⁷ How could we discern between good and evil if we did not know evil? How could we ever choose, if there was never a choice? How could we then be free “to act for ourselves” if we never had the knowledge to be able to do so?⁸ Without this knowledge, we would always be “acted upon.” We could never be like God. All of this required that we be placed in a kingdom where all choices were available to us which is the lowest of all of God's kingdoms.
- **To receive** a body of flesh and bones to serve as a tabernacle for our spirit-bodies. God

and Christ have bodies of flesh and bones.⁹ And so must we if we are to receive the fulness of joy that they have.¹⁰ We don't know all of the reasons why, but pro-creation seems a logical one.¹¹ But to be able to receive them in the first place and to master them, to ultimately subject them to our wills, we must learn to control them in the most difficult circumstances. In the lowest of all of God's kingdoms.

The plan by necessity had to also provide the way to ascend back into the presence of God. What good would all of this knowledge, agency, righteous desire and body do us, if there was no way we could come back into God's celestial presence? And how could we possibly come back into His presence with a body made up of the substance of a lower kingdom and a spirit covered from head to toe with telestial taint? For that, by definition, automatically occurred as we entered this telestial kingdom and partook of its offerings. Truly, we are as Moses said, "nothing." and "no unclean thing" can abide in His presence.¹²

Clearly, we were incapable of ourselves to do this. After all, for us to gain that kind of infinite power necessitated us coming to the telestial in the first place. We did not have it before we came, and we do not have it while we are here. Without outside help or grace we would be stranded in the lowest of kingdoms, eternally estranged from the presence of God and made subject to the lowest and vilest of beings in existence.¹³

Only one who Himself was a God could get us back into His presence. And this is what the atonement is all about. It is the way that we can come back to be at-one-ment with Him. The at-one-ment is not a single event, but incorporates the entire process, the plan, that allowed us to leave the presence of God in the first place, to descend to the lowest of His kingdoms, experience what we needed to experience, and then be brought back into His presence with all that was required in order for us to be like Him. That required God himself to condescend at every phase of the plan to reach down and *even come down* in order to lift us back.

What kind of pain and suffering did/does that involve? We can't even imagine. We concentrate on the Garden of Gethsemane and the crucifixion as depicting His ultimate suffering. But what about His coming to this telestial world in the first place? What could be more unimaginably painful than for God, Himself to descend from His eternal heights where love, purity, and goodness exist in their fulness, to this place of hate, pollution, and wickedness? Or how can we comprehend fully the sorrow that He feels when those who He loves and has known for eternities estrange themselves from Him by their choices? Look at our own children. Imagine what it would be like to be separated from them for eternity. The truth is, His atonement, His infinite at-one-ment, requires the most indescribable sacrifice at every point.

The infinite love of God is the motivating factor behind the atonement. To develop that love in our lives is the reason why we agreed to participate in the "plan" in the first place, and it is the end result of us allowing the atonement to work in our lives.¹⁴

Charity, or the pure love of Christ, means that one is willing to descend to the depths of sorrow to redeem/restore another. To, in essence, provide to another the grace (the way/the lifting hand) that would transport one of a higher nature back to his natural state. That process of grace requires a reaching down by the one extending the grace. And the reaching down almost always requires a payment of sorrow and pain. In other words, sacrifice. The degree to which we reach down determines the degree of our sorrow. The most intense love will motivate the possessor of that love to reach down into the deepest and broadest pit, to redeem/restore/lift one of his own. And thus it was with Christ. And thus it can be with us.

Is the atonement working in my life? Do I consistently look at my experience on this earth as one of a celestial being who has traveled far from home to sojourn for a brief time in a strange and hostile land? Or do I all too often forget who I am and succumb to the telestial tugs that would keep me from returning to my home? Is my testimony of the Savior primarily verbal? Or is my life an irrefutable witness of His reality, of His sacrifice, and of His grace? The degree to which the atonement has effect in my life is my choice.¹⁵ The Savior's hand is reaching down to me, but in order for me to be lifted, I must reach up and take it.

At-one-ment means to become one with. That requires the willingness or desire on the part of all who would be one. That requires on my part, the willingness to take upon myself His name; to lose myself in Him, that I might be one with Him. What would my life be like if Jesus Christ were the center of my thoughts? If I were to remember on a day-to-day basis that I am a son or daughter of God and could see what this telestial world really is? If my focus were on the Savior and on doing all that I have been sent to this lowest of God's kingdoms to do, how much effect would things like money, power, prestige, position, appearance, bodily appetites and passions, and all that is telestial have on me? And if my consuming desire was to be like the Savior and regain His presence, what kind of a light would I be to my family, to my friends and acquaintances? What kind of service could I render. What kind of peace would fill my heart.

But it is so hard for me to do. How can I do it? Joseph Smith spoke about finding truth in contradictions or contraries. As we examine the apparent contradiction in Moses' description of man as being "nothing" and the Lord's description of the potential state of man found in the Doctrine and Covenants 132, we are on our way to discovering the greatest truth of all: ***To know God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent.***¹⁶ And with that knowledge we also come to know who we are, why we are here, and by and through and because of Christ's atonement, our own divine destiny.

The most efficacious and meaningful aspect of Christ's at-one-ment for me is how it applies to me today. Right this minute. For how I get from Moses' Point A of *nothingness* to the Savior's Point B of being *everything* depends on what I choose to do *right now*. And *right now* is where I need His grace, because I have found I cannot do it by myself. And the wonderful dichotomy is that it is this realization and the desire to seek the Savior that allows me to do it.¹⁷

In a fitting close to the Book of Mormon, Moroni sums up the power and reality of the atonement.

*Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is His grace sufficient for you, that by His grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in nowise deny the power of God. And again, if ye by the grace of God are perfect in Christ, and deny not His power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father unto the remission of your sins, **that ye become holy, without spot.**"¹⁸*

And a thought added in 2003

Why does Christ suffer when we suffer and how can His atonement cleanse us? We are connected spiritually to Christ. We are connected spiritually to one another because we ultimately all came from the same source. We don't often detect that connection to one another because of our telestial veils (time?) and the flesh that dulls our spiritual sensitivity. However, Christ who exists in eternity would be affected by our tendencies toward estrangement and would have sorrow because of it. It is called the "sorrow of the world." It is innate with a telestial kingdom. As we approach in proximity, the Savior (i.e. take upon ourselves His name in ever increasing dimensions) our sensitivity to that sorrow increases and we become affected by it. Note the three Nephites who were allowed to remain on the earth were not isolated from the sorrow of the world. They couldn't be if they were to represent Jesus Christ.

I believe the atonement has to do with this concept. Since we are part of Christ and He is part of us, not only does what we do affect Him, but what He does, can affect us. It is the sending back of the "negative and dark" signals from Him to us, but they have been re-processed and have become Light. We must be receptive to that re-processed energy, however, in order for it to affect us (i.e.. repent and desire it). Our agency plays the critical role here.

1. See *Moses 1:10 and Doctrine and Covenants 132:19-20*

2. See *Doctrine and Covenants 93:21-23,29*

3. See *Doctrine and Covenants 76:70, 92-96*

4. See *Moses 1:39*

5. See *Abraham 3:22-27*

6. *See Abraham 3:25*
7. *See 2 Nephi 2:26*
8. *See 2 Nephi 2:11-29; Moses 5:10-11*
9. *See Doctrine and Covenants 130:22*
10. *See Doctrine and Covenants 93:33-35*
11. *See 2 Nephi 2:22-23; Moses 5:11*
12. *See Moses 6:57*
13. *See 2 Nephi 9:7-13*
14. *See 1 John 3:1-3; John 3:16-17, 1 Nephi 11:21-23; Moroni 7:46-48*
15. *See Alma 42:27*
16. *John 17:3*
17. *See Ether 12:27, 41*
18. *Moroni 10:32-33*

The Atonement-2

Orange Stake Early 2000--Talk Outline

The Plan Of Salvation

- Moses 1:39 God's sole purpose is to allow me to become ONE with Him
- Abraham 3:24-25 The plan to do this was put forth & accepted. The atonement of Jesus Christ was the way. I would be "proven" in the process.
- 2 Nephi 2:27 I will get exactly what I want.
- I am here on this telestial tour to find out what I want; if I want to be ONE with THEM

How Do I Become One With Jesus Christ?

- I love Him purely (Moroni 7:47-48; Omni 1:16)
- I repent (Ether 12:27)
- I serve/give grace (Doctrine and Covenants 93:11-13)
- Reciprocity law with grace (temple/family/Church/community)
- I remember Him always (Helaman 5:12)
- I receive the ordinances of the priesthood (Doctrine and Covenants 84:19-22; Doctrine and Covenants 109:15)
- Gateway, Covenant, Promise
- I keep His commandments and abide by the law (Doctrine and Covenants 82:8-10; Doctrine and Covenants 88:34-35)

- I endure to the end (2 Nephi 31:20)

The Result

- We become One with Jesus Christ and our Heavenly Father (not at-*equal*-ment but at-*one*-ment) (Moroni 10:32-33; Doctrine and Covenants 132: 19-20, 23-24)

Jesus Christ Christmas Message

Orange Stake 1982, 1989

"AND THIS IS LIFE eternal, that they might know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent."¹

To know Jesus Christ is the great blessing given to those who are members of His church. For we are given the means including the word, the ordinances, and the Spirit to know Jesus Christ, to know who He is and what He is. And thereby to know who we are, what we are, and what we can become.

Christ was in the beginning. We were in the beginning. Our brother on the one hand, Christ had also developed the attributes of God our Father in this pre-mortal state. "And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and He said unto those who were with Him: We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell. ...And the Lord said: whom shall I send? And one answered like unto the son of Man; here am I, send me. And another answered and said: Here am I, send me. And the Lord said: I will send the first."²

"In the beginning was the gospel preached through the Son. And the gospel was the word. And the word was with the Son, and the Son was with God, and the Son was of God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made which was made. In Him was the gospel, and the gospel was the life, and the life was the light of men."³

Jesus Christ is the Word. Jesus Christ is Jehovah. Jehovah has, from the beginning of time, communicated with the world through His servants, the prophets. And to those who have had faith and desire to receive it, He has revealed who He is and what His mission was to be. To Father Adam He said, "I am the only begotten of the Father from the beginning, henceforth and forever, that as thou hast fallen thou mayest be redeemed, and all mankind, even as many as will."⁴

The plan whereby this great being would redeem the world was carefully explained: (For, God the Father) called upon our father Adam by His own voice, saying: I am God; I made the world, and men before they were in the flesh. And He also said unto him: If thou wilt turn unto me, and hearken unto my voice, and believe, and repent of all thy transgressions, and be baptized, even in water, in the name of mine only begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth, which is Jesus Christ, the only name which shall be given under heaven, whereby salvation shall come unto the children of men, ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, asking all things in His name, and whatsoever ye shall ask, it shall be given you.... Wherefore teach it unto your children, that all men, everywhere, must repent, or they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God, for no unclean thing can dwell there, or dwell in His presence ; for.... Man of Holiness is His name, and the name of His Only Begotten is the Son of Man, even Jesus Christ, a righteous judge, who shall come in the meridian of time.... Teach these things freely that by reason of transgression cometh the fall, which fall bringeth death, and inasmuch as ye were born into the world by water and blood, and the spirit, which I have made, and so became of dust a living soul, even so ye must be born again into the kingdom of Heaven, of water, and of the spirit, and be cleansed by blood, even the blood of Mine Only Begotten; that ye might be sanctified from all sin, and enjoy the words of eternal life in this world, and eternal life in the world to come, even immortal glory..I say unto you: this is the plan of salvation unto all men, through the blood of Mine Only Begotten, who shall come in the meridian of time."⁵

That great and grand key which unlocked the knowledge of who God and Christ are was likewise revealed through the prophets. "Seest thou that ye are created after mine own image?" Jehovah explained to the brother of Jared. "Yea, even all men were created in the beginning after mine own image. Behold, this body, which ye now behold, is the body of my spirit; and man have I created after the body of my spirit; and even as I appear unto thee to be in the spirit will I appear unto my people in the flesh."⁶

We were created in His image and likeness. And through and by Him, we could become as He is. And he, in turn, was to experience a mortal earth life just like we would. "Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign, Isaiah declared, "behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called wonderful, counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."⁷

Nephi testified that "He cometh...in six hundred years from the time my father left Jerusalem... I looked and beheld the great city of Jerusalem, and also other cities. And I beheld the city of Nazareth; and in the city of Nazareth I beheld a virgin, and she was exceedingly fair and white. And I saw the heavens open; and an angel came down and stood before me; and he said unto me: Nephi, what beholdest thou? And I said unto him: A virgin, most beautiful and fair above all other virgins. And he said unto me: Knowest thou the condescension of God? And I said unto Him: I know that He loveth His children; nevertheless, I do not know the meaning of all

things. And he said unto me: Behold, the virgin whom thou seest is the mother of the Son of God, after the manner of the flesh And.. I beheld that she was carried away in the spirit; and after she had been carried away in the spirit for the space of a time the angel spake unto me, saying: Look. And I looked and beheld the virgin again, bearing a child in her arms. And the angel said unto me: Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father."⁸

"And He shall be called Jesus Christ, the son of God, the Father of Heaven and earth, the creator of all things from the beginning," King Benjamin told his people. "And His mother shall be called Mary."⁹

The time had come. It was the middle of time. Between the beginning and the ending. The event so long prophesied of, so long anticipated by all of the spirit children of Eloheim was about to take place. The great condescension of Jehovah, where God Himself would make His journey to earth as we made ours.

"In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: Blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: For thou has found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest. ...Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee: Therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. ...My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior. For He hath regarded the low estate of His handmaiden: For, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed."¹⁰

"And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child."¹¹

And the voice of Jehovah was heard by a prophet thousands of miles away. "Lift up your head and be of good cheer; for behold, the time is at hand, e and on the morrow come I into the world, to show unto the world that I will fulfil all that which I have caused to be spoken by the mouth of my holy prophets. Behold, I come unto my own, to fulfil all things which I have made known unto the children of men from the foundation of the world, and to do the will, both of the Father and of the Son. Of the Father because of me, and of the son because of my flesh. And behold, the time is at hand. "¹²

"And so it was that while (Joseph and Mary) were (in Bethlehem) the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth here firstborn son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: And they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, fear not: For, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people, For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, glory to god in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."¹³

It was done. The son of God was on the earth. The bands of death would now be broken, and the grave would now lose its sting. The means whereby the sons and daughters of God could return to their Father, and by that very process become as He is, were now provided. For now it was given through Christ to abide in us, "the record of heaven; the Comforter; the peaceable things of immortal glory; the truth of all things; that which quickeneth all things, which maketh alive all things; that which knoweth all things, and hath all power according to wisdom, mercy, truth, justice, and judgment."¹⁴

No wonder hallelujahs rang throughout the heavens. How could we be stilled. Would that we could remember. That the veil could be lifted for a moment that we might see again and feel again that which occurred in our heavenly abode that spring day nearly two thousand years ago. "(For now) He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons (and daughters) of God, even to them that believe on His name. ...(For) the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, ... full of grace and truth."¹⁵

1. John 17: 3

2. Abraham 3:24, 27

3. John 1:1-4, JST

4. Moses 5:9

5. Moses 6:51-52,57,59,62

6. Ether 3:15-16

7. Isaiah 7:14; 9:6
8. I Nephi 19: 8; 11:13-21
9. Mosiah 3:8
10. Luke 1:26-35, 28, 46-48
11. Luke 2:1, 3-5
12. 3 Nephi 1:13-14
13. Luke 2:6-14
14. Moses 6:61
15. John 1:10-12, 14

Come Unto Christ

Orange Stake 1988

THE GREAT TRUTH THAT has been lost to the world and restored again in our time through the Lord's prophets, is that we are literally sons and daughters of God and that our potential is to become like our father, through his son, and our elder brother, Jesus Christ. To understand this concept is to understand the eternal nature of choice and moral agency. To know that we can be as our Heavenly Father means we can no longer rationalize away our un-Godly behavior.

The most pernicious, most satanic doctrine that exists is that man is incapable of God-like thoughts and actions And consequently cannot be held accountable for his worldly ways. To hold such a view is damning. For there is no motivation to change, no reason to repent, no elevated mark to set our spiritual sights on.

As members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints we have covenanted to take a message to the world. We are to start with ourselves, then take it to our children and spouses, and on to our extended family, and then to our associates and to all we would come in contact with. Because we have the gift of the Holy Ghost, we are the only ones capable of carrying this message, for it is the testimony of the true and living God and our relationship to Him.

Through the cunning designs of the evil one and through the wickedness of man, this knowledge has been lost from the world. Through man's depravity and wickedness he has rationalized that he is not capable of anything more than telestial behavior. And that God, if He exists at all, is unknowable.

But our testimony is, that "This is life eternal, that (we...might know...the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom (He) Hast sent."¹ "There is a God in heaven, who is infinite and eternal, from everlasting to everlasting, the same unchangeable God, the framer of heaven and earth, and all things which are in them, and... He created man, male and female, after his own image and in his own likeness...and gave unto them commandments that they should love and serve him, the only living and true God, and that he should be the only being whom they should worship. But by the transgression of these holy laws man became sensual and devilish and became fallen man. Wherefore, the almighty God gave His only begotten son.. (Who) suffered

temptations but gave no heed unto them. (Who) was crucified, died, and rose again the third day, That as many as would believe and be baptized in His holy name, and endure in faith to the end, should be saved. And we know that all men must repent and believe on the name of Jesus Christ, and worship the Father in his name...or they cannot be saved in the kingdom of God."²

Our testimony is that Christ is our great prototype. It is He who we follow and it is He who we are destined to become like, if we will. This past Christmas, my family and I were able to visit the holy land. Our last day there was spent in physically following the footsteps of the Savior during His last few days upon the earth. Southwest of the temple mount at Jerusalem is a large room on the second floor of an ancient building. This is the traditional site of the last supper. Our group was alone in there for a few moments, and we took advantage of the time to sing several sacrament hymns and read from the scriptures concerning the institution of the sacrament.

"And afterwards Jesus) riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments: and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded... So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me master and lord: and ye say well, for so I am. If I then, your lord and master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord, neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."³

We come unto Christ by being a servant. By being of service to our fellowman. As Jesus so graphically pointed out, God is God because of his infinite love for all beings and his infinite capacity for service. And we come unto Christ by seeking that same kind of love, by rendering that same kind of Christ-like service.

Some 250 yards east of the temple mount, across the brook Kedron on the side of the Mount of Olives is the traditional site of the Garden of Gethsemane. And it is here that Jesus went with his apostles after the last supper. Some of the olive trees that are there today were probably there at the time of the savior, their old, weather—beaten trunks dead now, but new shoots have, over the years, come forth from the roots and the trees still live. "Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he...began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, my soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.... And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt."⁴ Nearly 2000 years later a resurrected and glorified Savior described this event to Joseph Smith, saying "(This) suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble

because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit. Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men."⁵

We come unto Christ by being willing, like him, to take upon ourselves the burdens of others, to suffer in order to bless an errant child, to be inconvenienced in order to counsel with the downhearted or to visit the sick, to sacrifice our time and means to assist the poor and the needy, and to increase our own burden in order to lighten the load of one whose burden is too great for them to bear alone.

Led by Judas Iscariot, the guards of the high priest took Jesus into custody and led him across the city to the palace of Caiphas, the high priest. The remnants of what is thought to have been his palace remain today, including a pit or dungeon dug into the ground below Caiphas' quarters, with a hole on top through which the Savior or other prisoners would have been lowered. And adjacent to that dungeon and on the same level was the scourging room, which is virtually intact. I couldn't help but marvel that these rooms were in the house of the religious leader of the Jews. Can you imagine President Benson having a dungeon and scourging room underneath his home? The Jews did not have the authority to condemn a man to death and since that was their intent with Christ, they needed to take him to the Roman leader, Pontius Pilate. On the northwest corner of the temple mount stood the large Roman garrison called the Fortress Antonia. It was probably here where the Jews brought the Savior to be interrogated by the Romans. The "crime" that so upset the Jews was blasphemy. Jesus' claim that he was the Son of God.

It is interesting that the claim that we are literally sons and daughters of God and that we can become like Him is likewise the primary cause of the Church's persecution today. But, of course, the Romans would not consider that a crime much less an act worthy of death. So the Jews accused him of sedition before Pilate.

"When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing with the Jewish leaders, He took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it. And when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified. And they stripped him and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him and mocked him, saying, hail, king of the Jews. And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head.... And led him away to crucify him."⁶

We come unto Christ by remembering Him. Not just that he died for us and took upon Himself our sins, but that He literally showed us the way. His life was the pattern for our lives if we are to become as He is. And to be like Christ, we must also experience what He has experienced. In answer to Joseph Smith's plea to relieve his sufferings and deprivations in the liberty jail, the Lord responded, "Know thou my son, that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good. The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than He?"⁷

And while this does not mean that we are to masochistically seek pain and suffering, it does mean that pain and suffering are the crucibles from which gods are made.

To the north of Antonia's Fortress is an ancient rock quarry with a cliff jutting out that resembles a skull. The word Golgotha means skull and some feel that this was the site of the crucifixion. Immediately adjacent to the rock quarry is what is known today as the garden tomb. It is a tomb that would be contemporary with the Savior and hewn out of solid limestone. There is a beautiful garden surrounding it and as I walked onto the grounds, a feeling of peace and sacredness came upon me. And as I walked through the garden and into the tomb and stood there all alone looking at the place where his body had lain, I felt that this was indeed the place.

"And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha: where they crucified him.... After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished...said, it is finished: and he bowed his head and gave up the ghost. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new sepulcher, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus.... For the sepulcher was nigh at hand."⁸

"And in the end of the sabbath as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher. ...And the angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow:... And the angel answered and said unto the women, fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen."⁹

We come unto Christ by taking upon ourselves his name. As he laid his body and spirit on the alter as a fit sacrifice for the sins of the world, so we are asked to offer as a sacrifice our broken heart and contrite spirit, we are to lose ourselves in Him, to "offer our whole souls as an offering unto him"¹⁰ that where we are He will be. And as we do this our old man of sin dies and we come forth spiritually born again.

"And now behold, I ask of you, my (brothers and sisters) of the church, have ye spiritually been born of God? Have ye received His image in your countenances? Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts? Do ye exercise faith in the redemption of Him who created you? Do you look forward with an eye of faith, and view this mortal body raised in immortality, and this corruption raised in incorruption."¹¹

Our invitation to you, as expressed by Moroni of old, is to "Come unto Christ, and be perfected in Him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness, And if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is His grace sufficient for you, that by His grace ye may be perfect in Christ,... Then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of

God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the father unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy, without spot."¹²

1. John 3: 17
2. Doctrine and Covenants 20:17-33
3. John 13: 4-17
4. Matthew 26: 36-42
5. Doctrine and Covenants 19:18-19
6. Matthew 27: 24-31
7. Doctrine and Covenants 122:7-8
8. John 19:17-42
9. Matthew 28:1-6
10. Omni 1:26
11. Alma 5: 14-15
12. Moroni 10:32-33

Developing the Attributes of Christ

Spokane About 2010

I HAVE KEPT A daily journal for well over 30 years now. For a number of years at the end of every year I would summarize what had happened to me and evaluated my progress and slippage. And then I would write down the areas in my life that I was going to work on including the Christ-like attributes that I would focus on. It would seem that at the top of my list every year of things to work on, was “patience.” I was taking a “Ben Franklin” approach to developing Christ-like attributes. And I was having a Dicken’s of a time making any substantive progress. Then I began to discover something.

As I sought more and more to lose myself in Christ, to take upon myself His name, to offer my whole soul to Him, to offer a broken heart and a contrite spirit and be submissive, the attributes that I sought to “develop” in my life just automatically started to come. I was becoming more like Him because I loved Him more. I realized that “I” can do very little without His grace and assistance. I realized that as I prioritized my taking on his name and to fully consecrate myself to Him so He became *the* focus of my life, the telestial in me began to melt away in a natural and wonderful way.

This is at least a lifelong process, and I still have pangs of frustration as I watch my body and mind do things I don’t want them to do. But it has also been wonderful to see what has been happening to everything about me as I have truly sought Him.

The Plan of Salvation

Orange Stake 1974

"FOR BEHOLD, THIS IS my work and my glory to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man."¹ Thus spoke the Lord to Moses, clearly stating the reason for our being and the end of our creation.

"Man was also in the beginning with God."² As co- eternal beings with God, we existed in His presence before the world was. To one degree or another we participated in that grand council of heaven where a plan to carry out our Father's purposes was presented. "And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and He said unto those who were with him: We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell; and we will prove them herewith to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them: and they who keep their first estate shall be added upon."³

Thus spoke Jesus Christ our elder brother and the Only Begotten of the Father. The earth was created and all things that are on the earth. And man, even Adam, the first flesh, was placed on the earth with his wife Eve. And they were commanded to multiply and replenish the earth, that the spirit children of God might be provided bodies of flesh and bones. They dwelt in the Garden of Eden in the presence of the Father and knew no sin. But a continuance in this state would thwart the purposes of God. "For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things. If not so...righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither holiness nor misery, neither good nor bad. Wherefore, all things must needs be a compound in one; wherefore if it should be one body it must needs remain as dead, having no life neither death, nor corruption nor incorruption, happiness nor misery, neither sense nor insensibility."⁴

"And to bring about His eternal purposes in the end of man, after he had created our first parents...it must needs be that there was an opposition; even the forbidden fruit in opposition to the tree of life: the one being sweet and the other bitter. Wherefore, the Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself. Wherefore man could not act for himself save it should be that he was enticed by the one or the other."⁵

And Adam and Eve partook of the forbidden fruit. And in doing so were cast out of the Garden of Eden and out of the presence of God. And their bodies became mortal, subject to pain and death. And they therefore brought to the children of men a spiritual death which is a separation from the presence of God because of sin; and a physical death which is the decay and death of the body. But the fall was necessary and was a part of God's plan to bring about our immortality and eternal life. For, "Adam fell that men might be; and men are that they might have joy."⁶

"And behold if Adam had not transgressed he would not have fallen, but he would have remained in the Garden of Eden. And all things which were created must have remained in the same state in which they were after they were created; and they must have remained forever and had no end. And they would have had no children; wherefore they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery; doing no good, for they knew no sin."⁷

The fall, then, was a necessary and integral part of our Father's plan of salvation. As Adam and Eve toiled they received instructions from the Lord and their part in this plan of salvation became clear. "And in that day the Holy Ghost fell upon Adam, which beareth record of the Father and the Son, saying, that as thou hast fallen thou mayest be redeemed, and all mankind even as many as will. And in that day Adam blessed God and was filled and began to prophecy concerning all the families of the earth, saying: Blessed be the name of God for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy, and again in the flesh I shall see god. And Eve, his wife, heard all these things and was glad, saying: were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient."⁸

Thus the avenue was provided for us to come to earth, to receive a physical body so necessary to our ultimate happiness; and a hostile environment was created, estranging us from the presence of God where we could through our own agency, determine for ourselves what we desired to be. To see whose voice we listed to obey; and experience the winds of sorrow and adversity, and the storms of temptation and tribulation. That by descending below all things we could come forth refined, compassionate, strong and God like if that was our choice. But we in and of ourselves could not overcome the deaths brought on by Adam's transgression, "For as death hath passed upon all men; to fulfil the merciful plan of the great Creator there must needs be a power of resurrection Wherefore, (there) must needs be an infinite atonement⁹, and an infinite sacrifice.

"Therefore as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life."¹⁰. Jesus Christ was the sacrifice. It was He who stood in the midst of the councils of heaven and presented the plan of salvation; the very creator of the world; even Jehovah, the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob. The great prophet Benjamin foresaw that day of atonement

and sacrifice and prophesied: "For behold the time cometh, and is not far distant, that with power, the Lord omnipotent who reigneth, who was, and is from all eternity to all eternity shall come down from heaven among the children of men and shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay. And He shall suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death: for behold, blood cometh from every pore so great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and the abominations of His people."¹¹

Jesus Christ in the meridian of time and in some incomprehensible way that only an enlightened being can understand and only a God could do, overcame for us the two deaths which estrange us from the presence of our Father.

"Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him."¹² Through His resurrection He broke the bands of the physical death. His spirit was reunited with His renewed, glorified body to make a whole, perfect soul never to be separated again. And in doing so guaranteed for every spirit child of God placed here on this earth a resurrection, a rejoining of spirit and body in a glorified, immortal state. "Now, verily I say unto you that through the redemption which is made for you is brought to pass the resurrection from the dead. And the spirit and the body are the soul of man and the resurrection from the dead is the redemption of the soul."¹³

Without this great gift, man could not obtain a fulness of joy, "For man is spirit. The elements are eternal, and spirit and element, inseparably connected, receive a fulness of joy; and when separated, man cannot receive a fulness of joy."¹⁴ And Christ overcame the spiritual death by taking upon himself, and therefore atoning for, the sins of the world. That through repentance the elect of God might become sanctified and pure and able to live in the presence of our Heavenly Father. "And thus He shall bring salvation to all those who shall believe on His name, and thus mercy can satisfy the demands of justice, and encircles them in the arms of safety. Therefore...unto him that has faith unto repentance is brought about the great and eternal plan of redemption."¹⁵

For, it is by grace that we are saved after all we can do."¹⁶

Every sacrament meeting we participate in a solemn, sacred act of remembrance and commitment pertaining to this great atonement. As we listen to the inspired prayer uttered by the priest as he blesses the sacrament, we should make it an individual commitment and prayer:

O god, the eternal Father, I ask thee in the name of thy son Jesus Christ to bless and sanctify this bread to my soul. That I may eat in remembrance of the body of thy Son and I witness unto thee, O God, the Eternal Father, that I am willing to take upon myself the name of thy Son and always remember Him and keep His commandments which He has given me, that I may always have His spirit to be with me.

And one might extend that prayer in his own thoughts: I covenant I will take upon myself the name of Jesus Christ. I covenant that I will remember Him. I covenant that I will keep His commandments. When these covenants are made and kept, the Spirit of the Lord dwells with us as our constant companion and guide.

1. Moses 1:39
2. Doctrine and Covenants 93:29
3. Abraham 3:24-26
4. 2 Nephi 2:11
5. 2 Nephi 2:15-16
6. 2 Nephi 2:25
7. 2 Nephi 2:22-23
8. Moses 5: 9-11
9. 2 Nephi 9:6-7
10. Romans 5:18
11. Mosiah 3:5-7
12. Romans 6: 9
13. Doctrine and Covenants 88:14-16
14. Doctrine and Covenants 93:33-34
15. Alma 34:15-16
16. 2 Nephi 25:23

The Gifts Of The Savior

Orange Stake 1975

"ALL THE PROPHETS WHO have prophesied ever since the world began...(did) prophesy concerning the coming of the Messiah and that God should redeem his people. That God Himself should come down among the children of men and take upon Him the form of man and go forth in might power upon the face of the earth."¹

Adam rejoiced in the assurance of the Savior's appointed ministry through the acceptance of which we as transgressors might gain redemption. to the Brother of Jared, Christ appeared in spirit form and said: "Behold, I am He who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. Behold I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son. In me shall all mankind have light and that eternally, even they who shall believe on my name; and they shall become my sons and my daughters.... As I appear unto thee to be in the spirit will I appear unto my people in the flesh."²

Abraham was promised that the Savior would be born through his lineage and in turn Jacob in a patriarchal blessing upon the head of Judah prophesied the Christ would be born through his direct line. Moses proclaimed the coming of the great prophet of Israel, and David's psalms abound in direct allusions to the forthcoming earthly life of Christ. Perhaps nowhere in the Old Testament do we have clearer declarations as to the circumstances surrounding Christ's birth than we do in Isaiah. That prophet whose writings were deemed as of such importance that Lehi was commanded to take them with him lest his people dwindle in unbelief beautifully described the forthcoming birth of the Savior: ¹ 'Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign; behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel.'³ "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: And the government shall be upon his shoulder: And his name shall be called wonderful; counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."⁴

And in the new world every prophet from Lehi on prophesied of the coming of the great Redeemer. Nowhere in all of the scriptures is this prophesy so explicit and so powerful as in King Benjamin 's poignant address to the Nephite people: "For behold, the time cometh, and

is not far distant, that with power, the Lord omnipotent who reigneth, who was, and is from all eternity to eternity, shall come down from heaven among the children of men and shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay.... And He shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of Heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning and his mother shall be called Mary."⁵

Then only five years from the Savior's birth, Samuel the Lamanite prophet spoke specifically of those signs that would accompany this great event: "Behold I give unto you a sign; for five years more cometh and behold then cometh the Son of God to redeem all those who shall believe on His name. And behold, this will I give unto you for a sign at the time of his coming; for behold there shall be great lights in heaven insomuch that in the night before He cometh there shall be no darkness And behold, there shall a new star arise, such an one as ye never have beheld; and this also shall be a sign unto you."⁶

Four years later in the meridian of time, Gabriel appeared to Mary, a young woman who lived at Nazareth, a town in Galilee. She was of the lineage of David, and though unmarried was betrothed to a man named Joseph who was also of royal descent through the Davidic line. "Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee : Blessed art thou among women. The heavenly messenger continued: "Fear not, Mary: For thou hast found favor with God. And, behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: And the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end."⁷

That this child would be the literal son of God there can be no doubt: "And the angel said unto her, the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."⁸

Joseph, being informed of Mary's chosen role by this same divine messenger married her shortly after. And when Mary was great with child a decree went out from Augustus Caesar that all inhabitants of the Roman Empire were to travel to the place of their birth or as in the case of the Jews to the city or town claimed by the respective families as their ancestral home. So, on the eve of this long awaited event, the coming of the Messiah, Joseph and Mary found themselves lodged in a humble stable at Bethlehem. And in the new world at this same time the voice of the Lord was heard by a prophet of God, saying: "Lift up your head and be of good cheer; for behold the time is at hand, and on this night shall the sign be given, and on the morrow come I into the world. Behold I come unto my own, to fulfill all things which I have made known unto the children of men from the foundation of the world."⁹

And thus did the Father's gift to us come to dwell in the flesh. A gift of immeasurable proportion and of eternal duration. A gift incomprehensible in its scope, limitless in its love. In memory of this gift we have established this season of the year, that we might, in our own feeble

way, try to understand what we have been given. That through this understanding there may be an effectual change wrought in our lives so that the gift of Jesus Christ may not have been given in vain.

For a few moments I would like to discuss what this gift entails. And recognizing that words alone are inadequate to convey feeling and understanding, I pray that the Spirit of the Lord may be with us that we may comprehend so that what our Savior has done for us may be understood, and that our lives will be led accordingly.

Jesus Christ gave us a plan whereby we could obtain all that the Father has. He then created this earth as an integral part of this plan and established the way whereby we could come here to dwell in the flesh and receive the experiences necessary for us to use the god-like powers that were to be given us. Abraham speaking of the pre-mortal state shown him in vision said: "And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and He said unto those who were with Him: We will go down...and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell; And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them; And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon,. and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads forever and ever."¹⁰

This was Jesus Christ. And Joseph Smith speaking of this same divine personage testified: "That by Him and through Him and of Him the worlds are and were created."¹¹ And King Benjamin taught that: "(Christ) hath created (us) (and) granted unto (us our) lives."¹² Not only is our existence a gift from Him, but our knowledge as well, for Jesus Christ is: "He that ascended up on high, as also He descended below all things, in that He comprehended all things, that He might be in all and through all things, the light of truth; which truth shineth. This is the light of Christ,...And the light which shineth which giveth you light is through Him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings; The light, which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed."¹³

Our very awareness of right and wrong is another gift of Christ's. "For behold...it is given unto you to judge, that ye may know good from evil; and the way to judge is as plain, that ye may know with a perfect knowledge, as the day light is from the dark night. For behold the spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil."¹⁴

Our moral agency is a gift as well. "For behold ye are free; ye are permitted to act for yourselves; for...He hath made you free. (And since) He hath given unto you that ye might know good from evil.... He hath given unto you that ye might choose life or death; and ye can do good and be restored unto that which is good, or ye can do evil and have that which is evil restored unto you."¹⁵

Having given us the means whereby we could learn truth, to distinguish between right and wrong and to make choices according to our desires, Christ came on earth to dwell. To show by his own life the way we must live to receive the blessings He had prepared for us. He both taught and showed us how to overcome by subjecting his flesh totally to the will of his Heavenly Father. "And thus the flesh becoming subject to the spirit or the son to the Father...suffereth temptation, and yieldeth not to the temptations, but suffereth Himself to be mocked, and scourged and cast out, and disowned by his people. (His) flesh becoming subject even unto death, the will of the son being swallowed up in the will of the Father."¹⁶

He taught us who we are, testifying that we are sons and daughters of God and challenged us to, "Be ye therefore perfect even as your father which is in heaven is perfect."¹⁷ He preceded this admonition with the beautiful sermon on the mount, emphasizing the need to not only keep the commandments outwardly, but within our hearts and minds as well; encouraging us to develop the virtues of humility, meekness, compassion, mercy, peace-making, hungering after righteousness and bearing with patience our afflictions.

He gave to us the gift of the Holy Ghost whom He sent forth from the Father to testify of Him and to lead us into all truth, that we might act by, think by and speak by the spirit of truth.¹⁸

He gave to us His priesthood, the power to act in His name that we might become as He is, "which priesthood continueth in the church of God in all generations which is after the holiest order of God. And this...priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God. Therefore, in the ordinance thereof, the power of Godliness is manifest. And without the ordinance thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh."¹⁹

The gifts of resurrection to all mankind and eternal life to the Lord's elect through an infinite atonement were to be Christ's crowning achievement. As a result of the plan set forth in the beginning, man was to find himself placed in a hostile environment, in a sinful and fallen state that, through faith he might learn to overcome and choose good from evil. Through Adam's transgression, therefore, a fall from the presence of God was wrought. "And now...if Adam had not transgressed he would not have fallen, but he would have remained in the garden of Eden. And all things which were created must have remained in the same state in which they were after they were created; and they must have remained forever and had no end. And they would have had no children; wherefore they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy for they knew no misery; doing no good for they knew no sin. But behold all things have been done in the wisdom of Him who knoweth all things. Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy. And the Messiah cometh in the fulness of time that He may redeem the children of men from the fall. And because that they are redeemed from the fall they have become free forever, knowing good from evil And they are free to choose liberty and

eternal life, through the great mediation of all men, or to choose captivity, and death according to the captivity and power of the devil."²⁰

The children of God were therefore placed in a carnal state, estranged from God and his direct influence, that they might exercise their agency and gain experiences necessary to become as God. From this mortal and fallen state, man could not on his own escape. For inherent in his flesh were the seeds of physical death, a separation of his spirit from an imperfect, decaying body. And because of the flesh, he would automatically suffer a spiritual death as a result of sinful acts that would keep him from the presence of God. As part of the divine plan, then, Christ overcame both the physical death and the spiritual death. "For were it not for the redemption which He hath made for his people, which was prepared from the foundation of the world,....all mankind must have perished."²¹

"And if Christ had not risen from the dead or have broken the bands of death that the grave should have no victory, and that death should have no sting, there could have been no resurrection. But there is a resurrection, (every spirit child of God that has been placed in a mortal tabernacle on this earth, shall have his spirit and body reunited in an immortal glorified state, never to separate again), therefore the grave hath no victory, and the sting of death is swallowed up in Christ."²²

"And again Christ came into the world to be crucified for the world, and to bear the sins of the world, and to cleanse it from all unrighteousness " (Doctrine and Covenants 76:41) The spiritual death was therefore overcome by Christ for those who choose to repent and keep the commandments of God. For they are cleansed and sanctified by his blood. "Behold (Christ has) suffered these things for all, that they may not suffer if they would repent; but if they would not repent they must suffer even as (Christ); which suffering caused (Him), even God, the greatest of all to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore and to suffer both body and spirit and would that (He) might not drink the bitter cup " (Doctrine and Covenants 19:16-18) "(But) surely He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.... He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with his stripes we are healed."²³

These, then, are the gifts of our Savior:

- A plan of salvation including our very creation and the creation of the worlds, by which plan we might become as God Himself.
- The knowledge of truth.
- The ability to discern between right and wrong.
- Our moral agency.

- His example of a perfect life and His teachings which serve as a light in our own lives, leading us back to His presence.
- The gift of the Holy Ghost.
- The priesthood or power to act in His name and become as He is. The resurrection, whereby our spirit and body may be reunited in an immortal, glorified state.
- The atonement, through which we as repentant sons and daughters of God may gain total remission of our sins and through his grace enter back into his presence, glorified, sanctified and perfected.

May we be as Mary the mother of Christ, who when she was told what wondrous things were to befall her, exclaimed, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God, my Savior."²⁴

1. Mosiah 13 :33-34
2. Ether 3: 14-16
3. Isaiah 7:14
4. Isaiah 9:6
5. Mosiah 3:5,8
6. Helaman 14:3-5
7. Luke 1:28, 30-33
8. Luke 1:35
9. 3 Nephi 1: 13-14
10. Abraham 3: 24-26
11. Doctrine and Covenants 76:24
12. Mosiah 2:23
13. Doctrine and Covenants 88:6-13

14. Moroni 7:15-16
15. Helaman 14:30-31
16. Mosiah 15:5-7
17. Matthew 5:48
18. See John 15:26; 16:13
19. Doctrine and Covenants 84:17-21
20. 2 Nephi 2:22-27
21. Mosiah 15:19
22. Mosiah 16:7-8
23. Mosiah 14:4-5
24. Luke 1:46

Understanding Who God Is & Understanding Ourselves

Thoughts Probably 1990's

JESUS CHRIST SAID, “AND this is life, that they might thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”¹

Everything depends on us knowing who God (the Father) is and His son Jesus Christ. Why? Because we are God’s spiritual offspring. We lived with Him before we came to this earth. We have come here to learn how to become like our Father. We cannot do this without knowing who He is; without knowing who we are to become like. And we need to know who Jesus Christ is because He is the way we become like our Father and His grace and love make it possible.

Who we are and our potential is the message of the Savior’s Sermon on the Mount.² He tells us directly and indirectly that God is our Father sixteen times in those three chapters. He gives us directions on how to become like God our Father; and then *commands us* to be perfect just like God is.³

To make certain that we don’t misunderstand who He, Christ, is, He concludes His sermon by saying, “Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of **my** Father which is in heaven.”⁴ God is *His* Father also. Jesus Christ is *our* brother. The Sermon on the Mount testifies that both we and Jesus Christ are children of God, and we can through Christ, our elder brother, become like our Heavenly Father.

In the 17th chapter of John, Christ *prays* to His Father (because they are separate beings and Christ does not have the power of His Father at this time) and asks that God His Father make it possible for us His followers to become *one* with God *our* Father in exactly the same way that Jesus Christ is one with God *His* Father; and that we who are His followers, also receive the *same glory* as God the Father has bestowed upon Jesus Christ His Son.⁵

For John, the Beloved, our divine potential is a thread throughout all of his writings. That is why he wrote: “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall

be: but we know that when he (Christ) shall appear, we shall be like him: for we shall see him as he is.”⁶

God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ are one in precisely the same way they want us to be one with them. With that kind of bond, there is only one God, truly. Because each individual who has followed the path and made the choice to become one with God, would do and say and think only as God the Father does and says and thinks. Wherever one is, so is the other. Each of us, who chooses to be part of that One, becomes that One and the glory of God is expanded as a result. For a full doctrinal explanation of who God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, are, see “The Father and the Son” 1916 Doctrinal Exposition by the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve in 1916.⁷

These truths about us and about God our Father and Jesus Christ were lost shortly after the early apostles were killed. And as men sought to gain understanding from the paradoxes that seemed to exist in the writings of the early apostles because these fundamental truths were lost, they became more and more confused. This culminated in the Council of Nice under the direction of Constantine. And what resulted was the Nicene Creed which obliterated the personality and reality of God and His Son, Jesus Christ. And which made it impossible for anyone who adhered to this “creed” to comprehend either himself or what his purpose was here on this earth.

The knowledge of God and Jesus Christ has been restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith and with it the knowledge of our own eternal nature and divine origin and potential. It is the key that makes sense of everything.

Some More Thoughts About God And Us

There's nothing like starting out with the most difficult concepts (and opening yourself up to all kinds of challenges). But it seems to me that one ought to begin with the beginning.

The *Veil* of Time

Actually, I don't think there ever was a beginning. Or at least a beginning in the sense that there was nothing before it; or, that everything started at some point. The concept of *beginning* implies the universality of *time* along with its finites, including *beginning* and *end*. In actuality, *time* may be an artificial restriction slapped on the residents of low-kingdom worlds like the one we live on.

It's a veil, really. Those who are in a time environment (like us *now*) are grossly limited in what they can do, think or know. You really can't see the future or the past. While you have some recollection of the previous *nows* you have experienced, that recollection is not even as good as

a grainy family movie that leaves out 99% of what your eyes really saw. And your eyes “really” saw only a fraction of what was then. As far as the future is concerned we can only *assume* what that *might* be, based on our memory of what has already occurred. Our best guess is just a projection of the past, which of course, is a flimsy recollection anyway. So we are stuck in the *now* of time, which is so fleeting as to be immeasurable. But that's where “our” *reality* takes place for those of us who are trapped in time. And to make the veil even thicker, our *nows* are experienced by bodies and minds that are horribly flawed because they are subject to the restrictions and ravages of time. Or, they came that way in the first place. Therefore, our spirits, which, for the most part, depend upon these fault-laden senses of the body to perceive what's going on around us, are largely kept from the knowing of things. It sounds like a pretty good veil to me.

In an environment of *time*, these minute bits of reality flow forward (and, therefore, out of our “view” or “awareness”) at a speed that varies according to the world on which we live. The fact that reality is *flowing before us at all* is what the veil is all about. In a *fast-time* world (like this earth) these bits of reality flow rapidly across our “awareness lens” giving us little chance to “linger” in the “now”. They are here and gone in an immeasurable instant, and our ability to see, much less understand, what passed across our awareness lens, is drastically limited.

I think that this is the way it is with the worlds that are governed by time. The slower the time of a world, the more its inhabitants comprehend and the closer reality comes to being *all surrounding*, for them, rather than a flow of reality bits with spaces in between. The closer these reality bits come to being connected together, the less past and future become in relation to *now*. In other words, the closer that world comes to being governed by *eternity* rather than *time*. And the closer it comes to eternity, the less the veil of time applies and the more the inhabitants of that world *know*.

So how *fast* time passes in relationship to our souls/spirits determines the degree to which we are veiled by time. And the speed of time in any particular world is determined by its proximity to God. This proximity, of course, is established according to the collective righteousness of that world, or, in other words, the degree of willingness on the part of the people of that world to follow Jesus Christ. The more righteous the world, the slower its time. For example, we know that the great governing planet of this telestial universe in which we live is Kolob. It's the nearest body in the telestial universe (i.e. the order in which the earth is in) to God. Its time passes far more slowly than does earth's. In fact it would take 1000 earth years to equal just one day on this governing planet. Put another way, time passes there 1/365,000 times as fast as it does here. Those bits of *now* are flowing so slowly that it is bordering on a state where there is no past or future, just a *now*.

However, as long as there is a past and future there is a veil and our vision is limited. So even in this state of hypo-speed, there is still a veil. It seems, then, that the speed of time determines

the extent of the veil and the proximity of a planet on which inhabitants dwell to "the throne of God," determines its speed. By the way, by definition the closer one (or one's planet) is to God, the more "righteous" one is in relation to those who are not in as close a proximity. Righteousness being defined as the degree of one's propensity to obey God according to what one understands God's requests to be. You might want to take a look at Abraham 3 about all of this. In fact, Einstein's theory predicts that time slows down according to the mass of the world/planet and according to how closely one comes to traveling at the speed of light. I believe this veil of time only applies to worlds that are of a telestial order. These are the worlds furthest from God's presence, and they are countless. They are all kinds of different light (speed) which is determined by their proximity (or lack thereof) to God.

It is possible that this earth is the lowest of the low, in other words, the fastest of the fast. The fact that we can *see* billions and billions of stars in the universe with our physical eyes and say something about them as a result of spectrometry probably indicates that they are all of a telestial order too. Otherwise we couldn't see them, let alone say anything about them, as it is not likely the Lord would allow us to see a kingdom higher than that on which we dwell.

The worlds within the telestial order are separated from one another by space and, therefore, by time. These "time distances" are significant enough to effectively keep the telestial worlds of the lowest orders, like us, from knowing very much about, or being able to communicate with, the telestial worlds of a higher order because of our fast time. However, both communication and observation from those of a higher (i.e. "slower time") telestial order of those of a lower (i.e. "faster time") telestial order ought to be entirely possible. Let me give an example.

If a star system is six light years away from the earth, *according to the "speed" of our time*, that means it would take six years for something (image, sound, spaceship, whatever) traveling at the speed of light (186,000 miles/second), to cover the spatial distance between us. However, if that star system's relative time was such that one of their days equaled 1000 of our years (like Kolob), then to those residing in that star system, the earth would only be *8.64 light minutes away*. What they saw going on here on earth would be *almost* in real time. Not something that happened years before. And a star system that was 1,000,000 light years from earth, according to the speed of our time, would "only" be 2.74 light years away according to the time of a Kolob-like star system.

It is entirely possible that the world on which we live is unique in the telestial universe in terms of its isolation from other telestial worlds. This isolation is caused by the "fastness" of our time, which in turn results from our collective wickedness or unwillingness to abide by God's laws. More will be said of this later.

The gist of all of this is that time is not a constant but is relative to the world or system from which it is being measured. Nonetheless, as long as there is a time-environment at all, there is a veil, because knowledge or awareness of *all* that is going on is automatically limited. Knowledge

in that environment comes in bits and pieces and *flows* into the receptor (us.) in some order and at some speed. It takes *time* for us to see and hear and comprehend and, therefore, we are drastically limited in our ability to *know*, even when time is passing 1/365,000 times as fast as it does for us on our earth (because we are still operating in the now of time and there is still a past and a future as a result that are hazy and imperceptible. It is only when there is no flow, no speed, *when it is just all there*, that we are unlimited in our knowledge and awareness. In a telestial, or *time-state*, this latter condition does not exist.

Now I know I said I wasn't going to try to justify the way I look at things, and what I am about to say isn't really a justification of these concepts about time. What I would like to do here is just make a statement about the *relativity* of law. You may want to take a look at Doctrine and Covenants 88:36-37 concerning this. That which seems to *always* work the way we explain it, we call a law as opposed to a theory. And on the basis of these laws, we are able to accurately predict applicable future events. It is this predictability that has allowed our civilization to make the progress that it has made. However, when we understand that the consistency of that which we observe is a product of the specific set of conditions that exist on our world and in our star system, then we are less likely to superimpose automatically and arbitrarily upon the rest of the universe our so-called laws.

For example, is it really possible that time could "pass faster" in some other star system than it does here? Why not! According to Einstein's Theory of Relativity, time slows as a body moves in speed closer to the speed of light and slows in direct proportion to the mass of a body (i.e. the larger the body, the slower time "moves"). At least from Einstein's point of view (and a lot of other astrophysicists as well) time is *relative*, not *absolute*. Is it possible that there could be a state of being where there was no time at all? Why not! Our theoretical astrophysicists and quantum physicists theorize about such states where "singularities" exist that defy all known laws from our earth perspective E.G. black holes, worm holes and the pre-Big Bang which is theorized as being a state where there is no space and no time.

What I have described above is what we Latter-day Saints refer to as the *Telestial Kingdom*. There are worlds without number in it and those worlds differ from one another in "glory" as do the stars in the heavens. It is more than ironic that most of us look at this comparison to "the stars" as analogous when it may be very literal.

The Dimension of Eternity

Now that's an oxymoron if there ever was one. How can something that by definition has no limits be measured? Have any *dimension* at all? Of course, it can't. And because we exist (currently) in a finite world where time is operative, we have a dickens of a time trying to imagine such a limitless, boundless condition, let alone putting time-limited words together

to try to describe such a condition to someone else. But notwithstanding the apparent impossibility of coming up with anything that might be meaningful to describe such a state, I do have some thoughts that I am going to throw out. And as "time" goes on and, hopefully, my own understanding increases, I may just literally do that—throw these thoughts out!

One of the difficulties that hinder us in our attempt to comprehend eternity is our natural inclination to think of eternity as a *place*. It is not a place. How could it be? A "place" has dimension. It is a *state of being*. When we make that adjustment in our way of thinking, a little light begins to seep through the chink or two in our veil that this realization causes. We start to define eternity from a point of *perspective*, a point of *awareness*, rather than as if it were a box or a world or something else that has dimensions. And the view from that state is boundless, limitless. There is no flow to what is seen or understood, it is just *there*. All things are *present* with me, the Lord said. And because there is no boundary on the knowledge, which means there is no limit to the *awareness* of what *is*, there is no limit to the power and capacity and influence of such a being either. He and she are omniscient and omnipotent. This knowledge, this awareness is also power because to know all truth is to be in all things, around about all things, to govern all things and be in the middle of all things. You might find Doctrine and Covenants 88:1-13 interesting reading at this point. To obtain *eternal life* is qualitative, rather than quantitative. It is a transformation rather than a transporting to some higher sphere. When one obtains eternal life, he/she is *released* into a state of *everything-ness* which is an ultimate state of being.

Looking at a common hourglass may prove helpful in understanding what I am trying to say. Let's say the sand in the top of the hourglass represents the future and the sand in the bottom of the hourglass represents the past. As the sand moves from the top of the glass to the bottom, it is moving through the "now" of time. That is where we are "now." We are only aware of what "is," not of what "will be" and have only hazy recollections of "what was." Our awareness of "what was" is only as complete as our ability to bring "what was" back into the "now," which, by definition, is not very complete at all. We have no ability at all, given our time-limited senses, to bring the future into our "now" tunnel. In essence, we are trapped in the "now" of time. And that is just an instantaneous connector between the future and the past. We can hardly see anything at all. And that vision is further compounded by the gross inadequacy of our physical senses.

To be in eternity is to be *outside* of time. It is like looking at the entire hourglass *from outside of the hourglass*. You see future, present and past all together. As if it were all one. As if it were all *present* with you. You are *aware* that it is flowing, but you are not affected in anyway by the flow.

Some More Thoughts:

To have our spirits and bodies inseparably connected doesn't mean necessarily that all that we are, i.e. our spirits, are completely enclosed in a body of matter. All that God is, pervades the universe and gives life to everything that lives. He, and therefore His influence, is not corporally locked in/limited by some physical dimension. But that body is part of Him and a critical part. It is through that body that he can descend and *feel* the feelings of those in the uttermost part of His vineyard. It is through His body that creations are begun.

Is the terrestrial world a connector between eternity and time?

1. John 17:3
2. See Matthew 5-7
3. See Matthew 5:48
4. Matthew 7:21
5. See John 17:20-26
6. See I John 3:1-3
7. <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/2002/04/the-father-and-the-son?lang=eng>

Jesus Christ—Treading the Winepress Alone

Romania 2008

I HAVE BEEN PRAYING that if it is the Lord's will I would see and hear what Nephi and Lehi saw and what Joseph and Sidney saw. Tonight, while I was lying in bed and before going to sleep, I had a “mini” 76th section experience. The eyes of my understanding were opened, and I saw the Savior in a way I had not seen Him before. And I saw Him in every way being the type and shadow of our potential and the path to reaching it. I was overwhelmed with who He is and what He has done. I did not see a vision, but through the Spirit my understanding was stretched, expanded, deepened. And I felt it.

The key to understanding who we are and what the telestial tour is all about is Lehi's phrase regarding us being sent here: “To act and not to be acted upon.” This pertains specifically to our control of our physical tabernacle including both our mind and our body. It is our connection with “matter” and brings the fullness of everything. But unless we are in complete control of it we cannot, worlds without end, be as God and we cannot master eternity or eternities.

We learn how to do this line upon line and precept upon precept. Here a little and there a little. Just like a baby learns to eat and walk, etc. During the first steps, we are almost completely dependent upon grace to do this. And the key to doing it is the desire to do it. We must want to lose ourselves in Christ and in God. To become one with Him. To offer our souls. To offer up the sacrifice of a broken heart and a contrite spirit. And then His grace is *sufficient*. Whatever it takes, as I have said so many times.

Clearly this process has been going on for “eons” before we ever came here. Apparently matter is “layered” on us. For example, we know that our “intelligences” were clothed with a spirit body before we came here on earth. And we know that spirit is matter, just more refined than “mortal matter. We had to learn how to control that matter before we were tied into this coarser stuff. How long does this process go on?

After we master this stage, is there another one? Is that what “eternities” mean? I don’t know. I didn’t see that far. Not yet. But what I did see is that we, if we want to be, are being weaned from grace. Ultimately we must be able to master our flesh, this telestial, without any grace whatsoever. That is what constitutes God. In a paradoxical sense He is both one with all that would be one with Him and derives infinite power and strength from that, but at the same time is one who has developed through a process of “*grace for grace*” into a master of matter without grace assisting him in the end.

Our Heavenly Parent has taken away His hand and we are walking completely, totally by ourselves. That is what this process of telestial and terrestrial (and maybe even celestial) is all about. Learning to ultimately walk without external grace whatsoever. And that is what Christ showed us

First of all He agreed to come to a telestial world that surely must have been at the bottom of the glory barrel. It had to be, because it is going to be at the top (celestialized) and in order for that to happen it will have had to descend below all things. And His willingness (yes it was a choice) to come here, His great condescension to come here, was a sacrifice of immeasurable proportions because of who He had become. The juxtaposing of 100% purity with this telestial world was extraordinary in its contrasts. But He *had* to do this. Not just for our sakes, but for *His sake*. He had to do this if He were to become who He was ultimately to become. Why? Because in order to become as God the Father, that is *become* God the Father, He had to “*tread the winepress **alone***.” Without any grace, help, assistance from His father whatsoever.

We receive grace *for* grace as we learn how to be complete and total givers of grace. We receive grace as we give grace. But there must come a time when we do this overcoming completely on our own. So that was what Christ did. He took upon Himself the sins and sorrows of this world. Totally and completely. And He ultimately did it without any assistance at all from His father. *He did it alone. He tread the winepress alone.* And He was now God the Father.

I caught only a glimpse of the agony and majesty of this great being. Not with my eyes but with my heart and spirit. And I was overwhelmed. I was overwhelmed with gratitude. I was overwhelmed with His greatness and love and power. I was overwhelmed with the knowledge that He has also shown me the way.

There is a law embodied in Doctrine and Covenants 84:48. In essence, we grow into the image of God as we serve in God’s name. The priesthood is for our sakes and for the sake of the entire world. The two purposes are inextricably connected. One cannot be done without the other. The one is the way to the other and vice versa. I saw that the only way that Jesus Christ could possibly have taken upon Himself my sins and sorrows and sufferings as well as those for every other man, woman or child who ever lived, was by doing it entirely by Himself. Doing it while He was still clothed and surrounded by the lowest of the telestial matter. Doing it ultimately, without any grace, assistance whatsoever. The only way He could save me was *by*

exalting Himself. And the only way He could exalt Himself was by saving me. And the only way He could do any of this was because of the infinite love He had developed within Himself for His Father and therefore for me.

This love, this charity, defines Him and defines all who are ultimately capable of doing what He did. There simply is no other way. It is true. His work and His glory *is* to save me. His great fear as He faced this “moment,” was knowing that He was going to have to do this *by Himself*. He was going to have to do this without any infusion of grace from His Father. He was going to have to do this being “forsaken.” There would be no fear whatsoever if He knew that His Father was right there and would infuse Him immediately with sufficient strength to overcome the world. But that could not be. And He knew it. And that is why He feared. He had never, ever done this before. *And He genuinely feared that He might not be capable of doing this alone.*

It was not a fear of the pain and agony. It was a fear that He was not yet prepared to do this all by Himself. But in spite of that fear and that reluctance about His own capacities and the fear not only of failing himself, but failing His Father and failing all of us, He proceeded. Asking only that His Father’s will be done. This was the ultimate, consummate leap of faith. And He did it. And in doing it, like it always is, He became God the Father, and we through His grace, can be brought back into the presence of God. Cleansed and purified. So that we could continue in our learning process to ultimately become like Him.

We must learn to be actors and not to be acted upon. We must by losing ourselves in Him, offering up a broken heart and a contrite spirit, grow grace for grace and from grace to grace. In other words, learning how to be less and less dependent on grace for our righteousness and more and more the givers of grace. That is the process that will ultimately bring us to the point that Jesus Christ faced. Where we infinitely tread the winepress alone. Then and only then are we like Him. And like our Father. Our experiences here prepare us for this.

What experiences have we had before this life that have brought us to this point? We can only imagine. But one thing is likely. Our experiences with the “flesh/matter” did not begin here. And perhaps they will not end here.

Jesus Christ has shown us the way.

Relationships Between: God, Christ and Us

Orange Stake 1993

IT SEEMS TO ME, if there is a key scripture that unlocks the door to the meaning and purpose of life, it is John 17:30. This is part of the Savior's most important recorded prayer to His Heavenly Father: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." To me the Lord is saying that everything rests on us knowing and understanding God the Father and Jesus Christ, His Son. For sake of direction, I would like to discuss three aspects of that knowledge: What are God's attributes? What is Christ's relationship to God the Father? What is man's relationship to Christ and to God the Father?

As I discuss these concepts, I am deeply aware of man's inability to understand anything of an eternal nature without revelation. And that I am grossly limited by my own human frailties and restrictions to fully understand or adequately communicate eternal truths. Our knowledge here, must come from the Holy Ghost and from God's word as recorded in scriptures and as spoken by His prophets.

What Are God's Attributes?

"We know that there is a God in heaven, who is infinite and eternal, from everlasting to everlasting the same unchangeable God, the framer of heaven and earth, and all things which are

in them."¹ He is omniscient, omnipotent, all caring, all loving and His influence is omni-present. All that is good comes from Him. All that He does is designed to bless and benefit His children, for His work and His glory is "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man."²

What Is The Relationship Between God The Father and Jesus Christ?

First, they are One. It is true, they are one in purpose and intent. But they are One in a way that I cannot fully comprehend given my finite mind. That "connection" or "unification" may be like a "spiritual umbilical cord" that connects them. Where the Father shares with the Son, His glory, His power and His love. That relationship and connection are real, and literally makes them One God.

Second, physically and consciously they are separate. God, the Father, has His a body of flesh and bones as does Jesus Christ.³ That this is the case is clearly attested to in the Bible, from beginning to end, as well as in latter-day scriptures.

"And God said, Let *Us* make man in *Our* image after *Our* likeness.... So God created man in His *own* image."⁴ "And they heard the *voice* of the Lord God *speaking* in the cool of the day."⁵ "And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of *Us*, to know good and evil."⁶

These passages pose some interesting dilemmas if we assume that God is a mystical "oneness" without "body, parts or passions". For example, why does He sometimes use "I", and sometimes use "Our" or "Us"? It sounds like "somebody" is with Him, doesn't it. And whoever He is referring to, assisted Him in the creation process. If we are in the image of God, we should be able to look at ourselves and get an idea what God is like. What else can it mean that we are "in the image" of God? Surely man's "carnal nature" can't be what is in the image of God. It must be our physical appearance, since bodies is what the scriptures here are talking about.

Where did God's "voice" come from? What did He "walk" with? God does not deceive. He was either talking or walking or He wasn't. And if He were talking and walking, then He has a body.

Turning to the New Testament, there isn't a more attested to fact than Jesus had *and has* a body. There may be disagreement on exactly how Mary conceived, but there can be no argument that Mary was pregnant and Jesus came forth from her womb just like you and I did. He was born. He had a body that grew and developed. That ate and talked. That laughed and cried. That suffered pain and experienced joy. And apparently that body was a pretty important thing to have, because keeping that body was what the resurrection was all about. Christ's body was *gone* from the tomb. Where was it? It clothed His Spirit. He went to great pains to make certain His apostles understood this great event and the importance of the eternal nature of a resurrected body. He ate and drank with them and bade them to feel that this was a real body. "And as they thus spake, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And He said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have."⁷ Christ has a body. That is the testimony of the scriptures and to assume that He somehow takes on a body when He comes to earth and sheds it when He leaves is illogical and anti-scriptural.

That God the Father and Christ are separate in "consciousness and will" is equally attested to in the New Testament. A few of many scriptures and incidents should suffice to demonstrate that. "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature," we are told, "and in favour with God and man."⁸ How could He increase in "favour" with Himself? "The head of Christ is God," Paul tells us.⁹ That statement certainly indicates a separate relationship, as does this statement of Paul's: "Then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all."¹⁰ And who did Christ pray to? Himself? Who answered His prayers? Who was answering the prayers of the apostles and other good people through-out the world when

Christ was here on the earth? Who was Christ talking to in the Garden of Gethsemane when He said, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as *I will*, but as *thou wilt*."¹¹ Apparently, His will *was* different than the Father's will at that moment in time. And what about on the cross? What did His cry mean: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"¹² The whole statement makes no sense if He, Christ, is not separate from His Father. After all, Christ was the *Son* of God. Can you be your own son?

"Wherefore, the Almighty God gave His Only Begotten Son, as it is written in those scriptures which have been given of Him. He suffered temptations but gave no heed unto them. He was crucified, died, and rose again the third day; And ascended into heaven, to sit down on the right hand of the Father, to reign with almighty power according to the will of the Father."¹³

What Is Man's Relationship to God?

To understand the relationship between God the Father, Jesus Christ His Son, and the Holy Ghost is crucial for us to understand our own relationship to God, since Christ is our prototype. How many times did He say, "Come follow me?" Was that just an idle statement? Where did He say, "Come follow me, but you can't quite become like me." He didn't. "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you," is what He taught.¹⁴ "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect," is what He directed.¹⁵

Most surely, His expectations for us are far beyond what most of us allow ourselves to believe. It was Jesus Himself that taught, "For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister."¹⁶ It isn't the "Latter-day Saints" who try to make themselves as God. It is God through His great condescension and love and infinite power who wants to make us as Jesus Christ. For we are His brothers and His sisters. And "(Christ) shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself."¹⁷ "Now *are we the sons of God* and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear, *we shall be like Him....* And every man that hath this hope in Him *purifieth himself, even as He is pure.*"¹⁸

The Savior's most poignant and efficacious prayer had to do with our potential Divine destiny. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me.... That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us. ...And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one."¹⁹

This is the message of the New Testament. Through the grace of Christ, we can be as He is. No wonder when the Savior appeared to Joseph Smith in 1820 He said that the ministers of Joseph's day teach doctrines that have a "form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof." It is the height of irony that the churches of Joseph's day, as do the churches of today, while condemning the Latter-day Saints for talking about the importance of works, actually preach a very diluted grace. Their condemnation of our vision of the potential of man is really saying that God's grace is incapable and insufficient to allow us to become as He is. That His grace will only take us so far.

I know that His grace is as infinite as is His love. I know that through and by His grace, the promises that the Savior both directly and through His apostles held out to us are real. We can become perfect. We can be Christ's brothers and sisters. Our resurrected bodies will be fashioned like His glorious body. We will be pure as He is pure. We will be like Him when we see Him. And we will be one with Him and God the Father in the same way that He and His Father are one and that the glory that the Father has given to His Son, Jesus Christ, Jesus, Christ will give to us.

Does this mean we will be out there creating our own universes? I don't know exactly what it means. What I do know is that whatever God is doing, we will be doing. Our capacity for love and righteousness and service and knowledge will be expanded infinitely for we will, through His grace, be one with Him in the same way that Christ is one with Him. After all, God did use the plural at the creation of this earth. "Let *Us*..." He said.

We know what that hope and knowledge means to us here on this earth. It means that we must seek, by the grace of God, to take nothing into our mind or body that would detract us from that potential. That we strive through that same grace for the gifts of faith, humility, and love, so that we might help each one we associate with to understand their own Divine potential and make their choices accordingly. We seek for those experiences that will allow us to know and thus become like our Lord and Master, Jesus the Christ.

This is life eternal, to know the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom He has sent. Because in knowing them, we also know our own divine nature and what our life on this earth is all about. It is the great truth that God has manifested to His children here beneath the veil. It is the gospel, the good news, of Jesus Christ. Surely, Mormon's admonition and promise to his son, Moroni, applies to us today: "And now my beloved son(s) and daughters let us labor diligently; for if we should cease to labor, we should be brought under condemnation; for we

have a labor to perform whilst in this tabernacle of clay, that we may conquer the enemy of all righteousness, and rest our souls in the kingdom of God. ...Be faithful in Christ (and) may Christ lift thee up, and may His sufferings and death...and His mercy and long-suffering, and the hope of His glory and of eternal life, rest in your mind(s) forever."²⁰

1. Doctrine and Covenants 20:17-18
2. Moses 1:3
3. Doctrine and Covenants 130:2
4. Genesis 2:26-
5. Genesis 3:8
6. Genesis 3:22
7. Luke 24:36-39
8. Luke 2:52
9. I Cor,11:3
10. I Cor 15:28
11. Matthew 26:39
12. Mark 15:34
13. Doctrine and Covenants 20:21-24
14. John 13:15
15. Matthew 5:48
16. Mark 3:3
17. Philippians 3:21
18. I John 3:2-3
19. John 17:20-23

20. Moroni 9:6,25

Seeing God – Coming into His Presence

Romania 2008-9

While there are a number of scriptures that I believe reinforce and even expand our understanding of what is in the verses you referred to (likely my email correspondence with Lloyd Rasmussen), I would add to this mix the following: Doctrine and Covenants 67:10-13; Doctrine and Covenants 76:5-10, 114-118; all of Ether 12

For what they are worth, here are some of my thoughts. Doctrine and Covenants 93:1 is one of those extraordinary “summary” scriptures that literally maps out our journey. The temple in a verse. The temple lays out the whole journey—before, “now” and after—with great specificity including the necessary ordinances and keys that will allow us to successfully complete our journey, unlocking the door back into God the Father’s presence. The scriptures, because they are before the whole world, only point the direction, some more clearly than others. The blanks are filled in by the Holy Ghost (and the temple) as one studies and ponders and lives what he/she is learning. A number of times the prophets, as they recorded what they saw and heard and felt, were stopped dead in their tracks by the Spirit saying that what they had written was all that was “lawful” to write. In essence, that if others were to know the “completeness” of what was revealed to them, they must come about that knowledge the same way the prophet did. But that every man and woman who would follow that course could come to that understanding and knowledge and even have the same experiences as some of the prophets including seeing Jesus Christ while still in the telestial world. Apparently “many” have had that experience.

Having said that, I believe the pattern or route to being in the presence of Jesus Christ and ultimately of God the Father is the same. Whether that is a relatively brief encounter here during mortality or in an eternal state. And the scriptures we are referring to, I believe, likely refer to that way. The way to see Him now. The way to be with Him when we are through with the telestial tour.

A question I have had in my own mind is the role which we receive in the temple plays in us being able to be in Christ's presence while still in our mortal state. For example, the brother of Jared. Was what we learn in the temple in order to come back into God's presence also required of the brother of Jared and Moroni in order for them to have spoken with Christ as one man speaks to another? Or is that process needed only when we come into God the Father's presence?

Another thought I had is the efficacy of *all* of the temple work for the dead that is done. Doctrine and Covenants 84:22 seems to indicate to me that the ordinances of the priesthood are required of all who come into God's presence. And since all of us must come back into God's presence to be "judged" (with all but the sons/daughters of perdition remaining in at least some of God's Light) do all need to have the priesthood ordinances (at least baptism) performed in their behalf in order to enter the presence of God to be judged? If that logic holds, that would also mean that virtually no temple ordinance that is performed is ultimately "wasted" (except maybe the massive # of duplications). In essence, that virtually everyone we do baptisms and endowments for is necessary so they can come back into God's presence to be judged. Worth thinking about.

Taking Upon Ourselves The Name Of Christ

Thoughts

IF THE NAME, CHRIST, is categorical and defines a state of being, that throws some light on what it means to "take upon ourselves the name of Christ." Here are some thoughts.

Perhaps the fundamental choice of all existence is to what extent we are desirous of becoming as Christ. That choice defines our eternal state. Do we want to be telestial, terrestrial, celestial, or one who chooses to be a law unto himself rather than to lose himself in any degree for the sake of others (i.e. a son/daughter of perdition). That choice is ours to make and no one else's. That is agency.

When we are baptized, we signify by ordinance and covenant a *willingness* to take the name of Christ upon us. To go by His name and become as He is. This is a fundamental first step. It is an action step. A manifestation of faith based on the hope that that desire is both attainable and is what we want. For most of us, we only know at that point that *we feel* that is what we want.

As our experiences help us realize that this is our desire, we make additional covenants. For the men, we receive the priesthood which is after the order of the Son of God. We covenant to be faithful and to magnify it, which is to extend the influence and power of Jesus Christ. Our desire to take upon ourselves the name of the Lord is expanded. We begin to *represent* that name. We carry the *authority* of that name. We *act* in the name of Jesus Christ and on His behalf. And the process of *striving* to keep this *oath and covenant* of the priesthood molds us into the very being whose name we are trying to carry—Jesus Christ.¹

The temple, with its ordinances and covenants, is where our increased desire to take upon us the name of Christ is manifest. There we make solemn and sacred covenants to live the laws of obedience, sacrifice, the gospel, chastity, and consecration. In doing so, we seek to do all that we do in the name of Jesus Christ rather than in our own mortal names. This is symbolically represented in the names of the signs and tokens. As we move from covenant to covenant, we

in essence say we will not only do everything that we do in the name of Christ, but ultimately, everything that we do will be the works of Christ.

To take upon ourselves the name of Christ then, is a process that reflects our fundamental decision that defines our very soul. That process involves us making a series of covenants and participating in the confirming and power enabling ordinances that bind us to God and open doors for His grace to assist us in that process. Those who come unto Christ and take upon themselves His name, fully and completely, will have sufficient grace from God to become one with and as Jesus Christ.²

The Covenant

He gives all He has.

I do the same.

My gift is my life.

His is His name.

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1. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:33-48; 107:1-4
 2. See Moroni 10:32-33

The Father & the Son

Thoughts

AFTER ALL THESE YEARS I think I am beginning to understand the eternal (and personal) significance of Abinadi's statement about Christ being both the father and the son.¹ Not only is everything a type of Christ, but by extension, of me as well since I have taken upon myself His name. So Abinadi is describing *me* symbolically and literally. Or rather who I am becoming. The Father because I am spirit and was conceived by Him and am part of Him. Through the ordinances of the Holy Priesthood I am bound to Him and can become One with Him and as He is. And the son because of the flesh for I have been encompassed by the telestial. So I am both the father and the son in this current "package" just like Jesus Christ was. And my objective is to be one with the Father. My telestial flesh becoming subject to the Spirit, "or the Son to the Father," and "the *will* of the Son being swallowed up in the *will* of the Father."

I see that in a very real sense the telestial part of me (the flesh) has a real will independent of my spirit's will. I have, because of the fall, a dual nature. The son's will independent of the father's will. And my choice is to learn to subject the will of the son in me (the flesh) to the will of the father in me (the spirit). And by doing so I learn to "master" all creation, from the telestial to the celestial. And I, therefore, become the Father (celestial) *with a perfect understanding of what it means to be the son (telestial)*. Indeed, I cannot be as Heavenly Father without that experience and understanding.

The challenge I am finding is to *always* remember. To remember that this is who I am. And my experiences with death and temptation and sorrow and pain and joy and love, through the grace of God, allow me to fully subject the flesh to the spirit. To become as Jesus Christ. To be both the father and the son. But I have to *always* remember who I am. Not an easy thing to do.

1. Mosiah 15:1-7

To Come Unto Christ

Orange Stake 1987

As members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints we have covenanted to take a message to the world. We are to start with ourselves, then take it to our children and spouses, and on to our extended family, and then to our associates and to all we would come in contact with. Because we have the Gift of the Holy Ghost, we are the only ones capable of carrying this message, for it is testimony of the true and living God and our relationship to Him.

Through the cunning designs of the evil one and through the wickedness of man, this knowledge has been lost from the world. Through man's depravity and wickedness he has rationalized that he is not capable of anything more than telestial behavior. And that God, if He exists at all, is unknowable.

But our testimony is, "that this is life eternal, that (we) might know...the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom (He) hast sent."¹ That "there is a God in heaven, who is infinite and eternal, from everlasting to everlasting the same unchangeable God, the framer of heaven and earth, and all things which are in them; And...he created man, male and female, after His own image and in His own likeness, created He them; And gave unto them commandments that they should love and serve Him the only living and true God, and that He should be the only being whom they should worship. But by the transgression of these holy laws man became sensual and devilish and became fallen man. Wherefore, the Almighty God gave His Only Begotten son.... He suffered temptations but gave no heed unto them. He was crucified, died, and rose again the third day; That as many as would believe and be baptized in His holy name, and endure in faith to the end, should be saved. And we know that all men must repent and believe on the name of Jesus Christ, and worship the Father in His name, or they cannot be saved in the kingdom of God."²

Our testimony is that Christ is our Great Prototype. It is He who we follow and it is He who we are destined to become like if we will. Our voices join with the prophets of old in inviting all to come unto Christ, and be perfected in Him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength,

then is His grace sufficient for you, that by His grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in nowise deny the power of God. And again, if ye through the grace of God are perfect in Christ, and deny not His power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy without spot.³

And that is our message to the world, that through Christ it is our potential destiny, “to be...perfect, even as (our) Father in Heaven is perfect.”⁴

And we know that we come unto Christ through faith. Faith seems to be one of those words that is self-defining. The concept it represents only being understood by those who possess it. To me, faith is the desire and willingness to live truth without knowing beforehand what that truth is or what the immediate consequences of living that truth will be. With that definition in mind, listen to what Mormon says about faith. “For no man can be saved, according to the words of Christ, save they shall have faith in His name. For if ye have not faith in Him then ye are not fit to be numbered among the people of His church. (But) how is it that ye can attain unto faith, save ye shall have hope? And what is it that ye shall hope for? Behold I say unto you that ye shall have hope through the atonement of Christ and the power of His resurrection, to be raised unto life eternal, and this because of your faith in Him according to the promise.... And again, behold I say unto you that he cannot have faith and hope, save he shall be meek, and lowly of heart. If so, his faith and hope is vain, for none is acceptable before God, save the meek and lowly in heart.”⁵

Faith is the willingness to live truth without knowing beforehand what that truth is or what the immediate consequences of living that truth will be. No wonder the Law of Moses was so inhibiting and restrictive. As Paul said, those who...were kept under the law, (were) shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.”⁶ They were only willing to abide the truth that was laid out for them in the form of written “laws” and where consequences of their actions were clearly spelled out. They were unwilling to seek additional truth because they were not willing to live additional truth without knowing beforehand what the immediate consequences of that would be and how it would affect their own worldly comforts and pleasures. They were not meek and humble and denied themselves the opportunity of coming to the knowledge of all truth as a result. Faith frees us. Frees us from the bonds of the world. Frees us from ignorance and leads us unto Christ.

As Nephi said, “wherefore the law hath become dead unto us, and we are made alive in Christ because of our faith, and we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ...that our children may...look forward unto that life which is in Christ.”⁷

But there is another step we must take in coming to Christ. “If(a man has) not charity,” said Mormon, “he is nothing; wherefore he must needs have charity. And charity suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, not easily

provoked, thinketh no evil and rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Wherefore, my beloved brethren...cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all... (For) charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him."⁸

To come unto Christ, is to possess His love. We must feel the oneness with all living things that Christ feels. But we are incapable in and of ourselves to possess this love. It is a gift and comes only as a result of our desire to have it. If we would come unto Christ, we would, as Mormon said,. "pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which He hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of His Son, Jesus Christ."⁹

To come unto Christ, is to have faith, hope and charity. "And now, my beloved brethren (and sisters) I would that ye should come unto Christ, who is the Holy One of Israel, and partake of His salvation, and the power of His redemption. Yea, come unto Him, and offer your whole souls as an offering unto Him, and as the Lord liveth ye will be saved."¹⁰ "That ye may become the sons (and daughters) of God; that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as He is pure."¹¹ And that we may bring with us, "him that is athirst...and whosoever will, (to) take the water of life freely."¹²

1. John 3:17
2. Doctrine and Covenants 20:17-33
3. Moroni 10:32-33
4. Matthew 5:48
5. Moroni 7:38-44
6. Galatians 3:22-24
7. 2 Nephi 25:27
8. Moroni 7:44-47
9. Moroni 7:48
10. Omni 26)

11. Moroni 7:48

12. Revelations 22:17

Worshipping The Only True God

Orange Stake 1983

BY THESE THINGS WE know that there is a God in heaven who is infinite and eternal, from everlasting to everlasting, the same unchangeable God; the framer of heaven and earth, and all things which are in theme And that He created man, male and female, after His own image and in His own likeness created He them. And He gave unto them commandments that they should love and serve Him, the only living and true God; and that He should be the only being whom they should worship.”¹ This being is Jehovah. The same who was manifested in the flesh as Jesus Christ.

Regarding this worshipping process, Bruce R. McConkie has said, "The issue is not whether men shall worship, but who or what is to be the object of their devotions and how they shall go about paying their devotions to their chosen most high. ...Our purpose is to worship the true and living God and to do it by the power of the Spirit and in the way He has ordained.... (And) a knowledge of the truth is essential to true worship.”²

Before we can understand how we are to worship, we must first know who we are worshipping so that we might know why we should worship him. Jesus Christ gave us a plan whereby we could obtain all that the Father has. He then created this earth as an integral part of this plan and established the way whereby we could come here to dwell in the flesh and receive the experiences necessary for us to use the godlike powers that were to be given us. Abraham speaking of the pre-mortal state shown him in vision said: And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and He said unto those who were with Him: We will go down, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell; And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them; And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon, and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads forever and ever.”³ This was Jesus Christ.

And Joseph Smith speaking of this same divine personage testified: "That by Him and through Him and of Him the worlds are and were created.”⁴ King Benj amin taught that: (Christ) hath created (us) and granted unto (us our) lives.”⁵

Not only is our earthly existence a gift from Him, but our knowledge as well. For Jesus Christ is "He that ascended up on high, as also He descended below all things, in that He comprehended all things, that He might be in all and through all things, the light of truth; which truth shineth. This is the light of Christ. And the light which shineth which giveth you light is through Him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings; The light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed."⁶

Our very awareness of right and wrong is another gift of Christ's "for behold...it is given unto you to judge, that ye may know good from evil; and the way to judge is as plain, that ye may know with a perfect knowledge, as the day light is from the dark night. for behold the spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil."⁷

Our agency is a gift as well, "for behold ye are free; ye are permitted to act for yourselves; for He hath made you free. (And since) He hath given unto you that ye might know good from evil... He hath given unto you that ye might choose life or death; and ye can do good and be restored unto that which is good,...or ye can do evil and have that which is evil restored unto you."⁸

Having given us the means whereby we could learn truth, to distinguish between right and wrong and to make choices according to our desires, Christ came on earth to dwell; to show by His own life the way we must live to receive the blessings He had prepared for us. He both taught and showed us how to overcome by subjecting His flesh totally to the will of His Heavenly Father.

"And thus the flesh becoming subject to the Spirit or the son to the Father suffereth temptation, and yieldeth not to the temptation, but suffereth Himself to be mocked, and scourged and cast out, and disowned by His people. (His) flesh becoming subject even unto death, the will of the son being swallowed up in the will of the Father."⁹

He taught us who we are, testifying that we are sons and daughters of God and challenged us to "Be ye therefore perfect even as you father (who) is in heaven is perfect."¹⁰

He proceeded this admonition with the beautiful sermon on the mount, emphasizing the need to not only keep the commandments outwardly, but within our hearts and minds as well; encouraging us to develop the virtues of humility, meekness, compassion, mercy, peace—making, hungering after righteousness and bearing with patience our afflictions.

He gave to us the gift of the Holy Ghost whom He sent forth from the Father to testify of Him and to lead us into all truth.¹¹ That we might act by, think by and speak by the Spirit of Truth.

He gave to us His priesthood, the power to act in His name that we might become as He is, "which priesthood continueth in the church of God in all generations ; which is after the holiest order of God. And this...priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key

of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God. Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest. And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh." (Doctrine and Covenants 84:17-21) The gifts of resurrection to all mankind and eternal life to the Lord's elect through an infinite atonement were to be Christ's crowning achievement. as a result of the plan set forth in the beginning, man was to find himself placed in a hostile environment, in a sinful and fallen state that, through faith he might learn to overcome and choose good from evil.

Through Adam's transgression, therefore, a fall from the presence of God was wrought. "And now... if Adam had not transgressed he would not have fallen, but he would have remained in the Garden of Eden. And all things which were created must have remained in the same state in which they were after they were created; and they must have remained forever and had no end. And they would have had no children; wherefore they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy for they knew no misery; doing no good for they knew no sin. "But behold all things have been done in the wisdom of Him who knoweth all things. Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy. And the Messiah cometh in the fulness of time that He may redeem the children of men from the fall. And because that they are redeemed from the fall they have become free forever, knowing good from evil...And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great mediation of all men, or to choose captivity, and death according to the captivity and power of the devil."¹²

The children of God were therefore placed in a carnal state, estranged from God and His direct influence, that they might exercise their agency and gain experiences necessary to become as God. From this mortal and fallen state, man could not on his own escape. For inherent in his flesh were the seeds of physical death, a separation of his spirit from an imperfect, decay-destined body. And because of the flesh, he would automatically suffer a spiritual death as a result of sinful acts that would keep him from the presence of God.

As part of the divine plan, then, Christ overcame both the physical death and the spiritual death. "For were it not for the redemption which He hath made for His people, which was prepared from the foundation of the world,...all mankind must have perished."¹³ "And if Christ had not risen from the dead, or have broken the bands of death that the grave should have no victory, and that death should have no sting, there could have been no resurrection. But there is a resurrection, (Every spirit child of God that has been placed in a mortal tabernacle on this earth, shall have his spirit and body reunited in an immortal glorified state never to separate again), therefore the grave hath no victory, and the sting of death is swallowed up in Christ."¹⁴ "Christ...came into the world to be crucified for the world, and to bear the sins of the world, and to cleanse it from all unrighteousness."¹⁵

The spiritual death was overcome by Christ for those who choose to repent and keep the commandments of God. For they are cleansed and sanctified by His blood. "Behold (Christ has) suffered these things for all, that they may not suffer if they would repent; But if they would not repent they must suffer even as (Christ); which suffering caused (Him) even God, the greatest of all to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore and to suffer both body and spirit and would that (He) might not drink the bitter cup."¹⁶ "(But) surely He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.... He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed."¹⁷

This is the being we worship. In its purest form, worship is copying, adopting, striving to become like the object of our adoration. A common saying is imitation is the greatest form of flattery. And that is precisely the essence of true worship. We worship Christ by imitating Him. By doing what He has done. Just as Christ worshipped His Father by doing what He saw His Father do. Therefore, we worship Him by keeping His commandments and by living our lives as He lived His, including being willing to descend below all things for our sake and for the sake of our fellowman, just as He did. For He was and is the prototype of salvation.

And His way must also be our path, "(Because Jesus) received not of the fulness at the first," we are told, "but received grace for grace. (He) continued from grace to grace, until He received a fulness; and thus He was called the Son of God because He received not the fulness at first. (Ultimately, however,)...He received a fulness of the glory of the Father; and He received all power, both in heaven and on earth, and the glory of the Father was with Him, for He dwelt in Him. I give unto you these sayings," said the Lord, "that you may understand and know how to worship, that you may come unto the Father in my name, and in due time receive of His fulness. For if you keep my commandments, you shall receive of His fulness and be glorified in me as I am in the Father; therefore, I say unto you, you shall receive grace for grace."¹⁸

This is the promise given to those who would worship the only true and living God, who is Jesus Christ, the Father of heaven and earth and the Savior of all mankind.

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1. Doctrine and Covenants 20:17-19
 2. General Conference Talk, Oct 3, 1982
 3. Abraham 3:24-26
 4. Doctrine and Covenants 76: 24
 5. Mosiah 2:23

6. Doctrine and Covenants 88:6-13
7. Moroni 7:15-16
8. Helaman 14:30-31
9. Mosiah 15:5-7
10. Matthew 5:48
11. John 16:13
12. 2 Nephi 2:22-27
13. Mosiah 15:19
14. Mosiah 16:7-8
15. Doctrine and Covenants 76:41
16. Doctrine and Covenants 19:16-18
17. Mosiah 14:4-5
18. Doctrine and Covenants 93:12-20

Faith

Thoughts

FAITH IS THE PATH to becoming like God. Or, as God. Literally, one with God. God does everything by faith. Faith is knowing and acting “before” something happens. It is the observing that it will happen that brings the happening about. This is the way the worlds were created. This is the way we overcome the flesh. This is the way matter is acted upon and put under subjection to the Spirit. This is what we have been sent on earth to learn how to do. Without this there can be no redemption. Without this, we are controlled by Satan because we subject ourselves to matter and he can control that matter. Faith transcends time. It defines a timeless state because faith means we see things as they really are and things as they really are become real because our faith has wrought them to be so. We take baby steps in this process and learn line upon line how to do this. That is why Christ underscores faith in Him. He is teaching us how to develop that trait which defines God. Looking forward with an eye of faith, seeing an entity in the condition we want it to end up before it is there, literally brings it to be there as long as it is conforming to eternal law. Moving mountains, turning water to wine, calming the elements, creating earths. This is what faith is all about. It is being a full and complete actor and never acted upon. One cannot be acted upon because our faith changes matter and conforms it to what we want it to be. It is as though that is what it always was. That is the looking forward with an eye of faith.

Scriptural Guideposts

THE FOLLOWING SCRIPTURES HAVE been particularly important guideposts for me as I have strived to wend my way through the telestial tour and gain some understanding as to what this is all about. It is not an exhaustive list. These do not represent so much my favorite scriptures as scriptures that for me hold vital clues as to who we are, what we are here to do and why. They have each had great impact on me. I have not included any scriptures from the Old or New Testaments even though they are filled with these same truths. I have felt that the latter-day scriptures are clearer in defining them.

THE BOOK OF MORMON

1 Nephi 19: 23

And I did read many things unto them which were written in the books of Moses; but that I might more fully persuade them to believe in the Lord their Redeemer I did read unto them that which was written by the prophet Isaiah; for I did liken all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning.

1 Nephi 10: 19

For he that diligently seeketh shall find; and the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto them, by the power of the Holy Ghost, as well in these times as in times of old, and as well in times of old as in times to come; wherefore, the course of the Lord is one eternal round. (See also Alma 37: 12, Doctrine and Covenants 3: 2, Doctrine and Covenants 35: 1)

2 Nephi 2: 13-14, 16, 26

13 And if ye shall say there is no law, ye shall also say there is no sin. If ye shall say there is no sin, ye shall also say there is no righteousness. And if there be no righteousness there be no happiness. And if there be no righteousness nor happiness there be no punishment nor misery. And if these things are not there is no God. And if there is no God we are not, neither the earth; for there could have been no creation of things, neither to act nor to be acted upon; wherefore, all things must have vanished away.

14 And now, my sons, I speak unto you these things for your profit and learning; for there is a God, and he hath created all things, both the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are, both things to act and things to be acted upon.

...

16 Wherefore, the Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself. Wherefore, man could not act for himself save it should be that he was enticed by the one or the other.

...

26 And the Messiah cometh in the fulness of time, that he may redeem the children of men from the fall. And because that they are redeemed from the fall they have become free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon, save it be by the punishment of the law at the great and last day, according to the commandments which God hath given.

2 Nephi 25: 23

For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do.

2 Nephi 31: 20

Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a clove of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life

Jacob 2: 16

O that he would rid you from this iniquity and abomination. And, O that ye would listen unto the word of his commands, and let not this pride of your hearts destroy your souls.

Jacob 7: 26

And it came to pass that I, Jacob, began to be old; and the record of this people being kept on the other plates of Nephi, wherefore, I conclude this record, declaring that I have written according to the best of my knowledge, by saying that the time passed away with us, and also our lives passed away like as it were unto us a dream, we being a lonesome and a solemn people, wanderers, cast out from Jerusalem, born in tribulation, in a wilderness, and hated of our brethren, which caused wars and contentions; wherefore, we did mourn out our days.

Omni 1: 26

And now, my beloved brethren, I would that ye should come unto Christ, who is the Holy One of Israel, and partake of his salvation, and the power of his redemption. Yea, come unto him, and offer your whole souls as an offering unto him, and continue in fasting and praying, and endure to the end; and as the Lord liveth ye will be saved

Mosiah 2: 16-17

16 Behold, I say unto you that because I said unto you that I had spent my days in your service, I do not desire to boast, for I have only been in the service of God.

17 And behold, I tell you these things that ye may learn wisdom; that ye may learn that when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God.

Mosiah 3:17-19

17 And moreover, I say unto you, that there shall be no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent.

18 For behold he judgeth, and his judgment is just; and the infant perisheth not that dieth in his infancy; but men drink damnation to their own souls except they humble themselves and become as little children, and believe that salvation was, and is, and is to come, in and through the atoning blood of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent.

19 For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father.

Mosiah 4: 27

And see that all these things are done in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength. And again, it is expedient that he should be diligent, that thereby he might win the prize; therefore, all things must be done in order

Mosiah 15: 1-7

1 And now Abinadi said unto them: I would that ye should understand that God himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people.

2 And because he dwelleth in flesh he shall be called the Son of God, and having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father, being the Father and the Son—

3 The Father, because he was conceived by the power of God; and the Son, because of the flesh; thus becoming the Father and Son—

4 And they are one God, yea, the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth.

5 And thus the flesh becoming subject to the Spirit, or the Son to the Father, being one God, suffereth temptation, and yieldeth not to the temptation, but suffereth himself to be mocked, and scourged, and cast out, and disowned by his people.

6 And after all this, after working many mighty miracles among the children of men, he shall be led, yea, even as Isaiah said, as a sheep before the shearer is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.

7 Yea, even so he shall be led, crucified, and slain, the flesh becoming subject even unto death, the will of the Son being swallowed up in the will of the Father.

Mosiah 17:2-3

2 Now these sons of Mosiah were with Alma at the time the angel first appeared unto him; therefore Alma did rejoice exceedingly to see his brethren; and what added more to his joy, they were still his brethren in the Lord; yea, and they had waxed strong in the knowledge of the truth; for they were men of a sound understanding and they had searched the scriptures diligently, that they might know the word of God.

3 But this is not all; they had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting; therefore they had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and when they taught, they taught with power and authority of God.

Mosiah 17:5

Now these are the circumstances which attended them in their journeyings, for they had many afflictions; they did suffer much, both in body and in mind, such as hunger, thirst and fatigue, and also much labor in the spirit

Mosiah 24: 14

And I will also ease the burdens which are put upon your shoulders, that even you cannot feel them upon your backs, even while you are in bondage; and this will I do that ye may stand as witnesses for me hereafter, and that ye may know of a surety that I, the Lord God, do visit my people in their afflictions

Mosiah 28: 3

Now they were desirous that salvation should be declared to every creature, for they could not bear that any human soul should perish; yea, even the very thoughts that any soul should endure endless torment did cause them to quake and tremble

Alma 5: 15

Do ye exercise faith in the redemption of him who created you? Do you look forward with an eye of faith, and view this mortal body raised in immortality, and this corruption braised in incorruption, to stand before God to be judged according to the deeds which have been done in the mortal body?

Alma 5: 26

And now behold, I say unto you, my brethren, if ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, can ye feel so now?

Alma 7: 7-16

7 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.

8 Behold, I do not say that he will come among us at the time of his dwelling in his mortal tabernacle; for behold, the Spirit hath not said unto me that this should be the case. Now as to this thing I do not know; but this much I do know, that the Lord God hath power to do all things which are according to his word.

9 But behold, the Spirit hath said this much unto me, saying: Cry unto this people, saying—Repent ye, and prepare the way of the Lord, and walk in his paths, which are straight; for behold, the kingdom of heaven is at hand, and the Son of God cometh upon the face of the earth.

10 And behold, he shall be born of Mary, at Jerusalem which is the land of our forefathers, she being a virgin, a precious and chosen vessel, who shall be overshadowed and conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost, and bring forth a son, yea, even the Son of God.

11 And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people.

12 And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities.

13 Now the Spirit knoweth all things; nevertheless the Son of God suffereth according to the flesh that he might take upon him the sins of his people, that he might blot out their transgressions according to the power of his deliverance; and now behold, this is the testimony which is in me.

14 Now I say unto you that ye must repent, and be born again; for the Spirit saith if ye are not born again ye cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven; therefore come and be baptized unto repentance, that ye may be washed from your sins, that ye may have faith on the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world, who is mighty to save and to cleanse from all unrighteousness.

15 Yea, I say unto you come and fear not, and lay aside every sin, which easily doth beset you, which doth bind you down to destruction, yea, come and go forth, and show unto your God that ye are willing to repent of your sins and enter into a covenant with him to keep his commandments, and witness it unto him this day by going into the waters of baptism.

16 And whosoever doeth this, and keepeth the commandments of God from thenceforth, the same will remember that I say unto him, yea, he will remember that I have said unto him, he shall have eternal life, according to the testimony of the Holy Spirit, which testifieth in me.

Alma 12: 9

And now Alma began to expound these things unto him, saying: It is given unto many to know the mysteries of God; nevertheless they are laid under a strict command that they shall not impart only according to the portion of his word which he doth grant unto the children of men, according to the heed and diligence which they give unto him.

Alma 29: 4

I ought not to harrow up in my desires, the firm decree of a just God, for I know that he granteth unto men according to their desire, whether it be unto death or unto life; yea, I know that he allotteth unto men, yea, decreeth unto them decrees which are unalterable, according to their wills, whether they be unto salvation or unto destruction

Alma 36: 24

Yea, and from that time even until now, I have labored without ceasing, that I might bring souls unto repentance; that I might bring them to taste of the exceeding joy of which I did taste; that they might also be born of God, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

Alma 48: 14

Now the Nephites were taught to defend themselves against their enemies, even to the shedding of blood if it were necessary; yea, and they were also taught never to give an offense, yea, and never to raise the sword except it were against an enemy, except it were to preserve their lives.

Helaman 5:6

Behold, my sons, I desire that ye should remember to keep the commandments of God; and I would that ye should declare unto the people these words. Behold, I have given unto you the

names of our first parents who came out of the land of Jerusalem; and this I have done that when you remember your names ye may remember them; and when ye remember them ye may remember their works; and when ye remember their works ye may know how that it is said, and also written, that they were good.

Helaman 5:12

And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall.

3 Nephi 12: 48

Therefore I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect

3 Nephi 28: 5-10

5 And they sorrowed in their hearts, for they durst not speak unto him the thing which they desired.

6 And he said unto them: Behold, I know your thoughts, and ye have desired the thing which John, my beloved, who was with me in my ministry, before that I was lifted up by the Jews, desired of me.

7 Therefore, more blessed are ye, for ye shall never taste of death; but ye shall live to behold all the doings of the Father unto the children of men, even until all things shall be fulfilled according to the will of the Father, when I shall come in my glory with the powers of heaven.

8 And ye shall never endure the pains of death; but when I shall come in my glory ye shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye from mortality to immortality; and then shall ye be blessed in the kingdom of my Father.

9 And again, ye shall not have pain while ye shall dwell in the flesh, neither sorrow save it be for the sins of the world; and all this will I do because of the thing which ye have desired of me, for ye have desired that ye might bring the souls of men unto me, while the world shall stand.

10 And for this cause ye shall have fullness of joy; and ye shall sit down in the kingdom of my Father; yea, your joy shall be full, even as the Father hath given me fulness of joy; and ye shall be even as I am, and I am even as the Father; and the Father and I are one;

Ether 12: 19

And there were many whose faith was so exceedingly strong, even before Christ came, who could not be kept from within the veil, but truly saw with their eyes the things which they had beheld with an eye of faith, and they were glad

Ether 12: 27

And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them

Moroni 7: 6, 9

6 For behold, God hath said a man being evil cannot do that which is good; for if he offereth a gift, or prayeth unto God, except he shall do it with real intent it profiteth him nothing.

9 And likewise also is it counted evil unto a man, if he shall pray and not with areal intent of heart; yea, and it profiteth him nothing, for God receiveth none such.

Moroni 7:15-19

15 For behold, my brethren, it is given unto you to judge, that ye may know good from evil; and the way to judge is as plain, that ye may know with a perfect knowledge, as the daylight is from the dark night.

16 For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil; wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for everything which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God.

17 But whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do evil, and believe not in Christ, and deny him, and serve not God, then ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of the devil; for after this manner doth the devil work, for he persuadeth no man to do good, no, not one; neither do his angels; neither do they who subject themselves unto him.

18 And now, my brethren, seeing that ye know the alight by which ye may judge, which light is the light of Christ, see that ye do not judge wrongfully; for with that same judgment which ye judge ye shall also be judged.

19 Wherefore, I beseech of you, brethren, that ye should search diligently in the alight of Christ that ye may know good from evil; and if ye will lay hold upon every good thing, and condemn it not, ye certainly will be a child of Christ.

Moroni 7: 47-48

47 But charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him.

48 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure. Amen.

Moroni 10: 32-33

32 Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in nowise deny the power of God

33 And again, if ye by the grace of God are perfect in Christ, and deny not his power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy, without spot.

DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS

Doctrine and Covenants 2

1 Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

2 And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers.

3 If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming.

Doctrine and Covenants 19: 6-12

6 Nevertheless, it is not written that there shall be no end to this torment, but it is written endless torment.

7 Again, it is written eternal damnation; wherefore it is more express than other scriptures, that it might work upon the hearts of the children of men, altogether for my name's glory.

8 Wherefore, I will explain unto you this mystery, for it is meet unto you to know even as mine apostles.

9 I speak unto you that are chosen in this thing, even as one, that you may enter into my rest.

10 For, behold, the mystery of godliness, how great is it. For, behold, I am endless, and the punishment which is given from my hand is endless punishment, for Endless is my name. Wherefore—

11 Eternal punishment is God's punishment.

12 Endless punishment is God's punishment

Doctrine and Covenants 29: 30

But remember that all my judgments are not given unto men; and as the words have gone forth out of my mouth even so shall they be fulfilled, that the first shall be last, and that the last shall be first in all things whatsoever I have created by the word of my power, which is the power of my Spirit.

Doctrine and Covenants 38:2

The same which knoweth all things, for all things are present before mine eyes;

Doctrine and Covenants 58: 21

Let no man break the laws of the land, for he that keepeth the laws of God hath no need to break the laws of the land.

Doctrine and Covenants 58: 42

Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more

Doctrine and Covenants 72: 3-4

3 And verily in this thing ye have done wisely, for it is required of the Lord, at the hand of every steward, to render an account of his stewardship, both in time and in eternity.

4 For he who is faithful and wise in time is accounted worthy to inherit the mansions prepared for him of my Father.

Doctrine and Covenants 76:6-10 & 114-118

6 Great shall be their reward and eternal shall be their glory.

7 And to them will I reveal all mysteries, yea, all the hidden mysteries of my kingdom from days of old, and for ages to come, will I make known unto them the good pleasure of my will concerning all things pertaining to my kingdom.

8 Yea, even the wonders of eternity shall they know, and things to come will I show them, even the things of many generations.

9 And their wisdom shall be great, and their understanding reach to heaven; and before them the wisdom of the wise shall perish, and the understanding of the prudent shall come to naught.

10 For by my Spirit will I enlighten them, and by my power will I make known unto them the secrets of my will—yea, even those things which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor yet entered into the heart of man.

•••

114 But great and marvelous are the works of the Lord, and the mysteries of his kingdom which he showed unto us, which surpass all understanding in glory, and in might, and in dominion;

115 Which he commanded us we should not write while we were yet in the Spirit, and are not lawful for man to utter;

116 Neither is man capable to make them known, for they are only to be seen and understood by the power of the Holy Spirit, which God bestows on those who love him, and purify themselves before him;

117 To whom he grants this privilege of seeing and knowing for themselves;

118 That through the power and manifestation of the Spirit, while in the flesh, they may be able to bear his presence in the world of glory.

Doctrine and Covenants 76: 86-98

86 These are they who receive not of his fulness in the eternal world, but of the Holy Spirit through the ministration of the terrestrial;

87 And the terrestrial through the ministration of the celestial.

88 And also the telestial receive it of the administering of angels who are appointed to minister for them, or who are appointed to be ministering spirits for them; for they shall be heirs of salvation.

89 And thus we saw, in the heavenly vision, the glory of the telestial, which surpasses all understanding;

90 And no man knows it except him to whom God has revealed it.

91 And thus we saw the glory of the terrestrial which excels in all things the glory of the telestial, even in glory, and in power, and in might, and in dominion.

92 And thus we saw the glory of the celestial, which excels in all things—where God, even the Father, reigns upon his throne forever and ever;

93 Before whose throne all things bow in humble reverence, and give him glory forever and ever.

94 They who dwell in his presence are the church of the Firstborn; and they see as they are seen, and know as they are known, having received of his fulness and of his grace;

95 And he makes them equal in power, in might, and in dominion.

96 And the glory of the celestial is one, even as the glory of the sun is one.

97 And the glory of the terrestrial is one, even as the glory of the moon is one.

98 And the glory of the telestial is one, even as the glory of the stars is one; for as one star differs from another star in glory, even so differs one from another in glory in the telestial world;

Doctrine and Covenants 76: 106-107

106 These are they who are cast down to hell and suffer the wrath of Almighty God, until the fullness of times, when Christ shall have subdued all enemies under his feet, and shall have perfected his work;

107 When he shall deliver up the kingdom, and present it unto the Father, spotless, saying: I have overcome and have trodden the wine-press alone, even the wine-press of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God.

Doctrine and Covenants 82:8-10

8 And again, I say unto you, I give unto you a anew commandment, that you may understand my will concerning you;

9 Or, in other words, I give unto you directions how you may act before me, that it may turn to you for your salvation.

10 I, the Lord, am abound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise.

Doctrine and Covenants 84:20-22

20 Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest.

21 And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh;

22 For without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live

Doctrine and Covenants 84: 33

For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies

Doctrine and Covenants 84:48

And the Father teacheth him of the covenant which he has renewed and confirmed upon you, which is confirmed upon you for your sakes, and not for your sakes only, but for the sake of the whole world.

Doctrine and Covenants 84:100

The Lord hath redeemed his people;

And Satan is abound and time is no longer.

The Lord hath gathered all things in cone.

The Lord hath brought down Zion from above.

The Lord hath brought up Zion from beneath.

Doctrine and Covenants 88: 13, 21-25, 34-36, 38, 42

13 The alight which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the claw by which all things are governed, even the power of God who sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things.

...

21 And they who are not sanctified through the law which I have given unto you, even the law of Christ, must inherit another kingdom, even that of a terrestrial kingdom, or that of a telestial kingdom.

22 For he who is not able to abide the law of a celestial kingdom cannot abide a celestial glory.

23 And he who cannot abide the law of a terrestrial kingdom cannot abide a terrestrial glory.

24 And he who cannot abide the law of a telestial kingdom cannot abide a telestial glory; therefore he is not meet for a kingdom of glory. Therefore he must abide a kingdom which is not a kingdom of glory.

25 And again, verily I say unto you, the earth abideth the law of a celestial kingdom, for it filleth the measure of its creation, and transgresseth not the law—

...

34 And again, verily I say unto you, that which is governed by law is also preserved by law and perfected and sanctified by the same.

35 That which breaketh a law, and abideth not by law, but seeketh to become a law unto itself, and willesh to abide in sin, and altogether abideth in sin, cannot be sanctified by law, neither by mercy, justice, nor judgment. Therefore, they must remain filthy still.

36 All kingdoms have a law given;

...

38 And unto every kingdom is given a law; and unto every law there are certain bounds also and conditions.

...

42 And again, verily I say unto you, he hath given a law unto all things, by which they move in their times and their seasons

Doctrine and Covenants 88: 76-80

76 Also, I give unto you a commandment that ye shall continue in prayer and fasting from this time forth.

77 And I give unto you a commandment that you shall teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom.

78 Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you, that you may be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that are expedient for you to understand;

79 Of things both in heaven and in the earth, and under the earth; things which have been, things which are, things which must shortly come to pass; things which are at home, things which are abroad; the wars and the perplexities of the nations, and the judgments which are on the land; and a knowledge also of countries and of kingdoms

80 That ye may be prepared in all things when I shall send you again to magnify the calling whereunto I have called you, and the mission with which I have commissioned you.

Doctrine and Covenants 93: 11-13, 20

11 And I, John, bear record that I beheld his glory, as the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, even the Spirit of truth, which came and dwelt in the flesh, and dwelt among us.

12 And I, John, saw that he received not of the fullness at the first, but received grace for grace;

13 And he received not of the fulness at first, but continued from grace to grace, until he received a fulness;

...

20 For if you keep my commandments you shall receive of his fullness, and be glorified in me as I am in the Father; therefore, I say unto you, you shall receive grace for grace.

Doctrine and Covenants 93:24

And truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come

Doctrine and Covenants 93: 29-37

29 Man was also in the beginning with God. intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be.

30 All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself, as all intelligence also; otherwise there is no existence.

31 Behold, here is the agency of man, and here is the condemnation of man; because that which was from the beginning is plainly manifest unto them, and they receive not the light.

32 And every man whose spirit receiveth not the alight is under condemnation.

33 For man is spirit. The elements are eternal, and spirit and element, inseparably connected, receive a fulness of joy;

34 And when separated, man cannot receive a fulness of joy.

35 The elements are the tabernacle of God; yea, man is the tabernacle of God, even temples; and whatsoever temple is defiled, God shall destroy that temple.

36 The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth.

37 Light and truth forsake that evil one.

Doctrine and Covenants 93:38-40

38 Every spirit of man was innocent in the beginning; and God having redeemed man from the fall, men became again, in their infant state, innocent before God.

39 And that wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth, through disobedience, from the children of men, and because of the tradition of their fathers.

40 But I have commanded you to bring up your children in blight and truth

Doctrine and Covenants 98: 16

Therefore, renounce war and proclaim peace, and seek diligently to turn the hearts of the children to their fathers, and the hearts of the fathers to the children;

Doctrine and Covenants 98: 39-45

39 And again, verily I say unto you, if after thine enemy has come upon thee the first time, he repent and come unto thee praying thy forgiveness, thou shalt forgive him, and shalt hold it no more as a testimony against thine enemy—

40 And so on unto the second and third time; and as oft as thine enemy repenteth of the trespass wherewith he has trespassed against thee, thou shalt forgive him, until seventy times seven.

41 And if he trespass against thee and repent not the first time, nevertheless thou shalt forgive him.

42 And if he trespass against thee the second time, and repent not, nevertheless thou shalt forgive him.

43 And if he trespass against thee the third time, and repent not, thou shalt also forgive him.

44 But if he trespass against thee the fourth time thou shalt not forgive him, but shalt bring these testimonies before the Lord; and they shall not be blotted out until he repent and reward thee four-fold in all things wherewith he has trespassed against thee.

45 And if he do this, thou shalt forgive him with all thine heart; and if he do not this, I, the Lord, will avenge thee of thine enemy an hundred-fold;

Doctrine and Covenants 107:2-3

2 Why the first is called the Melchizedek Priesthood is because Melchizedek was such a great high priest.

3 Before his day it was called the Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God.

Doctrine and Covenants 109:15

And that they may grow up in thee, and receive a fulness of the Holy Ghost, and be organized according to thy laws, and be prepared to obtain every needful thing;

Doctrine and Covenants 110:13-16

13 After this vision had closed, another great and glorious vision burst upon us; for Elijah the prophet, who was taken to heaven without tasting death, stood before us, and said:

14 Behold, the time has fully come, which was spoken of by the mouth of Malachi—testifying that he [Elijah] should be sent, before the great and dreadful day of the Lord come—

15 To turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse—

16 Therefore, the keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands; and by this ye may know that the great and dreadful day of the Lord is near, even at the doors.

Doctrine and Covenants 121:41

No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned;

Doctrine and Covenants 121: 46

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 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.

Doctrine and Covenants 122: 7-8

7...know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good.

8 The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he?

Doctrine and Covenants 128:15

And now, my dearly beloved brethren and sisters, 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 132:19-24

19 And again, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, and it is sealed unto them by the Holy Spirit of promise, by him who is anointed, unto whom I have appointed this power and the keys of this priesthood; and it shall be said unto them—Ye shall come forth in the first resurrection; and if it be after the first resurrection, in the next resurrection; and shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, all heights and depths—then shall it be written in the Lamb's Book of Life, that he shall commit no murder whereby to shed innocent blood, and if ye abide in my covenant, and commit no murder whereby to shed innocent blood, it shall be done unto them in all things whatsoever my servant hath put upon them, in time, and through all eternity; and shall be of full force when they are out of the world; and they shall pass by the angels, and the

gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever.

20 Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them.

21 Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye abide my law ye cannot attain to this glory.

22 For strait is the gate, and narrow the way that leadeth unto the exaltation and continuation of the lives, and few there be that find it, because ye receive me not in the world neither do ye know me.

23 But if ye receive me in the world, then shall ye know me, and shall receive your exaltation; that where I am ye shall be also.

24 This is eternal lives—to know the only wise and true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent. I am he. Receive ye, therefore, my law.

THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

Moses 1:1-6

1 THE words of God, which he spake unto Moses at a time when Moses was caught up into an exceedingly high mountain,

2 And he saw God face to face, and he talked with him, and the glory of God was upon Moses; therefore Moses could endure his presence.

3 And God spake unto Moses, saying: Behold, I am the Lord God Almighty, and Endless is my name; for I am without beginning of days or end of years; and is not this endless?

4 And, behold, thou art my son; wherefore look, and I will show thee the workmanship of mine hands; but not all, for my works are without end, and also my words, for they never cease.

5 Wherefore, no man can behold all my works, except he behold all my glory; and no man can behold all my glory and afterwards remain in the flesh on the earth.

6 And I have a work for thee, Moses, my son; and thou art in the similitude of mine Only Begotten; and mine Only Begotten is and shall be the Savior, for he is full of grace and truth; but there is no God beside me, and all things are present with me, for I know them all.

Moses 1:9-10

9 And the presence of God withdrew from Moses, that his glory was not upon Moses; and Moses was left unto himself. And as he was left unto himself, he fell unto the earth.

10 And it came to pass that it was for the space of many hours before Moses did again receive his natural strength like unto man; and he said unto himself: Now, for this cause I know that man is nothing, which thing I never had supposed.

Moses 1:12-16

12 And it came to pass that when Moses had said these words, behold, Satan came tempting him, saying: Moses, son of man, worship me.

13 And it came to pass that Moses looked upon Satan and said: Who art thou? For behold, I am a son of God, in the similitude of his Only Begotten; and where is thy glory, that I should worship thee?

14 For behold, I could not look upon God, except his glory should come upon me, and I were transfigured before him. But I can look upon thee in the natural man. Is it not so, surely?

15 Blessed be the name of my God, for his Spirit hath not altogether withdrawn from me, or else where is thy glory, for it is darkness unto me? And I can judge between thee and God; for God said unto me: Worship God, for him only shalt thou serve.

16 Get thee hence, Satan; deceive me not; for God said unto me: Thou art after the similitude of mine Only Begotten.

Moses 1:21-22

21 And now Satan began to tremble, and the earth shook; and Moses received strength, and called upon God, saying: In the name of the Only Begotten, depart hence, Satan.

22 And it came to pass that Satan cried with a loud voice, with weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth; and he departed hence, even from the presence of Moses, that he beheld him not.

Moses 1:38-39

38 And as one earth shall pass away, and the heavens thereof even so shall another come; and there is no end to my works, neither to my words.

39 For behold, this is my awork and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.

Moses 5: 10-11

10 And in that day Adam blessed God and was filled and began to prophesy concerning all the families of the earth, saying: Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy, and again in the flesh I shall see God.

11 And Eve, his wife, heard all these things and was glad, saying: Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient.

Abraham 3:21-28

21 I dwell in the midst of them all; I now, therefore, have come down unto thee to declare unto thee the works which my hands have made, wherein my wisdom excelleth them all, for I rule in the heavens above, and in the earth beneath, in all wisdom and prudence, over all the intelligences thine eyes have seen from the beginning; I came down in the beginning in the midst of all the intelligences thou hast seen.

22 Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones;

23 And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good; and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born.

24 And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and he said unto those who were with him: We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell;

25 And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them;

26 And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon; and they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate; and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever.

27 And the Lord said: Whom shall I send? And one answered like unto the Son of Man: Here am I, send me. And another answered and said: Here am I, send me. And the Lord said: I will send the first.

28 And the second was angry, and kept not his first estate; and, at that day, many followed after him.

Gratitude

Thought

I THINK THERE IS not anything that I am not thankful for. My life has been filled with the “obvious” blessings including an extraordinary wife, children, grandchildren and heritage, and I have had sufficient for my needs throughout my life.

My membership in the Church is an exceptional blessing including the opportunities for service I have been given, the promises that I have received as a result of the covenants I have made in the temple, and the reality of the Holy Ghost in my life. So also are the services that have been rendered on my behalf throughout my life by people who love me, and the fulfilling association I have with the members of the Church and others.

At the top of my gratitude list is the supreme atonement of Jesus Christ that makes everything meaningful for me. Without his eternal offering, eternal life, literally, would not be possible. In that light, I also place on my gratitude list experiences that on the surface would not seem to belong. Experiences that have brought me significant personal heartache, as well as extensive challenges with health and financial well-being.

It is accurate to say that in this life I have learned how to cry. Frequently. And in the process I have discovered that it is in my extremities that I come to know the Savior. It is in my extremities that I come to know me, and who I want to be. I have learned that by following Jesus Christ through literally descending below “all things,” my ability to act in His behalf to lift and bless others is increased exponentially. As a result, I am coming to know Him to a degree I could never have done without those experiences.

That is joy.

Any experience, then, that increases our proximity to Jesus Christ is a blessing. His promise that all things will redound to our good has been my experience time and time again. Hence, there is not anything that I am not thankful for.

Gratitude describes my life.

Prayer and Developing the Attributes of Christ

Romania-Thought 2009

JUST LIKE YOU TALK to a valued friend or parent about a problem or challenge or question, so in virtually the same way you talk to your Heavenly Father. No fluff, no rhetoric, just talk to Him. He is real. He is your Father. He loves you. Talk with Him like you know that, and you know that He knows you intimately. Understand that you will be talking with Him a number of times during the day so you don't need to cram everything into one "session." Sometimes during the day your communication with Him is a simple apology for a really dumb thing you did. Sometimes it is a "thank you" for a gift you received (like you did well on a test). Sometimes it is a request. For example you have been working on fixing something that is really important and you've done everything you know how to get it fixed, but it hasn't worked. Because it is important to get fixed and you can't do it "on your own" you take a minute and ask Him for help.

When you have this relationship with your Heavenly Father you don't worry about the content and length of your prayers. The conversation just comes out naturally. Morning and evening prayers are very important but should be seen as the beginning and the end of a flow of conversations you have with your Heavenly Father during any one day.

As far as developing Christ like attributes is concerned, I have a thought. I have kept a daily journal for well over 30 years now. For a number of years at the end of every year I would summarize what had happened to me and evaluate my progress and slippage. And then I would write down the areas in my life that I was going to work on including the Christ-like attributes that I would focus on. It would seem that at the top of my list every year of things to work on, was "patience." I was taking a "Ben Franklin" approach to developing Christ-like attributes. And I was having a Dicken's of a time making any substantive progress. Then I began to discover something. As I sought more and more to lose myself in Christ, to take upon myself His name, to offer my whole soul to Him, to offer a broken heart and a contrite spirit, to be submissive, the Christ-like attributes that I sought to "develop" in my life, kind of automatically

started to come. I was becoming more like Him because I loved Him more. I realized that “I” can do very little without His grace and assistance. I realized that as I made my covenant to magnify Him and to consecrate myself to Him *the* focus of my life, the telestial in me began to melt away in a natural and wonderful way. Obviously, this is a lifelong process, and I have pangs of frustration as I watch my body and mind do things I don’t want them to do. But it has also been wonderful to see what has been happening to everything about me as I have truly sought Him.

Looking Forward With An Eye of Faith

Thoughts

WHAT DID BRIGHAM YOUNG see when he looked out over the Salt Lake Valley and said, “This is the right place?” He obviously was looking with an eye of faith.

Have you ever had an experience with what you felt or were even certain was revelation to do something and it turned out entirely different than what you were expecting it to – maybe even temporarily devastating? How would looking with an eye of faith apply here?

What is a blessing?

A thought: We like to define for the Lord what a blessing is – health, wealth, obedient children, wonderful marriage, etc. A blessing is anything that brings us in closer proximity to Jesus Christ. And that seems to be a choice.

What does it mean to “look forward with an eye of faith?”

To begin acting as though what we have faith in happening has already occurred) See Alma 5:15 & Ether 12:3,6,19

Why is it so important that our faith is tested?

*We are here to make choices that reflect our desires. [See Abraham 3:25] Making righteous decisions when all seems to be failing around us is part of that test. We find out who we are and our faith becomes knowledge when over time it all works out – **time is on our side when we are doing what we ought to be doing***

Why is looking forward with an eye of faith so very powerful?

Things get done. It's like looking at the blueprints of a building that is going to be built. You know what it is going to look like. You know that it is going to happen. This is the way the worlds were created.

Revelation

Perhaps Christ paused
as Spirit led Him
to harsh wilderness,
but He followed.
And I am learning
not to question
the beginning
before I see the end

The Fall of Adam & Eve

Thought

Important questions to consider about Adam and Eve

NOT EVERY CHRISTIAN BELIEVES that Adam and Eve actually existed.

(View of a Catholic Franciscan Priest)

We realize more clearly now that the story of Adam and Eve is rather something like a parable. The truth is in the message of sinfulness rather than in factual history.

The overall narrative of Genesis 2-11 reflects a "creation-flood story" that was well known in the ancient Near East; several examples have come down to us from Mesopotamia. The biblical authors used this familiar (to them) story to teach their own distinctive view of God, the world and human beings. In other words, to read the story of Adam and Eve as a historical account is to misinterpret the text. Like a parable, it teaches a profound truth. (Michael D. Guinan, a Franciscan priest, is a professor of Old Testament, Semitic languages and biblical spirituality at the Franciscan School of Theology in Berkeley, California)

Why is it important for us to know that Adam and Eve actually existed?

Were Adam and Eve valiant spirits? How do we know?

In what ways are Adam and Eve our prototypes? What can we learn from them? What does the temple teach us about our relationship to Adam and Eve?

What were the conditions like in the Garden of Eden?

What changes took place in Adam and Eve as a result of their transgression?

What do you think our Heavenly Father meant when he said to Adam and Eve, "Cursed is the ground *for thy sake*."

Why was the fall of Adam and Eve necessary for the Plan of Salvation to take effect? Was Eve deceived or was she the first to realize what they needed to do to follow the great plan of happiness and then convinced Adam?

The following will help in this discussion:

Moses 5:9-10; Moses 5:11; II Nephi 2:22-25; Gospel Principles-Chapter 6-The Fall of Adam and Eve; Gospel Topics and Questions-Fall of Adam and Eve; Doctrines of the Gospel Student Manual-Chapter 8-The Fall; Teachings and Doctrine of the Book of Mormon Teacher Material (Religion 275)-Lesson 5- The Fall of Adam and Eve and the Gift of Agency

Baptism

Orange Stake 1970s-1980s

A TALK I GAVE at a baptism service.

I was baptized in the old stake center font in Shelley Idaho. In those days, the priests in the stake were given the assignment to do the baptizing. Fathers would do the confirming, if they were worthy. I remembered the anxiety I felt as I waited my turn. I did not, of course, appreciate the full significance of what was happening to me then, but I do remember the feeling of rightness and goodness I had at the time.

Years later, as a priest, I had the opportunity to baptize my sister, Lynette. I believe I literally felt the power I held as I pronounced the baptismal prayer. I was seeing the importance of baptism as a necessary ordinance. To be performed by one who had the authority from God to act in his behalf.

But it was on my mission to Australia where I saw the life changing and life directing power of this sacred ordinance. We were teaching a recently divorced young woman who had a four year old daughter. Her whole world had been turned upside down with the trauma and hurt caused by an unfaithful husband. She had even contemplated suicide. Only her love and concern for her daughter kept her from going over that edge.

I could literally see her countenance change as we taught her the gospel. Each lesson seemed to bring more light to her eyes and a smile more often to her face. She wanted to be baptized, and I performed that ordinance. When I raised her out of the water, she was glowing. Not just figuratively, but literally glowing. She was a new person. Her old ways were dead, and I saw what it meant to literally become alive in Christ.

Alma in the Book of Mormon stood on the banks of the waters of Mormon and spoke to those who had risked their lives to follow him. These words apply to all of you who are being baptized today.

“Now as ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another's burdens, that they might be light. And are willing to mourn with those

that mourn, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things and in all places that you may be in, even until death, that you may be redeemed with God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life. Now I say unto you, if this be the desire of your heart, what have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with him, that you will serve him and keep his commandments, that he may pour out his spirit more abundantly upon you.”¹

Alma then took the first one into the water and before beginning the baptismal prayer he cried out to the Lord “O Lord, pour out Thy spirit upon Thy servant, that he may do this work with holiness of heart.” Then, he offered the baptism prayer. “I baptize thee, having authority from the almighty God, as a testimony that you have entered into a covenant to serve him until you are dead as to the mortal body. And may the spirit of the Lord be poured out upon you, and may he grant unto you eternal life through the redemption of Christ.”²

These are the covenants we make and that our baptism symbolizes. Extraordinary promises of the Lord are then forthcoming. We will be cleansed of all our sins. We will have His spirit to be with us to guide us, to teach us, and to comfort us. And we will have eternal life.

Eight year olds are not too young to realize they are taking an important step when they are baptized. The Lord has designated that age as the age of accountability. And while most children initially will not fully understand the significance and power of that ordinance in their lives, yet they will feel the rightness of it. And they will be given the extraordinary and absolutely real gift of the Holy Ghost that will help them through the line upon line and precept upon precept and experience upon experience process that all of us go through to grow up in the Lord.

1. Mosiah 18:8-10

2. Mosiah 18:12-13

The Gift Of Revelation

Orange Stake 1987

MANY MEMBERS OF THE Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints may not understand the great gift that each of us has been given and consequently do not avail themselves of that blessing. I am speaking of the Gift of the Holy Ghost. Because we do not use that gift, we rely primarily on our own strength, our own limited knowledge and wisdom, and on the words of others who may or may not be speaking by the influence of the Spirit. Our decisions, judgments, and actions will often fall short of what they could and should be. And consequently we do not bless the lives of our family members, or the lives of those we lead or serve in our church callings, or the lives of those we associate with, or our own life to the extent we could.

The Lord stated, "Therefore, if you will ask of me you shall receive; if you will knock it shall be opened unto you.... I say unto you, I will impart unto you of my Spirit, which shall enlighten your mind, which shall fill your soul with joy; And then shall ye know, or by this shall you know, all things whatsoever you desire of me, which are pertaining unto things of righteousness, in faith believing in me that you shall receive."¹

We are entitled to this special gift as we seek to magnify our church callings. Indeed, a critical source of instruction and guidance for us should be the Lord as well as our ecclesiastical leaders or associates. We have the opportunity and the responsibility to find out what the Lord would have us do and then do it. In that light, I have been impressed by Nephi as he received the calling from the Lord through his father to go back to Jerusalem to obtain the Brass Plates. He did not mumble and groan like his brothers. He said simply, "I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them."²

We don't have recorded that Nephi asked his father for a detailed plan on just how this difficult task was to be accomplished. In fact, it is apparent there wasn't one. Yes, there was discussion. In fact, the plans for their first and second attempt at getting the plates came as a result of such

conversation. And they failed. It was only on the third attempt that success came. Nephi set out alone on this attempt, saying, “I was led by the Spirit, not knowing beforehand the things which I should do. Nevertheless, I went forth.”³ Success came as he relied on the Spirit. As he received revelation.

The Prophet Joseph Smith said that the thing that differentiated the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from any other church on the face of the earth, was the Gift of the Holy Ghost. Yet to what extent do we avail ourselves of that priceless possession? Virtually every decision of consequence we are called upon to make, we are entitled to ask the Lord for guidance.

What difference would it make in our lives if revelation were a constant factor? Would there be more harmony in our homes? Would our counseling to our children be more effective? Would our occupations be more satisfying? Would our testimonies be stronger? Would our worries and concerns be lessened? Would we feel closer to the Lord? Would we be happier?

In speaking to Oliver Cowdery, the Lord was speaking to virtually every member of the church when He said, “Verily I say unto you, that assuredly as the Lord liveth, who is your God and your Redeemer, even so surely shall you receive a knowledge of whatsoever things you shall ask in faith, with an honest heart, believing that you shall receive.... Yea, behold, I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart. ...This is the spirit of revelation.... This is thy gift; apply unto it, and blessed art thou. ...Oh, remember these words.”⁴

This is the gift of revelation that all member of Church have access to if they will seek it.

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1. Doctrine and Covenants 11:5, 13-14
 2. 1 Nephi 3:7
 3. 1 Nephi 4:6-7
 4. Doctrine and Covenants 8:1-15

Humility

Orange Stake 1988

OVER THE LAST FEW years I have thought much about humility. Humility, it seems, is the key attribute in obtaining everything that is significant.

For example, power. “Whosoever shall humble himself,” we are told, “the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”¹

Humility brings us deliverance from our afflictions. “He did deliver them because they did humble themselves before Him.”²

Humility brings us joy. “This is joy which none receiveth save it be the truly penitent and humble seeker of happiness.”³

Humility helps us receive grace and overcome our flesh. “My grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me...then will I make weak things become strong unto them.”⁴

Knowledge comes as a result of being humble. “Let him be humble before me, and...he shall receive of my spirit...which shall manifest unto him the truth of all things.”⁵

The humble can see God. “Inasmuch as you...humble yourselves before me...the veil shall be rent and you shall see Me and know that I am.”⁶

We will win our life battles here. “Inasmuch as ye are humble...I will give you the victory.”⁷

Our prayers will be more sincere and effective. “Be thou humble and the Lord. Thy Gpd shall...give thee answer to thy prayers.”⁸

We will in all reality have the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost. “And whoso cometh unto Me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the holy ghost.”⁹

Our faith and hope are enhanced. "Behold I say unto you that he cannot have faith and hope, save he shall be meek and lowly of heart."¹⁰

We are entitled to the pure love of Christ. "Because of meekness and lowliness of heart cometh the visitation of the holy ghost, which comforter filleth with perfect love."¹¹

And without humility, we cannot have eternal life. "He (who) shall humble himself shall be exalted."¹²

Developing humility is the prerequisite to become like the Savior and to receive all that He has. But what is humility? It's synonyms, meekness, lowliness of heart, contrite spirit, and broken heart, are used repeatedly throughout the scriptures, but they are only synonyms. They do not "explain" what humility really is, or how that attribute can be developed in our lives. Nor can they. Humility, like the other characteristics of the Savior, can only be understood line upon line and precept upon precept through personal experience and revelation as we seek it.

There is a critical key to become truly humble. We need to understand, recognize, and accept who we really are. This realization can come as quite a shock as it did to Moses in his first face-to-face conversation with God.

"The presence of God withdrew from Moses, that His glory was not upon Moses; and Moses was left unto himself, and as he was left unto himself, he fell unto the earth. And it came to pass that it was for the space of many hours before Moses did again receive his natural strength like unto man; and he said unto himself: Now, for this cause I know that man is nothing, which thing I never had supposed. But now mine own eyes have beheld God; but not my natural, but my spiritual eyes, for my natural eyes could not have beheld; for I should have withered and died in His presence."¹³

King Benjamin in his life-changing sermon to his people that resulted in virtually a whole nation being spiritually reborn, emphasized this key to humility. "I would that ye should remember, and always retain in remembrance, the greatness of God, and your own nothingness, and His goodness and long-suffering towards you, unworthy creatures."¹⁴

But how can this be? We know by revelation that we are sons and daughters of God. That our destiny is to become like Him if that is our choice. How can these two prophets say that we are "nothing" and that we are "unworthy creatures?" I believe that realizing on the one hand our own nothingness in relationship to God and Jesus Christ and, on the other hand, knowing our divine potential, is crucial if we are to understand and develop in our own life the attribute of humility.

Associated with that realization and inexorably tied to it is understanding the source of all our blessings. It is easy enough for the rich person to point to the poor and conclude, "If he had only been as resourceful and wise as I have been, he too would be rich." Or for the poor man to

point to the rich man and self-righteously proclaim, "If he had his priorities right and put the Lord ahead of the things of the world as I have done, he would be poor like me."

Or for the mother and father of a family that have seen all their children remain active in the church, go on missions, and marry in the temple, to look askance at a family who have suffered heartache and sorrow because of errant children and say, "If those parents had only been as diligent as we have been in practicing and teaching the principles of the gospel in their home, they wouldn't have those kinds of problems." Or for parents who have had severe family setbacks to look at others whose families seem to have nary a ripple in their lives and in smug meekness declare, "Because of our righteousness and our strength we are given experiences that family wouldn't be able to cope with and our blessings in the hereafter, will, therefore, be greater than theirs."

The truth is, all who would look at their blessings and benefits as something that they, in and of themselves, have achieved or earned, have missed the mark. All that we have, including time, talents, bodies, minds, locations we have been placed in, etc., are gifts.

Who put you in the appropriate time, place and circumstances that gave you the opportunity to make wealth? Where did you get the mind, and the aptitude to take advantage of that opportunity; or any opportunity, for that matter? Who gave you your singing voice, your analytical reasoning power, your coordination, your talent to act or to speak or to play a musical instrument? What have you done to be born with a whole complete body that functions properly and without severe pain? Who put the spirits in the bodies of the children that were born to you? Who gave you your parents? By whose grace are you given the strength to overcome your own spiritual weaknesses?

The scriptures are abundantly clear. All that is good comes from God and not of ourselves. We are stewards. Our responsibility is to take the unique set of blessings, opportunities, experiences, insights, and circumstances that each has been given by God and magnify that stewardship.

How can we possibly judge another in relationship to the magnification of their stewardship when each stewardship, each set of gifts, is different and unique? We are only capable of judging ourselves. If all that we have are gifts from God, wherein can we glory of ourselves? How can we use the so-called accomplishments of others as the yardstick by which we measure our own faithfulness in magnifying our stewardship? The answer is, we cannot. The recognition of our utter and complete dependence upon the Lord for all that we have and are is an important key to humility.

There is another aspect of humility. It is coming to understand the love of God and His invitation to all of us to become one with Him. On the surface, this understanding appears to be a paradox to our realization that we are, in and of ourselves, nothing. and that all we have,

we have been given. This paradox is resolved through His love. With His grace, we can become one with Him. We can become as He is.

That is exaltation, and exaltation is both a gift and a choice. It is a choice to humbly and with “perfect” love, lose ourself in Christ. It cannot be given to anyone who chooses to be a law unto themselves. Who chooses to be lifted up in the pride of their heart. Who chooses to not sacrifice their own self-interests and comforts to bring about the Lord’s purposes. Who chooses to not take upon themselves the name of Jesus Christ and *all* that that means.

Exaltation means to become one with God. To become one with God, means to lose ourselves. To lose our own name and our own glory as we take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ. In doing so, we become both recipients and disseminators of the love of God,

It may be that “humility” and the “pure love of Christ” are the same thing. At least, I know the one cannot be defined or possessed without the other. That love, that humility, is the path to exaltation. King Benjamin said, “I say unto you, I would that ye should remember to retain the name (of Christ) written always in your hearts, that ye (may)...hear and know the voice by which ye shall be called, and also, the name by which He shall call you. For how knoweth a man the master whom He has not served, and who is a stranger unto Him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart? ...I would that ye should be steadfast and immovable...that Christ, the Lord God omnipotent, may seal you his, that you may be brought to heaven, that ye may have everlasting salvation and eternal life, through the wisdom, and power, and justice, and mercy of Him who created all things, in heaven and in earth, who is God above all.”¹⁵

It is by and through the name of Jesus Christ that we become part of the Divine Oneness. And that is through true humility.

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1. Matthew 18:34
 2. Mosiah 29:20
 3. Alma 27:18
 4. Ether 12:27
 5. Doctrine and covenants 124:97
 6. Doctrine and Covenants 67:10
 7. Doctrine and Covenants 104:82

8. Doctrine and Covenants 112:10
9. 3 Nephi 9:20
10. Moroni 7:43
11. Moroni 8:26
12. Matthew 23:12
13. Moses 1:9-10
14. Mosiah 4:11
15. Mosiah 5:12-15

Joy and Sorrow

Orange Stake 1989

A COUPLE OF YEARS ago, my granddaughter, Nichole, who was four years old at the time, called me on the phone, "Grandpa, I cut myself," was her sad opening statement. It had been long enough since the incident that she was no longer emotional about it, but it was also obvious by her tone that she was going to milk every ounce of sympathy out of the situation that she possibly could. It was apparent to me that the injury wasn't very serious, but being a cooperative grandfather, I was appropriately sympathetic and asked her how big the cut was. She dropped the phone, and I could hear her yell, "Mommy, how big is my cut?" I also heard her Mother's response. "About two inches," She picked the phone back up and evidently not satisfied that two inches constituted that big of a deal, declared: "Mommy said my cut was two inches, but, Grandpa, it was a long two inches."

Like many of us do on occasion, Nichole was taking some pleasure in her pain. For some reason there seems to be a sort of gratification or sense of accomplishment when someone else views our suffering with sympathy or awe. As we all know, however, this seemingly positive feeling is not lasting, is not meaningful, and doesn't really make us very happy.

Yet, I have come to understand that there is a joy associated with sorrow. Not a masochistic pleasure, but real, meaningful, lasting joy. First I need to tell you what I mean by joy. Barbara Winder said, "Joy, it seems, is not only happiness, but the resultant feeling of the Holy Ghost manifest within us."¹

I would amplify that and say that joy is an exhilarating state of being that exists as we draw nearer in spiritual proximity to the Savior. We receive a fulness of joy when we are, in fact, like Him. And I believe that not only can we have joy, as I have defined it, with our sorrow, but we literally cannot have this joy without our sorrow. That thought brings us to a basic truth of reality as explained by Lehi in the Book of Mormon: "It must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things. If not so...righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither holiness nor misery, neither good nor bad. Wherefore, all things must needs be a compound in one."²

There is no state of being without opposition. For if “ye shall say there is no sin, ye shall also say there is no righteousness.” Why? Because righteousness can’t even be defined without the reality of sin. The existence of the one pre-supposes the existence of the other. “And if there be no righteousness there be no happiness, And if there be no righteousness nor happiness there be no punishment nor misery. And if these things are not there is no God, And if there is no God we are not.”³

But there is a God, and we are. And since God’s purpose for us is to become one with Him and, therefore, receive a fulness of joy, we had to be placed in a situation that would allow us to experience opposites. And where we could choose between those opposites. Lehi goes on to tell us, “And to bring about his eternal purposes in the end of man, after (God)...had created our first parents...it must needs be that there was an opposition; even the forbidden fruit in opposition to the tree of life; the one being sweet and the other bitter. ...And now, behold, if Adam had not transgressed he would not have fallen, but he would have remained in the garden of Eden...And they would have...remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery; doing no good, for they knew no sin. ...(But) Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy.”⁴

It is clear that Adam and Eve understood the relationship between joy and sorrow from the beginning. For one thing, the Lord plainly described to them what lie ahead: “Unto the woman, I, the Lord God, said: I will greatly multiply thy sorrow. ...In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children... And unto Adam, I, the Lord God, said: Cursed shall be the ground for thy sake. In sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.”⁵ After our first parents had had some experience with mortal life, and with sorrow and, therefore, with joy, they now fully realized the need for their fall. For “in that day Adam blessed God...saying: Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy... And Eve, his wife, heard all these things and was glad, saying: Were it not for our transgression we never should have...known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient.”⁶

There is no other way. To know joy, one must likewise know sorrow. The Savior is our example. He declared to the Nephite people after His resurrection that His joy was now full, but He was also brim with sorrow and wept. To an embattled and discouraged Joseph Smith languishing in a filthy prison, this same Jesus declared, “all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good. The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he?”⁷

The Savior is our way, in every way. We cannot come to where He is without following His path. He who ascended above all reached that pinnacle by way of a descension below all. To experience the height required the experiencing of the depth. And so it is with us. We learn about sorrow as a result of our experiencing first hand, life in a telestial world with its moral and mortal frailties. We come to know joy by what we choose to do with the resulting knowledge.

My family and I have had the opportunity to experience intense sorrow. And for us, at times, it has been almost unbearable. But I am trying to be less concerned with why I have adversity and more concerned with what I'm going to do about it, how I can learn from it, and how I can become more like Christ as a result of it. Whether I rationalize or through the grace of the Savior overcome, whether I give up or endure, whether I become bitter or compassionate, is my choice. And that choice will help determine how close I will come to the Savior's way of living, and to Jesus Christ Himself.

At times our adversity and sorrow seem almost impossible. Yet, we can detect, if we follow Christ's example, not only that we are increasing our ability and desire to overcome, but also that we are making progress in the right direction. Each difficulty, each experience with sorrow, can lead us one step closer to Jesus Christ and the fulness of joy that He possesses. Not in spite of our sorrow, but because of our experience with it.

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1. Ensign, Nov. 1987, p96
 2. 2 Nephi 2:11
 3. 2 Nephi 2:13
 4. 2 Nephi 2:11-25
 5. Moses 4:22-25
 6. Moses 5:9-12
 7. Doctrine and Covenants 122:7

Patience

Spokane Stake 1970s

THIS ARTICLE WAS WRITTEN for the Tustin II ward newsletter.

*When floods of turmoil 'round me rage like some Satanic sea,
And toss my soul with angry wave so uncontrollably,
Like oil upon the water, the Master's words console:
"My child, in your patience, possess ye your soul."
O help me, Lord, to understand that to be like Thee,
I too must bear the cross of life and do it patiently.
No matter what the forces be, I must have control.
For thus I learn to overcome, to possess my soul.*

Patience is the controlling of one's soul. Remaining constant in righteousness, constant in faith, constant in hope, regardless of the external pressures that are upon us. Patience not only means not getting angry in our thoughts or our words, but means being empathetic and understanding of ourselves and others as we learn through our experiences to overcome our weaknesses and imperfections.

Patience means we endure to the end the exalting process we call mortality and see our tribulations and trials for what they are: learning experiences, refining experiences, perfecting experiences. And temporary.

To procrastinate the development of patience until the children are older, or some less trying time, is to lose an opportunity to take another step toward Godlike self-control. By definition, the degree to which we perfect our patience is directly related to the degree of difficulty we have faced where we have, with grace, exercised total patience in the process. And it may be that to become like the Savior we must follow Him "below all things," and with His grace, do it with patience. For in so doing, like Him, we will "possess our souls."

Observing the Sabbath Day

Orange Stake 1975

SOMETIME AGO AS A member of a bishopric, I was assigned to home teach a family who had requested that they not have home teachers. The husband was a member and held the office of a deacon, while his wife and two sons were not members. He had not been out to church since he was a boy, and knowing the answer we would probably receive, we thought it best not to call to make an appointment but instead decided to sneak up on him one Sunday afternoon so we would at least have a chance to talk to him in person. This we did and found him out in his garage mixing paint. At first, the atmosphere was a little strained, but as we began to talk we all became more relaxed and the conversation soon turned toward the church. We asked him how he felt about the church and about his membership in it. He surprised us when in no uncertain terms he told us he valued his membership and, in fact he believed the church was true. But, he added, there are just some things about it I don't agree with.

That statement bothered me, and as I contemplated what he said, I began to think that many of us so-called active members of the church have a similar attitude. Maybe we don't express it so blatantly, but through our actions we broadcast our unwillingness to follow all the directions. We have become selective commandment keepers. Diligently abiding by those Divine laws we are in agreement with, but slothful in adhering to other principles we apparently are not truly converted to.

There is no way we can rationally or spiritually justify our not keeping any of the Lord's commandments or directions. Each eternal law is given for our betterment; for our joy, for our blessing. He has said, "That which is governed by law is also preserved by law and perfected and sanctified by the same. That which breaketh a law, and abideth not by law, but seeketh to become a law unto itself...cannot be sanctified by law, neither by mercy, justice, nor judgment."¹ The Lord goes on to say, "Unto every kingdom is given a law: and unto every law there are certain bounds also and conditions. All beings who abide not in those conditions are not justified."²

One law that many of us have a challenge to keep consistently is keeping the Sabbath Day holy. Here is what the Lord said to Moses. "Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man servant, nor thy maid servant."³ Christ reaffirmed the efficacy of this law to the people of his day when he said, "The Sabbath was made for man."⁴ And by revelation to Joseph Smith, the Lord stated, "the inhabitants of Zion shall also observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy."⁵

Recently, the First presidency said, "All during this, the last dispensation, the prophets of the Lord have urged Sabbath observance upon the people. The Sabbath is not just another day on which we merely rest from work, free to spend it as our lightmindedness may suggest. It is a holy day, the Lord's day, to be spent as a day of worship and reverence."⁶

President Kimball said, "To many, Sabbath breaking is a matter of little moment, but to our Heavenly Father it is disobedience to one of the principal commandments. It is evidence of man's failure to meet the individual test set for each of us before the creation of the world, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them."⁷

This law exists not just to test our willingness to obey but is for our ultimate sanctification. President Harold B. Lee discussed our spiritual bodies and the need for us to nourish them with spiritual food at regular intervals just as we nourish our physical bodies. Without a sustained, balanced diet of spiritual food, we become spiritually sick and may eventually suffer a spiritual death which is total estrangement from God. President Lee emphasized the role of the Sabbath in maintaining our spiritual well-being. He said, "It is not to be considered as merely a day of lazy indolence and idleness or for physical pleasures and indulgences. It is a feast day for your spirit bodies. You who make the violation of the Sabbath a habit, by your failure to keep it holy; are losing a soul full of joy in return for a thimble full of pleasure." ("Take Time to be Holy."⁸

What we do on the Sabbath day is a barometer of our spirituality, an indicator of the degree of our spiritual commitment. Keeping the Sabbath day holy has always been more a matter of conscience and desire, than outward rules and restrictions. It has only been when the Lord's people have become flesh oriented and spiritually blind, that they have had to be given specific rules governing their Sabbath day activities.

The Lord never intended the Sabbath day commandment to be a punishment or a list of don'ts. On the contrary, the Sabbath was indeed made for man; and its purpose is to bring us joy. I have often thought that if we went about doing all of the things we should be doing on the Sabbath, we would never have the time nor the desire to do those things which are not in keeping with that holy day.

What should we be doing on the Sabbath? Simply put, we don't make the Sabbath holy, we choose to be holy ourselves on that sacred day. We do those things which will strengthen us spiritually and will work for the benefit of the church, our families and our fellowmen.

The renewing of our covenants through the sacrament ordinance during sacrament meeting is a necessary act in maintaining our spiritual health. Without this weekly rededication and recommitment, our ability to stave off the efforts of the adversary are weakened considerably, and we become susceptible to his fleshly enticing. In addition, the spiritual food we receive by being active participators in service in the Church and participating in our priesthood, Relief Society, and youth meetings and by being attentive listeners in sacrament meeting is vital to our spiritual wellbeing. It is difficult to conceive how one could receive the full benefits the Sabbath blessing offers without being in regular attendance at these meetings.

The Sabbath day is an opportunity to grow spiritually and intellectually through reading the scriptures, conference talks, and other uplifting writings. The Sabbath gives us a chance to revitalize our spirits by listening to and singing our sacred hymns and other beautiful, peaceful music.

The Sabbath day should be a day of prayer where we take time to talk to the Lord in private as well as a family. The Sabbath day is a time to ponder; to mull over spiritual questions, to seek revelation and divine guidance in our life. The Sabbath day is a time for family. A time to draw closer to our children, our spouses. The Savior said, It is lawful to do well on the Sabbath days.⁹

A meaningful Sabbath day is one in which we have touched the life of someone else. Visiting a sister or brother in the hospital; writing a letter to a grandparent just to let them know we are thinking of them; going ministering; inviting neighbors over to share a special family home evening. Be involved with the family in Come Follow Me. The list is endless. There are so many people we can help; so many acts of service we can perform on our Sabbath days if only we want to.

Have we written our own personal history? Do we have a Book of Remembrance? Is there work that we could be doing to bring about the salvation of those individuals who sacrificed and suffered to make us what we are today? I can think of no other activity that is more in keeping with the holy purpose of this divine day than turning our hearts to our fathers.

Can we see how the Sabbath day is a blessing in our lives? How it draws us nearer our Heavenly Father? How it shields us from the worldliness we encounter the other days of the week? Do we then understand the great harm that is done by engaging in activities that make a mockery of that holy day and detract from its divine purpose?

The Lord commanded us not to work on the Sabbath day, not only to give our physical bodies a rest, but to give our spiritual bodies exercise. Laboring on the Sabbath inhibits our spiritual growth. And those who insist on taking jobs that require Sunday work are running the risk

of starving their spirits, What father, if he really understood that, would encourage his son or daughter to take Sunday employment? What man or woman who truly desired to become as his Heavenly Father would be willing to forego the spiritual blessings the Sabbath brings, for the mess of pottage earned through Sunday labor. Obviously, there may be times when we do not have a reasonable choice but to work on the Sabbath, but those should be the exception.

The blessings of the Sabbath are lost to the extent we engage in any activity that does not conform to the spirit and purpose of the Sabbath. The choicest blessings of the Lord are ours if we will seek to make ourselves holy on that day, for he has said, "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father."¹⁰

A faithful observance of the Sabbath sets a spiritual tone for the week ahead. We go forth refreshed, recommitted, and rededicated. We find ourselves during the week, taking time to be holy. We become more earnest in our daily, private prayers. We become more diligent in holding our family prayers. Our hand begins to reach for the scriptures more often. We find ourselves less likely to lose patience. We become more uncomfortable doing worldly things. Our understanding is quickened. Our testimonies begin to burn within us. And we become one with Christ.

And if we be found lacking. If we be found of the world, then "come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord And I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters. Having therefore these promises dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."¹¹

1. Doctrine and Covenants 88:34-35

2. Doctrine and Covenants 88:38-39

3. Exodus 20:3-10

4. Mark 2:27

5. Doctrine and Covenants 68: 29

6. Deseret News, June 20, 1959, p. A1

7. See Abraham 3:25, Faith Precedes the Miracle, p. 268

8. *Decisions for Successful Living*, pp. 142-150
9. See Matthew 12:12
10. Isaiah 58:13-14
11. 2 Corinthians 6:18; 7: 1

The Easiness of the Way

Orange Stake 1990

TWO YEARS AGO I received a call from a man who identified himself as a minister of a local Protestant church. He wanted to know if I would be willing to meet with him and tell him what we did to help our members prepare for emergencies. He explained he was quite familiar with the Mormons and admired us for the way we got things done. I set up the time and place. The time was a Sunday morning and the place was our high council room with its beautiful pictures of the Savior. As it turned out, the minister was very knowledgeable about the church. For example, I gave him a copy of the Book of Mormon. He smiled and said, "I already have four copies. In fact, I have a 4 in 1." He had spent a week in Provo visiting the MTC to see how it was organized and what they did to prepare our young men and women for missions. The tabernacle choir broadcast was one of his favorite radio programs.

It became apparent that emergency preparedness was not the main reason he wanted to meet with me. In fact, we only spent about five minutes of the two hours we were together talking about that. What he really wanted to know was what made us tick.

He started off asking me about the missionary program. He said in his church if a young man came up to him and said, "I would like to spend two years of my life testifying of Christ," all I could do is pat him on his head and say, "God bless you, son." And besides, the chances of that kind of occurrence happening were slim. Then he complimented us on the missionary program. "But there's one thing that puzzles me," he said. "How do you get 19 year old young men to give up their schooling and their fun to go away from their homes and family for two years at their own expense and preach the gospel?"

I answered, "Well, you need to understand one thing. This *is* the church of Jesus Christ. It is true and the Holy Ghost is here. There is a living prophet and the Lord Himself is directing the church through him and through the whisperings of *His* Spirit to the souls of its members. These young men go because they want to go. To one degree or another they know it is true, and they want to do what the Lord wants them to do."

He smiled and said, "I know you don't have any paid ministry. How do you get your men and women to spend the kind of time necessary to run your wards and stakes?"

I said basically what I said before.

He smiled. "Is it true," he said, "that every member of your church is visited each month by a representative of the bishop to see if they are okay?"

I said, "Well, that's the ideal. Actually, if I were honest, I would say only about 70% to 80% of the members were actually visited in our stake in any one month." I then explained the home teaching and visiting teaching program and that nearly all Melchizedek Priesthood holders and Relief Society members were involved in doing this.

He said, "But how do you get them to do this every month? What kind of disciplinary procedures do you have to get them to do this?"

I said, "Well, you need to understand..." I repeated what I had said before.

Then he said, "I understand that your teenagers participate in some sort of catechism training on a regular basis. Tell me about that." He was talking about the seminary program.

I told him that 70% to 80% of our young people between the ages of 14 and 18 attend scripture study classes at 6:00 a.m. during the week.

"Six in the morning? How often do they do that." he exclaimed.

I said, "Five days a week."

He didn't say anything for a second, but his mouth was open. "How do you get teenage kids to get up for scripture study at 6:00 in the morning five days a week."

I smiled and said, "Well, you need to understand that this is the church of Jesus Christ and...."

Afterwards, as I thought about that conversation, I couldn't help but be amazed that what I take so much for granted in the church, is, in fact, a real miracle to those who are on the outside looking in. The story of my minister friend does not end there.

For various reasons, within six months of my conversation with him, he had left the ministry in which he had served for over 20 years. I kept contact with him and have been quite heavily involved in his transition to the "non-ministry world." It has been extremely difficult for him, as you can imagine. Part of his struggles have been economic, and he has had to move twice over the last year or so. I have come to find that my friend was nationally prominent both in his religion as well as in Protestant circles in general. He had lectured and been a consultant to other ministers over the last number of years. To a much reduced extent, he was continuing that even after leaving the ministry.

On one occasion, not too long ago, he and his wife were meeting with a group of ministers. He told them they should look to the “Mormon” church for ideas about how to implement the teachings of Christ. You can imagine the response he got from that suggestion. “Pastor, how can you make that kind of statement? The Mormons aren’t even Christians.”

This is what my friend replied. “My experience has been that the Protestant churches are good at teaching about Jesus Christ, but the Mormons live Christ. You know, we have had difficult economic circumstances over the past months and we have had to move twice. We couldn’t afford to have movers move us so we hired a truck and did it ourselves. For those moves, there was one man from my congregation who came to help me. On the other hand, there were 27 Mormons including a beautiful man who was nearly 90 years old who were there.” Then his wife looked at the ministers and referring to the full time missionaries that had worked all day to help them said, “There were two handsome young men who did much of the work. Now I know that young men have better things to do than lug furniture around for someone they don’t even know, but there they were. I think you pastors would be hard pressed to find in your congregations any such young men who would have volunteered their time under those circumstances. When the moving was over they were all hot and sweaty and I thanked them for helping us. Do you know what they said to me? They said, ‘Oh, don’t thank us. Thank you for letting us be of service.’”

There was no response from the ministers. There was nothing more to be said.

As I heard this story from my friend, it was as though I was looking at the church from a different perspective. Suddenly what happens in the church on a day to day basis seemed much more significant to me. As I thought about it, there were a lot of other things too, that we as members have a tendency to take for granted because we are around them all of the time, and they are so much a part of our everyday life.

Things that are truly miraculous. Like the church itself, its organization, vitality, and the way it blesses our lives both in terms of us being served as well as giving us meaningful opportunities to serve. The priesthood with the power to bless and heal and comfort. A latter day prophet who is literally Christ’s mouthpiece on the earth and who leads and guides this church as the Savior would have it led. The saving ordinances of the gospel and the temple where knowledge and blessings that have been kept hid from the world for centuries have been both revealed and restored so that we can participate in the fulness of the blessings that God would have us receive. The gift of the Holy Ghost that is given to each member, entitling them to receive personal revelation and guidance on a day to day basis from the Lord. The Book of Mormon with its coming forth being one of the greatest miracles of all time and an irrefutable witness to the world that Jesus is the Christ and this is His church. And the great miracle that its contents can and have wrought in the hearts of countless men and women by leading them to Christ. The Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price containing hidden treasures of wisdom

and knowledge. And a heritage of strength and sacrifice and conviction and consecration that has been handed down to us from generation to generation.

It is all here. It is what Isaiah could only describe as a marvelous work and a wonder when he saw our day. Yet, as I have thought upon these things, I have become fearful.

Fearful that we are so used to the miraculous, to the wonderful, that we as a people both collectively and individually take them too much for granted. Fearful that we may become not unlike the children of Israel as they were led out of Egypt by Moses. They saw miracle after miracle, from the plagues the Lord caused to come upon Egypt to the parting of the Red Sea to aid their escape. They saw water produced out of a rock and manna and quail provided in the wilderness. Nonetheless, "they hardened their hearts." And, we are told, the only "labor which they had to perform was to look." But "because of the simpleness of the way, or the easiness of it, there were many who perished. And they did harden their hearts from time to time, and they did revile against Moses, and also against God."¹

Apparently, this has always been a problem with the saints of God. This, the easiness of the way. Alma warned his son, Helaman, about this as he prepared him to take his place as the high priest of the church. He talked to him about the Liahona, that marvelous compass/director that was given to Lehi in the desert to guide his party through the wilderness. Here was this great miracle that all could see on a day to day basis, yet, Alma told his son, "Because those miracles were worked by small means...(the people) were slothful and forgot to exercise their faith and diligence and then those marvelous works ceased, and they did not progress in their journey." Alma used this example of the Liahona as a type of our relationship to the word of Christ and our need to give heed to that word, or we will stray from our course. Then he said, "O my son, do not let us be slothful because of the easiness of the way; for so was it with our fathers; for so was it prepared for them, that if they would look they might live; even so it is with us. The way is prepared, and if we will look we may live forever."²

The early members of the church in this dispensation succumbed to the same pitfall, and the Lord warned them: "Your minds in times past have been darkened because of unbelief, and because you have treated lightly the things you have received which vanity and unbelief have brought the whole church under condemnation. And this condemnation resteth upon the children of Zion, even all. And they shall remain under this condemnation until they repent."³

But many of them didn't and Zion could not be established. Why? "There were jarrings, and contentions, and envyings, and strifes, and lustful and covetous desires among them; therefore by these things they polluted their inheritances. They were slow to hearken unto the voice of the Lord their God; ...In the day of their peace they esteemed lightly my counsel."⁴

The easiness of the way. And as a result, many of us take lightly that which the Lord has given us without measure. This easiness of the way should trigger in each of us giant neon warning signs

flashing, DANGER. DANGER. For did not Nephi see our day? "Others will (Satan) pacify," he said, "and lull them away into carnal security." Our nice homes and cars and TV's and clothes and vacations and boats. Ah, the good life. "That they will say: All is well in Zion; yea, Zion prospereth, all is well." And the result? "And thus the devil cheateth their souls, and leadeth them away carefully down to hell.... Therefore, wo be unto him that is at ease in Zion. Wo be unto him that crieth: All is well. Yea, wo be unto him that hearkeneth unto the precepts of men, and denieth the power of God, and the gift of the Holy Ghost.... Wo be unto him that shall say: We have received the word of God, and we need no more of the word of God, for we have enough.... Blessed are those who hearken unto my precepts, and lend an ear unto my counsel, for they shall learn wisdom; for unto him that receiveth I will give more; and from them that shall say, We have enough, from them shall be taken away even that which they have."⁵

It is one thing to withstand adversity and trial and persecution and hardship. It is quite another to survive temporal and spiritual prosperity. The lesson of the Book of Mormon makes that abundantly clear. When the church and its people struggled and sacrificed they thrived. It was when they were blessed with great revelations and spiritual gifts and the riches of this world that they became soft; that their pride caused them to forget what great blessings they had been given, and their hearts turned from the Giver of the gifts to the god of this world. And each man began to walk after his own way.

We have been told, though, that the church will never again be taken from the earth. Why? Because there will be a sufficient number who will have the desire and strength to withstand the devastating effects of prosperity. I am convinced that the source of that strength is humility. A surrendering of ones soul to the Lord. For the meek realize how close they are to sin and how dependent they are on the grace of Christ to overcome, while the proud literally ignore the possibility of grievous sin in their own lives.

For them, "All is well in Zion." In their comfort they do not even see that they are falling from grace. Truly they are being led carefully down to hell. Their ears are so full of the sounds of this world and their eyes so focused on what money can buy, that they are unable to hear that still, quiet voice: "Go ye out from Babylon. Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord."⁶

As members of the church in the dispensation of the fulness of times ours is a special test. The gifts and blessings that we have received from virtually every quarter are unequalled in the history of man. And the resulting easiness of the way is our monumental challenge. It is met by meekness and humility. It is lost by pride and by treating lightly the things we have received. For as it was "with our fathers", so it is with us. "That if (we) would look (we) might live. For "the way is prepared, and if we will look we may live forever."⁷

2. Alma 37:38-46
3. Doctrine and Covenants 84:54-57
4. Doctrine and Covenants 101:6-8
5. 2 Nephi 28:21-30
6. Doctrine and Covenants 133:5
7. Alma 37:45-46

Coming to Know Hell

Romania 2008

EMAIL DISCUSSION WITH LLOYD Rasmussen.

Our mission continues to be great. With experience after experience. A long time ago I discovered that spiritual experiences come to those who are looking and asking for them.

I've tried not to think too much about hell. □ A few months after I was released as stake president, I was carrying on an email conversation of sorts with Elder Perry. I told him, "I don't know what hell is like, but limbo can't be too far from it." There well may be more truth to that than humor.

Alma 12:9-10 is an extraordinary and I think very clear statement about what I would call the Lord's law of knowledge. Simply put, He gives us as much knowledge as we are willing to live. And it appears, takes it away (or we lose it) as we cease to live it. *Or at least restricts us in our ability to use it.* It seems that this is the main reason the Lord teaches us using symbols in the temple and outside. So that they who are willing to live the truths being taught will see them *by the Spirit* and then live them. Or see as much as they are, in fact, willing to live. And those who are not willing to live any of them will see nothing but foolishness and go on their mocking way.¹

We, of course, are under a "strict command" to handle the mysteries of God as we discover them, with that same discretion. That is, we follow the Lord's law of knowledge in determining whether or not we will disseminate that which we have come to know by the Spirit. We are required to be very careful indeed.²

It is interesting that apparently our knowing what the "hell" is that Amulek and Alma speak of falls under the umbrella "mysteries of God" and the knowledge of what that "really" is, is locked away from almost everyone.³ Evidently it takes revelation to know what that is, and then it is closed up quickly. Perhaps meaning you get a glimpse, have an understanding, and then forget the details.

The condition that Amulek and Alma seem to be referring to would appear to be limited exclusively to the sons (and daughters?) of perdition, as they apparently are the only ones who suffer the second death.⁴ I said I have not tried to think too much about this hell. That isn't quite true. Given the law of opposition so eloquently set out by Lehi, it appears that the degree to which we know and understand Christ, we would also know and understand Satan. And the degree to which we understand exaltation, we would also understand the condition and circumstances of Satan and his kin. It seems that we always need the negative to adequately and completely know and explain the positive. For example, I believe that a fullness of joy can only come with a fullness of sorrow. Christ most certainly has a fullness of both. Bottom line is we really do need to know what constitutes a son of perdition and what his (or her?) "ultimate" condition will be to understand the exalted state promised through the culminating ordinances of the priesthood.

Here are some thoughts I have had for what they are worth.

- Everyone gets what they choose. With knowledge, sons/daughters of perdition have chosen to be a law unto themselves and to reject the oneness (the submission) that is necessary to be in the proximity of God/Light. The result is they have no part of that oneness and no part of that Light. On the other hand, those who are of the Church of the Firstborn have chosen to offer their whole souls to the Savior and to become one with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.⁵ They have taken upon themselves the name of the Savior including His objectives (charity.) and He is manifest in and through them.
- There are two states of being. One regulated by time and one where "time is no longer."⁶ By definition, time is an entity within the reality of eternity. Time is restrictive, even a veil. Eternity has all things present and allows "one" who exists in that state to be in all things, around about all things, above and below all things. Existing unbound in an eternal state is infinite power. Only those who work for the good of the whole, i.e. have *Charity*,⁷ can be allowed to remain unrestricted in eternity. Otherwise all existence becomes exactly the opposite of what it is now. Agency is destroyed. That, I believe, was what the war in heaven was all about. And it is a continual battle for there is a stream of intelligences who desire to be a law unto themselves, which means they want to control everyone else. I believe, therefore, the "ultimate" destination of Satan and his followers and all who want to become a law unto themselves is to be completely isolated and chained by some form of time. A prison they cannot escape and from which they cannot interface with the rest of existence.
- Spirit (us) is eternal and eternally welded to matter/tabernacle which those who choose to be one with God have learned to master. We act and are not acted upon⁸. This brings a fullness of joy because it brings a fullness of power, knowledge, love, etc. (Note, since

writing this I have learned that a fulness comes in being one with a never ending seed) Our tabernacles allow us to do that which we cannot do without them. For example, procreate. They are one with our spirits and are incorruptible because through the grace of Christ we have mastered matter or element. The result is eternal lives and a continuation of the seed having infinite root and branch which I believe defines exaltation and fulness. On the other hand, I believe Satan and his 1/3+ will apparently never be eternally welded to matter and therefore are damned forever having no joy and no seed. In other words, they are finite. The sons/daughters of perdition, while in the state of perdition are apparently the masters of Satan and the 1/3 who followed him in our pre-mortal life, because they do have bodies.⁹ And that must be in the hell of all hells, because they cannot use their bodies for what they were intended.

- Perhaps then hell is having knowledge, with absolutely no power or ability or circumstances to ever use it. Power is knowledge, but only *if* you can use it. Satan and his minions apparently have that knowledge, and in the case of the sons and daughters of perditions, the bodies, that potentially would lead to infinite power. And they will never, worlds without end, ever be able to use that knowledge or those bodies. I cannot conceive of a less undesirable state. On the other hand, *maybe limbo really is hell*.

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1. See Matthew 13:10-17, 35; Luke 8:10; Mark 4:9-12; Bible Dictionary, "Parables" pp. 740-741
 2. See Doctrine and Covenants 63:64
 3. See Doctrine and Covenants 76:44-48
 4. See Doctrine and Covenants 76:31-39
 5. See Omni 1:26
 6. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:100 for example
 - 7.
 8. See 2 Nephi 2:26
 - 9.

Prioritizing in Our Life

Thought Early 2000's

CLOSE TO OUR HOME in southern California a new Chinese food restaurant opened up in the year 2000. Their large sign announcing it read: ***Y2k China Buffet***. And underneath those words it said, *All you can eat over 100 times*.

We were puzzled by that sign. All you can eat over 100 times? What did that mean? Then several weeks later the sign was changed. It now read, *All you can eat over 100 items*. That made sense. Same letters in the words “times” and “items,” just a different order.

Same thing with a combination lock. You might know all of the right numbers that will unlock it, but unless you have them in the right order, you can’t do it.

With life perhaps the most significant challenge for most of us is choosing between one good thing and another. Time limits our choices, and the order we choose to put things in our lives means everything. Our covenants with the Lord can help us in meaningful prioritization that will make sense. While we will likely not be able to do all that we *want* to do, we will be able to do all that we *need* to do.

With this in mind, a prioritization list in order of importance might look like this.

1. *Our proximity to Jesus Christ*
2. *Our family responsibilities*
3. *Our callings in the Church and serving others*
4. *Providing for our material necessities*
5. *Everything else*

Born Again

Thoughts-1985

THE PROCESS WE REFER to as "born again", "born of the Spirit," etc. is a highly personal one and involves revelation. It is a direct statement to our souls from God that:

We are His son/daughter

Without Him we are nothing

He loves us

He has prepared the Way for us to fill our Divine Birthright and that Way involves cease letting our flesh control us as we prepare it to be a Temple For His Spirit

Our spiritual birth means we literally give ourselves (our will) to Him, and that through His love we are cleansed from all our sins so we can become one with Him. We recognize our sinful state and our reliance on Him for cleansing and forgiveness as well as a complete realization that we are His children and possess His seed of Divinity. The rest of our lives is spent in seeking those experiences, understandings, and opportunities that will allow us to arrive at our Divine Destiny.

There is not a set "formula" for this singular experience in our lives. This becoming aware of who we want to be. It comes when it comes and when we are ready to respond properly. I suppose it can be sought, but virtually every scriptural example I know of as well as first hand examples I am acquainted with, including my own, came in, as it were, an instant and not as an extended, conscientious process over months or years. It is, in fact, a choice. A realization that we desire with all our hearts to follow Jesus Christ. It is true that for most of us who have experienced that rebirth, it comes after much involvement with the Church and the doctrines of Christ. But the timing is not what is important. That it happens, is.

The sacrifice of a broken heart and a contrite spirit is part of the spiritual rebirth. We offer our whole souls to Him. We subject our wills to that of His. We seek those experiences that will eliminate our pride, refine and purify us, and help us to understand and know Christ by having

experiences similar to what he had. In doing so, we are able to feel and know His compassion and love for us because we develop that same compassion and love for Him and for our fellowman.

Our eternal nature is who we are. Perhaps a spiritual rebirth is finding that out. That is who we always have been and we always will be. Our “works” do not necessarily reflect who we are and that is why we are not “saved” by works. When we know that we want to follow Christ, our works will reflect that desire.

Through the Savior’s grace, we are not only sanctified and purified, we are *given* the ability to overcome the world and all that is less than celestial. We do not “earn” the Celestial Kingdom. We *choose* the Celestial Kingdom, and through Christ we, with our telestial bodies, inherit it. We desire a fulness of Light and Truth. We want to follow all eternal laws. That defines who resides in a celestial world. It is not a reward for our efforts, it is who we are. The celestial kingdom is the space/condition/location where those who choose to be as Jesus Christ reside.

More Thoughts on Being Born Again

Thoughts

EVERYONE HAS TO BE “born again” and become a “new creature” in order to re-enter God’s presence. That’s what a spiritual rebirth means. We become like God. We re-enter His presence. We are not like Him now because of our telestial corruption. We must become celestialized and sanctified to become like Him and that requires “mighty” change. And that change is always precipitated by desire and includes the grace of Jesus Christ and the ordinances of the priesthood.

We have to recognize that we need to change and then desire to make the change. Those two realizations are not the same thing, of course. To know what we need to do to become who we have the potential to become is one thing. Wanting to do it is another. It is both the recognizing that we need to change and the wanting to do it that begins the real process of spiritual rebirth.

The timing of the recognition of our need to change and our desire to do so differs with each of us, and it doesn’t really matter how or when it begins. What matters is it does begin and that it continues throughout our lives.

For some the recognition of who they are and what they want to be is sensed when they are very young. For example Joseph F. Smith described the powerful change in direction in his life that came when he was baptized as a child. For others, there is a defining moment when because of an external “nudge” (or a downright shove.) everything became different in the way they are seeing their lives and what they want to do with it. We have examples of this in the Book of Mormon and in the Bible including Enos, Alma the Elder & the Younger, the sons of Mosiah, Amulek, Zeezrom, and Paul the apostle.

In these instances it is important to realize that it was not the event that brought about the change. It was the recognizing of one’s spiritual lack and the desire to get one’s life on course that brought the metamorphosis. The event just caught the person’s attention. After all, Laman

and Lemuel had an angel appear to them just like Alma did, but the results were entirely different. There was no spiritual rebirth there.

For many faithful members of the Church, there may not be a definable event where they recognize the need and the desire to change. Rather the degree of this awareness increases gradually over time as they live their lives by faith in accordance with the principles and ordinances of the gospel. They are doing what they are doing because they feel it is right, and they want to do what is right. There is a “mighty change” taking place, however. They are becoming less like this world and more like their Heavenly Father. But the change may be so incremental that they are not always aware of what is happening to them. They simply continually and naturally see things about their lives that they feel need to be changed, they want to make the change, and through the grace of the Savior they do it. Over time, as they look back to where they were and where they are now, they see that there has been substantial spiritual progress.

No matter how, when, or over what period of time we become a “new creature” in Christ, it follows a distinct pattern.

First, it is a process. Alma apparently experienced a singular event when his direction was changed. But it still took many days of fasting and praying for him to know key truths. He did not cease the repentance process because there was nothing more for him to repent of. Like the rest of us, he struggled with his flesh for the rest of his life. He knew that it was possible for him to fall from grace. He knew that he could get off course. Therefore, Alma’s asking the question, “Can you feel so now?” was not rhetorical. Rebirth is a constant reaffirming by our daily repenting that our hearts have changed. That process of repentance is a series of often small and sometimes not so small course changes that ultimately mold us in the image of Christ. We are reborn as we endure to the end.

Second, faith is a requisite of and perhaps defines the spiritual rebirth process. Faith comes as a result of our desire. It is wanting something to come about, hoping that it will, and acting as though it has already happened. We want to become like our Heavenly Father. We strive to live as though we were already one with Him. We look forward with an eye of faith, doing what we do as though the results had already come about. That is the way this telestial world is overcome. That is the way we escape the veil of time. We see through it with eyes of faith.

And third, rebirth involves the ordinances of the priesthood. Through these ordinances and the covenants associated with them, we bind the grace of God to bring about the mighty change that lifts us from the “now I know that I am nothing” state and makes us as God Himself. That grace and power that comes through the gateway ordinances of the priesthood sanctify us by the Spirit, making us “holy, without spot;” and empower us to become like Him in every way.

Part and parcel of that grace is the companionship of the Holy Ghost to assist us through the process of “mighty change.” It is a gift from God to all who see the need to change and strive

to do so. This gift ultimately allows us to transcend “mere” belief and know with certainty that our course is right before God. And that brings great power to assist others in their rebirth process.

In every instance, an indication as to where we personally stand in this process is how closely we identify with the desire that drove Alma the younger after his extraordinary rebirth experience.

*Yea, and from that time even until now, I have labored without ceasing, that I might bring souls unto repentance; that I might bring them to taste of the exceeding joy of which I did taste; that they might also be born of God, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.*¹

1. Alma 36:24

Letter to A Born Again Brother & Subsequent Thoughts

Orange Stake Early 2000's

WHEN I WAS A counselor in the stake presidency in the early 1990's I exchanged several letters with a young man who called himself a born-again Christian. One of his challenges to me was that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints tried to make man much more than he is and that in teaching that we can become as the Savior, we pulled Christ down to our level. In response to that challenge, I wrote the following:

"No wonder when the Savior appeared to Joseph Smith in 1820 He said that the ministers of Joseph's day teach doctrines that have a 'form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof.' It is the height of irony that the churches of today, while condemning our Church for talking about the importance of good works, actually preach a very diluted grace. Their condemnation of our vision of the potential of man is really saying that God's grace is incapable, insufficient to allow His children to become as He, their father, is. That His grace will only take us so far, and no further. It is not we who make ourselves as God. It is God, through His infinite love and grace for His children, that help us become as He is. His gift to us is Eternal Life and all that that implies. That is the message and mission of Jesus Christ."

Since I wrote that letter to my friend, I became almost overwhelmed as I contemplated the meaning of such a gift from God and the fact that I am actually a member of His church where both the knowledge of the gift and the way to obtain the gift is held. And as I pondered these great blessings, another part of the statement the Lord made to Joseph Smith in the sacred grove came into my mind. "They draw near to Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me."¹

I thought, does His statement now apply to me? Does it apply to the members of His church today? We testify at the drop of a hat that we have Divine potential, but is our life reflecting that knowledge? Where is our heart in relation to our words and beliefs? Does Paul's words to Titus describe us? "They profess that they know God, but in works they deny Him."²

I knew it was not satisfactory for those of us who are entrusted with such knowledge to live “get-by” lives. To tell our associates on the one hand we can be one with Jesus Christ, while at the same time think nothing of involving ourselves in worldly pleasures and pursuits that not only He would never do, but are, in fact, antithetical to what He is all about, was having our hearts far from him.

To not take seriously such serious knowledge was not unique to Christ's church in our day. Alma the younger quit the chief judgeship in order to help the members of the church cleanse their inner vessels. His challenge for introspection to the members of the church living in Zarahemla rings true today. “I say unto you, can ye look up to God...with a pure heart and clean hands? I say unto you, my brethren, if ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, can ye feel so now? Have ye walked, keeping yourselves blameless before God? Could ye say, if ye were called to die at this time, within yourselves, that ye have been sufficiently humble? That your garments have been cleansed and made white through the blood of Christ, who will redeem his people from their sins?”³

I felt that those were questions that we must daily answer according to the knowledge and understanding we have of who we are and what our relationship to God is. Moroni saw our day and spoke directly to us. “Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present. ...Behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing. And I know that ye do walk in the pride of your hearts; and there are none save a few only who do not lift themselves up in the pride of their hearts. ...Are ye ashamed to take upon you the name of Christ? ...Why do ye not think that greater is the value of an endless happiness than that misery which never dies because of the praise of the world?”⁴ And then He challenged us to “be wise in the days of your probation; strip yourselves of all uncleanness.”⁵

To one who knows and understands his Divine origin and potential, a marginal life is not okay. Nothing short of striving to avoid every unholy and impure act and thought will do, because the extent we bring impurity into our lives, to that extent the Spirit cannot be with us. Our proximity to the Savior is both measured by and determined by the degree of uncleanness we tolerate within us.

I would be less than honest if I didn't acknowledge that my initial reaction to Moroni's admonitions and observations was to look around me and think about those I knew who Moroni's remarks must have been directed to. The obvious assumption being that I was one of the only few who did not lift themselves up in pride. But that, of course, being a prideful thought, put me square in the middle of that group that I had so proudly removed myself from. I came to see that I have constant need for repentance. Soul-searching, heart-rending repentance. I am the only one I can change. And that only with Christ's grace. I can't change my wife. I can't change my children. And I can't change those around me. And I don't effect Christ-like changes in my own life by using anything as my yardstick for how well I'm doing,

other than my own proximity to the Savior. And that is a spiritual awareness, not a temporal one.

I also came to understand that I can't even begin to grow nearer to the Savior without being willing to recognize that I am not as close to Him as I can and ought to be. I limit His grace in my life when I am unwilling to look inward and seek the changes that would bring me to Him. The pride of my heart acted as a veil to keep me from my own potential.

So, all of this generated some hard questions. What kind of a husband am I? Am I avoiding the very appearance of evil? Am I trying to bless the lives of others? Am I magnifying my Church callings including that of a home teacher (ministering brother today)? Am I kind and patient with my children? Are my priorities in order? Am I living a Christ-centered life?

I wanted to be like the people of King Benj amin, who after hearing his great call to them to repent, “viewed themselves in their own carnal state, even less than the dust of the earth. And they all cried aloud with one voice, saying: O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive forgiveness of our sins, and our hearts may be purified.”⁶

I remembered that the very recognition of our weaknesses is our strength. Peace and fulfillment came by putting our sins and inadequacies out on the table where we can see them and where we can work on them and where we can ask the Lord to help us in overcoming them. Doing that is a sign that we are coming closer to Christ. He said, “if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them. ...And because thou hast seen thy weakness thou shalt be made strong.”⁷

“Sanctify yourselves,” the Lord directed, “yea, purify your hearts, and cleanse your hands and your feet before me, that I may make you clean.”⁸ For “if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”⁹

Repentance and cleansing of the inner vessel is what the gospel of Jesus Christ is all about. To be born again is not just a onetime experience but is a lifetime of change. It is a line-upon-line, precept-upon-precept process. And while our discovery that we are desirous to take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ can be a singular and life-changing experience, that decision is reflected by our willingness to look inward on a day-to-day, hour-to-hour basis, and through the grace of Christ make those adjustments necessary to bring us that much closer to our Divine potential. This is how the Savior's sacrifice on our behalf becomes efficacious for us and by which our Divine potential is attainable.

As I look at what I know and what I have been given, I can understand why Moroni was so hard on us. Here we live in the fulness of times with heavenly gifts and opportunities like no other people have had who have ever lived on this earth. We have the Book of Mormon and the Bible

and the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price and living prophets and apostles and temples and the priesthood and the Gift of the Holy Ghost and the protection and blessing and strength of the Church of Jesus Christ and the knowledge that we are literally children of God. If there were ever a people who could be expected to repent and to live Christlike lives, it would be us. In addition, because of the modern conveniences and standard of living we enjoy we have an abundance of leisure time and resources; time and resources that the Lord intended to be used to hasten the spreading of the gospel of Jesus Christ, to do good, to bring about His purposes.

I saw I wanted to do better and through the grace of Christ I would do better. And I saw that as I “wax(ed) stronger and stronger in (my) humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ... (that my soul would be filled) with joy and consolation, even to the purifying and the sanctification of (my) heart, which sanctification come (s) because of (my) yielding (my) heart unto God.”¹⁰

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1. Joseph Smith History 1:19
 2. Titus 1:16
 3. Alma 5:19-27
 4. Mormon 8:35-36, 38
 5. Mormon 9:28
 6. See Mosiah 4:2
 7. Ether 12:27,37
 8. Doctrine and Covenants 88:74
 9. 1 John 1:9
 10. Helaman 3:35

Remembering

Thought

OUR PROVING OURSELVES HEREWITH has to do with our willingness and desire to remember and do everything in our power to remember. To remember what we knew before we came here. To remember the spiritual experiences we have had by doing what we need to be doing to have more. Without effort, we forget our spiritual impressions, or the rush of the Spirit through our soul, or the impact of a scripture in our heart, or uplifting words of counsel. We must constantly seek to remember through writing in our journal, reading scriptures, pondering, praying, attending sacrament meeting and partaking of the sacrament, attending the temple, and serving. Or we will forget. And the forgetting, may be a manifestation of our desires. Whether or not we choose to remember is part of our purpose for being on the earth.

“We will prove them herewith.”

Remembering Who We Are

Orange Stake 2005

IN THE WORDS OF Elder Neal Maxwell, “We all are spirit sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father. An encouraging genealogy.”

The most sublime truth, the truth which makes sense of everything, is that we are of Divine lineage. That we are eternal in our nature. And that our stay here upon this earth, complete with its myriad challenges and veil of time, is part of our tutoring. It is part of the process that is necessary for us to realize our Divine potential. That we are sons and daughters of God is a fact. Whether or not we strive to remember who we are, and to act accordingly is a choice.

As members of the Church we are surrounded by reminders. Many of our hymns speak this truth. “I am a Child of God,” “O, My Father,” and “Come, Follow Me.” And our prayers, as we pattern them after the model given by the Savior Himself, contain that acknowledgement, “Our *Father*, Who art in heaven.”

What would happen if we truly knew, and consistently sought to remember, that we were literally sons and daughters of God? What would happen to our focus on Jesus Christ as we came to recognize Him as our mentor, our exemplar, the Way to our own Divine destiny?

That remembrance, and, therefore, that focus, for example, would surely affect our grooming. Our appearance would reflect who we are. We would likely strive to overcome distracting, unpleasant, annoying personal habits. Our clothes would be modest and clean and would not draw attention to ourselves. Our bearing would be that of an offspring of a King.

We may feel to utilize our time far different than we do now. We would put our relationship with Jesus Christ first. We would put our responsibilities to our families next. We would magnify our callings by being consistent in our service to the Church and to the community and to those in need. We would seek experiences that would refine us and purify us. We would likely change the amount of time we spent in front of the TV, on the Internet, or perhaps on the golf course or with other pursuits that from an eternal perspective are trivial and without significance.

How would we treat others, other sons and daughters of God, if we always remembered that that was who they were too? Would we be more patient, more tolerant, more compassionate? Would we yell? Would we swear? Or, would our voices be peaceful, quiet, gentle, persuasive, and our words meaningful, reflective, motivating. Would we always recognize the agency of others? Would we be more considerate?

If we remembered our Divinity, would we be more grateful for that which others do to help us realize our potential? Would our prayers be primarily expressions of gratitude? Would we be consistent in thanking our Church leaders, the Sunday School teacher, our ministering brothers or sisters, our Young Women's or Aaronic Priesthood Adviser, our Relief Society Enrichment Leader, the Primary teacher of our children, and our spouses, our parents, our children?

Would we be more inclined to ask for forgiveness of others? Of the Lord? To say I am sorry, because we are aware that our actions are often at disparity with what they could and should be as we learn how to become who we are desirous of becoming?

How would we respond to the telestial tugs of this world, if we were to always remember that we are not of this world. That we are strangers and foreigners here. That our own Kingly Father and Queenly Mother are of a Celestial Glory, and that we are as well.

What would we have done differently yesterday if we had remembered throughout the day who we are? How about today? What difference will it make in what we do, if we choose to remember today, our own Divinity?

Would we ever attend any movie, watch any show, read any book, listen to or sing any song, or listen to or tell any story that we knew would use foul language, contain graphic sex, extreme violence, or immoral innuendos or speech or scenes? Would we ever involve ourselves in pornography, or any other unclean or impure act if we remembered who we are?

Somewhere, deep in the back of our souls a voice whispers: "You are a son of God. You are a daughter of God." And a memory exists, for some, long since forgotten, for others, hazy and surreal, of a previous existence. Of a personal, child/father relationship with the Creator of worlds, the King of Kings. A memory with such latent power that through Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost, it will purge from us all telestial or less tendency. It will unlock the mystery of our existence, define the purpose of our lives, give meaning to every experience we will ever have in our telestial tour, and allow us to see the eternities.

I have thought this. How would I act if I were constantly in the presence of my Heavenly Father? If I were always around Jesus Christ? If I were in Divine presence, I am certain I would act accordingly. But then I have thought, I am in Divine presence. Every second of every minute of every day of every month of every year of my life, I am in Divine presence. Because *I* am a son

of God, and *I* am of the Divine. And I am *surrounded* by like beings. *My wife, my children, my grandchildren, my friends, and all who I associate with.* We are *all* of the Divine.

I need to remember that!

Remembering that and remembering it always *is* the key. Satan's greatest deception is that we are not of Divine origin. It is only when he can convince us that we are not who we are, that he has any power over us. It is only when we slide away because we choose not to continually remember who we are and, therefore, we cease keeping the covenants that we have made as sons and as daughters of God, that we are engulfed in his power.

He has no power when we remember who we are and act accordingly.

But how do we remember and remember consistently? In this telestial world we have all been fitted with what I call a "rolling veil." We not only cannot remember what it was like before we entered this world, we are challenged to remember in much detail what happened an hour ago. As time passes, the reality of the "rolling veil," at the very least, dulls the impact of our experiences that remind us of who we really are.

The Lord has given us a number of ways to keep alive in our souls this life-defining truth. The Holy Ghost, the Church, our current prophets, and the scriptures. But there is an overarching gift that is available to every one of us who have been placed here upon the earth in this, the dispensation of the fullness of times. This gift was so vital to the restoration of the gospel, that Moroni emphasized it in his first visit to Joseph, and it is referred to in all of our standard works. Moroni quoted Malachi, "Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers. If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming."¹

On April 3, 1836, Jesus Christ appeared to Joseph and Oliver Cowdery in the newly dedicated Kirtland Temple and among other things said, "I have accepted this house, and my name shall be here, and I will manifest myself to my people in mercy in this house. Yea, I will appear unto my servants, and speak unto them with mine own voice, if my people will keep my commandments, and do not pollute this holy house. Yea the hearts of thousands and tens of thousands shall greatly rejoice in consequence of the blessings which shall be poured out, and the endowment with which my servants have been endowed in this house."²

Then others who held important keys appeared, and finally Elijah, the prophet. He said, "Behold, the time has fully come, which was spoken of by the mouth of Malachi ... To turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse. Therefore, the keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands, and by this ye may know that the great and dreadful day of the Lord is near, even at the doors."³

Elijah held the keys to the dispensation of the fullness of times. *This* dispensation. And brought with the restoration of these keys the planting in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers. These promises, the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, pertain to our divine origin and our divine potential.⁴ They pertain to the endowment and the sealing ordinances in the temple which contain the promise of our Divine birthright. And our involvement in those ordinances, first on our behalf and then on behalf of those who have passed on before us, constantly reaffirms to our souls our Divinity. A literal result of the planting in our hearts the promises made to our fathers.

We remember who we are.

That memory, in turn, becomes self-sustaining to the degree that our hearts then turn to our fathers, for in that turning we see them as they really are as well. And our remembering them, including gathering their histories and performing sacred ordinances on their behalf, reinforces in us this eternal truth: ***We are sons and daughters of God.***

A significant part of planting in our hearts the knowledge of who we are comes through our becoming acquainted with those who have preceded us. Their lives and their sacrifices bear witness to who we are and bring to our remembrance our divine nature. Our constant involvement in the temple and our hearts turning to our fathers and to our children are keys to our *always* remembering. And, therefore, are keys to our living consistently according to who we *really* are.

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1. Doctrine and Covenants 2
 2. Doctrine and Covenants 110:6-9
 3. Doctrine and Covenants 110:14-16
 4. See Abraham 1:2-4

Preparation, Order, Wisdom, Diligence

A Lesson

WHO ARE WE ?

- How long have you been in existence? How long will you be?
- Why are you here on this earth?
- What would you have done differently yesterday if you remembered the entire day who you were?
- What would your life be like if you remembered who you are and what you are here to do 100% of the time?

USING THIS KNOWLEDGE TO GUIDE US

- Read Doctrine and Covenants 109:15
- What does it mean to “grow up in the Lord?”
 - What is the result (fullness of the Holy Ghost)? What does that mean?
 - In order for this to happen, what does this scripture say we must be doing? (organized (***order***) and be ***prepared***)
- King Benjamin’s sermon (He gives us instructions about becoming like Jesus Christ)
Read Mosiah 4:27

- What does King Benjamin tell us we need to do to become like the Savior—to grow up in the Lord? (Do these things in *wisdom* and *order* and be *diligent*.)
- We grow up in the Lord and achieve what we have been sent here to do in order to become like our Heavenly Father by being prepared, by organizing ourselves so that we do things in their proper order, by being wise in how we do this according to our own circumstances, and by being diligent.

PREPARE

- What does it mean to be prepared?
- How do we prepare ourselves?
- Setting objectives – what, how, why, when
- Not meaningful unless we can realistically do it and the goal doesn't depend on what someone else does or doesn't do
- Education/learning (Doctrine And Covenants 88:78-80)
- Savings (food, money, experience, time, avoiding debt, etc.)
- Doing the best we can (NOT in comparison to someone else)
- Learning to listen to and depend on the Spirit (Doctrine And Covenants 9)
- Role of righteousness here

ORDER

- What does it mean to do things in order?
- Do you have time to do everything you want to do? *How do you determine then what things you will do?*
- Has the Lord given us some general rules that will allow us to *prioritize* what we do in the *best order* possible? What are they? (Based on covenant)
 - FIRST -- Our proximity to Jesus Christ Why?
 - SECOND – Our responsibility to our family. Why?

- THIRD – Our responsibility to the Church & furthering the Lord's work by helping and serving others. Why?
- FOURTH – Providing a living for our physical needs
- Everything else
- What role does planning have in all of this?
- How do we effectively plan?
- Calendar/to-do lists

WISDOM

- What does it mean that these things are to be done in wisdom?
- Need to know when to “temporarily” re-order. Some examples.
- Role of Holy Ghost here
- What does it mean to not run faster than we have strength?
- What is wrong with comparing what we are doing or not doing with what someone else is doing or is not doing?

DILIGENCE

- How would you define diligence?
- Always doing what you know you should be doing even though you don't feel like it.
- What I am learning about enduring to the end

*Bear testimony about who we are and the reality of the **grace** of Jesus Christ to help us.*

My Witness

To my children and grandchildren

IF IT WERE POSSIBLE I would put into your mind and heart the experiences that I have had over the decades that have replaced my faith with absolute knowledge that we are eternal beings, that Jesus Christ is real, and is in every way the Savior who both facilitates and makes possible our journey to become like Him and like our Heavenly Father and our Heavenly Mother. I know that humanness and personal weaknesses notwithstanding, Joseph Smith was who he said he was and that which came through him did so precisely as he described it. This knowledge, which is way beyond faith, has brought me perhaps the single greatest gift that any of us could have here in our telestial tour: Peace.

But it is not possible to transfer these experiences and the resulting peace to another. Each person must first *want* them. And each person must be *willing* to pay the price to obtain them. And I have learned that “endurance to the end” is a significant part of that required price. Far from being an opiate and a Pollyannaish view of things, this is seeing things as they *really* are, as they *really* have been and as they *really* are to be.

There are men and women within the Church who have been blessed with exceptional minds and are people of integrity. They are great men and women of science, of philosophy, of history, of law, of finance, of politics, of virtually every discipline of knowledge there is. And they are faithful and true with testimonies of the gospel burning brighter and brighter in their lives. Likewise there are men and women of the same caliber, intellectual and honest, who have chosen not to be members of the Church and who have at least some knowledge of the gospel and its teachings. On the surface, this appears to be the oxymoron of all oxymoron’s. How can this be?

I believe the answer lies in our *desires*. That which makes each of us truly unique. It is our agency and how we are choosing to exercise it. I believe the truth we choose to *seek and dwell on* is the truth we *want* to follow. I believe that that is what the Lord meant in the pre-mortal council when he said, “We will prove them herewith to see if they *will* do *all* things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them.”

Another way of saying that, perhaps, is “We will see if in the mortal world where things are hazy and fuzzy and only become clear if you are willing to look beyond the telestial cataracts of your eyes and listen beyond the telestial deafness of your ears, you will still be willing to totally follow the Lord.” For those who *choose* to do so and seek the grace of Jesus Christ in their efforts, there is great peace here. And there is indescribable progress toward becoming who it is *really* possible for us to become: In *every* way like our Heavenly Father and our Heavenly Mother.

Being committed To Keeping Our commitments

Orange Stake 1976

DURING THE LATTER PART of my mission to Australia we received a new mission president. Since I was called to serve in the mission home for the remainder of my mission, I had the opportunity to observe this man and his family on a day to day basis. I grew to love them and respect them. President Coombs was in his late sixties but had two fine young men who he and his wife brought with them to their mission. Doug was the youngest and at sixteen was as mature and dedicated to missionary work as most of the fulltime missionaries.

There other son, Scott, was about twenty. But he suffered brain damage at his birth. Scott would never in this life exceed the mental age of about ten. He had had physical problems related to his birth as well and now at twenty, among other things, he was very short, lacked coordination, was hard of hearing, and had difficulty speaking. But he was a spiritual giant. He had a testimony of the gospel and was committed to do all that he could, given the mental and physical restrictions his spirit was faced with, to magnify his calling as a missionary and serve his Heavenly Father.

Scott loved the Book of Mormon, but he had difficulty reading so his folks bought him the complete set of Book of Mormon records. Every day Scott would spend time "reading" the Book of Mormon with his ears and would go through the entire book several times each year. There was a park across the street from the mission home. Scott would watch out the window until he saw someone in the park and then would rush out to talk to them and to ask them the golden questions. "What do you know about the Mormon Church? Would you like to know more?" Unfortunately, most of the time they couldn't understand what he was trying to say. If one of us missionaries were around, we would get the job of helping those who he was speaking to be able to understand him. If we were ever in public with Scott, we were going to be asking several people the Golden Questions. He was not ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I remember going to a restaurant with Scott and his family and the other members of the mission presidency. I don't think it even occurred to any of us, except Scott, to ask our waitress

the Golden Questions. Nearly incoherently he began to ask her. The rest of us looked at each other sheepishly. We were all somewhat embarrassed. Here we were the leaders of the mission, and it took Scott with all of his handicaps to show us what it meant to be 100% committed and dedicated to doing what we had been called to do.

One of the spiritual highlights of my mission involved Scott. My companion and I had taught a young man who was now ready for baptism. We asked President Coombs if Scott, who was an ordained elder, could baptize him. He talked it over with his wife and because of Scott's speech problem, his size, and lack of coordination, Sister Coombs was reluctant to give permission. She was afraid something embarrassing might happen, and Scott's feelings would be hurt. However, President Coombs decided to talk to Scott about it to get his feeling. The prospect of actually participating in a baptism excited Scott. He wanted to do that more than anything. After seeing his enthusiasm and desire, President and Sister Coombs apprehensively agreed to let him.

The day of the baptism arrived. Sister Coombs was concerned and was wishing she hadn't given permission for Scott to participate. The young man who was to be baptized stepped into the water, followed by Scott. Scott positioned himself properly, raised his right hand to the square, uttered the baptismal prayer and somewhat awkwardly immersed the young man to complete the baptismal ceremony. As the young man came out of the water he and Scott stood looking up at us with sweet smiles on their faces. The spirit was strong, and the purity and dedication that emanated from Scott at that moment affected all of us. We were emotional and grateful for Scott and his example.

Scott was committed. In every way he was committed. No physical restrictions, no mental restrictions, no spiritual restrictions, and no outside influence was about to stop him from doing what he promised the Lord he would do.

Commitment is perhaps another way of saying covenant. A willingness to obey. Our first commitments to the Lord were made in our premortal lives. And while our memory of those commitments has necessarily been temporarily blocked, our existence here in our second estate is evidence of our expressed willingness to obey the Lord's commandments and to keep them. We know that those spirit children of our Heavenly Father who refused to keep his commandments then could not come to this earth and receive a physical body but were cast out with Satan. Those of us who remained, covenanted with the Father to obey Him, and we have been sent here to receive a physical body and to be "(proven) herewith to see if (we) will do all things whatsoever the Lord (our) God shall command (us)."¹

At the time of our baptism, we made additional covenants or commitments. Alma, the elder, explained to those who were going to be baptized, what that commitment entailed. He said, "now as ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light; yea and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort and to stand as witnesses of

God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death, that ye may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life—now I say unto you, if this be the desire of your hearts, what have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness before Him that ye have entered into a covenant with Him, that ye will serve Him and keep His commandments, that He may pour out His spirit more abundantly upon you?”²

He then went into the water with the first one to be baptized and said, “I baptize thee, having authority from the Almighty God, as a testimony that ye have entered into a covenant to serve Him until you are dead as to the mortal body; and may the spirit of the Lord be poured out upon you; and may he grant unto you eternal life through the redemption of Christ, whom He has prepared from the foundation of the world.”³

Each week we renew our baptismal covenant with the Lord as we partake of the sacrament. Our silent prayer to Him as the sacrament is being passed could be something like this.

*These emblems of the sacrament
do in my soul revive
the covenants I have made with Thee
whose mercy brought me life.
That by a strict adherence to
these vows I have foresworn,
I am, through Thy atoning grace,
into Thy light reborn.
And now, oh Lord,
I pledge anew
to thus remember Thee.
To take upon myself Thy name
that all mankind may see
Thy wondrous works
and Thy sweet purity,
As I conform my life to Thine
and Thou dost work through me.*

Those of us who have received the priesthood have made additional commitments. For we have promised we will be faithful, that we will magnify our calling, and that we will receive the Father, which means we will strive to be like Him. We are then promised that we will be “sanctified by the spirit unto the renewing of (our) bodies,” that we “become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham and the elect of God.” As a result, “all that (the) Father

hath” shall be given unto us, if we are faithful to this commitment. Because “this is according to the oath and covenant which belongeth to the Priesthood.”⁴

When we receive our endowment in the temple and are sealed to our spouses and our posterity and our family who have preceded us, our commitment and blessings are literally infinitely broadened. For we can then become even as our Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother. The Lord said, “No one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into My glory. For all who will have a blessing at My hands shall abide the law which was appointed for that blessing, and the conditions thereof, as were instituted from before the foundation of the world. And as pertaining to the new and everlasting covenant, it was instituted for the fullness of My glory; and he that receiveth a fullness thereof must and shall abide the law, or he shall be damned, saith the Lord God.”⁵

The question then becomes, Are we committed to keeping our covenants, our commitments to the Lord? Do we strive to bear one another’s burdens, mourn with those that mourn, comfort those who stand in need of comfort, stand as witnesses to God at all times, take upon ourselves the name of Christ in very thought and deed, magnify our callings, truly sacrifice for our family, our friends, and the Lord, give all that is asked and more of our time, talents, and possessions to Jesus Christ through His church, and strive diligently to be a Heavenly Father or a Heavenly Mother? Perhaps that is what the “proving them herewith” is all about. Not for our Heavenly Father to find out what we will do, but for each of us to determine for ourselves who we want to be. We have made covenants and commitments. And if we keep them, Peter’s great promise applies to us. “Ye (will) be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world.”⁶

Integral to that question of our degree of commitment, is the one that Alma the younger asks us. “Have ye spiritually been born of God? Have ye received His image in your countenances? Have you received (a) mighty change in your hearts? Do ye exercise faith in the redemption of Him who created you? Do you look forward with an eye of faith.”⁷

Joseph Smith tells us what then comes to one who is born spiritually of God and a keeper of their commitments and covenants. “After a person has faith in Christ, repents of his sins, and is baptized for the remission of his sins, and receives the Holy Ghost., which is the first comforter, then let him continue to humble himself before God, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and living by every word of God, and the Lord will soon say unto him, son, thou shalt be exalted. When the Lord has thoroughly proved him and finds that the man is determined to serve Him at all hazards, then the man will find his calling and his election made sure, then it will be his privilege to receive the other comforter...(who is) the Lord Jesus Christ himself.”⁸

This defines one who is committed to keeping their commitments.

1. Abraham 3:25
2. Mosiah 18:8-10
3. Mosiah 18:13
4. Doctrine and Covenants 84: 33-40
5. Doctrine and Covenants 132:4-6
6. 2 Peter 1:4
7. Alma 5:14-15
8. Documentary History of the Church, Vol. III, pp 380—381

Habits Of The Tongue

Orange Stake 1975

OUR LIVES ARE MADE up of habits. Actions which we perform so constantly, so repetitively that they occur with hardly any thought or premeditation on our part. They can be annoying (to us or those around us) or they can be pleasant. They can be physical, mundane, or even spiritual. Habits can be of little consequence or they can be so powerful and far reaching as to determine our ultimate status before God. In every case, though, a habit is begun, is continued, and is stopped through an exercise of our agency. As a manifestation of our desire.

Put in another way, our habits can become a reflection of our character. As we look inward we may see habits we have developed that are not in conformity with the righteous desires of our hearts. If this is the case, we need to follow the simple counsel of President Gordon B. Hinckley. "Stop it."

In doing so, it most likely requires the substituting of a celestial/righteous habit for the one that is unbecoming us as sons and daughters of God. Years ago, I read a story about habits that impressed me.

"An older boy and his young companion were walking along a road which led through a field. They saw an old coat and a badly worn pair of men's shoes by the roadside, and in the distance they saw the owner working in the field. The younger boy suggested that they hide the shoes, conceal themselves, and watch the perplexity on the owner's face when he returned. The older boy, a benevolent lad, thought that would not be so good. He said the owner must be a very poor man. So, after talking the matter over, at his suggestion, they concluded to try another experiment. Instead of hiding the shoes, they would put a silver dollar in each one and, concealing themselves, see what the owner did when he discovered the money. So they did that.

"Pretty soon the man returned from the field, put on his coat, slipped one foot into a shoe, felt something hard, took it out and found a silver dollar. Wonder and surprise shown upon his face and he looked at the dollar again and again, turned around and could see nobody, then proceeded to put on the other shoe; when to his great surprise he found another dollar. His feelings overcame him and he knelt down and offered aloud a prayer of thanksgiving, in which

he spoke of his wife being sick and helpless and his children without bread, and then he fervently thanked the Lord for this bounty from unknown hands and evoked the blessing of heaven upon those who gave him this needed help.”¹

It is interesting the reaction of these two boys when faced with the identical situation. The one young man was ready for mischief. He had developed a habit of hurting. While the other automatically and without any forethought, determined to do something helpful. Something positive.

We are constantly faced with situations similar to the one experienced by these young boys with respect to the use of our tongues. Have we over the years developed tongue habits that hurt others? Or have we formed habits that restrain this tiny two-edged sword and automatically channel its activity for good?

The tongue is a paradox, for, “therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing.”² James also said, “If any many among you seem to be religious, and bridled not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.”³

Here are some tongue habits one might want to consider. Determine to never speak an angry word. This children's song says it well. “Angry words oh let them never from the tongue unbridled slip; May the heart's best impulse, ever check them ere they soil the lip. Love is much too pure and holy, friendship is too sacred far, for a moment's reckless folly thus to desolate and mar. Angry words are lightly spoken; bitterest thoughts are rashly stirred, brightest links of life are broken, by a single angry word.”⁴

How many families have been broken up by angry words? How many friendships have been lost through an angry conversation? How much bitterness has been fomented by words spoken in wrath?

In a youth conference I attended some years ago, an older teenage girl stood up in front of her peers in the testimony meeting held at the conclusion of the conference. With deep remorse and obvious emotion she related how her relationship with her younger sister had deteriorated constantly over the last months. How she could not seem to speak a kind word to her. The situation had become so severe that for weeks they had been totally avoiding each other. And even though her younger sister was coming to youth conference, all this young woman could think about was getting away from her home so she wouldn't have to be in the same house with her sister. And all because of words.

At the conclusion of her confession, she turned to her sister and publicly apologized. She told her of the love she felt in her heart for her and then sat down by her peers. Several minutes later with tears running down her cheeks, she stood up and walked a few rows back and down the

row to where her sister sat. They grabbed each other and with tears and kisses and words they spoke their sorrow and their love.

“Angry words oh let them never from the tongue unbridled slip.”

There is no room for words that offend, that create animosity, that are spoken in haste. Sons and daughters of God, followers of Jesus Christ, develop the habit of speaking words of peace in tones of peace.

Another celestial habit of the tongue is to “speak not evil one of another.”⁵ We are “not to go up and down as a talebearer among (the) people.”⁶ Reputations have been sullied, lives have been hurt, and souls have strayed as a result of the thoughtless, despicable habit of gossip. We have no right to judge another. As we bear tales of another’s weaknesses, more often than not with distortion, or exaggeration, or simply not true, we are judging them. What is worse, by blackening their reputation and their life, we have also taken upon ourselves the right to punish them as well, for “the words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.”⁷

I will be eternally grateful for the example my mother set. I cannot remember her ever relating any tale that put another person in a bad light or made me think less of them. I believe if we truly have the love of Christ in our hearts, our automatic reaction, our habit when we hear tales that are detrimental to our fellowmen, will be to discourage the gossipier and never let our lips repeat the poison.

There is another habit of the tongue that reflects the Savior, while it’s opposite is used by Satan as he seeks to destroy our Father’s spirit children. With words we can build up, we can encourage, we can strengthen others. And with words we can tear down, discourage, and weaken those around us. My wife’s grandfather was a master at building up. He was a saintly man. When you spoke to him you really felt as though you were somebody. You could tell he enjoyed talking with you. He didn’t look the other way seeking for other conversations. His attention was focused on you and he listened while you spoke. There was never a look or tone of rejection or sarcasm in his voice. No matter how down you felt, he always had some meaningful thing to say that uplifted your spirits. That made you feel worthwhile. Those who are habitually sarcastic and put others down douse flames of hope by belittling less than perfect actions and promulgating feelings of failure. Our negative words can be the result of misplaced zeal, or a manifestation of our lack of tolerance and empathy, or maybe even a reaction to our own inadequacies

As a young missionary called to serve in a responsible leadership position, I found myself being less than tolerant with elders who didn’t quite make it up by 6:00 a.m., or who kept what I considered to be a sloppy apartment, or who hadn’t mastered the discussions. Back then, missionaries were required to memorize word-for-word the discussions. My intolerance turned

to sarcasm as I discussed with biting humor these elders with my companions in the mission home.

Our mission president, a wise and compassionate man, heard our conversation and called us into his office. With gentle reproof, he admonished us to be empathetic, and where we saw improvement was needed, to approach our brother with words of love and concern. Sarcastic words, he said, will never lift but will end up poisoning the speaker as well as the hearer. His words impacted me, and there was a marked increase in my effectiveness as a leader as I sought to use words and tones that build and uplift. And I felt better about myself.

Our words are truly two edged swords. Which edge we use is ultimately determined by which master we seek to serve. There is a habit of the tongue that some have mastered that reflects a desire to lift with love. We constantly have opportunities through our words to brighten someone's day, by complimenting their efforts and sustaining their feeling of self-worth. They literally seek chances to complement. All of us have been uplifted when someone has thanked us for a talk or lesson we gave or told us how something we did or said had blessed them. At least for me, that kind of unsolicited response has helped me want to do even better.

Some years ago a man I knew who was not a member of the Church contracted a strange disease, and he was hospitalized. He and his young family had recently moved into the area and didn't know many people. A business acquaintance of his, who was a member, called him at the hospital to voice his concern and offered to help him in any way he could. There was nothing profound said, but that young man's heart was touched. Someone cared about him. After he was released from the hospital, he called his friend and thanked him for that phone call. He said he would like their families to get together sometime. A missionary door to a fine, beautiful family was opened because someone thought of his brother and took the time to verbalize his concern.

The power of words. Decades ago, I met a lady who had been totally deaf since she was 18. She was put on a list for an experimental operation that could allow her to hear. She had never heard her husband's voice nor the voices of her four children. After years of waiting, she was notified that the operation would be performed within the next few weeks. She was ecstatic. Although there were substantial risks involved, and the operation was extremely costly, her desire to hear was so intense she was willing to risk almost anything. When she was given the date for her operation she brought her family together and this is what she said. "I have never heard your voices. By undertaking this operation I am risking losing my eyesight and possibly contracting meningitis. And the dollar cost is enormous. You can see how much this means to me. Please, let all the words I hear from you be pleasant ones. No angry words. No bitter words. No words that hurt."

Peter said, “He (who) hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.”⁸ And, “For he that will love life, let him refrain his tongue from evil and his lips that they speak no guile.”⁹

Controlling our tongues is everything. Jesus Christ is called “the Word.”¹⁰ A statement of His power. Our words also contain power. The power to do evil and the power to do good. It is our choice how we use them.

1. *Not By Bread Alone*, Bryant S. Hinckley, p. 95
2. James 3:9-10
3. James 1:26
4. Sing With Me, Angry Words, Oh Let Them Never, R. H. Palmer
5. James 4:11
6. Leviticus 19: 16
7. Leviticus 19: 16
8. 1 Peter 1:15
9. I Peter 3:10
10. John 1:1

In The World But Not Of The World

Orange Stake 1976-1977

THE WORLD WE LIVE in is telestial. Celestial beings are strangers here. They feel uncomfortable with telestial surroundings. They do not seek to conform to telestial standards nor to be found in an environment that reeks of telestial characteristics. Yet our sojourn here has purpose. Speaking of man in this mortal state, Alma taught, “As they had become carnal, sensual, and devilish, by nature, this probationary state became a state for them to prepare; it became a preparatory state.”¹

And we, therefore, understand that our earth life is a crucial and necessary part of our eternal journey. That adversities, trial, tribulations, and temptations can act as refiners and purifiers, and “that all these things shall give (us) experience and shall be for (our) good.”²

How can we become as Jesus Christ without learning to overcome? Without learning to cope with difficult situations. “The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he?”³

Nearing the end of his mortal ministry, Christ offered a beautiful, empathetic prayer on behalf of his disciples and all those who believed on his name. “I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world Holy father, keep through thine own name those whom thou has given me, that they may be one as we are. ...I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.”⁴

So, we find ourselves in a world fraught with stumbling blocks, disappointments, and diverse temptations. How we respond to this test; whether or not we learn to be in the world but not of the world, is likely an indication of the true desires of our hearts. We live in a subtle age where men and women because of their sophistication, their worldly learning, and their unrighteous

desires, have become ready pawns in Satan's hands to provide us with all the rationalization we need to act, think, and speak "carnal, sensual, and devilish." But the simple truth is, "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."⁵

As sons and daughter of God, our challenge, indeed our salvation, is in overcoming the world. "For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be unless he yields to the enticings of the holy spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him even as a child doth submit to his father."⁶

This road we are asked to walk is not meant to be an easy one. It's very ruts, potholes, choking dust, and unpredictable turns are left to build in us perseverance, faith, and refinement. And it is our proving ground. We choose what we want to do and who we want to be. And we are here not just to see if we will overcome, but to contribute as well. Will we leave it a better place than the way we found it? Will we be a light unto the world? Mary, the mother of Christ understood this principle. Upon learning of her divine call and blessing she exuberantly exclaimed, "My soul doth magnify the lord."⁷

As spiritual begotten sons and daughters of Christ, we are to magnify the Lord by enlarging the sphere of influence of the spirit of Christ through our own involvement in the world. We carry the message of Christ to the world through our actions. We do not blare a trumpet of self-righteousness. Rather we simply live Christ-like lives. We follow His directions. We live the golden rule by treating all as our brothers and sisters. We live a life of service. We seek to lift and bless and love.

Being in the world, but not of the world; growing as a result of our experiences in the world yet not succumbing to the world is a matter of desire and attitude. And the Savior's grace. The circumstances we find ourselves in do not make us, but they do help bring to the surface the kind of person we really want to be. Overcoming the world is a process, not a single event. And all of us who desire to follow the Savior and overcome the world can, from time to time, exclaim like Nephi of old, "O wretched man that I am. Yea my heart sorroweth because of my flesh; my soul grieveth because of mine iniquities. I am encompassed about because of the temptations which do so easily beset me. And when I desire to rejoice, my heart groaneth because of my sins."⁸

And then, like him, as we remember the Savior, we can say, "I know in whom I have trusted. Why should I yield to sin, because of my flesh? Yea, why should I give way to temptations, that the evil one have place in my heart to destroy my peace and afflict my soul? ...Awake my soul. No longer droop in sin. Rejoice, O my heart and give place no more for the enemy of my soul."⁹

Then, following Nephi's example, we plead for the Savior's grace to overcome. "O Lord, wilt thou redeem my soul? Wilt thou deliver me out of the hands of mine enemies? Wilt thou make me that I may shake at the very appearance of sin? O lord, wilt thou encircle me around in the robe of thy righteousness. ...Wilt thou make my path straight before me. ...O Lord, I have trusted in Thee, and I will trust in Thee forever. ...I will lift up my voice unto Thee...(and) my voice shall forever ascend up unto Thee, my rock and my everlasting God."¹⁰

For those of us who choose to be not of the world, "thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment; and then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high."¹¹

1. Alma 42:10
2. Doctrine and Covenants 122:7
3. Doctrine and Covenants 122:8
4. John 17:9-18
5. 1 John 2:16
6. Mosiah 3:19
7. Luke 1:46
8. 2 Nephi 4:17-19
9. 2 Nephi 4: 19, 27-28
10. 2 Nephi 4:31-35
11. Doctrine and Covenants 121:7-8

Our Eternal Decision

Orange Stake 1976

OUR LIVES SEEM TO be a series of decisions. Regardless of age, regardless of standing, we are constantly required to make decisions. And as we come to understand our purpose more fully and what we are destined to become, we begin to understand and to appreciate the opportunity we have to make choices.

Lehi in his great discourse to his son Jacob, concerning the fall of Adam, said, “Wherefore, the Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself. Wherefore man could not act for himself save it should be that he was enticed by the one or the other.”¹ Lehi explains what the Lord expects us to do with this agency. “And the days of the children of men were prolonged, according to the will of God, that they might repent while in the flesh; wherefore their state became a state of probation, and their time was lengthened according to the commandments which the Lord God gave unto the children of men. For he gave commandment that all men must repent.”²

Alma told us that “We are (our) own judges, whether to do good or do evil.”³ And that “(Man was) cut off (by the fall) both temporally and spiritually from the presence of the Lord; and thus we see they became subject to follow after their own will.”⁴

The Lord makes it clear that this privilege and right to make choices will work toward our salvation or our damnation. “Behold, here is the agency of man and here is the condemnation of man; because that which was from the beginning is plainly manifest unto them, and they receive not the light. And every man whose spirit receiveth not the light is under condemnation.”⁵

Mormon reaffirms this truth, emphasizing further that no one is left with excuse: “For behold...it is given unto you to judge, that ye may know good from evil; and the way to judge is as plain, that ye may know with a perfect knowledge, as the daylight is from the dark night. For behold the spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may now good from evil... And now, ...seeing that ye know the light by which ye may judge, which light is the light of Christ, see that ye do not judge wrongfully; for with that same judgment which ye judge ye shall also be judged.”⁶

Our key decision therefore is that decision which affects all other decisions of any consequence we will ever make. It is to choose this day whom we will serve. Will it be the Lord by us taking upon ourself His name? By adopting into our own life his qualities and characteristics in total? By teaching of Him, preaching of Him, and consecrating all we have to Him? Or will we choose the world and all that implies. Will we put self-gratification ahead of service? Will we shirk church responsibility in favor of worldly pleasure? Will we replace Godly thoughts with mind polluting smut and garbage?

Whatever our choice, we will receive according to our desire. Alma, in his poignant expression of gratitude for his and the sons of Mosiah's successful missionary work said, "I know that (God) granteth unto men according to their desire, whether it be unto death or life, yea I know that he allotteth unto men according to their wills, whether they be unto salvation or unto destruction. Yea, I know that good and evil have come before all men; he that knoweth not good from evil is blameless; but he that knoweth good and evil, to him it is given according to is desires, whether he desireth good or evil, life or death, joy or remorse of conscience."⁷

The fruits of our decisions are also plainly made known. Alma in his counsel to his son Corianton warned "the decrees of God are unalterable; therefore the way is prepared that whosoever will, may walk therein and be saved. Do not suppose that ye shall be restored from sin to happiness. Behold I say unto you, wickedness never was happiness. All men that are in a...carnal state, are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity; they are without God in the world, and they have gone contrary to the nature of God; therefore they are in a state contrary to the nature of happiness."⁸

These are true principles. We are not predestined playthings built by some capricious God. We are individual, eternal intelligences with the right of choice. Indeed our very existence in this mortal state is a result of decisions we made prior to this life. And our future existence and relationship to our Heavenly Father will be a result of conscious decisions reflecting our true desires, that we have made, that we are making now, or that we will make in the future. Underlying all of these decisions will be that basic decision that each of us must make. To what degree do I desire to follow Jesus Christ?

Do I desire to assume fully the traits, characteristics, blessings, powers, and responsibilities of God? To offer my whole soul to Him? Or do I desire to become pure and undefiled and be able to dwell in the presence of the Lord, but not to be as he is in every respect? Perhaps my desire is to be honorable and for the most part conform my life to that of the Savior's, but not valiant in my testimony of Him. Would I feel uncomfortable in striving for complete perfection but want to feel of the Spirit of the Lord, but not to dwell in his immediate presence? Or maybe I want even less relationship than that with the Lord. I want to receive just some of His Light.

The eternal relationship we desire to have with our Heavenly Father will happen and is the decision that determines and affects every important decision we will make in this life. What

kind of a father or mother, husband or wife will I be? What will be my relationship with the Church? How responsive will I be to Church callings? What kind of a neighbor will I be? Will I be other oriented or will I tend toward being self-centered?

What vocation will I choose? What will be my business policy? How will I treat people in my business dealings? Where will I live? What will I do with my time? What will my priorities be? What recreational/entertainment activities will I involve myself with? Will I go on a mission? Will I marry in the temple? Who will I date? What will I do with my life?

Those of us who have chosen or will choose to “Be...perfect even as (our) Father... in heaven is perfect”⁹ literally experience a spiritual rebirth. The process is both painful and exquisitely sweet. Nowhere do we have a clearer description of this sanctifying experience than Alma the younger as he describes his own spiritual rebirth and decision to become as Christ to his son Helaman. The first step in the rebirth process is to recognize our sins and shortcomings and have this recognition affect us at least as impacting, if not as dramatic, as Alma’s sins affected him.

He said, “I was racked with eternal torment, for my soul was harrowed up to the greatest degree and racked with all my sins. Yea I did remember all my sins and iniquities, for which I was tormented with the pains of Hell; Yea, I saw that I had rebelled against my God, and that I had not kept his holy commandments. ...So great had been my iniquities that the very thought of coming into the presence of my God did rack my soul with inexpressible horror. Oh, thought I, that I could be banished and become extinct both soul and body, that I might not be brought to stand in the presence of my God, to be judged of my deeds.”¹⁰

After this recognition and painful remorse, came the decision to become as Christ and to accept His sacrifice. Alma describes his turning his heart to Jesus Christ. His spiritual rebirth. “As I was thus racked with torment, while I was harrowed up by the memory of my many sins, behold, I remembered also to have heard...concerning the coming of Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone for the sins of the world. Now as my mind caught hold upon this thought, I cried within my heart: O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me, who am in the gall of bitterness, and am encircled about by the everlasting chains of death. And now, behold, when I thought this, I could remember my pains no more; Yea I was harrowed up by the memory of my sins no more. And oh what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold; yea my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain. ...And I stood upon my feet, and did manifest unto the people that I had been born of God.”¹¹

Alma made the decision to follow Jesus Christ. That decision formed the basis for every other decision of consequence he was to ever make. He said, “From that time...I have labored without ceasing, that I might bring souls unto repentance; that I might bring them to taste of the exceeding joy of which I did taste; that they might also be born of God and be filled with the

Holy Ghost.”¹² Everything he did from that moment had as its primary purpose the bringing about the Lord's work among his people.

Our choices are clear before us, and our decision as to our direction and ultimate standing before God is being forged now. It is true we both learn and develop line upon line and precept upon precept. It is true we grow from grace to grace. Our path to perfection does involve steps and stumbles. The principle of repentance must be a daily process in our lives. And we are not without help as we seek to follow Jesus Christ. If that is our choice, we will “cry unto God for all (our) support; Let all (our) doings be unto the Lord, and (wherever we go) let it be in the Lord. Let (our) thoughts be directed unto the Lord; Let the affections of (our) heart (s) be placed upon the Lord forever. (Let us) counsel with the Lord in all (our) doings and he will direct (us) for good; When (we lie) down at night (we must) lie down unto the Lord, that he may watch over us in our sleep; and when (we rise) in the morning let (our) heart (s) be full of thanks unto God; and if (we will) do these things, (we) shall be lifted up at the last day.”¹³

As we turn our hearts to Him, his grace will be sufficient to help us and lift us in that exalted desire. We will find “peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come.”¹⁴

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1. 2 Nephi 2:16
 2. 2 Nephi 2:21
 3. Alma 41:7
 4. Alma 42: 7
 5. Doctrine and Covenants 93:31-32
 6. Moroni 7:15-16, 18
 7. Alma 29:4-5
 8. Alma 41:8-11
 9. Matthew 5:48
 10. Alma 36:12-15
 11. Alma 36:17-23
 12. Alma 36:24

13. Alma 37:36-37

14. Doctrine and Covenants 59:23

The Pursuit Of Excellence

Orange Stake 1974 & 1977

“I, GOD, SAID UNTO mine Only Begotten, which was with me from the beginning: Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and it was so.”¹ In this declaration, God clearly states who we are and who we can become. This great truth of man's divine parentage and purpose has been revealed to and testified of by every prophet from Adam to the present.

The Lord said to Moses, “Thou art after the order of him who was without beginning of days or end of years, from all eternity to all eternity. Behold, thou art one in me, a son of God; and thus may all become my sons.”² And with the strength that knowledge gave, Moses withstood the power of Satan, testifying, “Who art thou? For behold I am a son of God, in the similitude of his only begotten; and where is thy glory, that I should worship thee? Get thee hence, Satan; deceive me not; for god said unto me: Thou art after the similitude of mine only begotten.”³

In the meridian of time Jesus in humble sublime supplication to his Father prayed for his disciples and for all who believed on Him. “I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.”⁴

And John the beloved, witnessing to future generations of the divinity of Jesus Christ, also testified of our divine heritage and potential. “But as many as received him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.”⁵

Nearly four hundred years after a glorified, resurrected Christ appeared to the inhabitants of the American continent, this great people had dwindled in unbelief. To the small pocket of saints who remained steadfast, the prophet and general, Mormon, spoke reassuring words, saying : “Men also were saved by faith in (Christ's) name; and by faith, they become the sons of God.”⁶

Fourteen hundred years later a boy prophet was raised up by the Lord; and these glorious truths that were had by the church of old were restored. The Lord again spoke through his

appointed and ordained mouthpiece, testifying to his children that they were indeed his sons and daughters and that they could become as He is. To Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon, the Lord showed in vision the kingdoms and glories of heaven, And regarding those who received Christ, who were baptized in his name, who kept the commandments and who overcame by faith, the Lord said, "Wherefore as it is written, they are Gods, even the sons of God and he makes them equal in power, and in might and in dominion."⁷

And in the revelation to Joseph on celestial marriage, the Lord continues his description of the final state of those who keep his commandments. "They shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, all heights and depths...and they shall pass by the angels...to their exaltation and glory. Then shall they be gods. Therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting.... Then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be Gods, because they have all power."⁸

However, regardless of our divine parentage, these blessings that the Lord has prepared for us are contingent upon our desires and actions. Almost in the same breath, the Lord goes on to say, "I say unto you, except ye abide my law ye cannot attain to this glory. For strait is the gate and narrow the way that leadeth unto exaltation...and few there be that find it, because ye receive me not in the world neither do you know me."⁹

In another revelation the Lord makes it clear that a verbal commitment to live the gospel is not enough. "He that receiveth my law and doeth it, the same is my disciple; and he that saith he receiveth it and doeth it not, the same is not my disciple, and shall be cast out from among you; For it is not meet that the things which belong to the children of the kingdom should be given to them that are not worthy."¹⁰

And it is not enough just to do what we are commanded. The Lord instructs, "But he that doeth not anything until he is commanded, and receiveth a commandment with a doubtful heart, and keepeth it with slothfulness, the same is damned."¹¹

So how good does the Lord really expect us to be in order to receive those great promises? "When Abraham was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to (him) and said unto him, I am the almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect."¹²

Jesus in his sermon on the mount concluded with this directive: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."¹³ But the rationalizer will say, "How can that be required? We are only human. Surely we will be better equipped to overcome temptation in the next world. Perfect is impossible."

To this, Amulek answers. "For behold, this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; Yea, behold the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors. And now as I said unto you before, as ye have had so many witnesses, therefore, I beseech of you that ye do not procrastinate the day of your repentance until the end; For after this day of life, which is given us to prepare

for eternity, behold, if we do not improve our time while in this life, then cometh the night of darkness wherein there can be no labor performed. Ye cannot say, when ye are brought to that awful crisis that I will repent, that I will return to my God. Nay, ye cannot say this; for that same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will have power to possess your body in that eternal world.”¹⁴

And to this solemn declaration, President Kimball adds. “We catalogue our weaknesses and move in against them to overcome them (through the Savior’s grace). Christ became perfect through overcoming. Only as we overcome shall we become perfect and move toward Godhood. The time to do this is now, in mortality. Someone once said, ‘A fellow who is planning to reform is one step behind. He ought to quit planning and get on with the job.’ Today is the day.”¹⁵

It is a truth. To become a god, we must become like God. He is perfect. We must become perfect. That means we want to be like our Heavenly Father in every way. The key to our becoming as God is desire and humility. We want to be as He is, and we recognize that that is a process. That we cannot do this by ourselves, but with His grace all things are possible. Including overcoming all that keeps us from being as He is.

Here in our telestial tour, we innately live less than celestial. But recognizing when we are thinking, speaking, and acting less than celestial, we repent and ask for help in overcoming. We use our mistakes as stepping stones to perfection, not as weights to pull us down to mediocrity and failure. Our journey through our mortal probation becomes a pursuit of excellence. A humble pursuit of perfection. The Lord has given us His church and His laws and His Spirit and His grace that we might obtain it.

“For if ye by the grace of God are perfect in Christ, and deny not his power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy, without spot.”¹⁶

And then we will hear the Lord say unto us, “(I) will be with thee even unto the end of the world, and through all eternity; for verily I seal upon you your exaltation and prepare a throne for you in the kingdom of my Father, with Abraham your father.”¹⁷

1. Moses 2:26

2. Moses 6:67-68

3. Moses 1:13,16

4. John 17: 15, 21-23

5. John 1:12
6. Moroni 7:26
7. Doctrine and Covenants 76:58
8. Doctrine and Covenants 132:19-20
9. Doctrine and Covenants 132:21-22
10. Doctrine and Covenants 41:5-6
11. Doctrine and Covenants 58:29
12. Genesis 17:1
13. Matthew 5:48
14. Alma 34: 32—34
15. The Miracle of Forgiveness, p. 210
16. Moroni 10:33
17. Doctrine and Covenants 132:49

Covenants

Orange Stake 1993

THE PURPOSE OF MAKING covenants with the Lord is to raise us, through His grace, to His level.

- It is done by the grace of the Lord, because it is impossible for us to unilaterally raise ourselves.
- It requires sacrifice and change on our part. There must be a submission and conformity to God's standards and laws, as the purpose of the covenant is to bring us on the same plane as the Lord. We need to change so that the Lord's image will be in our countenance, as Alma says.¹
- To simply know that this is the process does not bring it about. There must be a willingness to change. To repent. There must be a "mighty" change wrought in our hearts to start the process.²
- Humility is the key to experiencing a change of heart and beginning the repentance process. To realize our own nothingness and total dependency on the Savior's grace can begin the process of sanctification and purification that will bring His image upon us. Our humility allows Him to give us all that He has sworn with an oath to do, as we keep covenants to follow Him and to offer our whole souls as an offering to Him.³
- The ordinances of the priesthood bind the covenant and provide power that enables the lord's promises to be efficacious in our lives.⁴
- The process of change is line upon line and receiving grace for grace. It requires constant renewal and remembering of our covenants through repentance, partaking of the sacrament, and continual participation in all the ordinances of the priesthood on behalf of our ancestors. In the process our understanding of our covenants increases and we receive the strength necessary to keep them.⁵

- It is not easy to strive to be constantly aware of ones weaknesses. But the paradox truth is that as we humbly seek to know our weaknesses and plead with the Lord that His grace will be sufficient for us to overcome them, we will find an ever increasing peace in our lives and that the fruit of the covenantal process will be ours.⁶
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1. See and Covenants 132:49; (Alma 5:19)
2. See Alma 5:14
3. See Moses 1:9-10; Helaman 12:7; Doctrine and Covenants 84:37-39; Omni 1:26
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:19-22
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 59:9; 93:19-20; Mosiah 18:8-10,13
6. See Ether 12:27; Doctrine and Covenants 121:45-46

Testimonies

Orange Stake 1975

AS A YOUNG MISSIONARY, I began to see that a testimony of the gospel constituted more than recognition rationally or spiritually of what was true. That regardless of the strength and power of the spiritual experiences an individual may have, his or her testimony is directly dependent upon their desire to conform their lives to that of Christ's and to commit themselves totally to the Lord's work here upon the earth.

Laman and Lemuel had some of the same experiences as Nephi in their younger lives. They saw an angel of God; they were subject to many miraculous manifestations; and yet they did not develop testimonies of the gospel. Testimonies are not built upon singular spiritual events. They are not just the result of intense study and deductive reasoning, although those efforts play a role in developing a testimony. A testimony is a spiritual transformation. A motivating conviction of spiritual truths that have been revealed to our souls by the power of the Holy Ghost. Such a conviction pervades our very being and motivates us to good works. It enlightens our understanding and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, and our relationship to our Heavenly Father. And like the leaven in the loaf, it expands and fills our souls, stretching our capacities, increasing our abilities to comprehend, and filling us with a true love of God and a Christ-like love toward our fellowmen.

An individual possessing such a testimony receives constant affirmation from the Spirit as they ask for guidance in their daily lives, as they seek understanding while reading the scriptures, as they plead to know the Lord's will in fulfilling their church responsibilities, and as they attempt to magnify their Church callings. This affirmation manifests itself in diverse ways. At times, it is simply a calm, peaceful feeling. On other occasions it is an intense burning in the bosom. And still at other times it is a warm, swelling in our hearts, as enlightening thoughts and ideas literally distill upon our minds as the dew from heaven.

I remember as a young man desiring such a testimony. That I could obtain one, I never really doubted. I would listen as my mother bore her testimony. I knew that she knew, but I couldn't quite identify with what she was saying because I hadn't experienced those same feelings. Yet, I

knew that somehow, sometime, I too would know. But a testimony is not automatic. It doesn't come without us being prepared. Without us exerting the effort necessary to obtain it. Or, without us following certain steps as outlined by the prophets of the Lord.

As a prerequisite to gaining a testimony, one must desire it and ask for it. In his message to the humbled Zoramites, Alma the younger outlined in great detail how they could gain such a testimony. But first they had to want it. Alma said, "Behold if ye will awake and arouse your faculties even to an experiment upon my words and exercise a particle of faith, yea even if ye can no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you."¹

Alma, as high priest of the church, felt it necessary to go throughout the land of Zarahemla to shore up the church. He resigned his Chief Judgeship and went from city to city, exhorting his people to righteousness. He bore strong testimony as to the divinity of the church and the truthfulness of the things he was telling them. Then, speaking to his brethren in the city of Zarahemla he said, "How do ye suppose that I know of their surety? Behold I say unto you they are made known unto me by the Holy Spirit of God. Behold I have fasted and prayed many days that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit."²

But to desire and ask are still not enough. We cannot have a testimony of something we know nothing about. The Zoramites were touched by Alma's message and expressed a desire to believe. "Now what do we do?" they asked. And Alma replied, "My brethren I would ask if ye have read the scriptures?"³

The Lord has not left us without ample evidences and witnesses. To obtain an abiding testimony of the gospel, we must search the scriptures, for their very purpose is to "(convince) the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal god."⁴

As we read the testimonies of scores and scores of prophets from Adam to our present day, that same testimony begins to grow within our bosom. And as we listen intently to our present prophets and apostles, that same light begins to kindle in our souls as they bear their witness to the truthfulness of the gospel. For if we have ears to hear, we will hear.

When I was a young missionary in Australia, Elder Harold B. Lee of the quorum of the Twelve was visiting our mission. As was customary when a general authority came into the mission, all missionaries were called into a conference to hear him speak. After Elder Lee spoke for some time, he seemed to hesitate, and then proceeded to relate the following as I can best remember it.

"I feel impressed to relate to you an experience I have not often related in public. Sometime ago while touring another mission, two elders approached me to ask me a question. It seems that they had conversed with a minister who challenged them as to the possibility of present day apostles. The minister said an apostle was one who saw Christ prior to his crucifixion and

then saw him after his resurrection so he could witness to the world of Christ's divinity and resurrection. Therefore, there could be no apostles today. I replied to those young elders that they should go back to the minister and ask him two questions. First, what about Paul. Paul was an apostle and a special witness of Christ. Yet he did not know or see Christ prior to his crucifixion. He could be an apostle for Christ, however, because Paul saw Christ in vision on his way to Damascus. And then, you ask the minister this question. How does he know I haven't had the same experience as Paul."⁵

At that moment my whole being seemed to be on fire as the Spirit witnessed to me that the man who stood before me was indeed an apostle of the Lord and the things which he spoke were true. And the Holy Ghost has similarly touched my soul, as I have read or heard the testimonies of Abraham, Moses, Nephi, Alma, Moroni, Joseph Smith, Spencer W. Kimball, and all of his prophets whose testimonies are recorded in our scriptures or that have been born in our own day and age. And each has substantiated and increased my own testimony.

I would ask you as Alma asked the Zoramites centuries ago: "Are you reading the scriptures daily?" Are you listening to our present day prophets and apostles and studying their words? For our testimonies are directly related to us doing so.

And as faith without works is dead, so too is a testimony whose bearer has not made Christ the focal point in his life, nor conformed his life to Christ's. A testimony is primarily gained through firsthand experience. What greater foundation for a testimony than to see the miracle the gospel has wrought in our own lives. Jesus stated this principle clearly as he testified to the Jews, "If any man will do (the Father's) will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God or whether I speak of myself."⁶

Alma taught the same principle. "Begin to believe in the Son of God,") he admonished his people.⁷ He was saying to them and to us, use Christ as your example. Strive to live your life as He lived His. Place your faith and reliance in Him. Depend upon Him for your guidance and direction. Recognize that he is in fact your Savior and your salvation. By adhering to these principles you will be, through His atonement and sacrifice, restored to the presence of your Heavenly Father, and be sanctified, purified, and exalted.

This day is a day of challenge, I invite each of us to look inward and examine our own desires. Do we come up lacking? Are we satisfied with our present level of commitment? Do we have the kind of testimony we have been talking about today? Do we want that kind of testimony? If so, are we willing to spend the time needed to obtain it? Will we conscientiously and consistently study the scriptures and the words of our present day prophets? Will we totally and completely conform our lives to Christ's and accept Him as our God and our Savior? If we are willing to do these things, that kind of testimony will be ours. And as we nourish it by our faith, "behold it will become a tree, springing up in you into everlasting life. And then may God grant unto

you that your burdens may be light through the joy of his son. And even all this can ye do if ye will.”⁸

1. Alma 32:27
2. Alma 5:45-46
3. Alma 33:14
4. Title page, Book of Mormon
5. My personal recollection, Sydney, Australia early 1962
6. John 7:17
7. See Alma 33: 22
8. Alma 33:23

Questions

Orange Stake 1986

TO POSE A QUESTION or to answer a question posed to us is the way to knowledge. Our willingness to ask and to answer honestly and forthrightly, can be at once soul wrenching and enlightening, bitter and joyful, depressing and uplifting, heart breaking and heart mending, damning and exalting. To gain knowledge, after all, is what this earthly sojourn is all about. Wisely and truthfully Mother Eve observed, "Were it not for our transgression we never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient."¹

The questions I have found to be most important are those I ask God, those God asks of me, and those I ask of myself. "What is man," the Psalmist inquired of the Lord, "that thou art mindful of him?"² This was an ontological question of unparalleled import. The answer was not given in the context of the question. Neither could it be. For the answer lies in the search itself, in the process involved in seeking it. And is literally dependent on ones willingness to pursue truth through their experiences, through the scriptures, through asking questions of the Lord and of oneself.

Purposely, I believe, the Lord has given us His word in a form not unlike a massive picture puzzle, where the interlocking pieces that would give us the "whole" picture, are not only scattered throughout several thousand pages of scripture but lie within experiences and personal revelations and the written and spoken word of holy men and women that we have access to. It is true that sometimes we find clumps of the puzzle together. A few pieces already interlocked, or in the vicinity of pieces they fit into. But more often than not, the picture comes together, the answers are forthcoming, through painstaking search for fitting pieces. Line upon line and precept upon precept. Here a little and there a little.

It is our desire to expend the effort necessary to put the puzzle together, to search the scriptures diligently, to pray for understanding, to seek experiences that will enlighten, and to listen, that brings to us the answer. The answer to who we are. And, conversely, it is our unwillingness to

search, to ask, to seek, that stops our ears and blinds our eyes so we cannot hear nor see. And the puzzle remains exactly that. A puzzle.

In my own quest, I have found questions that provide starting points in putting together a few significant clumps of the puzzle. The first one is directed to us. "Wherefore, I the Lord ask you this question—unto what were ye ordained?"³ Unto what were we ordained? Sometimes the mundaneness of duty, the repetitiveness of our function and the concerns and cares of the world keep from the forefront of our minds just what ordination to the priesthood of the Lord really means.

Unto what were we ordained? To go to meetings? To make out reports? To teach lessons? To run quorums? To preside over wards? The functions, albeit necessary to accomplish the ends, must never become ends in and of themselves. But too often, they keep many of us from glimpsing the whole picture. Unto what were ye ordained? The Lord answers his own question.

"This greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God."⁴

"I the Lord am merciful and gracious unto those who serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end. To them will I reveal all mysteries, yea, all the hidden mysteries of my kingdom from days of old, and for ages to come, will I make known unto them the good pleasure of my will concerning all things pertaining to my kingdom. Yea, even the wonders of eternity shall they know, and things to come will I show them. Even the things of many generations. ...For by my spirit will I enlighten them, and by my power will I make known unto them the secrets of my will. Yea even those things which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor yet entered into the heart of man."⁵

"Behold and hearken, O ye Elders of my church, I say unto you that it is your privilege, and a promise I give unto you that have been ordained unto this ministry, that inasmuch as you strip yourselves from jealousies and fears, and humble yourselves before me, the veil shall be rent and you shall see me and know that I am. ...Wherefore, continue in patience until ye are perfected. Let not your minds turn back, and when ye are worthy, in mine own due time, ye shall see and know that which was conferred upon you."⁶

"Whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods, and the magnifying their calling, become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God. And also all they who receive this priesthood receive me, saith the Lord, And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father, and he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father's kingdom, therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him. And this is according to the oath and covenant which belongeth to the priesthood. Therefore, all those who receive the priesthood receive this oath and covenant of my Father, which He cannot break, neither can it be moved."⁷

In summary, unto what were we ordained? To receive the keys to the mysteries of God, even the key of the knowledge of God. To see Jesus Christ, even in the flesh. To receive all that God has.

The next question arises from an acute awareness of our own divine potential. Saul, a persecutor of the saints, on his way to Damascus was stopped in a most unearthly way. The Savior appeared unto him and chastised him. Saul's immediate response was a question. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"⁸

How unlike Laman and Lemuel's rebellious reactions to their seemingly constant encounters with angelic messengers was this humble response-question of Saul's. A response of meekness and submissiveness. A request for light and knowledge that he might please the Lord. If that is a question that we as priesthood holders are also want to ask, the answers are forthcoming for the seeking.

"Organize yourselves," said the Lord. "Prepare every needful thing, and (you fathers who hold the priesthood) establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God, that your incomings may be in the name of the Lord, that your outgoings may be in the name of the Lord, that all your salutations may be in the name of the Lord. ...Therefore, cease from all your light speeches. From all laughter, from all your lustful desires, from all your pride and lightmindedness, and from all your wicked doings. ...See that ye love one another, cease to be covetous, learn to impart one to another as the gospel requires. Cease to be idle, cease to find fault one with another, cease to sleep longer than is needful, retire to thy bed early, that ye may not be weary, arise early, that your bodies and your minds may be invigorated. And above all things, clothe yourselves with the bond of charity as with a mantle, which is the bond of perfectness and peace. Pray always, that ye may not faint."⁹

The Lord's list is comprehensive, all inclusive. As Brigham Young said, "It requires the whole man, the whole life to be devoted to improvement in order to come to knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus Christ."¹⁰

But the magnifying of our priesthood is much more than following a list of do's and don'ts. The Lord's list of commandments or directions are as highway signs to get us to the point of ultimate obedience, which is a sacrifice. "What wilt thou have me to do?" The Lord's answer is, "Ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit."¹¹

No other kind of sacrifice is enough. To sacrifice means to give up something that is ours. Something that belongs to us and to no one else. Not even to God. Giving up something that already belongs to someone else is not sacrificing. But what do we have that God has not given to us? Virtually all that we have is His. Our bodies, our talents, our time, our so called possessions. They are all gifts from him, and we are but stewards over that which he has so bountifully

loaned to us. Those of us who are sincere in our temple covenants have consecrated these back to him with a promise that we will use these gifts to further his work here upon the earth. But we can't sacrifice them because they are not ours to give.

What is ours to give? One thing, and one thing only. Our souls. Our wills. That is ours. That is us. It always has been and always will be. The sacrifice of a broken heart and a contrite spirit is to give ourselves to God. Our whole souls. To cease being a law unto ourselves. To literally become one with Him. And of course our Savior is our prototype. He is our way.

What was the result of a lifetime he devoted to stripping himself of pride, of seeking experiences that would purge and purify him? That would eliminate fear and jealousy? That would teach him empathy and compassion? That would bring his body into total subjection to his spirit? That would allow him to suffer the depths of sorrow including the most exquisite mental, spiritual and physical pain possible and to be left totally alone? "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" he cried out in anguish, so that his will could be totally and clearly manifest without influence or persuasion from the Father?

And what was it called that He did? The sacrifice of a broken heart and a contrite spirit. His last words before death were to his Father: "Into thy hands I commend my spirit."¹² In those few words he in essence said, "I have conquered the body and pride and fears and jealousies and unrighteousness. I have tread the winepress alone. I am now one with Thee. My will is Thy will. I have lost myself in Thee. My spirit is in Thine hands.

"What wilt thou have me as a priesthood holder do?" The Savior's answer. "Come, follow me. The Son of Man has descended below them all. Art thou greater than He?"¹³

There is another question that now comes to mind. When Adam found himself naked in the Garden of Eden, he hid himself. "And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto Him, Where art thou?"¹⁴ "Where art thou?" A question that could, if we stood before the Lord, as Adam, stripped naked of pride and self-deceit, allow us to see what in our lives needed to be changed. To be corrected.

As a young missionary, I boarded the jet that would take me to my mission 7,000 miles across the ocean to Sydney, Australia. The trip was long and uneventful. The time was passed sleeping and talking with my peers who would be serving in the same mission. We tried to anticipate what it would be like but of course could only speculate. I felt confident in my abilities. Maybe even a little cocky. I was sure I would do well. We landed, passed through customs and then were met by several missionaries who would drive us to the mission home. As we waited for our luggage, I talked with one of the elders who was there to pick us up. He was the second counselor in the mission presidency and had about six months left on his mission. As we talked, I was overwhelmed with the differences between him and myself. He was poised, articulate, humble, spiritual, knowledgeable. I was nervous, stumbling, lightminded, and ignorant. He

was a man, and I was a boy and there was only one and a half years difference between us. It was like there was a lifetime between us. I kept asking myself over and over a question similar to the one the Lord asked Adam. "What have I been doing with my life." I was ill-prepared in virtually every way, and I had none to blame but myself.

My willingness to look inward made all the difference. I vowed there and then I would grow up fast. And I did. That wasn't the last time I asked myself that question. And it wasn't the last time I felt disappointed in seeing how far short I had come in relation to what I could have and should have been. In fact, I am convinced that type of introspection, that type of self-questioning is a key to continual positive change in our lives. For repentance or change to take place, recognition of its need must precede it. And for recognition to take place, we must be willing to answer the question: "Where art thou?"

"Where art thou in your priesthood duties?" Joseph Smith said, "Men will set up stakes and say thus far will we go and no further."¹⁵ Are we one of those?

"Behold...I say unto you, that there are many who have been ordained among you, whom I have called but few of them are chosen. They who are not chosen have sinned a very grievous sin, in that they are walking in darkness at noonday."¹⁶ "And (their) minds...have been darkened because of unbelief, and because (they) have treated lightly the things (they) have received...and they shall remain under...condemnation until they repent and...not only...say, but do according to that which I have written."¹⁷

Could those words of the Lord describe any of us?

Where are we in relationship to attitude? How do we feel about our priesthood leaders? About our quorum members? How do we react to their faults and less than perfect actions? Are we supportive and sustaining, or critical and condemning? Are we loving, empathetic and long suffering? Or jealous, impatient, and judgmental? And where are we in relationship to our spirituality? "Have ye spiritually been born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances?" Have we received a mighty change in our hearts? Do we exercise faith in the redemption of him who created us? Do we look forward with an eye of faith? Have we walked, keeping ourself blameless before God?¹⁸

Are our covenants as smoke blowing in the breeze, trailing off to wisps and finally dissipated by winds of disappointment, discouragement, tribulation and inconvenience? Or do we in fact bear one another's burdens, mourn with those that mourn and comfort those who stand in need of comfort?

"Where art thou?"

As difficult as such a question may be to ask of ourselves, as anguishing as the results may be as we come face to face with our own shortcomings and inadequacies, and as painful as is the

realization of where we are in relationship to where we could and should be, it is that very question, continually asked, that will bring us up to where we want to be. "Behold (Christ) sendeth an invitation unto all men, for the arms of mercy are extended towards them, and he saith: repent, and I will receive you. Yea, he saith: come unto me and bring forth works of righteousness."¹⁹

There is one further question. It is really the question of greatest import. Mary stood weeping at Jesus' tomb. The sepulcher was empty. She knew not where he was. She turned herself around and saw him, though she did not recognize him. It was then he asked her the question: "Whom seekest thou?"²⁰

Who do we seek? The Lord—or an idol? The choice is ours and it is the ultimate one. Dennis Rasmussen has said, "Whenever man places something other than God at the summit of his concern, man turns himself into an idolater. It makes no difference what that thing is, if it is not God, it will separate man from God. And if man is not with God, it matters little what he is with instead. The idolatry of modern man is the result of pride. Captivated by the inventions and achievements of his own brain, he succumbs to the temptation of self-worship. The idol of modern man is within himself. ...It is a hidden idol that man erects today. Few people if any, regard themselves as idolaters, but many are prepared to sacrifice their own happiness and that of others to serve some idol. It may be called success or fame or power or any of a hundred other names. All have the same lifeless substance, all demand victims."²¹

The danger of an idol is not just that it is a "false god," but that that false god is us. The idol is merely a reflection of ourselves. Of our desires and choices. It becomes our justification for doing what we do. We are worshipping our own image and likeness. And because the idol is "dumb," it will not tell us we are wrong or we need to change or shape up. When we worship our idol, we cease to improve. For when we are our own god, there is no target to shoot for, There is nowhere to go but down as we superimpose upon our idol god, attributes that reflect our degrading, carnal nature.

On the other hand, to worship the only true and living God, is to emulate perfectness and light. It is to be in constant change as we adopt his attributes, as we constantly look at where we are and through His grace make the adjustments in our lives that would bring us nearer to Him.

"Whom seekest thou"? the Savior asks. And our answer?

Whatever it is, it is the ultimate manifestation of our agency. If our answer is, the only true and living God, then we likewise have our answer to the question posed at the very beginning: "What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" For then the Savior's atoning sacrifice is in effect in our lives, and we are the subject of his extraordinary prayer. "I have manifested Thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: Thine they were, and Thou gavest them me, and they have kept Thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever Thou

hast given me are of Thee. For I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest me, and they have received them... I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given me, for they are Thine. ...Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are... That they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. ...I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through Thy truth...that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be on in us... And the glory which Thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one, I in them, and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one. That the love wherewith Thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them."²²

1. Moses 5:11
2. Psalms 8:4
3. Doctrine and Covenants 50:13
4. Doctrine and Covenants 84:19
5. Doctrine and Covenants 76:5-10
6. Doctrine and Covenants 67:1, 10, 12-13
7. Doctrine and Covenants 84:33-40
8. Acts 9:6
9. Doctrine and Covenants 88:119-126
10. Journal of Discourses 12:255
11. 3 Nephi 9:20
12. Luke 23:46
13. Doctrine and Covenants 122:8
14. Genesis 3:9
15. Words of Joseph Smith, PP 245—246

16. Doctrine and Covenants 95:5-6
17. Doctrine and Covenants 84:54-57,59
18. See Alma 5:14-15, 35
19. Alma 5:27-35
20. John 20:15
21. The Lord's Question, pp. 49-52
22. John 17:6—26

Taking Upon Ourselves the Name of Christ

Orange Stake 1990

"YE ARE THEY WHICH have continued with me in my temptations, the Savior told the twelve apostles at the last supper. "And I appoint unto you a kingdom as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."¹ No sooner did He get through pronouncing this tremendous blessing and promise, that he looked at Peter, his chief apostle and said: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."²

As we might expect, Peter was hurt by this challenge to his faithfulness. "Lord, I am ready to go with Thee, he replied, "both into prison and into death."³ Of course, we know what happened. Before the cock crowed that next morning, Peter was to deny Him thrice. For Peter was, in fact, not yet converted. But wasn't it Peter who in response to the Savior's question, "Whom say ye that I am?" replied with knowledge that only comes through the Holy Ghost: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"?⁴ And had he not given up his livelihood to become an apostle? Had he not followed Christ whenever or wherever he was bidden? But according to the Savior, he was not converted. Apparently to KNOW what is true and even to LIVE outwardly what is true is not enough.

The word convert means to change; to turn; to transform. To be converted to Christ means that we are changed to Christ. We literally turn from the world and from our own pride and in every way, take upon ourselves His name. We not only know of Christ and keep his commandments, WE ARE OF CHRIST.

We learn much about the importance of this kind of conversion from the Book of Mormon. We are told by Mormon that he was unable to include within his condensation of all of the plates of Nephi even one—hundredth part of what was available to him. When I contemplate that thought, I have to conclude that there are no words or concepts in that Book that are

unimportant . On the contrary, every event, every sermon that Mormon selected to be recorded was done so, carefully and by the Spirit to apply to us in our day. For as did his son, Moroni, he saw us. He knew what we needed to hear.

With that in mind, what kind of importance should we put on an event whose accounting of, Mormon gave no less than three times? And which event provided the basis for sermons and teachings that occupy at least a fifth of the entire Book of Mormon? Such a repeated accounting of an event is unequalled in that book. I am speaking, of course, of the CONVERSION of Alma the younger and the sons of Mosiah. Apparently, Mormon was inspired to put such emphasis on conversion, on taking upon ourselves the name of Christ, on being spiritually reborn, because that was what the members of the church in our day needed to hear.

Here are some excerpts from Alma's accounting of his rebirth experience to his son Helaman:

"I beseech of thee that thou wilt hear my words and learn of me; for I do know that whosoever shall put their trust in God shall be supported in their trials, and their troubles, and their afflictions, and shall be lifted up at the last day.... Now, behold, I say unto you, if I had not been born of God I should not have known these things; but God has... made these things known unto me, not of any worthiness of myself. After Alma described his experience with the angel that served as the catalyst for this rebirth, he described the actual rebirth process. ¹¹ I was racked with eternal torment, for my soul was harrowed up to the greatest degree and racked with all my sins. Yea, I did remember all my sins and iniquities, for which I was tormented with the pains of hell; e In fine, so great had been my iniquities, that the very thought of coming into the presence of my God did rack my soul with inexpressible horror. Oh, thought I, that I could be banished and become extinct both soul and body, that I might not be brought to stand in the presence of my God, to be judged of my deeds.

"While I was harrowed up by the memory of my many sins, behold I remembered also to have heard my father prophesy unto the people concerning the coming of one Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone for the sins of the world. Now as my mind caught hold upon this thought, I cried within my heart: O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me, who am in the gall of bitterness and am encircled about by the everlasting chains of death. And now, behold, when I thought this, I could remember my pains no more; yea I was harrowed up by the memory of my sins no more. And oh, what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain.

Please listen carefully as Alma then explains the hallmark by which one can distinguish all who have taken upon themselves the name of Christ: "Yea, and from that time even until now, I have labored without ceasing, that I might bring souls unto repentance; that I might bring them to taste of the exceeding joy of which I did taste i that they might also be born of God and be filled with the Holy Ghost. For because of the word which he has imparted unto me, behold, many have been born of God, and have tasted as I have tasted, and have seen eye to eye as I have

seen; therefore they do know of these things of which I have spoken, as I do know; and the knowledge which I have is of God."⁵

Although Alma's experience with a spiritual rebirth was perhaps the most dramatic of those recorded in the Book of Mormon, Enos was no less impacting on him and perhaps more like the kind of experience we can expect in our own lives: "My soul hungered, he said, "and I kneeled down before my Maker, and I cried unto him in mighty prayer and supplication for mine own soul; And there came a voice unto me, saying: Enos, thy sins are forgiven thee, and thou shalt be blessed. And I, Enos, knew that God could not lie; wherefore, my guilt was swept away. And I said: Lord, how is it done? And he said unto me: Because of thy faith in Christ, whom thou hast never before heard nor seen. Wherefore, go to, thy faith hath made thee whole. Now... when I had heard these words I began to feel a desire for the welfare of my brethren..., wherefore, I did pour out my whole soul unto God for them."⁶

Speaking of this experience of Enos', President Benson said, "Through his mighty supplication to God, (Enos) experienced what the faithful of any dispensation can... and must experience if they are to see God and be filled with His Spirit."⁷

As we know from Peter's experience and as many here in this room can testify, to be baptized a member of the church or to hold the priesthood, does not necessarily mean we have been converted. That we have been spiritually reborn or have, in fact, taken upon us the name of Christ and all that that means. Alma was speaking to members of the church when he asked the questions : Have spiritually been born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances? Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts?"⁸

The necessity of such an experience cannot be denied.

Alma said, "Marvel not that all mankind, yea, men and women, must be born again; yea, born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters."⁹

"Have they not read the scriptures, which say ye must take upon you the name of Christ, which is my name?" the Savior asked those who had gathered at the temple at Bountiful. "For by this name shall ye be called at the last day: And whoso taketh upon him my name, and endureth to the end, the same shall be saved at the last day Therefore, whatsoever ye shall do, ye shall do it in my name."¹⁰

What then does it mean to take upon ourselves the name of Christ? To be spiritually born of God? Although the understanding of this process can only come as we experience it ourselves, yet there are hints. For Enos and Alma, their experience involved an acute recognition of personal weakness and sin; and the accepting of the Savior as both the only way their burden could be relieved as well as the source of the strength needed to overcome their own carnal nature. We are also struck with the permanency of the change that took place in their lives. No

longer were they self—centered, but seemed almost entirely motivated by their desire to help their brethren have the same rebirth experience. They had in essence emptied themselves of pride and self—serving desires so that they could be filled with His Spirit.

To take upon oneself the name of Christ, is to recognize that without Christ, we are literally nothing; that we only become something" through His grace. God has all power in and of Himself. We only have power to the extent that God wills to give us His power. What we can do, however, is choose. We can choose to allow Him to make us One with Him or we can choose to alienate ourselves from God and become a law unto ourselves.

To choose to become one with Him is to take upon ourselves His name; to lose our own name, our own glory. In a word, to act in His behalf. As He laid his body and spirit on the alter as a sacrifice for our sins and our salvation, so we are asked to offer as a sacrifice to Him, our broken heart and contrite spirit; to "offer our whole souls as an offering unto him."¹¹

It is only by us becoming one with Him that His sacrifice for us can even be efficacious. If they know not the name by which they are called, we are told, "they cannot have place in the kingdom."¹²

When we have taken upon ourselves the name of Christ, we move beyond being motivated by punishment and reward. We do what we do because that is who we are. We are no longer a son or daughter of the world, but of Christ. We go to the temple because Christ is there and we want to be where He is. We do our home teaching and visiting teaching because that is what Christ is all about. We magnify our callings as husbands and wives, as fathers and mothers, as church leaders because, like Alma and Enos, we love those we serve. We keep His commandments because we want His Spirit to be with us. We pray because we want to hear His voice. We read His scriptures and participate in His holy ordinances because the knowledge and power of Christ are there. We aren't trying to EARN anything. We are simply trying to be like Him because that is our desire.

Many years ago as my family and I were driving back from Utah I was listening to one of the local news stations. They were interviewing a so—called handwriting expert who had been hired by Walter Martin to read some of the original Book of Mormon manuscripts to see if they were in the handwriting of Solomon Spaulding. The man's conclusion was that it was Spaulding's handwriting. I didn't know at the time that Martin had hired another handwriting expert whose conclusion was that the Book of Mormon manuscript was not Spaulding's writing somehow Martin neglected to give that opinion any press. And for a moment, I forgot all of the personal experiences and revelations that I had been blessed with that gave me a sure testimony of the Book of Mormon. For the briefest of moments, I asked myself, "Could it be possible the Book of Mormon isn't true?" In that second, I saw into my own soul and I knew that no matter what happened; no matter what kind of so—called proof that detractors could bring up against Joseph Smith or the Book of Mormon or the church, that I would be faithful. I would

be faithful because I knew the teachings of the church and of the Book of Mormon represented the kind of life I wanted to live and were helping me become the kind of person I wanted to be. It was a reaffirmation of a singular experience I had had some years before, not unlike Enos where my heart had been changed, where I had made a choice to take upon myself the name of Christ.

While temptations still beset, perhaps even more intense in many ways, and while extraordinary weaknesses still existed, magnified now as I began to see them in more and more light, yet my direction was set. And while the trip has been fraught with unimaginable difficulties and experiences that I would never have asked for, yet I can see in my journey an accumulation of knowledge is necessary in order for me to become what I have chosen to become. I now know, that as this knowledge is obtained line upon line and precept upon precept, there comes with it an increasing awareness of the love and grace of Jesus Christ. And our ability to reflect and magnify Him reaches levels we could not before even begin to imagine.

I believe I understand Peter a little better now — and what the Savior meant when he told him, "when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren". Until Peter had made that deeply personal choice to take upon himself the name of Christ, he would be but a doer of deeds. One who would go about doing his duty, but without the power to truly change peoples' lives, because his own life was not yet changed.

Most certainly the Savior's challenge to Peter applies to each of us who have been called to lead His sheep: To become converted. That we may in turn strengthen our brethren and sisters. And for those who will take upon themselves His name the promise is sure: "Ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold,... he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name ; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters. And under this head ye are made free, and there is no other head whereby ye can be made free. There is no other name given whereby salvation cometh; (and you) shall be found at the right hand of God, for (you) shall know the name by which (you) are called; for (you) shall be called by the name of Christ."¹³

1. Luke 22: 28—30

2. Luke 22 : 32-32

3. Luke 22: 33

4. Matt 16: 15—17

5. Alma 36: 3—28

6. Enos 1: 4—9
7. Ensign, September, 1990, p. 5
8. Alma 5: 14—15
9. Mosiah 27: 25
10. 3 Ne 27: 6-7
11. Omni 26
12. Doctrine and Covenants 18:25
13. Mosiah 5 : 7-9

Counsel of Love to Young Women

Orange Stake 2003

I HOPE YOU KNOW by now that I love you. With the years of experience that I have had, I perhaps am able to see you in a far better light than you often see yourselves. Under the camouflage of giggles, cheerleading skirts, feelings of inferiority, worries about boys, stumbles with uncertainty, and a million other telestial distractions, walk daughters of God. You are of Divine heritage. You are filled with Divine potential.

As you begin another year of school, it will take everything that you have to consistently remember who you are, and to have the Holy Ghost with you. You have been told many times how you can do this: Attend seminary. Read the scriptures alone every day. Say your prayers night and morning, carrying a prayer in your heart throughout the day. Attend your sacrament and Young Women meetings. Be involved in service. Share the gospel with your friends who are not members of the Church. Keep yourselves clean and pure, avoiding like the plague anything that would suck virtue out of you, including inappropriate music, movies and TV shows. Associate with other young women and young men who know of their Divinity and who are desirous of living their lives accordingly. And strive to be a peacemaker and blessing in your families.

My promise to you is that if you do these things, the Savior's grace will be upon you and you will be given the strength to overcome every temptation and every testimony challenge you will be faced with in the coming year. Not only that, but through His grace you will actually see your weaknesses become your strengths. This I know.

You are always in my prayers, my dear young friends.

Becoming Who You Are

Orange Stake 2003

LESSON GIVEN TO the young men and young women

- Who is Jesus Christ?
- If you were to describe Him, what attributes would you use?
- Who are you? (Do you *really* believe that?)
- What attributes would you use to describe who you are (want) to become? (Read 13th article of faith/quote it)
- What in this world works against you from becoming who you want to be? (e.g. peer pressure, media, dress, wanting to be popular, immorality, sports, etc.)
- How do you overcome the world and its pressures to keep you from your divine potential
 - Must want to live truth
 - Pick friends that think like you and want what you want.
 - Attend church (why?)
 - Personal prayers (why?)
 - Read scriptures (why?) Serve (why)
 - Trust & follow those who love you (parents/church teachers & leaders)
 - Remember that being a heavenly father & mother is what your existence is all about—so guard your virtue as you would your life that your children will have a

pure/holy mother/father

- Seek the grace of the Savior—you need it and it is real
- Repent (scriptural examples)
- Bear testimony

Becoming Converted

Orange Stake

“I APPOINT UNTO YOU a Kingdom as my father hath appointed unto me; the Savior told his disciples at the Last Supper, “that you may eat and drink at my table in my Kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”¹ No sooner did He get through pronouncing this tremendous blessing and promise, that He looked at Peter, His chief apostle and heir apparent to the presidency of His church, and said, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not. And when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.”²

Peter was hurt by this seeming challenge to his faithfulness. After all, hadn't he left his occupation to follow the Lord? Hadn't he traveled without purse or script preaching the gospel? Wasn't it he along with James and John that witnessed the great miracle on the mount of transfiguration? Why then would the Lord question his conversion?

“Lord, I am ready to go with thee, replied Peter. Both into prison and into death.”³ Before the rooster crowed that next morning, Peter was to deny him thrice, for Peter was, in fact, not yet converted. Yes, he knew who the Savior was. And yes, he had a testimony, if you will. But he did not know who he, Peter, was. He was not yet converted. To know what is true and want to live what is true are two different matters. And to be converted to Christ, means to be willing to live the life of Christ. To follow Him exactly. Nothing less will do.

“Behold, there are many called, but few are chosen,” the Lord said to Joseph Smith when Joseph was in the Liberty jail. “And why are they not chosen? Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world. And aspire to the honors of men, that they do not learn this one lesson, that the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven. And that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness... When we undertake to cover our sins, or to gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control or dominion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the heavens withdraw themselves, the Spirit of the Lord is grieved,

and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man...(and he is) left unto himself.”⁴

To know the gospel is true is not enough, and the priesthood that has been bestowed upon us is null and void if we do not choose to follow Jesus Christ in every way. I believe what the Savior was saying to Peter was to get your life in order, Peter. For that is what conversion means. Peter was not spiritually prepared to exercise the power of the priesthood and to have the Holy Ghost as a constant companion both of which were necessary if he were to represent the Lord here upon the earth. Without those gifts, he would by necessity be left unto himself.

Where do I as a priesthood leader stand? In my present state of conversion, am I able to strengthen my brethren? Or do I lack in my conversion? And if I lack in my conversion, what would the Lord have me do now? What do *I* want to do now? At the very least, we need to look inward, ask the Lord for help that we might see our inadequacies so that we, through His grace, might overcome them.

For example, if we are dilatory in our prayers, we change. Let our hearts be drawn out continually in prayer to him to seek His revelation. If we do not read the scriptures as we should, we change. We don't just read them, we hunger and thirst after his word that is contained within them so we can come to know Him. If the temple is not a priority in our lives, we make it so. Our ability to strengthen our brethren is directly related to our knowledge of Christ, and it is within the walls of the temple that the keys to that understanding lie.

If we are not honest in our dealings, if we lack patience or compassion or brotherly kindness or diligence in serving, we change. If virtue does not garnish our thoughts unceasingly, we repent.

Conversion is the recognition that we want to follow Christ, and it is a line upon line, precept upon precept process as we move from grace to grace in doing so. Our word and our example then, can strengthen our brethren who we lead, and even more importantly strengthen our families. The promise is that if this is our desire, the day will come when “our confidence will wax strong in the presence of God, and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distill upon us as the dews from heaven. The Holy Ghost shall be our constant companion and our scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth, and our dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto us forever and ever.”⁵

1. Luke 22:28-30

2. Luke 22:31-32

3. Luke 22:33

4. Doctrine and Covenants 121:34-38

5. Doctrine and Covenants 121:45-46

Doing the Best We Can

Thought

IN 1984 MY FAMILY and I took an extended trip across the United States to visit Church and national historic sites. Each evening, sometimes with nothing else to do, I became absorbed in the Olympics that were being held during this time. I was often overwhelmed with the performances of those who had devoted themselves to perfecting their athletic talents. There were many poignant stories of unexpected successes and tragic failures. Here is one I will not forget.

A swimmer from a country other than the United States, in a race whose length is unimportant, decided in his qualifying heat to hold back; to give less than his best. Whether the thought was, as claimed, to keep inconspicuous in the trials so as to give him a competitive edge in the race for the Gold, is not important. Whatever the reason, the swimmer held back. And he did not qualify for one of the eight places in the final race. The irony was, he won the losers bracket. He came in 9th place overall. And his time for that race was a new Olympic record.

Can you imagine how he felt standing on the sidelines as the eight qualifiers raced for the medals and the glory? As he watched the Gold Medallion being draped around the neck of the winner, whose winning time was not as fast as his own Olympic record he had just set in the previous heat, he knew that that medallion would likely have been around his neck if he had given his all in the qualifying trials.

Knowing that we are sons and daughters of God requires of us to strive consistently to act accordingly and to always strive to do the best we can.

Our Eternal Nature and Divine Potential

Thought

I READ THE SERMON on the mount and was struck with the power of the testimony of our divine potential and eternal nature. The sermon was given to His disciples who clearly had been taught who they were. The Savior was telling them how to become that here on this earth. Giving them instructions. He referred to their Father in Heaven some 13 times using that name. He told them they were to become perfect like their Father. He told them that they being good fathers would never give their children something useless when they needed something to help them. And then said that our Heavenly Father would not do that either. He instructed them to pray to their Father in Heaven. And then he referred to God as His own Father in Heaven. Making Him a brother with His disciples. It is clear and powerful. Why didn't I see this before?. And it came into my mind that if any Christian wanted to have a serious discussion about this we could sit down and read these chapters in the Bible. We would first read the sermon on the mount in Matthew 5-7). We would then read John 17. We would then read 1 John 3. In these passages there is irrefutable evidence that we are sons and daughters of God and are to become one with Him. To become as He is.

JOSEPH SMITH AND CHURCH LEADERS

Following the Prophets

Orange Stake 1992

THROUGHOUT MY LIFE I have revered the prophets. In uncounted ways they have been a blessing in my life and have helped me to build a sure foundation in the Lord.

1. The prophets testify as special witnesses of the divinity of Jesus Christ and the truthfulness of the gospel.
 - a. Moroni 7:29-32
 - b. My experience with President Harold B. Lee and his witness of the Savior
2. The prophets both teach by precept and show by example the way to a Christ like and Christ centered life.
 - a. "Though man travels throughout his days, he need not wander. The way is marked by the testimonies of those who have gone before. The words of prophets whose lives belong to the past guide man's steps as he enters the future. ...The teaching of the prophets comes from beyond the world, and it appeals not to science but to conscience. To hear this teaching is to be blessed, but also directed to interpret, to understand, to teach, and to obey. Those who follow the prophets take upon themselves the task of building (their) words...into structures of life and then sharing the words with all others." (Dennis Rasmussen, The Lord's Question, p. 25.)
 - b. (Early summer of 1988) My experience with President Benson's call regarding Barbara and his constant concern for her and for his brother, Ross, and his pleading for my help. My subsequent conversation with Barbara telling her of his love and her response: "I know he loves me and I don't understand it because I won't join his church." I responded, "It isn't his church, Barbara, it is the Church of Jesus Christ and He is the Savior's prophet and as such, perhaps the most like Him of any person on this earth. That is how and why he can and does love you like he does."

- c. (If have time) My experience with President Kimball and Will. Introducing President Kimball as a prophet and the love and emotion that radiated from President Kimball as he pulled Will into his arms and kissed him.
 - d. There was another impression I had of President Benson. He was old and feeble and the signs of old age were readily apparent. During our conversation, he continually repeated himself and asked the same question a number of times, I wondered if I would ever hear him speak at general conference again. The next general conference was October 1988 where President Benson gave his "flooding the world with the Book of Mormon" talk. My experience with the Holy Ghost 2/3's of the way through that talk and as I listened to President Benson speak. He was the prophet of God. I was an eye witness to the role of the Lord's prophet in speaking in His behalf to the church and that the Lord would apply the blessing of renewing the Prophet's body and mind as required in order for the prophet to do so.¹
3. The prophets are the Lord's mouthpiece to lead His church and to express His will to His people at any given time. They are our lamp in the darkness, our beacon in the fog, no matter what their physical condition may be.
 4. It is through the prophets that the Lord reveals the doctrines, the keys, the ordinances and bestows the priesthood that will allow each of us to know and to see God. And therefore to know ourselves.
 - a. My experience with Kent Anderson: "I suppose that Joseph Smith could have taken the best parts of all of the existing religions and combined them in such a masterful way and added to them on his own such marvelous teachings and insights that others do not have. I suppose that is possible. Joseph Smith was a great man."

My testimony of Joseph Smith. His teachings, the scriptures that he brought, the ordinances that have come forth through him have been the center of my study and prayer for virtually all of my adult life. He is not only a great man, he is a prophet of God. And that which he saw and heard is not just limited to those with the ecclesiastical calling of a prophet. In fact, he was the door, as all prophets are, that will lead us to Christ. It is by following the prophets that we will see the way to part the veil and understand and know all the Lord will have us know. For that is His promise.²

1. Doctrine and Covenants 84:3

2. See Doctrine and Covenants 76:5-10

What I Should Do To Follow The Prophet

Orange Stake 1986

WHAT WOULD IT HAVE been like to live at the time of Enoch?

“So great was the faith of Enoch,” we are told, “that...he spake the word of the Lord, and the earth trembled, and the mountains fled, even according to his command; and the rivers of water were turned out of their course; and all nations feared greatly, so powerful was the word of Enoch, and so great was the power of the language which God had given him.”¹

Surely if we lived then, we would have been persuaded by this great prophet to keep the commandments, and we would have been gathered up with the rest of the city of Enoch into the bosom of the Lord. Or is it possible we would have found ourselves among another group at that time. “(For) Enoch went forth in the land, among the people, standing upon the hills and the high places, and cried with a loud voice, testifying against their works; and all men were offended because of him.”² Enoch was not perfect. “And Enoch himself spake before the Lord saying, Why is it I am but a lad, that I have found favor in Thy sight, and all the people hate me; for I am slow of speech.”³ Is it possible that his words would have offended us? Is it possible that his “slowness of speech” would be our justification for not listening to his warning voice?

If we could only have been on the earth when Noah was here. How could it be that the multitudes rejected him as a prophet? I can see him there in all of his majesty, long flowing white beard and uplifted hand calling the people to repentance and telling them of the destruction that awaited them unless they humbled themselves and came unto the Lord. If we had been there, wouldn't we have sustained and supported him? wouldn't we have helped him build the ark? And wouldn't we have been on it with Noah and his family? “For the Lord ordained Noah after his own order and commanded him that he should go forth and declare His Gospel unto the children of men, even as it was given unto Enoch. And Noah called upon the children of men that they should repent.”⁴

Or would we have been counted among those he was speaking to, “for after that they had heard him, they came up before him, saying: “Behold, we are the sons of God; have we not taken unto ourselves the daughters of men? And our wives bear unto us children, and the same are mighty men, which are like unto men of old, men of great renown. And they hearkened not unto the words of Noah. And God saw that the wickedness of men had become great in the earth; and every man was lifted up in the imagination of the thoughts of his heart, being only evil continually. And Noah continued his preaching unto the people, saying: Hearken, and give heed unto my words; Believe and repent of your sins and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, even as our fathers, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost, that ye may have all things made manifest. Nevertheless they hearkened not.”⁵

What an exciting thing it would have been to have lived with Lehi and Nephi. How would it be to have had a father who was a prophet. To have sat by his side as he related to us his experiences with the Lord, “for he was carried away in a vision, even that he saw the heavens open, and he thought he saw God sitting upon His throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels in the attitude of singing and praising their God. And...he saw One descending out of the midst of heaven, and he beheld that His luster was above that of the sun at noonday.”⁶ Surely we would have followed our father and fed upon His every word as he led us from the comforts of our home to a promised land, more precious than any other. Wouldn't we have willingly suffered the privations of years in the wilderness and to have done all that our father would have commanded us knowing that he spoke for God and that...the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save He shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which He commandeth them.”⁷

Yet, maybe it would have been hard. After all, we would have been wealthy. We would have had all the comforts of life. Nice clothes, good food, all that money could buy. We would have had respect and standing in the community. Our friends would have thought our father was crazy, and we, of course, would have liked our friends. And maybe we would have even liked to do some of the things our father was telling us not to do. Is it possible, that like Laman and Lemuel, we would have murmured, saying, “it is a hard thing which (you) have required of (us).”⁸ Would we have told our father he was a visionary, a man caught up in silly dreams? Would we have gone with our father grudgingly, because at the time we had no other alternative?

How about Joseph Smith? Do we sometimes wish we had been there when he was the prophet? It would have been thrilling to witness the first copies of the Book of Mormon come off the press and to listen first hand to Martin Harris and David Whitmer and Oliver Cowdery as they testified, “That we, through the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, have seen the plates which contain this record. And we also know that they have been translated by the gift and power of God, for His voice hath declared it unto us; wherefore we know of a surety that the work is true. And we also testify that we have seen the engravings which are upon the plates; and they have been shown unto us by the power of God, and not of man. And we declare

with words of soberness, that an angel of God came down from heaven, and he brought and laid before our eyes, that we beheld and saw the plates and the engravings thereon.”⁹

We would have walked and talked with Joseph Smith. We would have heard him testify, "And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of Him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of Him: that He lives. For we saw Him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that He is the Only Begotten of the Father.”¹⁰ With all of the miracles that were wrought around us and with this constant experience with spiritual manifestations, surely we would have followed Joseph to the ends of the earth. Like him and many of the saints, we would have left everything to go to Ohio. Left everything again to go to Missouri. We would have suffered persecution, deprivation and death there, move again and settle, at his direction, in swamp lands in Illinois. We would have been part of Zions camp that hiked hundreds of miles from Kirtland to provide succor to the saints in Missouri. We would have stood up to mobs. We would have obeyed and sustained our prophet.

Wouldn't we?

There were many who didn't. Not all left Kirtland. Some said Joseph was a fallen prophet, and they stayed behind. There were financial problems. Surely the Lord wouldn't let His prophet fail financially, they reasoned. Besides, the Lord doesn't expect us to give up all of our worldly possessions for the sake of His kingdom, does He?

Not all left Missouri. There's going to be no end to this persecution, was the thought, until Joseph is willing to stop putting himself forth as THE mouthpiece of God all the time. Stop calling everybody to repentance. Besides, he should share some of his power here. And so they stayed.

Not all sustained him in Nauvoo. Many grew accustomed to the comforts of nice homes and pleasant conditions. And some asked, why is Joseph rocking the boat with antagonistic doctrines like baptism for the dead, celestial marriage, and as God now is, man may become? And they gossiped and murmured and ceased to sustain him. Some even contributed to his martyrdom.

But we didn't live at the time of Enoch or Noah or Lehi or Joseph Smith. We live now. And there is a prophet on the earth, just like then. And we are called upon to reach into the depths of our souls and ask ourselves the same question that all of those who are given the opportunity to hear a prophet's voice must ask. "Will I follow the prophet?"

On the one hand we can look at our current prophet, Ezra Taft Benson, and say, he is old. He doesn't understand what life is like today. Life styles and values have changed and he is still talking about the same things they talked about in the nineteenth century. He has been too politically controversial and says things that are just his opinion and not doctrine. He is feeble. He speaks so slowly that it is hard to listen to him. Besides, I'm active in church, I pay my tithing,

I live the Word of Wisdom, and what he says really applies to the sinners of the world, not to me.

On the other hand, we can see him as he is. A man just like Enoch or Noah or Lehi or Joseph Smith. A man, who in spite of his human imperfections, has been called and anointed as the Lord's prophet to lead those who would be called after the name of Christ back into His presence.

As I listened to him speak at the last October Conference, he had no energy. He was not eloquent, and his hand was shaking so much that he had to pause to turn each of the pages of his talk. Rather than this being distracting to me, his words seemed to burn upon my soul.

*"What think ye of Christ? Will ye choose to follow Him? The devils believe that Jesus is the Christ, but they choose to follow Lucifer.... How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him. When you choose to follow Christ, you choose to be changed.... I ask of you, my brethren of the church, have ye spiritually been born of God? Have ye received His image in your countenances? Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts? ...If ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, can ye feel so now? ...Men captained by Christ will be consumed in Christ. Their will is swallowed up in His will. They do always those things that please the Lord. Not only would they die for the Lord, but more important they want to live for Him. Enter their homes, and the pictures on their walls, the books on their shelves, the music in the air, their words and acts reveal them as Christians. May we be convinced that Jesus is the Christ, choose to follow Him, be changed for Him, captained by Him, consumed in Him, and born again."*¹¹

It was a prophet of God who was speaking. And he was speaking to me. And he was speaking to you. In April conference this year he again spoke and, like Alma of old, he bore down in pure testimony to the members of the church, calling us to repentance and to strip ourselves of the pride of the world.

What then should I as a priesthood holder do? I will listen and obey. I will follow the prophet. Our prophet is a man just like Enoch or Noah or Lehi or Joseph Smith. A man, who in spite of his human imperfections, has been called and anointed as the Lord's prophet to lead those who would be called after the name of Christ back into His presence.

1. Moses 7:13

2. Moses 6:37

3. Moses 6:31

4. Moses 8:19-20
5. Moses 8:21-24
6. I Nephi 1:8-9
7. I Nephi 3:7
8. I Nephi 3:5
9. Statement of the Three Witnesses
10. Doctrine and Covenants 76:22-23
11. Ensign, October 1985, pp. 5-7

Joseph Smith—A Prophet of God

Observations Abt 2003

JOSEPH'S AGE WHEN HE received certain revelations & accomplished extraordinary things. He was an instrument in the Lord's hands. No man on his own could have done what he did at any time, let alone at these ages & in these circumstances.

Event	Joseph's Age
First Vision	14-15
Moroni's Visit	17
Received the Gold Plates	21
Book of Mormon translated in 60-90 days and published Aaronic Priesthood Restored Melchizedek Priesthood Restored	23
Received key revelations including Doctrine and Covenants 20 Church is Restored Begin "translation" of Bible Book of Moses, including Book of Enoch comes Forth	24
Received key revelations including Doctrine and Covenants 42, 58, 59 Moves to Kirtland along with a handful of Saints Revelation received that Zion is in Jackson County, MO and members are sent to establish it Received 1 st revelations on Celestial/eternal marriage	25
Received key revelations including Doctrine and Covenants 76,84	26
Received key revelations including Doctrine and Covenants 88, 89, 93 Finishes translation of the Bible	27
Saints are driven from Jackson County and Joseph receives important revelations concerning the Church's temporal affairs Revelation for establishing the high council is received	28
Great revelation on the priesthood is received (Doctrine and Covenants 107)	29
Kirtland temple is completed The Savior and key prophets returning keys appear (Doctrine and Covenants 110)	30
Key elements of the Book of Abraham are translated (by this time, more later)	31
Extermination order is issued by Governor Boggs Joseph and other Church leaders imprisoned in Liberty Jail Doctrine and Covenants 121, 122 are received	33
Nauvoo is established and a temple begun Ultimately rivaled the size of Chicago	34
Revelation on work for the dead received (Doctrine and Covenants 128) & revelation on Celestial marriage was recorded (Doctrine and Covenants 132)	36-37
Joseph ran for president of the United States King Follett sermon given (our divine nature & potential, "one of the truly remarkable sermons ever preached in America" Harold Bloom) Joseph was murdered	38
All this while being subject to constant physical, mental, spiritual abuse, traitors within and without, people driven and displaced, property confiscated, lives taken, own children dying, no home of own, law suits and imprisonment	
"Only a person of powerful conviction could have remained productive and hopeful through the discouragements... His people marveled that he did so much when he was just one of them, and his accomplishments – translations, cities, missions, gatherings, priesthoods, temples, cosmologies, governments – are astonishing by any standard. Joseph Smith himself did not take credit for his achievements. All he could speak of were his 'marvelous experiences. It was his calling, as Joseph himself put it, to 'lay a foundation that will revolutionize the whole world.'" (Bushman, JS, p560-561)	

Joseph Smith—Letter to My Children

2005

For Christmas, I gave each our children a copy of Rough Stone Rolling by Richard Bushman along with this note

Other than the scriptures themselves, this book is one of the most impacting books I have read. Richard Bushman is a foremost American cultural historian and carries extraordinary respect among his peers. The reviews of this book from other noted historians are nothing short of spectacular. For a sample, see the back cover. While written from a secular (non-religious) standpoint, it is balanced and honest. It is important to know that Richard Bushman is not only a member of the Church but is a stake patriarch. As you read through the book, just keep in mind this has been meticulously researched, honestly stated, and is written by a man who *knows* that Joseph is a prophet. This is not the work of an apologist, however. There may be things in here that will be uncomfortable reading. Joseph, after all, was human. And that makes what came forth through him all the more miraculous. Pay particular attention to Bushman's observations and conclusions.

Another interesting, even enlightening exercise is to put an age on Joseph during some key events in his life. For example, think of Joseph as being Michael's & Justin's age when he went to the grove to inquire of the Lord. He was about Chelsey's age when Moroni visited him and he began 4 years of intense tutoring. He was Nichole's age (but without her education or access to books) when he translated the entire Book of Mormon in 60-90 days, had it published and received both the Aaronic and Melchisedek priesthoods. He was Dan's age when he restored the Church, began the "translation" of the Bible and brought forth our Book of Moses, including the Book of Enoch. He was Judy's age when he moved the body of the small Church to Kirtland, sent Saints to settle Jackson County and received many key revelations. By the time he was Ben's age he had received extraordinary revelations like Doctrine and Covenants 76, 84, 88, 89, 93, 107 and within a year the Kirtland temple was completed and he was visited by the Savior and prophets who bestowed crucial keys upon him. By the time he was Liza's age he had

been imprisoned in Liberty jail, founded Nauvoo and begun the Nauvoo temple. And when he was about Will's age, he was running for president of the United States, delivered the King Follett sermon and was murdered.

Bushman's concluding words are telling. "(Joseph's) people marveled that he did so much when he was just one of them, and his accomplishments—translations, cities, missions, gatherings, priesthoods, temples, cosmologies, governments—are astonishing by any standard. Joseph Smith himself did not take credit for his achievements. All he could speak of were his 'marvelous experiences.' Perhaps his signal trait was trust in his own inspiration. It was his calling, as Joseph himself put it, to 'lay a foundation that will revolutionize the whole world.'"

I know something of Joseph. My experiences have mirrored many of his though on a much smaller scale. Nonetheless, they have been absolutely real and have allowed me to identify with him in exceptional ways. I can simply state, Joseph was a prophet of God. It happened like he said it did. This I know with certainty.

I love you.

Dad

Joseph Smith-Rough Stone Rolling

2006

MY RESPONSE TO AN active member's criticism of Richard Bushman's book "Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling," because of its portrayal of the Smith family as fortune seekers and Joseph Sr. as a wine bibber.

Hi (member)

Your wife shared with me your thoughts on Bushman's book. I am impressed at your thoroughness. I'll make a couple of comments here indicating a couple of my views of the book. With respect to your specific challenges, it would be interesting for you to bring those up directly to Richard Bushman or perhaps discuss those with Joe Bentley (Newport Beach stake and good friend of your wife's) who really is a Joseph Smith scholar, or Greg Christofferson (Irvine Stake) who has an extensive collection of period correspondence and printed material from Joseph's time.

I personally am not disturbed by Bushman's portrayal of Joseph Sr. with his possible or probable use of alcohol. There is not abundant historical references to draw upon in defining historical personalities. By definition, anytime one writes about historical figures, even when there are extensive journals and eye witness accounts, there is a great deal of supposition on the part of the historian. That is even more so the case when there is very little written material from a variety of "on-the-scene" folks as is the case here. I think I see where Bushman is coming from. He is, after all, a "cultural historian," and from a secular standpoint seeks to define history from the culture in which events are occurring. In the case of his portrayal of the Joseph Smith Sr family, and Joseph Sr. himself, he relies heavily upon the local culture to define them. I think we need to remember that Bushman has strived to be neither apologist or antagonist in this work, but to look at Joseph and his context from the eyes of an objective historian. He may be right in some things, not so right in others. For me, the power of the book comes from at least the following, and there are certainly other points I could make as well.

1. Bushman himself is a believer. Not just a believer but has been a stake president and is currently a stake patriarch and is more than conversant with personal revelation. He has

and does experience on a firsthand basis that which Joseph claims to have experienced. Arguably, he knows more about Joseph Smith, his weaknesses, challenges, temptations, mistakes, and in a word, his humanness, than any other living person. I believe no one has researched Joseph so extensively and so honestly as has Bushman. And he is still a believer.. In fact, apparently strengthened in his beliefs by what he has found about Joseph. This alone ought to give members with fragile testimonies hope and reduce their fear to hear and consider "negative" things about early Church leaders.

2. In one fell swoop, Bushman addressed every negative of substance that has ever been raised about Joseph. Even to the using as references the blatantly antagonistic works of Quinn, Metcalf, Volgal, etc., as well as the ostensibly objective works that are really wolves in sheep clothing like Brody's biography and subsequent revisions. He dealt with them not as an apologist, but as an objective historian, hit them head on, fully and honestly, and in the process rendered virtually every one of them impotent in terms of disproving that Joseph was who he claimed to be. He did this by either putting the allegations into serious question or saying Joseph was human. So was his family. No one, particularly Joseph, ever denied that. As a result, the "negatives" that Bushman acknowledges may have been there makes the miracle of what took place all the more astounding.
3. By placing Joseph in environmental, political, and social context, the extraordinary power of Joseph and who he really was is undeniably brought forth. The histories of Joseph you refer to approach Joseph primarily from a spiritual point of view. They are uplifting, even inspiring, but they are categorically dismissed by the non-believer. The non-believer cannot casually dismiss Bushman's portrayal and conclusions. One cannot read through Bushman's work and conclude anything but this: ***It is impossible for any man to have done what Joseph Smith did.*** The reader may not be "converted," but they will at a minimum walk away from the reading of that book shaking their head in puzzlement. The book, therefore, has the potential of strengthening the "weak" believers, and setting the table of conversion for the skeptic by opening his mind and perhaps eventually his heart.

For me personally, the most impacting aspect of Bushman's portrayal was Joseph's consistency and humility. Joseph knew what he knew. And he never once varied from his objective. Faced with monumental defeat after defeat, disappoint after disappoint and trial after trial, and remember he was only a kid through all of this, he just kept going. He never claimed any credit for that which he did that were accomplishments that by any measure were extraordinary. He knew he was simply given an assignment from God and given the tools, the grace, to do it. Joseph is to be admired and extolled, not because of all of the things he "did," but because he was

given an assignment from God and chose to do it. All the way to the end of his life. Bushman's biography makes that point in the most powerful way I have yet seen.

Obedience To Church Authority

Orange Stake 1975

"BEHOLD VERILY I SAY unto you, for this cause I have sent you, that you might be obedient."¹

Obedience is one of the basic principles of the Gospel and has everything to do with our salvation. To learn obedience is to learn self-mastery. To practice obedience, obedience to parents, obedience to civil laws, obedience to the principles and ordinances of the Gospel, and obedience to our church leaders who we have, by our uplifted hand, and our very membership in the church promised to uphold, sustain and obey, is to become perfect and Godlike. Obedience is an end in and of itself and is a quality that must be developed. The principle of obedience is all encompassing. We cannot selectively choose to obey some true principles, but not others, some church leaders, but not others, or even obey most of the time but not always, and expect to become masters of ourselves. For if this is our nature we have not learned the principle of obedience and are effectively damning ourselves and keeping us from becoming as our Lord and God Jesus Christ who was and is totally obedient and totally subjected to his Father's will.

Those of us who have not quite got the grasp of this divine principle often find ourselves at odds with our local Church authorities on some of their directives. We justify our disobedience and failure to live up to our agreement to sustain by rationalizing: The directive is not general church policy, or nobody expects us to be that perfect, or the directive has nothing to do with our spiritual wellbeing, or it is so small and inconsequential as to not matter whether we obey it or not.

I believe that disobedience even with respect to the smallest directive is never inconsequential. Disobedience is contrary to the basic Law of God, and disobedience, whatever its form, can bring misery, unhappiness, and eventually spiritual death. Nearly one hundred years ago my great great grandfather Anderson settled in the upper Snake River valley in Idaho. He built what in those days would be considered a large cabin and raised his family. He had a strong testimony of the gospel, but he was also stubborn. His daughter got married and as was the custom he provided a wedding dance in his home to celebrate the event. The handtied rag carpets were rolled back, and the dancing commenced. Now the bishop of his ward had

established a rule about dances that he insisted be followed. There was not to be more than two round dances (that is slow dances) in an evening. All the rest were to be fast moving like square dances and Virginia Reels. He apparently felt the slow dances gave couples too much opportunity to become intimate. But whatever the reason, that was the rule. The rule was to be broken that night. The bride chose for her special bride/father dance, a waltz, and there were two other round dances that evening. The 2nd counselor in the Bishopric was in attendance and reported the three slow dances to the Bishop. The next Sunday the Bishop spoke to my grandfather: "You broke the rule Brother Anderson," the Bishop admonished, "and I would like for you to get up in sacrament meeting and apologize and ask the ward's forgiveness."

But my grandfather didn't see it that way. "I didn't do anything wrong", he replied, "and I have nothing to apologize for."

And with that he left. He didn't come back to church for six months. Finally, one Sunday as he watched his family get ready for church, he broke down and began to cry. His wife said, "Come on, Pa. Do what the bishop asks and apologize to the ward. You are so miserable and unhappy. He put on his Sunday clothes and went to church with his family. "I'll do it," he said to the bishop as he arrived at church, "but I still can't see any harm in having three round dances." He got up in front of the ward and apologized and resumed his previous good relationship with the bishop and the Church.

When I first heard that story and for a long time thereafter, I admit I sided with my grandfather. I said, "Way to go Grandpa. Way to stick to your guns. What a silly bishop. What a dumb rule." But you see, I had missed the whole point. It was my grandfather who was in the wrong. Oh, I don't know whether the two slow dance rule was even a good rule, but the point was that it was the rule. And that it had been established by the bishop who my grandfather had pledged to sustain and obey. By having three slow dances my grandfather disobeyed his bishop. He reneged on his promise to the Lord and to the bishop to sustain his Church leader. And to make matters worse, for six months he refused to obey his Church leader with regards to publicly apologizing and asking the ward to forgive him. Disobeying a small directive is never inconsequential. My grandfather's decision to not obey gave him six months of misery. It gave his family six months of misery. And how did it make the Bishop feel? What effect do you think it had on the other members of the ward? How did it effect the unity of the ward? And what kind of thoughts and attitudes began to develop in my grandfather's children?

The other day I received a call from a man I hadn't talked to in two years. He had been a member of one of the wards in our stake. Ward boundaries had changed since I last talked to him so I asked him which ward he was in now. "Oh, I'm not a member of the Church anymore," he responded. "When they split wards they wanted me to go to one of the Tustin wards, but that is just geographic dictatorship. No one can tell me where I have to go to church. So I just quit the Church.

It is sad that this man's unwillingness to obey a simple directive from his presiding church authorities may cost him his ultimate happiness. I was talking to a close friend who is now a bishop in Salt Lake City. He was telling me that his stake president had requested that all bishopric members and priesthood leaders wear white shirts and ties on Sunday. A member of his ward who was affected by the request said, "He can't tell us how to dress. That's going too far. Wearing a white shirt has nothing to do with my priesthood responsibility, and I'm not going to do it." My friend replied, "Brother, I kind of look at it this way. There are so many of the commandments that are hard to keep consistently that when an easy one like wearing white shirts and ties comes along, I willingly do it all the way, hoping I can make points that I've lost as I struggle with some of the hard ones."

In a facetious way, my bishop friend summarized the importance of the basic principle of obeying church authority: The very act of obedience develops self-control and strengthens and increases our ability to keep even the most difficult commandments we are given.

If we can't muster the control necessary to observe white shirts, shorter hair, or two slow dances a night directives, how can we expect to keep the weightier commandments such as developing patience, keeping ourselves pure, developing true charity toward all mankind, etc. Obedience for obedience's sake is a valid reason and justification for obeying church authorities. But it isn't the only reason.

At the last June conference President Tanner said: "I want to emphasize that Satan has pledged himself to destroy mankind and the work of the Lord, and with his cohorts and through evil and designing men is having great success. He is using governments, courts, radio and television, newspapers, magazines, movies, immodest fashions, appetites and passions. ... The Lord, on the other hand, has given us a plan, or blueprint and has told us how we can save ourselves from this destruction *through the organizations he has set up*.... Most importantly, he has given us a Prophet to lead and guide us and encourage us and counsel us to accept the Lord's way of life."²

What does obedience to our Church authorities do for us then? It protects us from the influence of the world and the wiles of Satan. It gives us the strength and support to be in the world but not of the world. It gives us the avenue whereby we may overcome and enter into the rest of our God. Why is total obedience to Church authorities so important? Because *they are almost always right*. They may be no smarter than the average member, they may have no more experience than many of those who they have responsibilities for, but they have something that no one else has. The keys to officiate in that responsibility. They are therefore entitled to specific revelation regarding that calling and the wellbeing of those in their care. And if they are living worthy, I testify they will receive revelation. They will be guided in their decisions and admonitions, and those who are in their jurisdiction will be blessed by obeying them.

Does this mean our church authorities never make mistakes or never err in their judgments? No it doesn't. Mistakes are made. They are learning just as we are learning. A bishop doesn't just

automatically become a perfect bishop as soon as he is given the bishop's mantle, no more than we automatically become perfect individuals just by being placed here on this earth. There is a process of learning, of developing, of refining, of suffering, of perfecting, of making mistakes and learning from those mistakes.

Are we then to obey blindly regardless of whether or not we feel the directive is a "mistake?" There is not a simple answer to that question. Godly obedience is not blind obedience. It requires us to live our lives so that we are in tune with our Heavenly Father and are dependent on individual revelation for guidance in our daily lives. We will not then ever be led astray by men who may be in a position of authority in the church who would deceive us or make attempts to pull us away from the Church's teachings. Individual revelation then is our prime test as to the rightness of any directive given to us by a Church authority. However, there are also other standards we have been given by which we can measure all directives from our church authorities.

- Is it in conformity with basic church doctrines as outlined in the standard works.
- Is it in harmony with procedures and directives established by the next highest church authority.
- Is it in harmony with the directives given by our present prophet.

If a directive given to us by any church authority meets these three basic standards *or is not in conflict with these standards*, then we have the responsibility to obey it whether or not we like the directive or rule, whether or not we think it is the best way to accomplish the given purpose of the directive, or even whether or not we think there is any need for the directive. We have pledged to sustain and obey our church authorities. Our leaders need our total support. Our strength comes in being unified. Our personal spiritual growth is directly related to the Church blessing us and strengthening us and helping us to learn the attributes of the Savior.

There is another reason why obedience to church authorities is so important. It has to do with example. Our role as parents involves teaching our children by word and by example. Our teaching the word means nothing if the example is not there. Some time ago while I visited one of the teacher's quorums in the stake, the adviser was teaching a lesson on prayer and scripture reading. He admonished the young men in the quorum to say their personal private prayers to the Lord at least night and morning, and to read the scriptures daily. One boy raised his hand and said, "Brother so and so do you do those things?"

There was a moment's hesitation as that adviser looked squarely into the eyes of the young teacher. "Yes I do," was the firm reply. There was the lesson. How much effect would the adviser's words have had on those young men if he was not doing what he was admonishing them to do?

Obedience is a choice. A choice to be one with those who choose to follow truth and righteousness. It is the foundational law upon which all of God's directives are based.

1. Doctrine and Covenants 58:6

2. June Conf. June 29, 1975

Some Challenges Faced By Leaders

Orange Stake Early 2000s

DISCUSSION WITH PRIESTHOOD LEADERS

- **Avoiding conflict** rather than acknowledging that it exists and seeking to directly and unambiguously resolve it
 - Under the rationalization of seeking “harmony” and “peace” by avoiding the resolution of differences and conflicts, misunderstandings build, tensions become more frequent and more intense, frustration and even animosity results. Invariably the conflict is magnified in just about every conceivable way, relationships are soured, and the work is significantly impaired.
- **Unresponsive** rather than acknowledging quickly the receipt of a request or observation made by another and giving them an assurance that the concern will be responded to in a timely manner
 - Under the rationalization of “being wise” and “taking time to consider,” the leader’s lack of response leaves the petitioner feeling neglected, undervalued, ignored, and his/her advice and counsel unimportant and lacking in meaning.
- **Ambivalent** rather than making clear, unmistakable statements and decisions when strong differences of opinion exist
 - Under the rationalization of being “flexible” and “non-judgmental” a leader exacerbates and even creates conflict by leaving parties who have differing views the impression that each is “right” and that they are free to proceed how they want.
- **Short sighted in helping “the one”** rather than looking at the needs of the one in the

context of the needs of others who will be affected by the actions taken to aid the one

- Under the rationalization of being “caring,” “feeling,” “a savior,” to an individual who has caught the attention of a leader, the leader both ignores the needs of those whose challenges are less obvious and often adds to those challenges by negatively affecting the circumstances they were counting on to help them with those challenges.
- **Unilaterally acting to get things done** rather than directly involving those who share leadership responsibility in making key policy and procedural decisions
 - Under the rationalization of being a “doer” and “knowing what is best,” a leader, by not involving others who have shared leadership responsibilities, makes decisions that run a greater risk in being unwise and counterproductive; and, creates a lack of leadership unity and inconsistency that is detrimental to the work which the leaders oversee.

Some Thoughts On The Priesthood

(Quotes from Elder Russell M. Nelson)

WHEREFORE, NOW LET EVERY man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence¹

“The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is neither a democracy nor a republic. His is a kingdom—the kingdom of God on earth. His is a hierarchical church, with ultimate authority at the top. The Lord directs His anointed servants.”

“They who receive ordinations or callings have obligations of obedience, loyalty, and understanding of the power of the priesthood.”

“Honoring the priesthood also means to honor your personal call to serve:

- Do learn to take counsel. Seek direction from file leaders and receive it willingly.
- Don’t speak ill of Church leaders.
- Don’t covet a calling or position.
- Don’t second-guess who should or should not have been called.
- Don’t refuse an opportunity to serve.
- Don’t resign from a call.
- Do inform leaders of changing circumstances in your life, knowing that leaders will weigh all factors when prayerfully considering the proper timing of your release.”

“The potential of the priesthood is so vast that our comprehension of it is a challenge.”

1. Doctrine & Covenants 107:99

The Miracle of Imperfect Church Leaders

Thought

WHICH STATEMENTS AND ACTIONS of church leaders we dwell on says more about us than about them. To acknowledge that our leaders are human does not mean that we need dwell on their humanness. In fact, among other things, wart-focusing seems to be our way of excusing our own inadequacies. It not only can potentially damage our own testimony but can divert others from the true source of peace and fulfillment, Jesus Christ. Even more problematic is when this diversion is done purposely, with the intent to distract or detract others. Indeed, this is both intellectually and spiritually dishonest. The warts are taken out of context via magnification and occupy the whole view, or at least so much of it that nothing else matters. The wart-focuser will ultimately be fully answerable for this. It is one thing to warp one's own vision. It is quite another to try to poke out the spiritual eyes of another.

On the other hand, it is misguided or even dishonest to maintain that humanness in our leaders does not exist. Such action is not only disingenuous but distorts the journey to perfection that all of us, leaders and non-leaders alike, must follow. Such a sugar-coated view simply sends the wrong message to the members of the Church as they seek to wend their way toward their divine potential. We all struggle. Revering and respecting another, including Church leaders, comes when we see the “whole package,” or at least a realistic package, warts and all. Moroni speaks for all of our great leaders when he acknowledged his weaknesses and asked us to learn from them.¹

There is another serious problem to whitewashing both the actions and opinions of individual leaders as well as Church administration as a whole. We get a distorted picture of how God operates in the telestial world. He works through imperfect beings. He has nothing else to work with. Importantly, we are here to learn and choose and that requires a process of finding out what we don't want along with what we do want through our experiences. And that is the miracle of it all. Ultimately, His purposes are brought about in spite of our failings, including our leaders'. To know this builds tolerance and patience with ourselves as we deal with our own

challenges as well as tolerance, patience, and empathy for others, including our leaders, in their failings and inadequacies as they are in the becoming who they ultimately want to be process.

The picture of Church leaders and the Church as a whole that we choose to paint and/or dwell on says everything about us. About our own desires. To choose to build by focusing on the extraordinary revelations and doctrines and principles and ordinances and truths and successes and good works embodied in the Church says everything about the direction we want to head. And to acknowledge and be grateful for the miracle of grace that is so consistently and powerfully manifest in our imperfect leaders brings us hope as we deal with our own personal struggles with the world and the flesh.

It isn't that we do not acknowledge the warts. We do. We just know that in the end they don't matter at all. They automatically come to us here in the telestial world as we are seeking to find who we want to be eternally. And if they don't matter at all, then when all is said and done, why would we want to say and do anything more about them than we need to? If we want to follow Jesus Christ fully, we will learn from them and humbly and with love sustain others as they struggle with their less than celestial minds and bodies. Just like we do.

1. See Mormon 9:31

MISCELLANEOUS THOUGHTS, EXPERIENCES, OBSERVATIONS

Meeting With Kent Anderson, Nazarene Minister

Orange Stake 1988

KENT CALLED ME TO during the previous week. He had been up to Provo and had been to the MTC and had bought "two boxes" of books up there and was reading them. He was extremely impressed with the Latter-day Saints and wanted to talk to me about how we implement our emergency preparedness program in the church. I invited him to meet me at our stake offices and took him in the high council room where there were these beautiful pictures of the Savior.

Although the surface intent of the meeting was to show him what we were doing to help our members with emergency preparedness, it became obvious that that wasn't the "real" reason he wanted to meet with me. I gave him our stake's booklet on welfare, but the time was spent in him telling me about how much he admired the Church and his awareness of the fact that we were implementing Christ's teachings.

He said that he was "getting into trouble" with his fellow ministers because of his positive attitude about the Mormons. His response to them was, "We profess Christ and teach His principles, but the Mormons are implementing them."

He wanted to know how we did it? He kept using the word, "discipline" "How do you discipline your people to do it. He wanted to know what disciplinary actions we took if an individual did not do as instructed. I explained to him (and I repeated this at least 1/2 dozen times through our conversation) that this was the church of Jesus Christ, that it was true, and that its members for the most part, have the Holy Ghost with them because they want to live the truth and consequently follow the truth. I quoted Joseph Smith, "I teach them correct principles, and they govern themselves." I emphasized that the purpose of the church was to show those who desired to come unto Christ, how to do it.

He kept asking me the same question, only in different form.

For example, missionaries. He couldn't get over 19 year old young men being willing to take 2 years of their life at their own expense to go out and testify of Jesus. He said if he had a 19 year old in his congregation tell him he wanted to do that, all he could do would be pat him on the shoulder and tell him, "God bless you." and that was all because there was nothing his church could do to help the young man lose himself in Christ. How did our church get our young men to do this?

Home teaching: He couldn't get over the fact that 70 to 80% of our entire congregation is visited by home teachers and visiting teachers each month. The dedication of the people to do this was more than he could comprehend. How do you get them to do this?

Seminary: He couldn't understand how we could get teenagers to get up 5 days a week for 6:00 a.m. seminary. How do you do it?

I kept telling him the same answer: This is the Lord's church and these people want to become like Jesus Christ.

I gave him examples of people helping people, responding to calls for help.

I told him that the people don't do these things out of fear of discipline, but out of love. I explained that the temple was reserved for members who were willing to live "higher laws" but that there was no coercion and that if you visited a congregation, you couldn't tell those with recommends from those without. I explained the questions that we asked those who wanted a temple recommend. Again he was amazed at the commitment and willingness to do things without "force" or discipline.

He then went on to say that he was a PhD in New Testament studies and that he understood the main message of the New Testament to be to love. And that the Latter-day Saints, unlike his church, had internalized that and were practicing that. He said he used the church as an example to his congregation constantly and, in fact, was in some ecclesiastical hot water with some of his fellow ministers. (He was head minister at the Church of the Nazarene on 17th street in Santa Ana)

He then talked about Joseph Smith. He said it is easy to call Joseph Smith a hoax or an imposter, but it isn't so easy to explain what he did. He said, "How did Joseph come up with the system that he did?" It certainly didn't exist in the other churches. Did he glean the good things and make up things where there were inadequacies? He said, Joseph Smith was a GREAT man. There was no getting around that fact. And, he said, Brigham Young was a GREAT man.

I was impressed with his honesty. I asked him if he had a copy of the Book of Mormon. He said he had 4 copies. Including a 4 in 1 and that he had read it. He did not doubt its truthfulness, or at least did not express that to me. I bore strong testimony as to its truthfulness. I told him I had read it many times, had studied it from every aspect, and that it was true. I also gave him a

copy of my book, "The Mission." I told him I would like to talk to him again and gave him my card. He said he would like to talk to me also.

I decided to try to get him to take a CD with computerized LDS scriptures. If he would, he would see Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price references every time he pulled up anything of value to do his sermons. I subsequently did give him that CD and he used it.

Kaye's Letter to Rolf

Completing 50 mile run 1983

YOU ASKED YOURSELF YESTERDAY near the end of eighteen hours and fifty miles, "Why am I doing this?" Someday you will know fully the value of yesterday and all fifty miles, but in the meantime let me share with you some values I could see.

First of all, I am extremely proud of you. I have loved you all my life but watching you struggle against physical and emotional pain yesterday, my respect for you rose tremendously. You were engaged in a real battle. The one against yourself. And you won. Making our bodies do what we want them to do is just about the whole reason for being on this earth. You were committed to a task and saw it right through to the very end. You were in that fifty miles *alone*, even though others came and went along the way. Could you see that when the last three miles came—perhaps the longest of the night and day—your family came to walk by your side? We couldn't take away the pain, nor ease the task you had to do, but we came to show our support, our caring, our concern, and to let you know that you don't have to do it *all* alone.

You demonstrated that you know a great deal about commitment. When you start something it matters that you do all you can to finish.

You showed the value of a healthy physical body. Your strength and stamina are really remarkable, but you have also worked hard to keep it that way.

You chose companions to be with who wanted the same things you did. Choosing friends in all other parts of life is just as important. It is impossible to reach goals on this earth or in the eternities if we follow friends who want to take other roads, or want to walk backwards, or who sell shortcuts. There are no shortcuts in fifty miles.

You remained cheerful. When we saw you, though the pain and exhaustion were obvious, you smiled at us. And several times in the next two hours you smiled again. At that time, you did not complain.

As you fell in to bed to welcome sleep you said two very important things: When I asked how the morning looked as it came you talked about having reached the halfway point and watching

the light on the mist as it rose from Utah Valley. Your tone of voice and your words spoke of the great joy of seeing the beauties of this earth, and of the beauty of the morning after a long, wearing night. The second thing you said was, "It was fun." Your positive attitude so quickly after the pain were so impressive to me. Thank you for that lesson.

So, though I was afraid to let you have the adventure, I now approve wholeheartedly of the experience. I 'm proud of you, my young man son.

Love, Mother

Last Lecture by Kaye Terry Hanson

Provo 2008

IN A MEETING WITH several Seventies a couple of weeks ago I heard Elder Jay Jensen say that when a Seventy retires he is given a few moments to give his last talk to his brethren. They call the talk “Things of My Soul.” In academia we call that last appearance before students our Last Lecture. Let’s consider 13 items that I want my students to hear in my Last Lecture.

1. Be present.

In this busy world of multitasking, being present is more and more difficult. We live under the illusion that we can do more than one thing at once and give all things enough attention. We have classrooms of people behind their laptop computers doing email at the same time they supposedly are listening to principles being taught. We switch back and forth between job and home or family and friends in our minds until focus on either one is difficult.

In a world that does too much, it is really hard to be present. We are merely really good at pretending we are not absent....Being absent means you’re not there. Your body might be there, you may see yourself and hear yourself, but you are somewhere else. You are not feeling, not experiencing, not absorbing what there is to absorb from that moment. Being present, on the other hand, means you are paying attention and experiencing all the nuances of the moment. These nuances may be your own emotions or the satisfaction that comes from listening fully, learning from every experience and surrendering to the unexpected.

-Take a deep breath

-Know the signals (recognize when you are spinning out of attention and do what you have to do to focus again)

-Avoid triggers (once you recognize when you are not present, start observing what are the things that cause your lack of attentiveness, nip the source of these problems in the bud)

-Be complete in each task or communication (finish one thing at a time, don't work on several things at a time. If you must move on, jot down what you have to do so you can mentally leave the thing you have not finished and focus attentively on the new item)

-Purge often (whether it is your computer, your belongings, or your papers. My sweet step-mother passed away in December. My sister and I are going through our parents' home to sort things to be thrown away. My sister wants to throw away nothing. I want to throw away everything. What is right is probably somewhere in between, but the throwing away needs to occur for us to move on.)

-Delegate (you don't have to do everything yourself)

-Find your transitions (learn how to move from one thing to the next. Do you need to debrief? Take a breath? Make some notes?)

"Being a working mom who transitions from one role to the other several times a day, I am especially aware of presenting myself. I will not enter an interaction with one of my children if business is still plaguing my mind. I take a deep breath and focus fully on my child. That way I avoid taking out any stress or frustration on my kids. I learned early on that if I pretended to pay attention to my child when I was carrying a business concern in my mind, I would become irritated with the little person and was sending a message that I did not really want to be with them."¹

2. Understand quote by Shimon Peres

When I lived in Jerusalem I learned to respect and admire Shimon Peres. He stepped in as Prime Minister when Izaak Rabin was assassinated. He served as Prime Minister until elections were held and the opposition Likud Party won the elections. Still I admired him. Now, some 13 years later, Shimon Peres has been appointed President of the State of Israel in his eighties. He says this: "After being 60 years in politics, I lost my taste for management," he said. "I do believe that to inspire is more important than to manage. And to influence is more important than to give orders."² I agree.

3. Remain teachable

Some years ago in the Edgemont 14th Ward our bishop told the priests that they were completely responsible for the sacrament in the ward. The two priest assistants accepted the bishop's assignment and asked if they could teach the high priests what was expected of those who administered at the sacrament table. The bishop readily agreed, and then watched the two young men go in to the high priests group and talk about wearing white shirts, knowing where the sacrament trays were carried, being reverent. In our ward, that roomful of high priests that contains former mission presidents, former stake presidents, and former bishops, was taught the duty of caring for the Lord's supper by two sixteen-year-old young men.

I love that the bishop gave the assignment and encouraged the priests to carry it out. I love that the priests knew their duty, and I love that those grown mature men in the high priests group with years and years of Church experience allowed themselves to be taught. I'm amazed at how the priesthood brotherhood teaches those who are growing into responsibility.

Yesterday, in my Edgemont 14th Ward, an amazing thing occurred in relationship to the Sacrament. Because last week was General Conference we weren't there. This week happens to fall on the weekend of spring break from schools. As we looked around at the beginning we were aware that the room was partially empty of the families with school age children. But not until the sacrament song did we realize that no one was sitting at the sacrament table and the row of deacons was 5 deacons short.

As we sang, we saw the second counselor in the bishopric move down to serve at the sacrament table, then a young father comes from the audience, then the only priest in the congregation saw what is happening and took his place at the table. There was no conversation, no signaling, just response to recognizing a need. Then several exchanges took place in the row of deacons. First, five high priests joined the young men in the row. Then two teachers who had been preparing the sacrament table came to the row of deacons and two high priests get up to return to their seats. As the sacrament song ended, I was amazed to see the young deacons teaching the mature high priests where each person should serve in the room. Then everything went smoothly and reverently through the regular sacrament service.

Later, one of the high priests who had served bears his testimony, clearly moved by the experience. "I have never," he said, "passed the sacrament in my life. I joined the Church when I was grown, and this opportunity never came until today. I keep thinking about the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles blessing and passing the sacrament in the temple each Thursday. I feel so blessed." He allowed himself to be taught.

4. Thank, at least, at the level we plead for relief

When my son and his wife were fairly newly married they search intently for my son's second job. After several weeks of interviews and leads, we three fasted together, prayed every day, and went to the temple. One day the job came. Not the job he still has, but the one that led to the job he still has that has blessed his life. I took them out to eat to celebrate on the day my son landed that job and we talked about thanking our Father in Heaven at the same level we pled for the blessing. How many times do we fast just to say, "Thank you?" How many times do we go to the temple to say, "Thank you?" I believe the Lord loves a grateful heart.

5. Remember, over time, things don't look the same

When I was a growing up in Beaver, Utah, we had no videos. In fact we had no television at all until I was 16. We went to the Firmage Theater for entertainment and they changed their showings three times a week, so we really got to see a lot of movies if we wanted to.

I remember an early movie, *Gone With The Wind*, that I saw with my parents. I was about seven years old the first time I saw it. But I vividly remember a little girl named Bonnie Blue who had a little blue riding habit and a pony. She died from a fall from that pony after jumping a little low jump. That was all I could remember.

In those days movies were recycled every seven years. So the second time the movie was released I was about 14. I remember loving Scarlett O'Hara's clothes. Oh, they were wonderful. Huge hoop skirts that floated out behind her when she ran across the green of Tara. I wanted huge skirts like that.

I saw the movie again when I was about 21. Then I was taken with the romance between Scarlett and Rhett Butler. How beautiful she was, how handsome, and how volatile their love story. When I was 28 I was teaching high school in Omaha, Nebraska, on the Near North Side. My students, whom I loved, were all black students, and we were experiencing the height of the civil rights movement together. I excitedly told them about this movie that was a classic for my theater class to see. So one afternoon we left school early. Honestly, I can't believe I was so obtuse, but it didn't even occur to me how the slaves in *Gone With The Wind* would look to my students. I saw social issues in a light I had completely missed before.

By the time I was 35 I discovered Scarlett was a spoiled miserable person and I longed to emulate the character of the patient caring Melanie whom Scarlett dismissed as mealy-mouthed. When I was in my forties videotape had been invented, and I was delighted that I could rent any movie I wanted any time I wanted. I watched *Gone With The Wind* and was disappointed that I didn't care for it at all.

The point is this. Nothing about *Gone With The Wind* had changed. It was the same movie every single time. I, however, was different. I was growing, I was changing, and things didn't look the same from my different points of view.

6. Realize that the Spirit will not be forced; only invited.

7. Remember, things may not be what they seem.

Teaching has been a great part of my life. Years ago, when I was a new teacher in Omaha Nebraska, the teachers' organization brought in Jonathan Kozol, author of *Death at an Early Age*, as a speaker. He has written several excellent books about educating the downtrodden since. On that day he told us of a group of orphaned preschoolers who had the misfortune to be in the care of a state that ran out of money to provide for them. Each of the orphaned children had been diagnosed with learning difficulties. In a pinch, they put those 8 or 10 preschoolers in with the mentally ill women. Those women had nothing to offer the children but love. And that they gave freely. They lavished attention, words, hugs, comfort, nurturing on the children. After some time together, when they tested the children again, all were well within normal

ranges of intelligence. In fact, as I recall the story, every one of the orphaned children went on to graduate from high school and attend college. They succeeded because they knew they could.

I am aware of another situation that intrigues me of a second grade teacher who went in her school to the teacher of the first grade and asked, "Please tell me who the six smartest children in the class are. The first grade teacher, not liking that system, purposefully gave the names of her six *slowest* students, and said they were the smartest. And guess what? By the end of second grade those six *were* the smartest students in second grade because they had been treated all year as though they were.

Things are not always what they seem. The way we treat people (helps) them become what we expect from them.

8. Look for the leaven.

I served on the Young Women General Board for five years. We trained other Young Women leaders all over the country and one of my trainings led me to the home of my girlhood in Beaver, Utah, where I had been a young woman myself. I remember in the course of teaching that I was prompted to ask how many people in the audience spoke another language. So many hands went up. So many brought the experiences from another part of the world home to enrich everything and everyone.

Similarly, as I taught Theater History for many years in the Theater Department at BYU I would discuss something about theater in France, or in Thailand, or in Greece, and inevitably a student would raise a hand and say, "Let me explain why the people in France find Moliere so funny," or "The reason the people in Thailand look for beauty is because of the poverty some of them live in." Always we were enriched and understood more.

Everyone has something to give; it isn't only languages or world experience. If we look for what we can learn from everyone, from *anyone*, we will be enriched and more able to understand the world we live in.

9. Remember, the Lord will open doors for you.

When I finished my course work for my PhD in Theater, I called my home teacher the night before my oral exams to come give me a blessing. As he laid his hands on my head I asked him to let me know what I should do next. I remember his words as he blessed me, "The Lord will open doors in front of you."

Of course.

And that has been my experience. Doors I couldn't even imagine have opened. Opportunities I never dreamed of have been laid at my feet. Sometimes they looked too difficult or I knew I

was too busy, or the timing didn't seem right, but the doors were open in front of me time and again. *The blessing comes in our learning which doors to walk through.*

10. Elizabethan times had many writers.

Most English speakers claim that Shakespeare is the greatest writer in the English language. Shakespeare lived in interesting times that encouraged and fostered his creativity. Queen Elizabeth I loved theater. She commissioned plays herself. That encouragement as well as the delight in live theater exhibited by the people of London made several gifted playwrights at the time. Thomas Kyd, Christopher Marlowe, Thomas Greene, Ben Jonson, and several others were all excellent writers. In fact, if Shakespeare weren't among them, we would be reading the others with great admiration.

The point is this. Choose something you like to do and do it with others who are good at it, too. You will inspire each other. You will learn from each other. You will enjoy what you are doing more than if you are stingy with your questions and ideas. In short, we each make each other better by encouraging others to do their best as well.

11. Realize that you can't hurry some things.

When I was twelve years old Beaver opened a public swimming pool. I loved it there and soon learned to swim. By the time I was fourteen I worked in the office handing out baskets for swimmers' clothing and accepting dimes for payment to swim. By the next year I began to lifeguard and to teach swimming lessons.

Over the years I taught most of the children in Beaver how to swim. Gradually I discovered a principle that I've thought about many times since. If a person, child or adult, came to me to learn to swim and I spent 30 minutes a day in the pool with them for five days, by the end of the week I could have them swimming across the pool on their own. I've done it many times. However, I have never taught anyone to swim in 2 ½ hours straight. What is it that happens when they are out of the pool? They aren't swimming, they aren't practicing, they probably aren't even consciously thinking about swimming. Yet they learn to swim by the end of the week.

I've thought about this principle similarly when I look at our marvelous babies and realize that no amount of encouragement, force, or practice will make a child walk any earlier than it does. Yet they all learn to walk. Some things simply take time.

12. Read the scriptures, listen, learn.

A German member of the Church used to tell me that she couldn't remember anything in the scriptures that she read. Then she said that for her, reading the scriptures was like taking a basket to the river to get water. By the time she got home the basket was empty, but "*wenigstens der*

Korb wird rein.” At least the basket gets clean. Now I believe that applies to anything wonderful or trustworthy or beautiful that we read or hear or understand but can’t remember specifically afterward. At least the basket gets clean.

13. Joseph in Egypt, Genesis 39-45

The scriptures are full of teachings for us. I think of Joseph and his certain dismay at his brothers’ behavior toward him. I think of his finding himself *sold* into Egypt, a place where he doesn’t even speak the language. I think of his heartbreak there, and his certain prayers to the only God he knows—one that isn’t in the life of the Egyptians. I think of his integrity to do what is right even when he is the only one. How he served Potiphar, a man who *bought* him. How he refused Potiphar’s wife, who then lied to trap him after he slipped out of his coat and left it there when he escaped from her enticements. I think of his languishing for *years* in jail until he became so trusted that he supervised other prisoners. At that point he interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh’s baker and butcher and they were released, one to freedom, one to death. Still, it was two years later before Pharaoh’s baker heard that Pharaoh had a dream and told him of a prisoner who had interpreted for him.

When Joseph told Pharaoh that they would have 7 years of plenty then 7 years of famine Pharaoh made Joseph his servant in charge of preparing the kingdom through the years of plenty. Meanwhile, two years into the famine part of that, Joseph’s brothers in Canaan were hungry. They went to Egypt to get help and Joseph recognized them, but he didn’t let on who he was. On their second trip to get food Joseph insisted that they bring their youngest brother with them if they want any more from him. In Genesis 42:21-24 we read this:

“And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us.

“And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? Therefore, behold, also his blood is required.

“And they knew not that Joseph understood them; for he spake unto them by an interpreter.

“And he turned himself about from them, and wept; and returned to them again, and communed with them, and took from them Simeon and bound him before their eyes.”

Then, to get Simeon back, they had to bring Benjamin down to Egypt. Their father was distraught with letting Benjamin go, but he finally did it. And Benjamin “rose up, and went down to Egypt, and stood before Joseph.” (Gen 43:15) “And [Joseph] lifted up his eyes, and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother’s son, and said, Is this your younger brother, of whom ye spake unto me? And he said, God be gracious unto thee, my son.

“And Joseph made haste: for his bowels did yearn upon his brother and he sought where to weep; and he entered into his chamber, and wept there.” (Gen 43:29-30)

Joseph seats them all at dinner and eats apart from them because an “Egyptian” cannot eat with a Hebrew. Then the brothers try to talk Joseph into letting them all go back to Canaan.

“Then, Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren.

“And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard.

“And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence.

“And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt.

“Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.

“For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest.

“And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

“So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and He hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.”³

How was Joseph able to develop his relationship with his Father in Heaven when he was so alone in the alien world of Egypt? How was he able to forgive his brothers? How did he come to know why he had been sent to Egypt? And that it was God’s will for him to be there? And how did he develop wisdom and power and confidence when he was so immeasurable oppressed.

I believe the 13 concepts we’ve talked about are related to each other and have bearing on what makes us who we are.

I bear you my witness that God lives, that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is true, that our Father in Heaven has a specific plan for each of us and our errand is to let ourselves be instruments in His hands.

1. Laura Berman Fortgang, InterCoach, Inc., Montclair, NJ, 2001

2. Interview on *All Things Considered* on NPR, July 30, 2007
3. Genesis 45:1-8

The Far and Near

Kaye BYU Devotional 2002

TWO PARTS OF MY university education introduce my subject today. The first I remember from my BYU freshman English class, where I had an excellent teacher. We wrote essays that were due every Friday, and, at that point, I hoped someday to be a writer. I had enjoyed some success with my writing during my 18 years. I had won a prize here and there, and my parents certainly thought I wrote well. So I welcomed writing that essay every week—at first.

Somehow my teacher was more critical than my parents were. No matter how I tried, I couldn't seem to please him. Finally, one week I poured everything I had into three pages and handed it in, only to receive it back simply dripping with red ink and caustic comments about choosing something to write about that could be tackled in three pages. "Limit your subject," he wrote, and "Write about something you understand." There were exclamation points to help me see the fervor of his comments, and I was stunned to receive what I considered a failing grade. I had hoped to touch his heart with my stirring three-page treatise encompassing all anyone would need to know about democracy.

With a crisp remembrance of that experience in my mind, I broach my subject today with real trepidation. I will talk about eternal perspective—which brings me to the second part of my university education that I want to share with you.

As an undergraduate English major at BYU I read a lot. In an early class on learning how to analyze literature, we read a short story by Thomas Wolfe called "The Far and the Near." Wolfe wrote about a train engineer who drove the same line for 20 years. At a certain crossing he had to blow the whistle, and then, just ahead, every day a woman stepped out of her cottage and waved to him with a high, happy hand. He looked forward to that distant encounter every day. Soon the woman came to wave with a child by her side, then, over the years, the little girl grew bigger until now she was a grown woman, too.

The cottage where the woman lived was neat and tidy with flowers growing around it. The woman waved summer or winter, sunny days or gray, and the man promised himself that someday he would go meet the woman who had been such a bright spot in his life.

Finally the day came. Retired from responsibility, he got off the train at the little town one day and walked the country road to where the woman lived. He was shocked to find that it was all unfamiliar, not at all as he had imagined it. In fact, when he got up enough courage to knock at the door, he found the woman who greeted him at the door was not beautiful, not free. Life's hardships had made her pinched and sullen and ugly. After struggling to explain why he was there, he left disappointed, beaten, and sad.

I have thought about that story many times over the years, looking at it this way and that, considering what it means to look at something from far away and then close-up. I discover that I am uncomfortable with Thomas Wolfe's conclusions and with the "unfinished" look, which communicates that something is wonderful from far away but ugly when seen close-up. I am concerned with our often jaundiced view of one another and our assumptions that one close-up look brings enough information to make clear judgments. I now realize that both the far view and the near view by Mr. Wolfe's engineer were false because he did not look with eyes of truth. Suppose he had used eyes of truth that would allow him to see from an eternal perspective—the Lord's perspective—with an understanding heart. It is just as the Savior explained to His disciples when asked why He taught in layered parables. Instead of "he that hath ears" (see Mark 4:9–13), let us say, "He that hath eyes to see, let him see." Looking with eyes of truth, I would say two seemingly contradictory things to Mr. Wolfe's engineer: "You didn't go near enough" and "You didn't go far enough away."

Looking Nearer Through Eyes of Truth

First, about looking nearer: Last summer I took my first baby steps into family history—oh, nothing as noble as searching out lines of our family to take names to the temple to have them sealed to us forever. No, my aims were more modest. I set out to write a simple story about my father, Andrew Jensen Terry—an ordinary man, now 94 years old, who lives in Beaver, Utah, the town where I was born and grew up. I hoped to capture his charm and his humor and some of the tales from his life that I have loved since I was a child. Interviews with him of several hours over a delightful weekend were to be the heart of my story, told in his own words and preserved for my grandchildren. I hoped Zachie, Olle, Sadie, Leif, and McKay might see that the elderly man who calls them—and all his other grandchildren—"Butch" was once a child like they are.

Soon I realized that the book wouldn't be complete without at least two other stories inseparably intertwined with my father's. First is that of my wonderful mother, Lyla Wixom Terry, who was accidentally killed more than 35 years ago while I was a missionary in the South German Mission. Second is that of my sweet stepmother, Edla Johnson Terry, who has been by my father's side since he was little more than middle-aged. They were two ordinary women—one a schoolteacher, the other a nurse—each having chosen one of the traditional roles available to women born about a century ago.

My father's tales about living in a tent in the Nevada desert with his parents and three siblings intrigued me. So I searched for histories of his parents, then of my mother's parents, then of their grandparents, until I had cobbled together small stories of each grandparent up to four generations before me. I found ordinary people: farmers, a few teachers, a lumberjack, a telegraph operator, two railroad graders, and people who were children in one story and young marrieds in the next—who then became the mothers and fathers who brought their skills and gave them freely to tame the wilderness of the American West. As I come nearer, Mr. Wolfe, I find no bitter, sullen people here. On the contrary, I discover something else entirely.

These are not ordinary people at all, though they didn't know it. These are heroes. They were men and women who fought the elements, the economy, the challenges of the frontier. They were men and women who forged relationships through monogamy and polygamy and monogamy again to carve out lives of honor and, yes, glory.

I regret that I can't get close enough. I revel in bits of information that I find and discover that the family history center in my own stake has information to enrich my work. I have found the names of the ships on which my ancestors sailed to America. I have found census records with their names and occupations. I have found that some were involved in the Church history I already knew.

For example, Solomon Wixom, my mother's great-grandfather, was a member of the Schuyler, Illinois, militia and a member of the Church. As a militia member he was called with his unit to go to Carthage to keep the peace as Joseph Smith and Hyrum were arrested and put in jail there. He tried to explain that his allegiance to Joseph was too great, but those around him insisted that the Mormons do their duty and go to Carthage with them. He went. On June 26, 1844, he watched as Joseph and Hyrum were taken to the Carthage courthouse; then he helped keep order as they were returned to jail. On June 27, because of the seeming quiet, Solomon's group was relieved of duty and sent back home to Schuyler, Illinois. They had traveled 10 miles on their way and set up camp when a horse and rider galloped through shouting that "Joseph and Hyrum have been killed." But Solomon hadn't had to be there. He hadn't had to choose where his allegiance lay.

My father's grandmother, Bengtha Swenson, left beautiful Sweden disowned and knowing that she may never hear from her father or mother again in this life. Did they quarrel? Did she try to explain about the gospel? After whatever words had been said and she had left for Denmark to work for a year before boarding a ship set for the golden shores of America, did her mother waken in the night to weep for her daughter and for the words that had passed between them? They never had contact again.

The far and the near? Oh that we could draw nearer to heal the rifts we make with those we love.

This I know to be true. Family matters. The learning that comes in the laboratory of the home is one reason we have accepted this earthly existence—yes, more than accepted: rejoiced over. Yet when I look at how far we have to go, how much we have to learn to ever be like the Savior, I despair over the length of the journey. How can it ever be? How can we learn enough?

Resolving family problems lies at the heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East. “We are two brothers,” a priest in Jerusalem said to me, “born in the same cradle.” In the Jerusalem Center we employed both Israeli and Palestinian workers. They worked side by side—respectfully, for the most part; hopefully; and with responsibility. That microcosm of Holy Land society leads me to believe—to hope—that there is a solution to the anger between the two peoples. As I discussed such things with my friends on both sides of the issues, I was amazed to discover that everyone—really everyone whom I knew—wanted peace. They wanted the leaders to work out solutions. They didn’t hate each other. They knew there was some way to live together to the mutual benefit of both sides without encroaching on each other’s beliefs.

I watched Abdullah, a Palestinian worker, stand respectfully at attention on the balcony of the Jerusalem Center as the siren sounded for Prime Minister Rabin’s funeral after he was assassinated. I saw our Israeli security chief hire Palestinian workers to help guard the center, and on one occasion when fire broke out because children were playing with matches under some nearby brush, my Israeli friend watched one of our fine Palestinian workers wade into that fire with our fire hose, remarking to me, “When I’m in trouble, I want Ali to be right there. Ali is a brave man.”

Have you seen that, Mr. Wolfe? Do you know that when we get right up close to someone, we may see their warts but we may also see their souls? And they are brave and beautiful.

Let’s now look from farther away. What does a broader view tell us about the truth of this earthly existence?

Looking with Eyes of Truth from Farther Away

In my mind’s eye I imagine our learning about coming to earth, rejoicing, knowing we could do whatever was required and understanding that this earthly existence was the next necessary step in our eternal progression. But in that pure spiritual environment, I wonder, did we realize what it would mean to have the veil drawn, to be here without “recollection of [our] former friends and birth?”¹

I like places here that remind me of there. The temple is one of those places. The temple lets me look at the big picture of eternity with the Savior Himself at the center. And sometimes, when I’m there, I get a glimpse of the whole thing—from the beginning to wherever “never-ending” is. And sometimes I almost understand.

One thing I understand for sure (this means our view necessarily focuses in again) is that the Savior is the key to our whole earthly existence. I think of the baby in Bethlehem, the toddler in Egypt and then in Nazareth, the stripling boy who learned to build things by Joseph's side. I think of earthly parents teaching Him. I think of Galilee and the sea where the tempest raged; of Capernaum, where He taught and found friends like Peter and John, who followed Him. I think of Bethany, just around the shoulder of the Mount of Olives from Jerusalem, where He liked to stay with Mary and Martha and Lazarus. He ate and slept and grew and laughed and was discouraged and enjoyed friends—just as we do. He underwent this mortal experience to learn and progress—just as we do. Because of that experience, He understands us. If we work it right, this earthly experience will lead us to understand Him, too. No, it is stronger than that: He loves us, and, if we work it right, this earthly experience will lead us to love Him. “We love him,” says John, “because he first loved us.”² How else could He have endured Gethsemane? He paid for your life and mine, paid for your sins and mine, with His whole self. It was all that God Himself could offer. “I stand all amazed.”³

Our view must come closer again to examine what it means to love God, to love the Savior, because, after all, we are caught in this finite existence and must work out our salvation from here. How? What must I do today to demonstrate that I love the Lord? John reported that the Lord said, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”⁴ Ah, me. It is hard to even like some people, let alone love them.

But here are some ways I have found that work. The most important way is praying for the gift of the Spirit that allows love.

Here's another. Certainly I see my students at the first of the semester differently than I do at the end. As we forge through this learning process together, I get glimpses of who they are, of what they hope, and, sometimes, of what moves them. In short, getting to know them—connecting with them, finding what truths we share and what passions we carry—is one way that helps me love them.

Here's another way. At the Jerusalem Center we had wonderful mature couples, service couples, who came to help us run things more smoothly. They oversaw housekeeping, for example, or played the organ, led tours, helped with secretarial work in the office, and served as marvelous grandparent figures for hundreds of students. They offered themselves as role models of happy marriages, as experienced adults with listening ears and stable backgrounds. They loved the students. I learned a lesson from a brother from one of those couples. He was a professional man—learned and wise. He was a former stake president who had clearly blessed the lives of thousands of people in his lifetime.

He told me how he and his wife had approached their time to serve a mission. He said his wife was willing to serve wherever the Lord called them. But he—in his “wisdom,” he said—had counseled the Lord about what he would be willing to do. He told the Lord and those who

issue mission calls for the Lord that he couldn't learn a language, wasn't willing to proselyte, and would like to continue practicing his profession. So they were called as a service couple to Jerusalem. There—mingling with young people full of faith, walking where the Savior walked along the dusty roads of Palestine, and growing to love and understand the Savior's teachings with a depth he hadn't known before—he confided to me near the end of his stay, "Now I will go wherever the Lord wants me to go. This time I put my whole self upon the altar." That's another way to love our fellow travelers on this earth, by putting our whole selves upon the altar and "yielding [our] hearts unto God."⁵ President Ezra Taft Benson said, "Men and women who turn their lives over to God will discover that He can make a lot more out of their lives than they can."⁶

I have one more way to learn to love. My story begins in first grade. I loved first grade. The windows that were decorated with our drawings for anyone to see who drove down Main Street were changed with the seasons. I loved the smell of chalk dust and pencil shavings. I loved jump rope and tag at recess, and I loved the books the teacher read to us after lunch. In our school, two first-grade classrooms on the first floor were matched by two second-grade classrooms directly above on the second floor. We first graders were not allowed to go up those stairs except on an occasional afternoon visit to the school library, carefully chaperoned by our teacher. But each day I stood on the first floor and watched the second graders clamber up the stairs talking and laughing, the boys punching each other in the arm and the girls giggling and whispering. I longed to go up those stairs, too. Going upstairs to second grade appeared to me to be the ultimate step in maturity. Second graders knew more than we did, and somehow I understood that knowing more would be advantageous to me, so I longed for the day I could go upstairs to second grade.

That day came. I climbed the stairs on the first day of second grade and sat down in my classroom expecting maturity and understanding to unfold before me. I looked around the room and found seated there the same children I had been with in first grade. To my surprise and dismay, nothing, simply nothing, seemed different. It appeared that second grade would not unlock the mysteries of the world. Surrounding me were ordinary children. All of us apparently were no different than we were last year. What a disappointment when I had expected something much more grand.

I have lived long enough now to watch my classmates grow up, marry, raise families, wrestle with the economy, put food on the table, and set one foot in front of the other in doing the best they could. What I couldn't see in second grade—and often miss even now—was that I was growing, too. Just because the same people were around me didn't mean we were the same.

Understanding who those ordinary people around us are can help us love them more. C. S. Lewis understood, I feel, better than Thomas Wolfe. Lewis said:

It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship.... It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal.⁷

And there it is. No matter how it looks, we are no mere mortals. We must treat ourselves, and those sitting next to us in class, with more respect because of who they are—and because of who we are. We are not ordinary people. None of us is—not one. We are gods and goddesses in training. For us to move forward, we must be better than we are in our simple dealings with one another. We must love one another—not merely like them or tolerate them, but love them.

These things I know to be true. We are given time and opportunity to be molded like Jesus Christ. We are in a process. So are all those around us. By looking at this earth and its purpose from some broad perspective, we can sense the purpose of the exercise, the school—the university, if you will—that moves this earth life forward in our becoming like the Savior.

So I plan to gather my grandchildren around me and tell them stories about where they came from. I want to tell them about Anna, the little girl who grew up to live in a tent. I want to tell them about Don, the baby boy whose mother died when he was nine months old but who now tells us that never was a mother kinder to him than his father's third wife. That little boy grew up to be the kindest man many people have ever known. And, of course, I want to tell them about Andrew, the little boy who wanted to get rid of his warts so much that he stole his grandmother's only dishrag, rubbed his warts with it, and buried it in the garden because he heard that would make warts disappear. That little boy grew up to call all of his grandchildren "Butch." I want them to understand the nobility they spring from, the richness of their heritage, the nature of their caring.

I want to tell them about Bethlehem and Nazareth and Galilee and about a little Boy who lived there and grew up to offer them life eternal. I want to help their parents teach them not to "fight and quarrel one with another" but "to love one another, and to serve one another" (Mosiah 4:14–15).

Someday this mortality will put on immortality. Someday we will see not "through a glass, darkly; but... face to face."⁸ Someday the unfolding lessons of our life will become clear to us: exactly why we failed chemistry or why that relationship didn't work out or why we lived in days of war or why we were taught the gospel in Argentina or Germany or what purpose the daily efforts of life had and why the crying babies and the pain of divorce and loneliness and heartache were allowed, making us sit in dismay with our heads in our hands. Something about all of this "shall give [us] experience"⁹ and turn us to Him to seek solace and peace and understanding,

teaching us to love Him. We love Him because He first loved us. Because He loves us, we may, we can, we must love each other.

Because we are not ordinary people as Thomas Wolfe would have us believe, we will see as John does: “Beloved, now are we the sons [and daughters] of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”¹⁰

Kaye Terry Hanson was an assistant professor in the BYU Marriott School of Management when this devotional address was given on 3 December 2002.

1. “O My Father,” *Hymns*, 1985, no. 292)
2. 1 John 4:19)
3. *Hymns*, 1985, no. 193
4. John 13:35
5. Helaman 3:35
6. Teachings of Ezra Taft Bennson, p. 361
7. C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* (New York: Macmillan, 1949), 14–15; emphasis in original
8. Corinthians 13:12)
9. Doctrine and Covenants 122:7
10. 1 John 3:2

My Email to Kaye—Her Last Lecture

THE DOORS ARE CLOSING and the doors are opening. It is amazing that we usually only see the door closing, and sometimes we even miss that. You have so many extraordinary gifts and perhaps this document captures them all. And describes in not so veiled a way—at least for some of us who I think really know you—your life. When I think of Kaye, I think of Joseph Smith (and, indeed, the "other" Joseph you referred to here). Children of God laden with talents and given assignments that unfolded as did their lives. One could get caught up admiring *what* they did. And that is understandable, because what they did was extraordinary. But that which is truly admirable isn't what they did, but *that* they did it. After all, what they did was miraculous and by definition not doable at all, without the grace of God.

It has been a long time now since I ceased admiring Joseph Smith because of the Book of Mormon, the revelations, the management of the Church, etc., etc. Because those abilities were all gifts from God. He had no personal claim on them and he would be the first to tell one this. But what he did do, that was "him," was *that he did* them. He did not quit. And he had every reason to do so. He obeyed to the last breath of his life. No matter the circumstances, no matter the shattering of dreams and yes even the apparent shattering of revelations (like establishing Zion), he learned the principle that time is on our side when we are obeying, but we should never, ever set the clock. He did not quit. He found out who he was through this grueling process and blessed countless through the discovery. He obeyed. The same is said about Joseph of Egypt. And the same is said about my true friend Kaye. They obeyed. And have blessed the world as a result.

Thank you for that.

Steve

1984 American Olympic Trials

A Lesson

AT THE AMERICAN OLYMPIC trials in 1984 the American 50 kilometer walk Champion Had come back to the stadium with 800 meters to go in his walk. His walking was really funny looking. It was like a bird running into the beach to escape the surf. When he came back to the stadium there were only a few 100 people there. Several athletes who were trying out for the high jump started to walk across the track. An official stopped them for the 50 kilometer walk champion to come by on the track. Those athletes started to laugh as they watched him come around the track.

Then the announcer said, "The greatest American 50 kilometer walker is now on the track and is just finishing his 50 kilometer walk, which is about 30 miles in under 4 hours." People in the stands started to stand up and applause. Then these athletes who had been laughing each dropped their bags and started to applaud. As the runner passed them, they began to jog alongside him. They were cheering him on and raising clenched fists in salute to him. They were becoming a team as they understood the accomplishments of this man.

Do we laugh or giggle at someone who is physically out of step or is different in some way? What tremendous things have these people accomplished given their physical or spiritual challenges? Are we part of the team, or do we stand on the side and at least in our minds make light of someone else's challenges?

Some Interesting Things About Joyce

2004

GIVEN TO AMY – for her to use at Joyce’s birthday 2004

She would take a hairpin and put it in the corner of her mouth then twitch it somehow so it would become attached to her cheek. A really nifty, but very useless trick.

She was a real fan of the old TV show, “The Fugitive.” We had a small black& white TV when we were first married and that was one show she would not miss. She was so involved in it, in fact, that one evening (she was admittedly tired.) when we were having our prayers together she asked that Richard Kimball (the always-running hero) would be able to escape. I just looked at her. A little embarrassing. Ultimately he did escape, so her prayers were answered.

When we got married, you had to have blood tests. I guess so they could match the blood to assure there would not be gene problems. And the nurse couldn’t draw her blood. Her veins kept collapsing. After at least ½ dozen attempts I think there was more than a small probability that we were not going to get married because your mother was just about to the wall with that needle being stuck in her arm.

Your mom likes to keep score. When we were first married, we had several games that we played together all of the time. Crazy 8’s, Touring and Jeopardy, among others. And she kept a running score as to total # of wins for each of us over a period of several years. With Jeopardy, she would add the “\$ winnings” each game. I think she still has those totals somewhere.

When we lived in Tempe, she decided that she was going to go through a cookbook one year (or two.). Each meal would be a different one – taken right out of the cookbook. I will have to admit it was an adventure. Sometimes I liked them. Sometimes I didn’t like them “as well.” The frustrating thing was that if I really liked a meal, I knew I would probably never get to eat it again until she got through those 1000 recipes. The Pearce’s lived next door. All Linda

would cook each Sunday was roast, gravy, potatoes, etc. And Clyde longed for the variety that “I enjoyed.” And, to be honest, there were times I longed for roast, gravy and potatoes.

There seems to be a disagreement on when our first date occurred. I think it was when Ron Bitter and I took Joyce and her roommate to the movies. Her roommate sat in the front seat with Ron, and Joyce sat close by me in the back seat. I paid for her way into the movie. We sat together at the movie. She held my hand during the movie. She sat close by me in the back seat of the car after the movie. We had fun. I don’t know why, but I thought that was a date. Silly me. Joyce said our first date didn’t occur until a few weeks after that when she and I double dated with my roommate Bob Parchman when we went to a basketball game. You be the judge.

Your mother was waiting for a missionary. (My standard “joke” is that that was very fortuitous for me since I was a missionary. When she was on the dating scene, she was very popular. Sometimes having as many as 3 dates (or more?) in one day. But when I first met her, she was “waiting” not “dating.” I have thought that that was very fortunate for me, and probably made what ultimately happened, possible. If she had been on the dating scene, it may not have been too likely that I would have gone through the trauma of trying to get a date with her. It would have been something like this:

“Would you like to go with me to the game Friday?”

“Yes, but sorry I’m busy.”

“How about Saturday to a movie?”

“It would be fun, but I’m busy that night too.”

“We have a neat fireside in our ward Sunday night. Would you like to go to that?”

“It sounds great, but I already have a date for that evening.”

“Well, when would you be available for a date?”

She looks at her calendar.

“Well, I would be available 3 weeks from this Saturday in the afternoon from 2:00 to 5:00.”

“See you around campus.”

I guess we all can be eternally grateful she was waiting for a missionary. I know I am. She just didn’t know who the missionary was.

During our first year or so of marriage our names for each other were: “Sweet Pea” and “Sweet Pete.” Don’t repeat that.

When we were dorm parents, there were girls in our dorm older than she was. But they never knew that. She was a great dorm mom.

And there are lots more – but you have limited time -- her birthday only lasts 24 hours.

More Thoughts About Eternity And Everything

Romania 2008

AN EMAIL CONVERSATION BETWEEN Lloyd Rasmussen and me.

Comments by Lloyd

I have thought for a long time that for each of us reality is what we perceive it to be. Therefore, how we act determines our future. This would include what we learn and where we go and who we take with us. If we describe the universe as you have as being telestial, then it becomes very interesting as we contemplate the universe and space expanding faster than the speed of light. Since earth is a sphere, expansion is occurring in all direction. If the only real thing is the observer, then each of us individually becomes the center of his or her existence pertaining to the telestial. Now if the spirit world is also on our earth then we have a new dimension that we cannot see with our telestial vision. If after the resurrection there are three degrees of glory and multiple glories within each, then the expansion of God's dominions become infinite.

The answer to all of this is found in the temple and perhaps is generally understood as being the "Fullness of the Gospel" or the "Fullness of the Priesthood", or the "Fullness of Truth" as sometimes referred to as "mysteries". Perhaps the best and only answer is what we take with us from the temple and is, therefore, found in the center of the "Garments of the Holy Priesthood."

My Response

Yes. To all of your points. One interesting ramification about the edge of the universe moving faster than the speed of light is that "time" would be reversed at that point and would be moving backwards. □ That is also interesting to contemplate. I have an entirely different view of telestial, terrestrial, and celestial and their relationship to each other and to me now than I did as a young missionary putting up degrees of glory circles on a flannel board. To me then, the circles represented "the future" as I described the plan of salvation to investigators. My experience with

the temple was limited to going twice before my mission. Seeing now that I am currently in the telestial puts me smack dab in the middle of the whole process and has changed everything in how I view existence. Understanding that there is no space where there is not a kingdom or degree of glory. See Doctrine and Covenants 88: 37. Contemplating what the Lord meant when He said that all things are “present” with Him. See Doctrine and Covenants 38: 2 & Doctrine and Covenants 130: 7 for example. And pondering on the whole concept of “circles” or chiasm. I believe I am catching a peek of eternity. “The first shall be last and the last shall be first,” and “The course of God is one eternal round for example. See Doctrine and Covenants 35:1 and 29:30, and contemplate the circular nature of the endowment presentation in the temple.

Less Than Spiritual Happenings at Church

SOMETIMES US BEING HUMAN makes for interesting and unique church services.

FRESNO

In my Fresno Ward when I was in my late teens, our elders quorum president had a 4 or 5 year old son whose antics could make a teenager smile/laugh and maybe even some older members. For example, during the passing of the sacrament one time, Sammy started to loudly sing the Burgermeister Beer song. Back in the 1950's virtually all products that were advertised on TV had their own song—including beers. Whether it was that time or another, given his antics his dad put him under his arm to take him out of sacrament meeting, when Sammy yelled, "Help me, Bishop."

When my dad was a bishop, there was a sister in the ward who mostly functioned okay but was somewhat mentally challenged. She thought she was Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ. She told Dad that she needed to tell the ward they were not worthy to partake of the sacrament, but of course he would not let her do that. She told him that he couldn't stop her. Fortunately, her daughter told Dad what she was going to do this one Sunday. She sang in the choir and would be "naturally" sitting on the stand. Then when the sacrament had been passed, she would go to the pulpit and tell the members that they were sinners and unworthy to partake of the sacrament.

With the daughter's warning, Dad was ready. He probably told Mom about this, but I didn't know anything about it. When the sacrament was over, this sister headed to the pulpit, and Dad stood between her and the pulpit. "You can't stop me." She said. Dad didn't say anything but semi-wrestled with her in front of the congregation. Two brothers who Dad had sitting on the stand then came and took her out of the room. Dad explained to the congregation what had happened and that he had spoken to the stake president about it and had been given permission to do what he did. My mind, and I think anyone else's there, wasn't on the speakers that sacrament meeting.

But that sister wasn't through. Her daughter told Dad that she was going to call the ward to repentance in a fast and testimony meeting. Back then, people did not come to the pulpit to bear their testimonies, they just stood where they had been sitting. They had to speak loud because there was no mic brought to them either. Dad had a strong brother in the ward sit by this sister at the beginning of testimony meeting. When testimonies began, this sister stood up and so did this brother. He put his arm around her and literally carried her out of the meeting. She was so surprised, she didn't say a word. Our Fresno sacrament meetings weren't boring.

But this sister wasn't through. Some three or four years later, I had come home from my mission and the Fresno stake president asked me to bear my testimony in stake conference. My folks lived in Pacific Grove at the time, and I drove over to Fresno to speak in stake conference. Back then, there was always a general authority at stake conference. This time it was Elder Critchlow, who was an assistant to the quorum of the Twelve. There were only seven 70's then. There was not a stake center in Fresno, and we were meeting I think in the Fresno State College auditorium.

Elder Critchlow had been an attorney, and his dynamic talk was portraying an attorney in court. He was acting as though he were calling witnesses to testify of Jesus Christ and would ask them questions and use their words as recorded in the Bible for their responses. For example, he would say, "I now call to the stand, Peter formerly known as Simon." He would then ask a question about the Savior and then read what Peter said about the Savior. He would then call John to the stand, etc. Then he said, "I now call to the stand Mary, the mother of Christ." He didn't immediately see what we in the congregation saw. This sister, who thought she was Mary, got up from her seat, walked up the few steps at the side of the stand and stood behind Elder Critchlow. It was a minute perhaps before he sensed she was there. He turned around and saw her, and said, "What are you doing here?" She calmly replied, "You asked for Mary, the mother of Christ to come to the stand." Without hesitation, he pointed down at the congregation and said, "You take your seat." She meekly obeyed. But for most of us in the congregation, that was likely the only part of his talk we would forever remember.

TUSTIN

Our ward in California was prone to some non-spiritual happenings. For example, some of the women, rather than get their hair ready for church, would just put a wig on. It is a lot easier than spending an hour or so at the mirror. Our neighbor, Dianna LeSueur often did that until a little boy on the bench behind her reached up and pulled off her wig. We got to see what her hair looked like when she got up in the morning. I don't know that she ever wore a wig to Church again. Or at least she made certain she was sitting where a little boy behind her couldn't yank it off.

A sister in our ward who conducted the music for sacrament meeting would have her little girl sit with her on the stand who would bring a doll up with her. Usually, she would just sit there while her mother led the music. But one time she decided to imitate her mother. As her mother led the music with a music conducting baton, her daughter stood up and began leading the music with the only baton she had available to her. A naked Barbie doll.

Joyce was our ward organist and lived by a timer that she carried around with her. She would time her reading and just about everything else with it. When the allotted time was up there would be a consistent beeping until she turned it off. One Sunday sacrament meeting I was sitting with some of our teenage children a few rows back on the side of the chapel where the organ was. About ½ way through the sacrament song there was this loud beep-beep-beep that just kept going. Everyone was looking around to see what it was, but the Hanson row knew and were smiling broadly. It was Joyce's timer going off in her purse. She was playing the organ and couldn't get to it to shut it off, and we didn't know where her purse was to help her out. It probably remains still a mystery what that sound was to the other members of the ward who never knew where it came from. The Hanson's though will never forget where it came from.

TOOWOOMBA

In 1961 Toowoomba in Australia had one of the half-dozen or so LDS chapels in Australia. I served as a missionary here for a few months. Sunday School was held mid-morning, and it started virtually the same every Sunday. The Sunday School superintendent or his counselor would welcome everyone and announce the opening song. The organist would play a little prelude, and then with an exaggerated shift of her head and body indicate that we were to sing. About 1/3 or so through the hymn, the chorister would come into the chapel with his family, then walk up on the stand, pick up his baton, and begin "leading" the congregation in the song. I think only us missionaries even noticed him come in or looked at him because everyone else was used to this. Our challenge was to keep from laughing.

BYU 12 WARD

As a student at BYU before Joyce and I were married, I was a counselor in the BYU 12th student ward bishopric with Robert Thorn the bishop, and Clyde Pearce the other counselor. We were being released as a bishopric and two members of the stake presidency were at our sacrament meeting to release us and to have the new bishop sustained. Our sacrament meeting was held on the mezzanine of the Wilkinson's Center. During the week, the mezzanine was empty and for Sunday services, plastic chairs were set up, and the 8" to 10" high platform for the priesthood leaders and speakers to sit on was brought in. Then a podium with a microphone was put on the stand. Another sacrament meeting was being held on the other side of an according

plastic room divider that was theoretically sound proof and divided the mezzanine into two large sections for the meetings to be held.

The chairs on the stand were like those the congregation sat on. They were light plastic with metal tube legs, and the legs of each chair were attached to the ones next to it with a stiff bracket so if you moved one chair, the other chairs attached to it would move too. The stand was placed a half foot or so away from the back wall so it wouldn't rub against the wall.

After the sacrament, a member of the stake presidency stood up and officially released us as a bishopric and announced the new bishop, who was sitting with the congregation, and had him sustained. He invited the new bishop and his wife to come up on the stand. Clyde and I were sitting next to Bishop Thorn on the stand behind the pulpit. We both stood up and were moving to the end of the row so the new bishop and his wife could sit next to our bishop. Bishop Thorn motioned for us to come back and sit where we had been. Before I could sit down, however, Clyde, who was kind of heavy set, sat down. As he did, the legs of his chair slid back 4 or 5 inches and over the edge of the stand. He tipped over, and so did every chair on the stand. I watched as he, the bishop, and the two members of the stake presidency fall backwards in their chairs and stick against the wall at a 45 degree angle. All everyone in the congregation could see were the backends and the legs of their priesthood leaders thrashing in the air.

Bedlam is not strong enough a word to describe the scene. The students were aghast at first and then there was near raucous laughing. The members of the stake presidency and the bishop quickly extricated from their embarrassing position, but poor Clyde could not. Given his weight and the angle of his chair, he couldn't get up. I tried to pull him up, but the soles and heels of my shoes were leather, and they just slid on the slick stand. Finally, with the help of the bishop, I got him up.

Now what do you do? What was supposed to be a solemn, spiritual meeting was turned into an anything but sacred event that no one in that room would ever forget. To make it worse, Clyde and I got the giggles. Finally, the member of the stake presidency conducting called the meeting to order. He announced that the old bishopric and the new bishop and his wife were to be the speakers, and I would be the first speaker.

I couldn't look at Clyde, or I would burst out laughing. So I faced my fellow students who were all grinning from ear to ear, and I remember vividly what my first words were: "What a way to go." And the laughing uproar began again.

We finally got through the meeting, and when they opened the door for the students in the ward to leave, the hallway was blocked by the students from the other ward that had been meeting at the same time as ours. Their ward had let out at least 15 minutes before ours, but they wanted to know what happened in our ward. The soundproof divider between us was not designed to

contain the kind of noise they heard. What I remember some of them saying was, "I only wish I could have been in your ward when that happened!"

EXPERIENCES I DID NOT WITNESS BUT HEARD ABOUT

The chorister stood up ready to lead the closing song but the organ wasn't playing. She looked over and the organist was asleep.

After the intermediate hymn in sacrament meeting, the brother who had been asked to give the closing prayer came to the pulpit and started to offer it. The bishop got up and put his arm around him. "Thank you, brother, but let's wait until the meeting's over before giving the closing prayer."

Some years ago, it was common to have an outstanding soloist not in the ward give the intermediate music number in sacrament meeting. In this instance, the ward had a visiting brother soloist sing. He was leaving early and when he finished singing, he went to a door on the stand, opened it, and closed it behind him. He apparently thought the door was to the hallway that surrounded the chapel. It wasn't. It was to a closet. Everyone in the congregation knew it was a closet and were expecting the singer to come out. He didn't. Evidently, he didn't want to be embarrassed so he just stayed in the closet until the meeting was over. The members kept looking at the closet door expecting him to come out, so the concluding sacrament meeting speaker likely didn't get much attention. I wonder how many in the congregation waited after the meeting was over to see the singer exit?

Thoughts on Time

Thoughts 1992

I FREELY ADMIT THAT I struggle with even trying to understand what "time" is, much less "eternity". I am not sure that one can understand these things to any great extent with our finite, severely limited minds. I have read with interest a number of secular views of time, including Stephen Hawking's, A Brief History of Time, among them. I feel some comfort in seeing that even minds of his magnitude are seemingly inadequate to comprehend it.

As I have pondered this, I must admit my logical self seems to have every bit as much difficulty trying to comprehend an existence in time, as it has with trying to understand how everything can be at once and always, "present" with me. To try to define either state requires the use of paradoxical and contrary terms. For example, to describe "finite," which has to do with "time," requires an awareness of the "infinite" which is a "timeless" state. Indeed, the fact that a state of "time" exists must mean that a state of "timelessness" or "no-time" also exists, for there must be opposition in all things as Lehi clearly states. The one on the one hand, the other on the other. It is also interesting to me that scientists who see and acknowledge "time" as indispensable to the existence of everything, as is space and matter (energy), also postulate that "prior" to the so-called "Big Bang" (where/when/how they say our universe was created) there was no time (nor space) and that these were "created" with that singular event. But the question is, "What did/does this finite existence exist in?" The answer, it seems, must be a state where all things "are present". Or at least, that is where my logic leads.

I have come to understand that one reason why some of the things that the Lord "reveals" to man (and babes) is "unspeakable" or "not lawful to speak," is because we *can't*. We simply do not have the tools (verbal or otherwise) to describe or understand which, speaking in mortal terms, is indescribable. In trying to communicate to another what one who has received such Spirit to spirit revelation has seen and understood, all he/she can do is to allude to his/her experience and understanding. Words in and of themselves cannot convey that experience and understanding to another. In order for another to understand, they must receive that knowledge from the same Divine source. One's reason and logic can only take him so far. I don't believe that saying this is a cop-out, but it is in fact the way things are. I believe that "reason's glimmering ray was

leant, not to assure our doubtful way, but lead us upward to a brighter day." The Lord's ways simply are not our ways, and I think we arbitrarily limit our ability to understand his ways if we insist that we should be able to explain and understand His ways with our mortal minds and veil-shrouded logic. We definitely see through a "glass darkly" here.

The problem with mortal logic is that we use assumed parameters and there must be agreement on those parameters in order to have agreement on what the conclusion is. In the question of time vs eternity, there is much disagreement on the parameters. Why? Because they are unknowable except by revelation.

For example, "The Vision" has been given by God to his elect throughout the history of the world, e.g. Moses and Ether, where they were shown every man and woman and every event in their time context. They saw all that would befall the world and all that would befall man—past, present, and future.

In the case of some of our Book of Mormon prophets, parts of their visions were recorded in great detail. For example, Nephi describes the condescension of God in coming to this earth. He sees Mary and Joseph and Bethlehem and the birth and the crucifixion, all *before* it had happened and, in fact, speaks as though it had already happened. He talks about the universality of the atonement applying to past, present, and future which certainly goes beyond the boundaries of time and the sequential nature of time. Joseph Smith was shown The Vision and was specifically told to write certain things from what he saw, but Joseph also said, they were shown things "which surpass all understanding" and they were "commanded...not (to) write (them)" because they "are not lawful for man to utter."¹

The whole concept of *oneness*, the bringing together in one and the dispensation of "the fulness of times," points to a "timeless" existence. Indeed, becoming one with Christ and losing ourselves in Him implies a timeless existence. I likewise see compelling *evidence* for this concept in the temple ceremony. Both in terms of what we are taught about Adam as well as in the signs and tokens and the names of the signs. The panorama that we participate in there is, in God's words, "one eternal round."

I see "time" as God creating for us a world of *ceteris paribus*, where certain variables are kept constant, i.e. those which apply directly to mortality. And by definition, mortal variables are temporary. Our experiences here help us to choose who we want to be eternally. In a sense, then, this is not a real world, but a world within the real world. By us entering into this restricted world we see and understand and overcome. Even in saying this, I am aware of the *apparent* inconsistency of using sequential terms, but that is all I can use here. Perhaps eternity means that we are not bound by time but have the freedom to move in and out of it as needed. Joseph talked about proving the contraries and this certainly is a contrary. But that does not mean that it doesn't exist.

This is life eternal, to know the only true God and Jesus Christ who He has sent. In other words, to become one with Them. That is our potential, and we are given the means to do that. An important tool is our reasoning and logic, but given our mortality, we are drastically limited in comprehending God with just that tool. In the final analysis, it is revelation that brings us that knowledge. I cannot speak for any other person. What I can say is that as I have read the scriptures that have been discussed here, there have been flashes of insight that I am incapable of describing or explaining that have brought to me a "feeling" of the reality of an existence where "all things are present" and that this earth is but a type and shadow of that world. The older I get, the more I feel a stranger and foreigner here. The more I feel the "unnaturalness" of this existence. Yet paradoxically, the more I also feel the necessity of it.

In a real sense, I see time as our veil. We are trapped in the now and can't see the past or future, which means we can't even see ourselves very accurately. And that veil makes it virtually impossible to use symbols that are all time related to describe an existence that is not bound by time. With our mortal brain, we cannot even conceive of the state of being represented by the words, Eternal Life. But that doesn't mean it doesn't exist.

Prophetic scriptures demonstrate that prophets and thus the Lord saw into the future in very specific ways including the actions of individuals. If God can see the specific future actions of just one individual then He can see the actions of all. In other words, all things are present with Him.

1. Doctrine and Covenants 76:114-115

Blessings Are Blessings

Thoughts

I HAVE GIVEN MANY hundreds of blessings throughout my life. And I have learned that regardless of the immediate outcome, they are blessings. Perhaps most of the time the one giving the blessing and the one receiving the blessing have a specific thing in mind as to what they want the results from that blessing to be, particularly when the receiver has a significant health or emotional issue. Sometimes that happens. Sometimes it doesn't. But regardless of the immediate outcome, the blessing is there. And over time, the receiver can, if they will, recognize the gift they have been given.

In 1979, the year of extraordinary trials and tears for Joyce and me, I gave a blessing to Mary following her should-have-been-fatal accident and to Joyce a few weeks prior to the birth and death of Jacob. Mary lived and Jacob died. In both instances the blessing through me came from our Heavenly Father. While Jacob died, Joyce lived. And Jacob's death has been a singular blessing in the decades since for everyone in our family.

I have included below, with some editing, my journal entries that describe those two events as they happened. While they are deeply personal, I am sharing them as evidence that blessings are indeed blessings.

MARY'S ACCIDENT

February 6, 1979

The day began pretty much like every day begins. I took Laura to school and came back and ate breakfast. I kissed Joyce goodbye and poked my head into the family room at Mary and Ben. I told them I loved them and waved goodbye to them. Later on at work, I called Joyce to remind her to tell the carpet installer to fix the TV cord in the workroom. Mary picked up the phone and I kidded with her. I went about with my regular tasks at work. Then about 2:00 p.m., one of the girls buzzed me and said there was a woman on the phone who said it was an emergency. I connected to the line. It was Diana. "Come home quick, Mary has been hit by a car." Her voice

was emotional and strained. "I'll be right there." I dropped the phone on the cradle and ran out of my office telling the girls I wouldn't be back today. While driving home, I was praying, reminiscing, thinking. From the sound of Diana's voice, I felt that there was every possibility that Mary was dead. As I drove I began to think of my last relations with her. I put her to bed the night before. It was pleasant. She said her prayers like she usually did, cutting off the last word in the sentence to play a little joke on me. She had me turn on her light, give her, her drink and we kissed each other goodnight. I remembered her smiling face this morning when she waved goodbye to me and the pleasant bantering with her on the phone. It had all been pleasant, filled with love. What if I had been cross with her last time I saw her? How horrible I would have felt. But I wasn't. And I felt that I was capable of handling the situation in the event she was dead. I felt a calm, peaceful feeling. I arrived at home. The paramedics were there with the ambulance and the fire engine. People were gathered around and there in the middle of the road lay my Mary. Her fragile little body lay limp and lifeless. Her face was battered almost beyond recognition, her head swollen grotesquely. The paramedics were working on her with their frantic skill. Joyce was ashen but composed. "How is she?" "She is breathing and her blood pressure is good." They put her in the ambulance and took her to the hospital. The young man whose car had hit her (she had darted out between two trucks parked along our side of the street right into the path of the car, which was going the speed limit) was badly shaken up. I tried to reassure him. To tell him it was not his fault. He apparently went into shock. I rushed to the hospital. Ian McKay was there. A neuro surgeon was called and Ron Jones was there (a pediatric doctor in our ward). They worked on her for a considerable time. On my way to the hospital I asked my Heavenly Father if she was to be healed. I received a confirmation that she was to be healed. I asked Ron to let us know when we could administer to her. Finally we were allowed in. Ian anointed her and I blessed her with Ron and Ian assisting. After gaining composure, I blessed her that she would be totally and completely healed, regaining fully her health and strength. The X-rays showed she had received a 4 inch skull fracture along her right side and that it appeared that part of her head had caved in. Other tests indicated there had been a shift in position of the brain. She remained in an unconscious state throughout. She was finally taken to intensive care where she was closely monitored. Joyce and I stayed at the hospital until about 6:30 p.m. She was already improving, and all outward signs were positive. On our way home we stopped to see the young man who had hit her to let him know how she was and again reassure him it was not his fault. They are good people. Our phone has been constantly busy. The neighbors who are not members of the Church have been concerned, considerate, and tremendous. We are so grateful for them. Joyce was totally composed and a real strength. The children have also been strong, although at night they all broke down emotionally as the realization of what happened dawned on them. Our doctor friends have all gone over and stopped in or called to give us assurance. We are most blessed.

JACOB

Gave Joyce A Blessing

June 15, 1979

(Note: Joyce had placenta previa where the placenta covered the cervix and where both hers and the baby's lives were in significant danger from her hemorrhaging.)

The doctor called and wanted to see Joyce. I took her over. He told her she would have to stay in bed. He said all you can do at this time is try to buy time by not bringing on the hemorrhaging any faster than it would come normally. He said that if she started to hemorrhage now the baby would not stand much of a chance. It is obviously a very dangerous situation for both Joyce and the baby. He said she could stay at home and would probably not be any better off at a hospital. He said she was not to be left alone under any circumstances. So there we are. I fasted all day to give Joyce a blessing. I did not know whether she or the baby would be all right physically, (unlike the powerful spiritual impression I had when I blessed Mary) but I did bless her with the peace and assurance that comes from knowing our Heavenly Father is involved in this experience and that whatever happens, the overall effect will be a positive, learning and growth experience for all of us, including the children. I love her Father. I plead for her life. And yet I will accept Thy will.

Joyce Was Hospitalized

July 3, 1979

(Note: Joyce had been bedridden at home for two weeks now)

Joyce's birthday. I love her dearly. I have been so blessed by her life. I took her to the high risk pregnancy specialist in the morning. After reviewing her situation they have decided to put her in the hospital for the remainder of her pregnancy. I feel that is the right thing although I'll miss her horribly. She has been weepy all day as she sees the children and knows she will not see them again for a while. She knows her life is literally on the line and has willingly made that choice to bring another spirit into the world. She sees that possibly this may be her last day with her children. I know she is participating in her Gethsemane at this time and is experiencing all of the faith testing, patience testing and loneliness that that requires. I pray Father that these intense feelings we are having will be enough and that she will remain on the earth with me. Yet I understand the frailty of this existence, and I trust in my Lord explicitly. We will overcome regardless of what may happen. I am grateful for the peace of the gospel. The peace of righteousness.

July 4, 1979

A sad day. I took Joyce to the hospital. It was an emotional experience to see her say goodbye to each of the children. But I think this was the hardest day for her. We feel much better about the situation with Joyce in the hospital.

Jacob's Birth

July 15 & 16, 1979

I received a phone call from Joyce's roommate about 7:00 p.m. on the 15th, saying Joyce had started to bleed heavily. (This was from the hospital where Joyce had been since July 4) I went over and went with her (as she was wheeled into) the labor room. There we sat until about 1:00 a.m. on the 16th. The doctors finally decided to take the baby (by caesarian—C-Section). They began operating about 2:00 a.m. and were done by 2:30 a.m. Joyce came through very good, but our sweet little baby boy will not make it. His lungs are not developed and apparently neither are his kidneys. Dr. Linzey, the OB/GYN was so compassionate and understanding. I had a great peace and assurance come over me, and I knew this was the will of Heavenly Father. Joyce was taking it very well. I went to intensive care at CHOC (children's hospital where they had taken the baby) and gave the baby a name: Jacob Nathan Hanson. I laid my fingers on his head as I pronounced the blessing. A kind nurse asked me if I wanted some water to baptize him. I told her that he wouldn't need that. Of course he would not need that. There was no sin in him. What a sweet, pure spirit was in that little baby body. I know we will have the chance to raise him in the eternal worlds. I also know we were supposed to have him and that he has finished his work—to obtain a body. I am so tired. I thank Thee my beloved Father for preserving Joyce's life. I thank thee for this baby boy. Help me to be worthy of him and to use this experience to become more refined. Bless Joyce that she will recover rapidly. I received a phone call from Joyce about 6:30 a.m. on the 16th. (I had come home and had told Shirley who had been staying with us for a month. We both cried together.) Jacob died at about 6:00 a.m. I went to sleep for a couple of hours. Made arrangements with a mortuary and cemetery for Jacob's burial. We will bury him in Fairhaven Memorial Cemetery. Took Shirley to see Joyce. She is under heavy sedation. Everyone has been so kind. All of the nurses and doctors have dropped in to express their love and consolation. Went back at night to visit her. So very tired, both she and me. The children accepted it well. It is not so hard for them when they have never seen him. They brought Jacob's body down for Joyce to hold and that was special for Joyce. I did not want to see him dead. Sweet is the peace the gospel brings. But even so, my Father, it is so hard.

After Jacob's Death

July 17, 1979

So tired. Slept until 9:30 a.m. Saw Joyce. She looks much better. The people at the hospital have been so kind and compassionate. Both of us are still weepy. It is hard. We were led by the Spirit to have this baby and Joyce put her life on the line in making that decision. What would have

happened if we didn't listen to the promptings? Jacob would not have been ours, but he was meant to be. He is our last and that decision has also been made by revelation. That is the only way that kind of decision can be made for certain. I have so much to be thankful for. It's time to remove the long face and go on with life. A new phase of our life is beginning. I am excited and thrilled to enter it. With my wife.

July 18, 1979

I am still weepy at times. Spent several hours this evening with Joyce. She is doing well. We walked around the hospital halls together. I looked at each of our children in their rooms tonight and thought about the one who will not be with us and became teary again. I think we will bury Jacob Monday. Joyce's mother is coming Sunday. Shirley has been so great. We couldn't have managed without her.

July 19, 1979

I visited Joyce during the day and at night. She was saying how Laura called her and was talking about how hard I was taking the baby's death. How this death was easier for her than Grandpa Swenson's death because she never knew Jacob. At her age, she only understands the sorrow associated with the termination of an existing relationship. Yet the sorrow that comes from the termination of a future relationship can be at least as exquisite. How could she know the anticipation Joyce and I felt to hold and love this new one; to see his personality develop; to watch and participate in his physical, mental and spiritual progress. She could not know that an empty bassinet, a baby's nightgown could set off a flood of "future memories" of a father-son relationship with my little Jacob. And then with the realization of the present, turn the flood of memories to the trickle of tears. I have the peace and the assurance, but I also have the heartache.

July 20, 1979

I brought Joyce home from the hospital today. The children were really happy to see her. She has been very tired and sore but seems to be recovering rapidly. I was not very productive today.

July 21, 1979

Joyce's mother came today. We are so very grateful for her.. My mind dwells on the baby. Joyce is feeling better today.

July 22, 1979

I was virtually gone (from home) from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. with meetings, interviews, etc. (I was in the Tustin II bishopric) The burial is tomorrow. So many people at church expressed their love. The bishop announced that we would have a burial with the family only and voiced our appreciation to the ward for their compassion and service to us. This is a great ward.

July 23, 1979

We buried little Jacob today. Liza read a passage out of the vision of Joseph Smith that said children who die before the age of accountability inherit the Celestial kingdom. I related my experience in giving him a name. How the nurse came up with a cup of water for me to baptize him. I told her, "He is taken care of." Then Laura read a statement from Melvin Ballard that small children who die also have the opportunity for exaltation. Then Will read a statement from Joseph Fielding Smith that parents will raise deceased infants in the millennium. I then gave the prayer, dedicating and consecrating the grave. It was a simple service, but I felt the Spirit of the Lord there. Afterwards, the mortuary general manager who was there said that this was one of the most inspirational services he had ever attended and that it was the first one where he had seen children participate. Bruce's family, Reed's family, Kaye's family, Mom and Dad, Olive and Earl J, Joyce Wallin and Joel, Shirley and Mother Swenson were in attendance. The Relief Society had prepared a lovely luncheon for us, and we had the family over. Joyce looked good and seemed to hold up well. She went right back to bed as soon as we arrived home. People have been so kind.

Note: As I recall, Jayne and Amy didn't feel they would be able to stop crying if they spoke at the funeral so they didn't speak. And for the decades since then, visiting Jacob's grave has been a reminder to all of the family that we are eternal beings. And love, real love, is never ending. His birth and death have been an extraordinary blessing to our family.

Things I Have Learned

Spokane 2020

I SENT THESE TO each of my grandchildren.

1. ***Seek happiness.*** There *is* such a thing as happiness or joy that's different than pleasure, and I want it. It brings *consistent* peace, purpose, and a love for others (especially my family) even when nothing else is working in my life. I have watched others who are truly happy to see what they are doing that makes them so and then try to do the same. That works.
2. ***Don't worship my mind (or anyone else's).*** They are false gods and undeserving of my adulation. Worshipping them gets me *nowhere*.
3. ***Find out who I am.*** Ultimately I will become exactly who I *want* to be. Over time, I have found who that is. *Desire* is everything.
4. ***Be kind, don't judge another, be righteous.*** When I do this, I am walking with God.
5. ***Recognize the fallibility of my senses and my logic.*** There is a source of knowledge outside of my mind and my physical senses that is *sure*. It is the Spirit, and it is real. I have learned to recognize it and listen. Without it, I am blind and deaf to that which has the greatest meaning.
6. ***Be willing to change.*** I *want* to see in my life what I need to change to bring me *fulfillment*, and that is the *key* to my changing. My pride is an obstacle here, and striving for *humility* is vital. I am unable to make the most significant changes by myself. But if I *ask*, *grace* and the ultimate source of that grace, Jesus Christ, are there, and that is *sufficient*.
7. ***Deal with reality.*** Joy and sorrow go together. Without the one, the other does not exist, and the degree I ultimately feel of the one, likewise, determines the degree I am able to experience the other. This has to do with the eternal principle of *opposition in*

all things (See 2 Nephi 2). I am learning to deal with this, and my reality is expanding.

8. ***Serve others.*** This is *LOVE*, and that *mind-set* brings me great joy.
9. ***Let The Book of Mormon bless my life.*** That Book has affected my life in the most sublime ways. It has taught me of Jesus Christ. Since I was age 20, I have read it on the average over once a year. It is what it claims to be—a revelation from God. A hold-it-in-your-hands miracle. If it were anything less, I would have stopped reading it decades ago.
10. ***Remember that I am an eternal being.*** My time on earth is, by anyone's definition, *temporary*. As I have come to recognize my own *eternal* nature and *divine* potential, I am able to make the *most* of my stay here. *Only* by following Jesus Christ is that done. That is what I have chosen to do.

PERSONAL LIFE IMPACTING EXPERIENCES

Christmas Talk

Orange Stake 1983

FOR ME, THERE HAS always been something magic about Christmas. One of my earliest recollections was when I was perhaps 4 or 5. We were at my Grandma and Grandpa Dunn's. Since my brother and I were the oldest grandchildren, there were only a few other children there; but uncles and aunts were in abundance. We sang Christmas songs and stories were told. Then Grandma gave each of us children one of Grandpa's big, long work socks. I was led to the willow stand that served as a flowerpot holder, and as careful as a 4 year old could be, I hung my stocking by looping its top around the top willow bar and then pinned it to the sock. Uncle Charles explained in warning tone that Santa Claus would be coming to fill that stocking with candy and nuts, and to bring presents as well. But I mustn't let him see me, or he would leave without giving me anything. All of a sudden, bells began to jangle.

"Hide. Hide.," Aunt Lucille cried out. "He's coming. He's coming."

I ran to Grandpa's overstuffed chair in the corner, jumped up on the seat and over the back, and then tried to hold my breath so no one would know I was there. The bells kept jingling, but all else was quiet. Then I heard a rustling of clothes as someone entered the room. Not daring to peek, but unable to resist the temptation, I slowly raised my eyes above the back of the chair. And there he was. White whiskered, in a bright red suit and filling stockings with candy and removing presents from his bag and placing them under the tree. I could hardly stop from shouting.

As I got older, my perspective slowly changed, and my Christmases became more special. When I was able to shop by myself for presents for my brothers and for Mom and Dad, I felt a different kind of excitement. A warm feeling flooded over me as I carefully selected the 10 to 15 cent gifts I would give to my brothers and to my father. But I couldn't seem to find anything that I could give Mom. Then Dad took me to a set of glass mixing bowls that cost four or five dollars or more.

"How about if we put our money together and get her that?" he asked

It was like I was all on fire inside as I thought how happy Mom would be when she saw that I had given her a set of mixing bowls instead of some little present. I wrapped those bowls as special as I could and placed them under the tree. My anticipation of the presents I would get barely exceeded my anxiety in seeing Mother's face as she opened my present to her.

Perhaps my most memorable Christmas as a boy occurred in St. Louis, Missouri. My younger life had been spent, for the most part, in Shelley, Idaho. My father had a farm implement business in Shelley but was not satisfied with its potential. so he and Mother decided that with their six children, Dad would go back to school and become a dentist. With the proceeds from the sale of Dad's business and the sale of our home, Dad getting night time work, and with my older brother and me getting jobs to take care of our own needs, they felt we could make it through the five years it would take to finish dental school. That is if nothing went wrong.

The dental school Dad chose to attend was in St. Louis. And you can imagine the cultural shock that occurred in the life of a 12 year old boy when he found himself living on a corner of an 800, 000 population metropolis. And yes, things did go wrong. For one, Dad had several family members who found themselves in financial difficulties. Dad gave them the money they needed out of our precious, carefully budgeted savings, not knowing how or where we would replace them. And for another, the man who bought Dad's business was supposed to have paid him in full by the end of our first year.

We were now in our fifth year, it was a week or so before Christmas, and Dad still had not been paid the remaining large amount of money that was owed him. We had run out of money. Mom and Dad called my older brother and me into talk to us. They asked us how much money we had. Between the four of us, we had about \$20 to \$30 total. They asked us if we would be all right going without presents this year, and they would use the little money they had to buy presents for the younger kids and get a Christmas tree. We agreed and the warmth I felt as a result of the sacrifice I was being asked to make was a new feeling for me. That experience alone was enough to make this a most memorable Christmas. But there was more. My Aunt Lucille in Fresno wired us \$100 just a few days later. "I sensed you needed this." she said. Then literally the day before Christmas, we received the check from the man who bought Dad's business for the rest of what he owed.

Christmas is still a magical time for me. Each Christmas has brought me a little closer to understanding, to knowing, He whose birth we celebrate. The gift of light and life that Jesus Christ has wrought, the greatest of all gifts, is comprehensible and, indeed meaningful, *only* to the extent we have accepted His teachings and strived to follow His example. By becoming like Him, we understand Him and we are humbled by what he has done for us. We feel "good" at Christmas time, because at that time we make special effort to exemplify the Christ. To be forgiving, to be compassionate, to give of ourselves, and to sacrifice for others. The peace and warmth we feel at Christmas time would be with us throughout the next year and even for the

remainder of our lives if we were to continually make the kind of effort to be as He is that we make at this special time of year.

May I share with you a written response from one who was forgiven a debt to the one who forgave him:

“I had intended to fulfil my obligation regardless of how long it would take. Nevertheless, your letter (forgiving me of that debt) caused me to reflect upon many things. The thought came to my mind that it would be best for me to do to others what you have done for me. The little things I could do for them now will be a reflection of your willingness to help me learn with only the future to tell how well I (have) learned.”

The gift the Savior has given to us is magnified through us, as we go and do likewise. We making "his work and his glory" our work and our glory is our gift to him. He lives; and we are destined to become as he is if that is our choice.

Death and Grandpa

Logan 1957

I *REALLY* LOVED MY Grandpa Dunn. He was short and stocky, ruddy in complexion with a shiny, pinkish crown beset with patches of snow white hair. His eyes twinkled mischief and love. He took me fishing. He made me willow whistles. He told me stories. He bought me Hires Root Beer. He tickled my nose with a feather from my pillow. He always spoke kindly to me. He told me jokes. He showed me magic tricks. He bragged about me. He praised me. I could tell he wanted to be with me. I could tell he loved me. And there was no one I would rather be with than my grandpa.

I was 16, and we had been living in our home at Ft. Ord, California for about six months when my mother's brother, Jack, called. My grandfather had cancer of the stomach and was in a coma. He said the doctors didn't think he would live more than a few days. My parents decided they would take the family to Logan, Utah where Grandpa lived. When we got there, my mother's sister and brother and some of Grandpa's siblings were there to help Grandma Dunn care for Grandpa. I wanted to see him, but my aunt suggested I not go into his bedroom. "He's not the same," she said. "Don't you want to remember him the way he was?"

I said I wanted to see him and went into his bedroom. It was a small room with a single chair by the side of his bed. Grandpa looked like a skeleton with skin. He was not conscious, and I left and went into their living room and sat in Grandpa's big armchair and sobbed.

Grandpa did not die quickly, and someone had to be by his bedside 14/7. Dad took my siblings up to Idaho where his folks lived so they wouldn't be in the way in this small house. I wanted to stay to help take care of Grandpa, and they let me. The adults and me were scheduled in two hour shifts to be with Grandpa. For the next few days I sat by my grandpa's bed up to six hours a day. Most of the time he was in a coma. But there were times when he would regain consciousness, and we would talk. It was on two such occasions that I experienced the actuality of the spirit world.

I was alone in the room with him one time and we were talking. Suddenly he stopped and stared at the foot of his bed. "Who's in the room with you, Steve?" he asked.

"I'm the only one here," I said.

"No, you're not," he replied. "There are people walking past the foot of my bed."

I could not see them, but it was as though I could feel that they were there.

A few days later, several of us gathered around his bed as he told us that he had seen his father and mother and his brothers who had died and other friends and relatives who had passed on. He described their dress and surroundings in detail. Then he turned to my mother and referring to her twin daughters who had died shortly after their birth years before, said, "Don't worry about your daughters, Isabelle. My mother is taking care of them for you."

That was overwhelming for me and for everyone in the room, especially Mom.

Grandpa's condition seemed to stabilize and since we children had already missed much school, the decision was made to go home. The trip back was quiet, and I was involved in my thoughts as I recounted my extraordinary experiences over the last few days.

Several days later we received the final phone call. Grandpa had died. I went to my dresser drawer and pulled out my book of remembrance. I was crying as I wrote, "Grandpa died today. I have learned to face death."

Father Paul

Newport Beach Temple 2005

I HAD BEEN ASKED by Craig Hansen, former president of the Sacramento mission if I would escort Father Athanasius Paul of the Coptic Orthodox Church through the Newport Beach temple at its open house in 2005. Father Paul's son, daughter and her husband had all joined the Church and his son was preparing to go on a mission, as I recall. Craig had many talks with Father Paul and told me that he was certain that Father Paul knew the gospel was true. I made arrangements to meet with Father Paul in one of the parking lots that was being used for the open house. Craig had warned me that Father Paul gets lost very easily. And he got lost. But finally I got him to the temple, but 30 minutes later than we were scheduled to be there.

Father Paul had told me I would easily recognize him. He was right. He had flowing black robes, an Orthodox beard, and, as he put it, an ostentatious cross hanging from his neck. We went on the temple tour and then with permission from President Oveson, the new temple president, we spent three hours in the sealing room talking, answering questions, feeling each other's love and desire for the wellbeing of the other. President Oveson joined us for much of the time and added significantly. In fact, Father Paul asked President Oveson, as president of the temple, if he would say a prayer for him before we left the sealing room and it was a sweet prayer.

Father Paul asked sensitive, thoughtful questions that pertained to his wanting to know. He bore his testimony of the Book of Mormon, of the priesthood in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, that President Hinckley was a prophet, and of the truthfulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ as embodied in the Church. I am sitting in this sacred room listening to a man with Orthodox Church garb on bearing his testimony about the truthfulness of the Gospel and that the priesthood resides in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This was a moving, once-in-a-lifetime experience. And time and time again the Holy Ghost was with both President Oveson and me as we answered his questions by the Spirit.

Father Paul spoke of his own personal challenges and the attempts by Satan to block what he needs to do. He came all the way in from Apple Valley this morning. Father Paul's position in the Coptic Orthodox Church is equivalent to that of being a member of the First quorum

of the Seventy in our Church. He is the only one of 50 in that position in the Church who is a priest and therefore married. The others are bishops and celibate. He told story after story. Great adventures. A great blessing to many, many people. He talked to me about the day when he would be baptized into the Church and the need for him to do this the right way. He had made vows in his church, and he needed to meet with the patriarch (pope) of the Coptic Orthodox Church to be released from those vows.

He spoke about our Church embodying the key elements of the early Church, including temple work and baptisms for the dead. And about one of the senior bishops in the Coptic Church saying very positive things about the Book of Mormon, as he showed Father Paul a copy of the Book of Mormon he had in his library.

After having lunch with President and Sister Oveson, Joyce and I took Father Paul over to the reception center at the stake center. As we were standing by the statue of the Savior in the middle of the hall, a young man, perhaps 15 or 16, came up toward us and saw Father Paul in his flowing black robes and “ostentatious” cross. He came right up to Father Paul and asked, “Are you Catholic?” Father Paul not wanting to get into a long explanation about the difference between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church replied, “Yes.” Clearly this young man was thrilled to see someone there who was obviously not LDS. And the young man with a big smile said, “I’m Episcopalian.”

Father Paul took the young man by the shoulders and said, in essence, “Your church is going through some very trying times isn’t it.” The young man nodded his head. Then Father Paul continued, “You have two roads you can take. You can stay with your church and try to help it right itself, or it may be time for you to leave it.” Then he looked at him squarely and referring to the temple and the Church said, “The Spirit is here.” The young man was clearly taken aback. These were the last words he would ever have expected from a priest. He walked off with a perplexed look on his face.

I have wondered since what happened to him. Did those words burn deep in his heart, or did he brush them off? I don’t know. But the testimony that Father Paul bore was unmistakable and undeniable. Joyce and I had been witness to something really quite extraordinary. As the years have gone by I have lost contact with Father Paul and do not know what he eventually decided to do about his testimony of the gospel. But this I know. That day in the temple, he knew without any question that the truth was embodied in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the authority to act for God on this earth was exclusively held by the priesthood of our Church.

A Warning Voice

MANLY, QUEENSLAND, A SUBURB of Brisbane, was the first area I served in on my mission to Australia in 1960. My companion and I lived in a one room apartment with a small kitchen and bathroom on the second floor of the home of the Bunney's from whom we rented. The stairs to get to our apartment were attached to the building on the outside. The Bunney family lived downstairs and there may have been another apartment upstairs, or maybe we were the only renters. To say that this was a "physical" adjustment for me is an understatement. The house sat right next to the suburban train tracks where a smokey train passed several times a day. There was no washing machine for our clothes. Rather we threw our dirty clothes into a large kettle and boiled the dirt out. There was no hot running water. To take a bath, we lit a small water heater over the tub to heat the water that slowly came out of it.

The mailbox where we deposited our letters was on the other side of the bridge that arched over the rail tracks that ran by us. From our porch or decking you could see the bridge and the road that led to it on both sides of it. One evening I had finished writing a letter to home and told my companion that I was going to mail it. I was maybe half way down the stairs that led to the street in front of our house, when a clear, distinct voice said, "Don't go over there." As I recall, I stopped on the stairs and looked around to see who said that. There was no one there but me. Then I looked across the bridge to where the mailbox was. And standing in the shadow of a bridge pole by the mailbox was a large man. There was no reason for anyone to be there at any time of the day, let alone late at night.

I knew immediately that if I had gone over there, my life may well have been in danger, and I went back up to our apartment.

Where Two Are Gathered

The Sacrament

IN 1961 I WAS serving as a missionary in Goulburn, Australia, a small town a few hundred miles south of Sydney. It was winter and it was cold. My companion and I were the only missionaries in this town, and he had just received a telegram telling him he was transferred, and I was to wait for my new companion. Transfers were made by train, and it could take several days for my new companion to get there. In the meantime, I was to stay in my apartment and go down to the train station each day to see if he was on the train.

It was at this time my feet chose to break down on me. I had purchased a pair of Australian shoes a month before and my feet were apparently not compatible with them. At any rate, when my companion left, I had a difficult time walking. I could ride my bike, but the pain was excruciating when I walked. So, I spent my time sitting by the fireplace studying and reading with my feet propped up so no pressure was on them.

The end of the week came and still no companion. It was fast Sunday and the two member families in our town would be depending on the elders to conduct services. Neither one of them had a telephone for me to contact them if I cancelled the meeting. Even though I didn't have a companion, I felt I had to take care of the services so as not to disappoint them. My feet were still very painful as I dressed, straddled my bike and rode to the hall where we held our meetings. I arrived ten minutes early to clean the room up a bit, remove the cigarette butts, and dust the benches and the old table we used for the sacrament. I then prepared the sacrament with one half tray of water and one slice of bread, then sat down to read the scriptures and rest my feet while I waited for the members.

The member families in Goulburn seemed total opposites. The one, young with children, the other retired and no family nearby. The young couple were recent converts and their dedication to certain church principles, particularly the word of wisdom, ebbed and flowed. The older couple were rock solid, and both had been members all their lives. He was a United States citizen, she his Aussie bride. They had lived for several years in the states and had come back to the slower paced life of Australia to spend their closing years.

She was our "organist". An old, yellow-keyed piano was her instrument. It was badly out of tune. She in turn had lived without a piano for years and was a little rusty to say the least. But she made up for the piano's discord and her own lack of skill and timing with her ingratiating smile and timid enthusiasm.

It was always cold in this meeting room of ours. Our budget didn't allow for an electric heater and the lessor's budget apparently prohibited him from operating the building's gas heater over the weekend. Even bundled up in my overcoat, suit and sweater, I was starting to feel the cold. My concentration on the scriptures began to wane as I got colder and as the time we were to start our meeting came and went. "What was keeping the members?" I kept asking myself. Although both families were sometimes late, they had never been this late before. I began to feel sorry for myself. I had made a special effort, pained feet, no companion and all, to provide a meeting for the members, and no members. The longer I sat, the more frustrated I felt until at last I decided I would wait no longer. I started to refold the sacrament cloth when up the stairs panted the dear elderly sister. Her face was flushed and pink, both from the cold as well as her own physical exertion. Her husband was sick, she explained, and since she couldn't drive their car, she rode her bike the three to five miles into town from their home so she wouldn't miss church.

I didn't want to disappoint her, but it seemed to be a little foolish to hold a fast and testimony meeting with just the two of us. But as I saw her anxiousness to participate in a church service, and I felt my own thirst for a meeting with a member after a week by myself, I said, "Well, it looks like with an organist and a priesthood holder, we have all we need." And we commenced to participate in probably the most meaningful and emotional fast and testimony service of my life.

Being the only priesthood holder, I gave the opening and closing prayers (only Melchizedek priesthood holders could pray in sacrament meetings back then), blessed and passed the sacrament, and conducted the meeting. And this dear little sister played the hymns as sweetly as I have ever heard them played. The tears began almost immediately as the Spirit filled this dirty makeshift chapel. As the two of us sang, it was as though we were joined by a host of angels. I have never uttered the sacrament prayer with more humility and desire. And as we partook of the emblems of the Savior's sacrifice, the reality of what He had done for us bore upon our souls with unspeakable understanding.

We gazed into each other's eyes as we in turn bore testimony of our feelings and our love and knowledge of Jesus Christ and our gratitude for what He had done for us. With tears streaming, we sang our closing hymn, I offered the prayer, and we fell into each other's arms. A young, inexperienced missionary and a beautiful daughter of God in the winter of her mortal life, had for a moment shared a glimpse of the eternities. And came away with their light not only renewed but permanently brightened.

The Bunny Rabbit

Argentina 1989

WHEN WILL HAD BEEN on his mission about six months, they tracted out a woman in her early thirties. She was black and blue from a beating her husband had given her the night before and was despondent to the point of being suicidal. They taught her the first discussion and gave her a Book of Mormon. They came back several days later to find that she had read a significant part of the book and was converted and wanted to be baptized. Will told her that they would have to have consent from her husband to teach her further. They came back to talk to him. He was extremely rude to them and literally kicked them out of his house. He was a policeman and often worked on Sundays. Those days he worked, she would come out to church. Will was transferred and lost contact with the family. The latter part of his mission he was called as an assistant to the President and attended a conference in Tucuman (the family was from Tafi Viejo). After the conference was over he looked down in the congregation and coming toward him was this good sister. She was beaming. "I have just been baptized with my daughter," she said. This was December 1988.

Right behind her was her husband. He was beaming too. "My son and I will be baptized in several weeks," he said. A miracle had taken place in their lives.

When we went to Argentina to pick Will up, we rented a car to tour his mission and visit families that were particularly special to him. Our last night, we were in Tafi Viejo. It was 11:00 p.m. We had already visited two other families that evening, each one feeding us. We were stuffed and a little tired when we went to this family's home, the last one we would visit on our tour of his mission. They were humble people. There were no more than two or three rooms in their apartment and the rooms were very small. He couldn't have made more than the average wage of about \$100 a month.

As we walked in their apartment, we were greeted with love and affection. There was "finger food" on their table for us. I couldn't speak Spanish and Joyce only a little, and the family could speak no English, so Will served as interpreter. "You bring me great honor to come to my home," the brother said. We asked each other about our occupations, etc., then through Will the father

said to me, "Everything I have is yours. If I have anything at all you want, it is yours. If I can do anything at all for you, just ask, and I will do it." I was moved to tears. Surely the Savior could not have been treated more kindly or with more love than I was being treated.

There was complete love being manifest within the family. When a child was acting a little obnoxiously, only love came from this man. It was about midnight. "Dinner will be ready in about 20 minutes," he said. I was stuffed, but I couldn't refuse what this good man would give me. He was serving only Pepsi Cola to drink. This was the first time in at least 20 years that I drank a Cola. And he then brought out these huge steaks that must have cost him at least several days wages. Somehow I managed to get mine down on a half glass of Pepsi.

When it came time to go, they wanted each of the three of us to write a note in each of their scriptures. There were several copies of scriptures, but not one for all five members of the family, so the good sister brought out her Relief Society lesson manual to have us write in for their six year old boy to remember us by. Again a humbling experience. We got up to go. It was about 1:00 a.m. now. The sister whispered something to the little boy, and he ran into the other room and brought out a toy bunny rabbit. It was obviously his most priceless possession. He gave it to Joyce. By this time the tears were flowing freely. What love. To give strangers your most prized possession.

They walked us out to the car. Then each of them hugged and kissed each of us. I embraced their 15 year old son and said, "I'm looking forward to hearing about your mission call." Will interpreted, and the boy smiled and nodded approval. Then the father embraced and kissed Will and whispered to him, "Please forgive me for what I said and did to you those months ago."

"I forgive you," was Will's emotional reply.

Our ride back to the hotel was teary and emotional. We had experienced an extraordinary event. I could not get out of my mind the love this family had shown to us. Love from a husband who had been a wife beater and a precious boy who gave us his prize possession. All as a result of the gospel of Jesus Christ that had been embraced by this family.

Terminal Cancer Diagnosis

2003

WE HAD OUR 1ST annual Steve & Joyce Hanson reunion the week of July 4th. 35 were here, most of the time at our house. And that was good. It was also eventful. The brief story is this. I had been having unusual and severe headaches for the past several months (I never have headaches.). They were localized at a spot above my right temple. I told this to Chris, who was in residency for radiation oncology at the time. He said I needed to go to the emergency room, so we did.

The director of ER at St. Joseph's said they would do a CT scan, but first asked Chris and the nurse practitioner in my room what they thought the problem was. Chris said, "A malignant tumor." The practitioner said something relating to a chronic eye problem I had, and the ER doctor "guessed" a cluster headache. I had the CT scan done and when the doctor walked back into the room his first words were, "Well, this is not good." And he pointed to Chris and said, "He was right." That got my attention.

The CT scan showed three lesions on my inner skull, with 2 being right in the spot where my headaches were. Chris went back and looked at the CT scan and spoke with the radiologist and ER doctor. He came back in to my room and said, in essence, they all concurred that it was virtually certain that I had a metastatic cancer. I was basically told I was likely terminal, and the process now would be to find where the metastasizing tumor was and go from there.

I asked for and received a beautiful blessing from Chris. I will say no more about that, only it was an extraordinary experience for both of us. I was hospitalized for two days while they did a bunch of tests including blood, urine, and an MRI of my head. Bottom-line, while the MRI confirmed the lesions, they did not appear to be malignant, and the blood and urine tests were negative. After that, I saw a neurologist and had a full body bone scan and chest x-ray. There was a slight abnormal hot spot on one of my ribs as well as my skull but not likely malignant. Then I saw another oncologist who specialized in hematology. They obviously thought I was possibly dealing with multiple myeloma.

It was a singular experience, particularly since it all happened in the midst of our family reunion. You can imagine the emotions, etc. as each of the children were told what the initial prognosis was. Several days later when I told them it looked like that first prognosis was not correct, I felt a little bit like Huckleberry Finn who had the privilege of listening in on his own funeral but caught "heck" when the townspeople found out he had not died.

Regarding my own feelings during this time, I think I will simply say I had great peace and not a speck of concern about my situation. I was concerned about Joyce and the children. I reviewed some practical things, like finances, in my mind and was satisfied that all would be well there. I thought about what I would do differently now that it appeared I may not have much longer here on this telestial tour, and I concluded, "Not really anything." That is not to imply that I did not recognize my substantial weaknesses, but simply that I was at peace, and I believe ready to go whenever it was time.

I think I was particularly struck with the "even-ness" of the experience; the "naturalness" of it. In fact, when the oncologist, after the series of blood tests and MRI concluded that I probably did not have cancer, I had no feelings of euphoria, or even a sense of relief. It was as though I had been planning to take a long trip that would take me away from my loved ones for a while, and the trip was cancelled. Or, rather, postponed.

I had two thoughts as a result of all of this. Our time is short here and we simply don't know from day to day what will happen. And that is okay. We ought to think about that frequently and live accordingly. The second, is the role the Gospel plays in all of this. In fact, our existence, our mortal experience, our "veil," and the dealing with uncertainties, etc., are the Gospel. This is all such a part of my life and awareness that there was no need to have a review or a striving to remember who I am and what this is all about during this unique time. It was all just there. And my knowledge and awareness and testimony of the reality of Jesus Christ and His atonement enveloped me like a wonderful blanket. Bringing me security and warmth and peace.

I was also filled with gratitude during this time for Joyce and our children and grandchildren.

An addendum 3-13-2025

With the literally scores of experiences I had as a stake president with consoling families as their loved one was dying or who had died, with my experience here I gained a new realization about death. I became aware of the sorrow the one who was dying felt as he/she saw the sorrow of their loved ones who were grieving for them. I was overwhelmed with the sorrow that represented the love Joyce and our children had for me at this time. I shared in that sorrow. Not because of what was happening to me, but because of what was happening to them. My sorrow for them was deep and poignant and real. That experience added to my understanding of life and death here on our telestial tour

And, by the way, I was once again diagnosed with multiple myeloma a few years ago as a result of a positive significant blood test. The subsequent bone marrow biopsy indicated I did not have multiple myeloma *yet* but MGus, which is a pre-myeloma condition with a small but significant percent of those who have it ultimately developing multiple myeloma. And, once again, Joyce went through a “I’m going to lose my husband,” experience.

Three Life Transforming Events

WHILE NONE OF THE following events involved a vision or even an audible angel's voice, yet they were each as transforming as if I had seen or heard the Lord Himself. I report them here briefly, but their significance for me could not be overstated. In each case, my life was transformed dramatically. Interestingly, each event was separated by 10 years.

When I was 9 years old

One night as I lay in bed, everything that I had been doing wrong was like a huge weight on my heart. While my "sins" were common for a boy my age, yet for me at that moment they brought unbearable sorrow. I didn't know what to do. Finally, I got up and went to mother who was in the living room by herself, and with sobs I told her everything. "The pain is awful." I cried. "Will it ever go away?"

My mother just put her arms around me and loved me. And she told me about Jesus Christ and about how He will forgive me because I don't want to do those things anymore. While the pain and sorrow did not go away completely, yet I felt some relief. Over time, the pain did leave and literally from that moment on I wanted to avoid anything and everything that would offend my Heavenly Father. I wanted to be completely pure. I wanted to follow Jesus Christ.

When I was 19 years old

In spite of the sobering experience I had as a young boy, I had developed a fun loving disposition. And with that outlook I must admit a certain degree of irresponsibility was the result. My activity in the church never slackened, but my commitment to always do what was right wavered at times. I was not as diligent as I should have been in reading the scriptures. I did not strive to be a peace maker, and I did not actively seek to draw nearer to my Heavenly Father. It was as though I would just "postpone" these serious minded involvements until later on when I was "ready" to grow up.

As a result, as I approached the age where a mission call could be expected, I found myself faced with internal conflicts. On the one hand, that I would serve a full time mission had been

a foregone conclusion for as long as I could remember. I had planned for, talked about, and anticipated that call for years. But now that I was to that point in my life, I saw the acceptance of a mission call as the acceptance of adulthood. I would no longer be a boy and would leave all the enjoyable, even lighthearted and lightminded activities that I associated with this time of my life. With that view, my testimony of the gospel was not fully developed, and I began to see a mission as a real sacrifice. I would have to work hard, take time out of my schooling, and be sober. I would be away from my girlfriend who I had been dating for nearly two years. I had serious doubts about my willingness to take that leap, to make that kind of change in my life, and to offer that seemingly overwhelming sacrifice.

In my heart, I knew the right decision was to go on a mission. But I didn't always know I knew that. I had developed a knack for rationalizing and that talent was utilized to its fullest at this crucial crossroad of my life. I was prepared to say "No" to my bishop when he called me in to talk to me about a mission.

But he didn't accept my answer. Instead, he talked about my responsibility to serve the Lord and the personal growth and future blessings I would leave behind if I did not go. I was not happy with what the bishop said. He had spoken lovingly but had been straightforward. And my conscience had been pricked. I agreed to pray about it, and I did so. But my frustrations simply seemed to mount with no answer coming.

How could it come? I was praying for the wrong thing. I was asking to know what the Lord would have me do. But I already had that answer. I had that answer when I was born and my parents began preparing me for a mission. I had that answer when I was a little boy, and I first began anticipating a mission. I had that answer when the prophet said all worthy young men should go on a mission. I had that answer when the bishop counselled me to go on a mission.

What my prayer should have been was for the strength to make the right decision and for an assurance from Him that I would have His Spirit with me as I took this step of faith. Then one morning, I awoke with a beautiful, calm, peaceful feeling. I had received no vision. I had seen no heavenly messenger. Yet I knew with absolute certainty what the Lord wanted me to do, and I was ready to do it. The prayer that I should have been asking was answered. That night completely changed me.

My call to serve in the Australian mission came. There was nearly a two month wait between the issuance of the call by the First presidency and the day I reported to the mission home. It was during this time that I underwent the most intense period of struggle and temptation of my life. It was as though the forces of hell were raised up against me. I was in a battle for my very spiritual life.

The culmination of this struggle occurred a few nights before I was to enter the mission home. I was in Provo staying with friends of Mom and Dad. My girlfriend was at BYU, and I wanted

to be with her for a few days before I went to the mission home. I was overcome by some awful power of darkness as I lay in my bed. The darkness enveloped me, bore down upon me, bound me so that I could not move body or limb. I lay awake, fully conscious of this devastating power. I struggled to free myself and pled with Heavenly Father to release me from this dark force before I was totally destroyed. Finally, I was released and sat up in bed, my clothes wet with perspiration, and my body trembling and weak from the ordeal. I then lay down again, frightened lest the power return.

As I have read and re-read the story of Joseph Smith's first vision, I have been able to completely identify with his experience with the power of Satan. And as Joseph's experience with Darkness was followed by an indescribable experience with the Light, so my experience with the awful, consuming powers of the Evil One was followed by a veritable burst of Spiritual Light as I entered the mission home a few days later and listened to the latter-day prophets and apostles. My heart burned within, as I drank in the messages delivered to us by the Servants of the Lord.

The receiving of my own endowment in the Salt Lake temple was the highlight of this week of spiritual feasting. I felt that my sins were literally washed away as I was "cleansed from the blood and sins of this generation." I thrilled when I saw the entire gospel plan unfold before me as I participated in the endowment process. And I literally felt I had walked into the presence of the Lord as the temple veil was parted, and I was invited to enter. Finding a corner of the celestial room, I quietly wept as I thanked my Heavenly Father for this great blessing of Light and for His patience and support during my times of temptation and struggle.

As I stood up at the conclusion of the mission home week to bear my testimony, I could say without qualification, without hesitation, and with total conviction, "I know more than I know anything that I am a son of God, that Jesus Christ lives, that this is His church." I knew also that my life was to be spent bearing that testimony.

When I was 29 years old

I had an extraordinary mission. When I came home, I went to BYU and served faithfully in priesthood callings including being ordained a high priest when I was 23 and serving as a counselor to two bishops. When Joyce and I moved to Arizona, I continued to faithfully serve in whatever Church callings I was given, including being Sunday School teacher for adults and children. But I began to lose some of my spiritual edge as I became involved in traveling over the United States working for political clients running for national and state office. I worked with US senators, congressmen, and governors. I don't think I even noticed my slippage here. But I was slipping. And it showed in my non-focus on the Savior and in being less than faithful in reading my scriptures daily and in my impatience with Joyce and the children. The things of this world were becoming less offensive to me and more my life.

Then...

I woke up one morning and everything had changed for me. Again, no vision, no heavenly voice, no visitation. But in the most real way, I was spiritually reborn. My experience was not as dramatic as Alma the Younger when he was visited by the angel and went through hell in his repenting. However, it was every bit as impacting and life changing for me. My experience was literally the same as was the experience of King Benjamin's people after he spoke to them.

"The Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent...has wrought a mighty change in...our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually." And as a result they were "called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters, for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten (them)."¹

Literally, from that morning on, my life has been focused on Jesus Christ. I have sought with all my heart to follow Him. To serve Him. To learn of Him. To love Him. To learn what He wants me to do and do it.

These three experiences quietly but with indescribable impact changed my life at critical times and helped me see who I wanted to be. And while I have stumbled, erred, been inconsistent at times, and have constantly battled my mind and body, yet my direction has been sure and the grace of Jesus Christ a reality in my life to help me overcome the non-celestial in me. The Holy Spirit has literally been my constant companion and guide. And as a result, my love for Jesus Christ and, therefore, for Joyce, for each child and grandchild, and literally for everyone is more closely mirroring the pure love of Christ.

1. (Mosiah 5:2-7)

THE BOOK OF MORMON

The Book Of Mormon—A Hidden Treasure

Orange Stake 1988

WHEN MY OLDEST SON Will was a small boy, he and I were visiting my brother in Merced. He is a doctor and had as a patient an old, crusty hermit that owned a gold mine. The old man lived by himself next to his petered out mine in California's historic gold country. My brother asked me if I would like to visit his miner friend. Both Will and I were anxious to go and so we did.

An hour or so out of Merced, we turned off the paved highway onto a rutty dirt road, and for the next 45 minutes we traveled 5 to 10 miles an hour in 4 wheel drive to reach our destination. The scenery was beautiful. These were foothills to the mighty Sierras, but they would be considered mountains themselves back east. The old-timer's mine was located half-way down the steep side of one of these small mountains. It was supported with timber braces that were rotting and was ankle deep in water. The shack where he lived was straight out of the old west with a small bed and horsehair mattress, a wash basin, and a wooden chair or two. There were some sheds around the place and a turn of the century mill used to crush the ore was strung out down the side of the hill. He took us around and explained what had transpired here over the past 80 years or so.

As we were talking he nodded his head toward a coffee can filled with dirt that was sitting on the ground outside of one of the sheds. "Ya see that can?" he said. "Well back in the 1940's when I had some hired hands helping me work my mine, there was a fire in the bunk house that burned it to the ground. My workers all quit right after that and left me with the cleanup. That can was underneath one of the bunks and was filled with dirt just like you see it now. I moved it out from under the rubble and set it here by the shed, and there it sat for 6 or 7 years. Then one day I got curious to know if there was anything in that can besides dirt. I dumped it upside down and underneath the dirt was 7 or 8 pounds of pure gold. One of my workers must have been pilfering gold from the mill for a long time and stored it in that can putting dirt on the top so no one would know. Isn't it funny? It sat there in front of that shed just like it's

sitting there now, and I'd walk by it a hundred times a day for years and didn't even know there was a small fortune in it."

Perhaps this old miner's experience isn't too unlike many of us when it comes to the Book of Mormon. We walk by that book many times a day as it sits on our shelves, figuratively or even literally collecting dust. And because we don't put forth the effort to see and feel what is in it, we never come to realize the treasure that is there.

The Book of Mormon is not like any other book ever made available to the people of the earth. If there ever was a miracle, this book is it. If there ever was a marvelous work and a wonder, this book is it. Its very coming forth under the circumstances which it did is dramatic evidence, irrefutable evidence, that there is a God in heaven. That all that is taught in the New Testament about Jesus Christ is true. And that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, and God's priesthood is here upon earth again. This book came forth the way Joseph Smith claimed.

It can be felt with our hands, seen with our eyes, and pondered by our minds. Its contents can be scrutinized and analyzed by the most demanding investigator. Its literary style, political and social setting, geographical backdrop, name and word etymology, historical veracity, internal consistency, and doctrinal integrity is there for all to see. Intense, objective scholarly research to date has only verified its authenticity.

What would you give to have been present as the Savior gave his sermon on the mount? Or to have been an eye witness to Christ's raising Lazarus from the dead? Or to have been in the room with the apostles and felt the nail prints in the hands and feet of the resurrected Savior when he appeared to them after His crucifixion?

The Lord has given each of us the chance to have that kind of sure knowledge. It is sitting on the bookshelves of our homes. Speaking of the Book of Mormon and the manner in which we received it, Joseph Smith said: "By these things we know that there is a God in heaven, who is infinite and eternal, from everlasting to everlasting the same unchangeable God, the framer of heaven and earth, and all things which are in them."¹

That book is as filled with spiritual insight and truth as the Sermon on the Mount. It is as tangible as the marks in the Savior's hands. And its coming forth is as miraculous as Lazarus' raising from the dead. It is the Book of Mormon. It is a voice as one speaking from the dust that God lives. That Jesus Christ lives. That Joseph Smith is a prophet. And that undeniable witness makes it a treasure of incomparable value.

The Book of Mormon is a prize of inestimable worth because it tells us who God and Jesus Christ are by defining our relationship to them. One of the most poignant and revealing passages in all of scripture is found in Third Nephi as the resurrected Savior is introduced by His Father to the Nephite and Lamanite people. Both the event itself and the manner in which

the prophets recorded it outlines the path that we are to follow in order to know God. As you read it, I would urge you to try to listen with your spiritual ear.

"It came to pass that while they were...conversing one with another, they heard a voice as if it came out of heaven; and they cast their eyes round about, for they understood not the voice which they heard; and it was not a harsh voice, neither was it a loud voice; nevertheless, and notwithstanding it being a small voice it did pierce them that did hear to the center, insomuch that there was no part of their frame that it did not cause to quake; yea, it did pierce them to the very soul, and did cause their hearts to burn. ...Again they heard the voice, and they understood it not. And again the third time they did hear the voice, and did open their ears to hear it; and their eyes were towards the sound thereof; and they did look steadfastly towards heaven, from whence the sound came. And behold, the third time they did understand the voice which they heard; and it said unto them, behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name. Hear ye him. And it came to pass, as they understood they cast their eyes up again towards heaven; and behold, they saw a Man descending out of heaven; and he was clothed in a white robe; and he came down and stood in the midst of them; and the eyes of the whole multitude were turned upon him, and they durst not open their mouths, even one to another, and wist not what it meant, for they thought it was an angel that had appeared unto them. And it came to pass that he stretched forth his hand and spake unto the people, saying, Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world. And behold, I am the light and the life of the world; and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning. ...When Jesus had spoken these words the whole multitude fell to the earth; for they remembered that it had been prophesied among them that Christ should show himself unto them after his ascension into heaven. ...The Lord spake unto them (again) saying, Arise and come forth unto me, that ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet, that ye may know that I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world. ...The multitude went forth, and thrust their hands into his side, and did feel the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet; and this they did do, going forth one by one until they had all gone forth, and did see with their eyes and did feel with their hands, and did know of a surety and did bear record, that it was he, of whom it was written by the prophets, that should come. And when they had all gone forth and had witnessed for themselves, they did cry out with one accord, saying, Hosanna. Blessed be the name of the Most High God. And they did fall down at the feet of Jesus, and did worship him.²

The Book of Mormon is a pearl without price because its pages are filled with the knowledge of who God and Christ are and who we are in relationship to them.

When my children were all younger, we tried to instill in them a love for the Book of Mormon and a desire to read it. We gave them some non-spiritual incentives as well to encourage them to get into its pages, For the most part they responded in a positive manner. One day Will, who was 7 or 8 at the time, was in his bedroom trying to work his way through First Nephi. Some of his sisters were in the adjoining bedroom arguing over some insignificant thing. Will had taken about all he could take with his sisters bickering and in his high-pitched and somewhat lisp-y voice, called out: "You girls are just like Laman and Lemuel. You're always murmuring."

Nephi said we are to "liken all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning," (I Nephi 19:23) Therein lies a key to another treasure within the pages of the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon is about real people and about real events and about how those people responded to their circumstances and situations. It tells us in detail the results of those responses. About what befalls individuals, families, and even nations as they choose to follow Christ or to list to the voice of Satan.

It outlines in a real-life context the doctrines of Jesus Christ in clear and unmistakable terms. "My soul delights in plainness," Nephi recorded, and the entire Book of Mormon is a testimony that every prophet whose writings it contains felt the same way. The Book leads us through this life of tears and sorrows. I testify that as we read the Book of Mormon daily, and as our lives unfold, we will find within its pages the answers to our most soul wrenching questions, the balm that will sooth our wounds, and the peace that will be like oil on the troubled waters of our lives, It is our guide to exaltation.

It provides us with a clearly marked path to God, that we may know with absolute surety that our course is right before Him. And it was written for us and to us. "Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present," Moroni said to us, " and yet ye are not. But behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing." (Mormon 8:35)

"I cannot write the hundredth part of the things of my people," said Mormon as he was choosing what to include in the Book of Mormon. And regarding that which he selected to incorporate he said, "I do this for a wise purpose; for thus it whispereth me, according to the workings of the Spirit of the Lord, which is in me, And now, I do not know all things; but the Lord knoweth all things which are to come; wherefore, he worketh in me to do according to his will."³

The selection of what Mormon was to include in his abridgement of the millions of words of history that were recorded by the prophets over the 1000 year period that the main portion of the Book of Mormon covers, was given to him by revelation. And that in every respect, it is pertinent to the people who it was to be given to. And that is us. There is nothing in that book that is superfluous. There is nothing in that book that does not apply directly to us, both Gentile and Jew, both member of the church and non-member, as well as to the nations of the world and everyone as children of God.

We can, therefore, find within its pages a clear delineation of our own individual paths to Christ. And we can also find therein, by looking at the history of those people, a type and shadow of our own day and circumstances. And therefore what will befall us as a world, as a nation, and as a people who profess to follow the Savior here in our own time.

Those who have read and studied the Lectures of Faith as given by Joseph Smith to the school of the prophets, may recognize these three treasures of the Book of Mormon:

To know with certainty that God and Jesus Christ live; to know their attributes and characteristics; and to know what our path must be in order for us to be acceptable to God, as the three keys necessary to obtain that degree of faith that would bring us exaltation.

It is said that the Book of Mormon contains the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I believe that statement is truer than most of us imagine. And it is said that "a man can get closer to God by abiding by the precepts of that book than by any other." "The Book of Mormon," said John Welch a professor at BYU, "speaks to your level, whatever that level is." In other words, whatever level of spiritual understanding you are at, the Book of Mormon is pertinent. And the more times you read it, pray about it, and ponder it, the deeper you will go and the closer you will get to the spiritual mother lode.

But there is a warning to those of us who will not avail ourselves of this priceless gift. "And these things have I written" said Mormon referring to the words of Christ, "which are a lesser part of the things which he taught the people; and I have written them to the intent that they may be brought again unto this people. And when they shall have received this, which is expedient that they should have first, to try their faith, and if it shall so be that they shall believe these things then shall the greater things be made manifest unto them. And if it so be that they will not believe these things, then shall the greater things be withheld from them, unto their condemnation."⁴

The Lord has told us through His prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson, that we as a church, and many of us as individuals, are still under condemnation. For we continue to treat lightly this magnificent treasure which Christ has given us, And because of this, He cannot give us "the greater things" that he would have us receive.

"And I exhort you to remember these things," cried Moroni, "For the time speedily cometh that ye shall know that I lie not, for ye shall see me at the bar of God; and the Lord God will say unto you: Did I not declare my words unto you, which were written by this man, like as one crying from the dead, yea, even as one speaking out of the dust? I declare these things unto the fulfilling of the prophecies. And behold, they shall proceed forth out of the mouth of the everlasting God; and his word shall hiss forth from generation to generation. And God shall show unto you that that which I have written is true. I would exhort you that ye would come unto Christ, and lay hold upon every good gift."⁵

And that is my testimony and invitation as well.

1. Doctrine and Covenants 20:17
2. 3 Nephi 11:1-17
3. Words of Mormon 1:5-7
4. 3 Nephi 26:6-10
5. Moroni 10:27-30

The Book of Mormon and Skin Color

Spokane 2011

THERE ARE PASSAGES IN the Book of Mormon that some construe to imply that discrimination on the basis of skin color is justified. But, in fact, as one examines these verses in context they will find the message to be quite the opposite.

The doctrine of skin color indiscrimination is indisputably set forth in the Book of Mormon as stated by Nephi. “For none of these iniquities come of the Lord; for he doeth that which is good among the children of men; and he doeth nothing save it be plain unto the children of men; and he inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile.”¹

This is what the Book of Mormon teaches. The verses in the Book of Mormon that seem to most strongly refer negatively to skin color are also in 2nd Nephi but are much earlier than this unmistakable directive from the Lord (and from Nephi himself) that skin color discrimination is not acceptable to God. And these few verses are really the only ones like them in the entire Book of Mormon. But why are they there? And what are they saying?

The people of Lehi came from Jerusalem and relatively speaking were of a fairer or lighter skin color. Because of their culture and their human bias they would likely have found at least some of the people that were in the “promised land” when they arrived (yes, there were people here when they came.), “unappealing” because they had a darker skin. They had been running around in the sun for a long time after all. And at least with some, they had a life style that was repugnant to them. This was not God judging skin color. It was the Nephite’s own personal bias. Just like the bias that existed in the United States and the rest of the “white” world for uncounted centuries. There were many good Christian “white folks” here in the U.S. who had a skin color bias.

Apparently those who followed Laman and Lemuel quickly chose to adopt the life style of some of the “natives” and as a result became like them both in looks (darker skin and all) and habits. They, therefore, effectively isolated themselves from their Nephite cousins. And, for the time being, there would be little or no association or intermarriage.

With these observations as backdrop, let’s examine 2 Nephi 5:21-23 carefully.

- 2 Nephi 5:21: “that they might not be enticing unto my people the Lord God did cause a skin of blackness to come upon them.” Another way of saying this is, “I will use the personal, cultural biases of my people who are otherwise striving to keep my commandments to keep them from intermarrying with those who would destroy my gospel and the records that have been kept and therefore doom my ultimate purposes here.” Keep in mind that it is Nephi who is speaking here and who is describing his own people (with his own words not the Lord’s) as being “white and exceedingly fair and delightsome.” It appears, at the time Nephi wrote this, he had the same cultural bias as his people even though he knows (or perhaps later finds out) the Lord doesn’t.²
- 2 Nephi 5:22: “I (the Lord) will cause that they shall be loathsome unto thy people.” The Lord is not saying they are loathsome unto Him, but because of the “natural” human biases of the Nephites, the Nephites will find their Israelite cousins loathsome because of their habits and skin color. So the Lord’s purposes will be fulfilled here. The Nephites will have enough struggles on their own to stay reasonably righteous and the Lord will use their own biases to keep them from the dangers of a complete apostasy by intermingling with the now very corrupt Lamanites.
- That that situation could (and in fact will) change, the Lord adds, that the Nephites will find the Lamanites loathsome “save (until) they (the Lamanites) shall repent of their iniquities.”³ It will not be a skin color change that will do it. It will be that the Lamanites change their ways. They repent and therefore are no longer a danger to derail the purposes of the Lord. And the Nephites will also repent regarding their own unfounded biases regarding skin color.

It is clear that the biases of the Nephites with respect to skin color changed as time went on (just like they have in our day). The biases were lessened/eliminated as the Nephites became more Christ-like, and as many of the Lamanites changed themselves. For example, Jacob, younger brother of Nephi, was not born in Jerusalem and in his older years (Nephi had died by then) speaking as the prophet and in the name of the Lord addressed and condemned these very biases of the Nephite people. He said, speaking metaphorically and hitting the Nephites with their own prejudicialness, that the skin of the Lamanites will become whiter than those of the Nephites before God. And then he said, “Wherefore, a commandment I give unto you, which is the word of God, that ye revile no more against them (the Lamanites) because of the darkness

of their skins; neither shall ye revile against them because of their filthiness.” (Jacob 3:8-9) Stop being prejudiced he said. The Lord was telling the Nephites through His prophet that they were in gross error with respect to their prejudices and they had to repent.

Over time we see that a significant part of the Book of Mormon focuses on righteous Nephites reaching out to the Lamanites to teach them who they are and what they can become. Skin color had nothing to do with that reaching out. It was certainly not a barrier. This is what we have seen in the Church in our day as well. The sons of King Mosiah (Nephites) spent 11 years with the Lamanites and succeeded in bringing 1000’s of them unto Christ. And they came as a body to dwell with the Nephites who undoubtedly intermarried with them and became for the most part one with them.

We don’t know, but I wouldn’t be surprised if the sons of Mosiah married Lamanite women. After all, they were marriageable age and that’s who they were around for 11 years. And we know that for significant periods of time the Lamanites as a people were more righteous than the Nephites, and individual Lamanites, like Samuel, helped keep the Church intact. Righteousness had nothing to do with skin color.

Ultimately the terms “Lamanite” and “Nephite” in the Book of Mormon did not describe descendants of Laman/Lemuel and Nephi but identified ideological and political groups. Skin color, it appears, only had significant application during the early part of the Book of Mormon and for the reasons we have discussed. And at the time of Christ there was a great unification. The “curse” was taken off the Lamanites (i.e. they were no more to be separated and distinct from the Nephites) and through the process of intermarrying and becoming one with the Nephites their skin would become lighter (or “whiter.”).

That latter statement, by the way, was likely not a quality or judgment statement, but simply a statement of what happens naturally over time when such intermarrying takes place. If it was meant qualitatively it was most certainly metaphorical. Skin color became a non-issue just like it has nearly become today in the Church and is becoming so in the world.

A thought about the word, “white.” Throughout the scriptures we see the word “white” as a term used to represent “purity.” In this context the word is used symbolically because on the color spectrum it is the earthly color that is closest to PURE LIGHT. It is not at all the same thing as LIGHT. It has simply become a metaphor for LIGHT. But like all metaphors, when taken out of context and beyond what the symbolic application of it is, it can become a distortion of truth. For example, is white furniture inherently more beautiful, better, more pure than brown or black furniture? Is white chocolate better, more desirable than dark chocolate? Is a white animal stronger, more faithful, and more appealing than a dark animal? Of course not.

We are all children of God. We all have the seeds of divinity within us. The color of our body has nothing to do with our potential. To think otherwise is a sin and a manifestation of gross pride. The Book of Mormon so testifies. And today's Church and prophets and leaders exemplify the oneness of God's children regardless of culture or race or skin color.

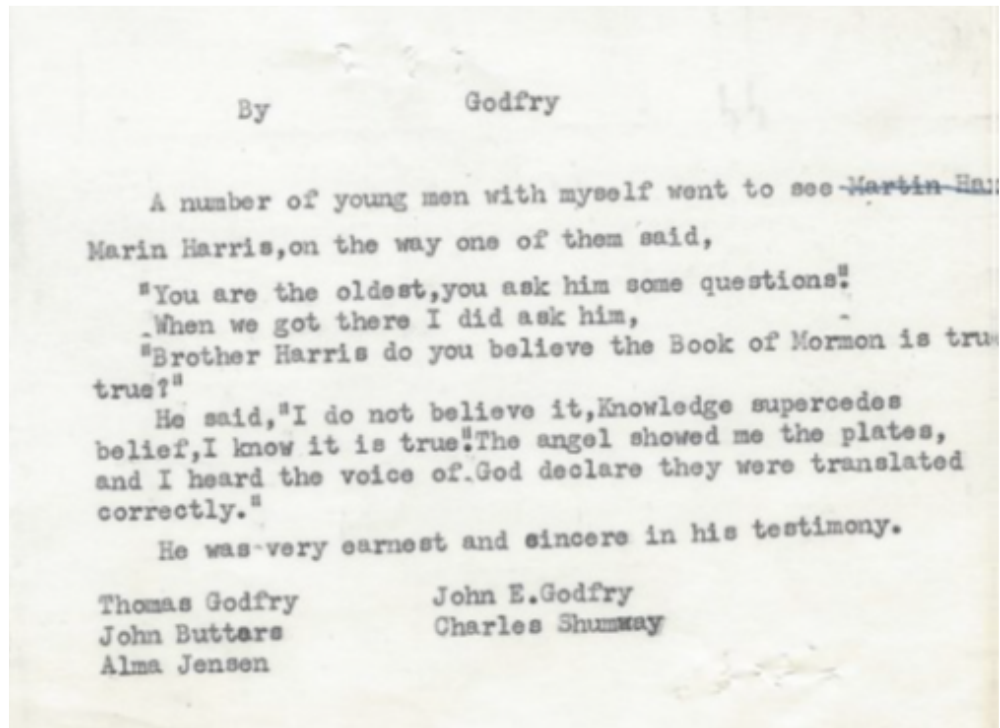
1. 2 Nephi 26:33
2. See 2 Nephi 26:33
3. 2 Nephi 5:22

My Witness Of The Book Of Mormon

When I was a boy, back in the early to mid-1950's, my mother's father, John William Dunn, told me about an experience he had regarding the Book of Mormon. Grandpa lived in Logan, Utah and was born in 1889. Martin Harris, one of the Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon, lived in Clarkston, 20 miles northeast of Logan, until his death in 1875.

Martin died 14 years before my grandfather's birth, but when my grandfather was perhaps a teenager, maybe older, a man who had spoken with Martin Harris told Grandpa about his experience. What I remember my grandfather saying to me was that this man told him that he had visited Martin Harris in Clarkston and asked him if the Book of Mormon were true. Martin Harris told him he knew it was true because of what he had seen. That experience my grandfather had when he was a young man made such an impression on him, that he shared it with me.

It has been some 70 years since I heard the story, and I have forgotten most of the details. But I never forgot Grandpa telling me about it and the impact it had on me at the time. Several years ago, I came in possession of my Grandmother Dunn's book of remembrance, which was chockfull of memorabilia, pictures, and documents. I systematically went through these and put them on FamilySearch. That is when I found this little note:



I do not know who typed it, but if Mr. Godfrey did not, it was copied from his handwritten or typed recollection that was in my grandfather's possession. In any case, the note I have is scores of years old and gives the first-person accounting of the experience of this young man and those who were with him. After over six decades, I have a simple, powerful, hold-it-in-my hand evidence of what my grandfather told me so many years ago.

There have been countless articles and books written about evidence of the Book of Mormon. External evidence includes, for example, Mesoamerican archeological discoveries in the last decades¹ and unimpeachable eyewitness accounts of the plates, of the angel safeguarding them, and how Joseph brought the book forth. There is a plethora of internal evidence including Hebraic literary devices within the book and its remarkable consistency, complexity, and detail.

While these are interesting, they are also expected, for the book *is* true. The real proof of the book is what it does to you and for you. How you change when you make it an integral part of your life. How your knowledge, understanding, and love of Jesus Christ grows because of the words you are reading and the Spirit you are feeling. How you are becoming a more Christ-like person through that process.

Back in the 1970's, I was driving our family from Utah to our home in southern California. It was late at night and everyone else in the car was asleep. I was listening to news radio when the newscaster talked with a man by the name of Walter Martin, a Christian radio talk host who for years carried out a vendetta against the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He had hired three so-called handwriting experts to exam Solomon Spaulding's handwriting as com-

pared to the Book of Mormon manuscript. I am not sure which manuscript he was referring to—either the printer’s copy or the original where only a fraction of that manuscript still exists. In any case, those were mostly written by Oliver Cowdery. Walter Martin explained what he had done, and one of those he hired reported that the manuscript was in Solomon Spaulding’s hand. The conclusion: Joseph Smith plagiarized the book from Solomon Spaulding.

For a second, a devastating wave swept over me, and then the resolve that defined who I was came. My commitment was unwavering. “I don’t care what they say. I will follow that Book for the rest of my life.” I knew what it had done to me and for me. And that is what I wanted. Then I almost laughed at the absurdity of what I had just heard. Turns out, a few days later what the other two experts concluded came out. One said, it was such a frivolous thing he did not want to participate. The other said he was wondering what Mr. Martin was doing. He had written his opinion that there was no similarity whatsoever between the handwritings, and Mr. Martin did not even acknowledge it.

The importance of that experience for me was my seeing that the sublime truths and spirit of the Book of Mormon was what *I desired*. How it was changing *my* life was unimpeachable evidence that it was what Joseph purported it to be.

President Ezra Taft Benson said: *We do not have to prove the Book of Mormon is true. The book is its own proof. All we need to do is read it and declare it. The Book of Mormon is not on trial—the people of the world, including the members of the Church, are on trial as to what they will do with this second witness for Christ.*²

Those who seek to “prove” or “disprove” the Book of Mormon using external evidence are looking beyond the mark. The proof *is* within its pages and the life-changing effect it has on the sincere reader. As Joseph Smith said, “A man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.”³ That is the proof.

Every reader can be a certain and sure testator to its truthfulness. *If they want*. The pure humble desire (faith) to follow the Savior is the key. That is why I can declare to you, my children, and grandchildren, that I am a witness of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. Like Martin Harris, I do not believe it. I know it.

What we desire will lead us to truth or away from it. Jesus said, “If ye continue in my word, then ... ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”⁴ The corollary, of course, is if you do not desire to live your lives as Christ has taught, you will block yourself from seeing and understanding truth. You will not be free.

I am an irrefutable witness to this miraculous book. The Book of Mormon is filled with extraordinary insights that resonate with our souls. That they are merely the product of the mind of a 23-year-old farm boy is inconceivable.⁵ Virtually every chapter has life-helping, even life-changing truths that have affected me. No other book I have studied, including the Bible,

has this concentration of truths so clearly and consistently presented. I have had countless spiritual experiences in this journey. I am coming to understand the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ as a result.

This book and its *miraculous coming forth*⁶ is evidence that there is a God and that Jesus Christ is His Son and our Savior. That there is a plan of salvation or happiness that we are involved with here in our mortal stay. I have tried to live my life as a testimony of these truths. And as weak and failing as I am, still, I hope my witness has been sure and clear. The *way* that I have *chosen* to live my life and the resulting consistent peace and joy that you see in me are the fruits of my choice.

1. See, for example: bookofmormoncentral.org/blog/4-ways-the-new-mayan-discoveries-may-relate-to-the-book-of-mormon; and www.fairmormon.org/conference/august-2012/reading-mormons-codex
2. See: www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1984/10/a-new-witness-for-christ?lang=eng
3. See: www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1984/06/the-most-correct-book?lang=eng
4. John 8:31-32
5. Professor Robert V. Remini, a University of Illinois historian, not a member of the Church, who also served as the U.S. Congressional Historian, gave this admiring description of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon:
6. .See: knowhy.bookofmormoncentral.org/knowhy/why-did-the-book-of-mormon-come-forth-as-a-miracle

A Commentary on 2nd Nephi 4:15-35

2 NEPHI 4:15-35 IS real. It is a practical application of gospel principles. Anyone who has had any amount of “depression” can completely identify with Nephi’s feelings here. They can see that even prophets of God who have seen angels, visions, and the Savior have depression too. And it makes us feel “better” knowing that we are not weird or strange or different because we have those challenges. Importantly, as he describes his way out of depression, Nephi gives us the way to get out of our depression as well. It is remembering who we are. We are literally children of God and that through losing ourselves in Christ and relying upon His grace, we will overcome our flesh. By the way, because of the “realness” of this description of the mental/emotional/spiritual challenges that virtually everyone has, I believe it is also a powerful evidence of the truthfulness of The Book of Mormon. That book is about real people having real experiences in Christ.

On a deeper level, this passage is a metaphor of our existence, the purpose for which we have been placed here on earth, and the *only* way we can *successfully* work our way through it. It is the process that we observe in the temple, and it is about the temple. I believe we can put our own name where Nephi’s is to see who we are, what we have been placed on this earth to experience, and how we are to make the most of it and overcome it. This scripture, for me, describes succinctly our telestial tour. We are celestial beings who have been in God’s presence and have been placed in a telestial environment so that we can learn to master telestial matter. To become “actors” and not to be “acted upon.”¹

In essence, we are making our bodies eternal temples for our spirits. And to do this with a veil in place is the perfect proving and developing ground for those who will become as God.² That we are celestial beings dwelling temporarily in a telestial world can certainly bring absorbing depression from time to time.

How could God’s love consume Nephi’s flesh? (vs.21)

The only way we can overcome the flesh is through the grace (love) of Jesus Christ. To be as God we must be one who always, under every circumstance “acts” and is not “acted upon.” That defines who God is. Our bodies and our minds, both of which are “our flesh” are intended to be “acted upon” or controlled. To do this, we must “come unto Christ” and offer our “whole souls” to Him. In other words, we lose ourselves in Him and truly take upon us His name.³

As a result, his love or grace will be “sufficient” for us to completely control our flesh so we can be like Him.⁴ It is this grace/love of God that strengthens and molds our flesh to become a fit temple for us in the eternities. The “telestial” aspects of it are refined by the Spirit. And as it was once our “weakness” it is, by the Savior’s grace, turned into our strength.⁵

Our celestialized, controlled bodies are necessary for us to have a fulness of joy as we ultimately become “permanently” with them. They become eternal temples. Temples of God. For that is who we have become one with. They have become undefiled, cleansed by fire, and consumed through the Spirit by the grace and love of Jesus Christ.⁶

Is there a better word than sanctification to describe this change mentioned by Nephi? (vs. 17)

I don’t think so. Sanctification is to become completely pure. To become like Jesus Christ. We must move from a telestial everything to a celestial everything and that is the process of sanctification. We are purified by the Spirit as a result of covenants we make and keep, and ordinances that are administered by the authority of the Holy Priesthood after the Order of the Son of God. These ordinances are gateways through which we must pass in order to become “pure as He is pure.”⁷

Does flesh refer to us only being mortal or is there an additional meaning?

Flesh is that which is to be acted upon and is to be controlled, purified, and sanctified because it is the temple, the dwelling place, of God. And it is our dwelling place, our temple, as we become as God. Perhaps sanctified flesh is just another name for eternal temple.

1. See 2 Nephi 2:26

2. See Abraham 3:25

3. See Omni 1:26; Mosiah 5

4. See Moroni 10:32

5. See Ether 12:27
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:33-35
7. See Moroni 7:48 and Moroni 10:33

I Am a Witness of The Book of Mormon

2005

I DO NOT KNOW how many times I have read the Book of Mormon cover to cover. I have not missed more than a handful of days in reading the scriptures since 1970. The Book of Mormon has been a regular part of that reading, and I have read it completely at least once each of those years. I read it many times while I was on my mission and shortly thereafter.

I am a voracious reader. But other than the scriptures, particularly the Book of Mormon, The Doctrine and Covenants, and The Pearl of Great Price, the number of books I have read more than once I could probably count on one hand. Why then would I continue to read on a regular, systematic basis The Book of Mormon? The answer is simple. It is true. It came from God. It came about just as Joseph said it did.

I cannot get enough of this extraordinary gift. I have found that all truth is layered. The more time you spend pondering a truth and the more you are willing to live it, the more you understand it and the deeper you go into the heart and soul of that principle. This has been my experience with The Book of Mormon. I am in the middle of it once again and I am “ooohing” and “aaaawing” with my discoveries as if it were my first time through it. The Holy Ghost has born witness to my soul time and time again that it is true. The real life accounts in that Book have served as my own personal map to life. And its testimony of the Divinity of Jesus Christ rings in my soul. I will spend the rest of my life reading, studying, and pondering that Book.

I do not hold myself out to be anything out of the ordinary intellectually. But I believe by any measure I would be considered well read. I have read 1000's of books and articles and magazines on just about every conceivable topic. For example, astrophysics, quantum mechanics, philosophy, sociology, psychology, economics, history, biographies, comparative religions, political science, world governments, business, music, fiction, geology, anthropology, archeology, mathematics, warfare, etc., etc. I have read histories of Joseph Smith (both apologetic and anti), every volume of the official Church History, BH Robert's Comprehensive History of the

Church, and Saints. I have read biographies of many of the early and contemporary Church leaders and have read probably every anti-Church and anti-Joseph Smith argument that has yet been offered. In addition, I have read scores of books written by faithful Latter-day Saint intellectuals.

With that as a background, I believe a legitimate question that one who knows me might ask is this: “If there was not extraordinary substance to The Book of Mormon how could Steve Hanson read it through so many times and be committed to continue reading it for the rest of his life?” The answer is obvious. If it were not what it claims to be, I would have put that book on the shelf after my first or second reading. The simple fact is the substance and fabric of my life testifies that it is true.

I bear solemn witness that as you make this book an integral part of your life, you also will come to know with certainty that it is not only true but holds the key to your coming to know yourself and becoming who you can become.

An added observation. It is May of 2025 as I prepare this book. Since writing my witness of the Book of Mormon some 20 years ago, I have continued to read it at least once a year since then. My life is a witness that it is all it purports to be. An extraordinary testimony of the reality and divinity of Jesus Christ, the restoration of His gospel through Joseph Smith, and a defining guide for our existence.

MISSIONARY WORK

The Effect Of Missionary Work On Future Generations

Thought

JOYCE'S AND MY GREAT grandparents or great great grandparents were introduced to the gospel of Jesus Christ and accepted it. As a result of faithful members of the church way back then introducing our ancestors to the church, literally thousands of their descendants, including us, have had our lives affected for the good. How many countless other lives have been affected as the direct descendants of our ancestors by the hundreds have served missions and by the scores served in stake presidencies, high councils, bishoprics, Relief Society, Young Women's and Primary presidencies, as teachers and priesthood and youth leaders, and as mothers and fathers and sons and daughters serving and helping and contributing to the growth of Christ's Kingdom here on the earth. As one life is touched and transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ it becomes their duty to touch the lives of others both in and outside of their own family. The Lord has been particularly clear with respect to this basic responsibility of members of the church.

Back in 1831 the Lord spoke to a conference of the church through Joseph Smith. "I give unto you a commandment that every man both elder, priest, teacher, and also member go with his might with the labor of his hands to prepare and accomplish the things which I have commanded. And let your preaching be the warning voice, every man to his neighbor, in mildness and in weakness."¹

Our great missionary prophet Spencer W Kimball has pleaded with us and commanded us to assume this responsibility. To lengthen our stride by fellowshipping families into the church. Why do you suppose he is such a great missionary? Could his missionary zeal be directly connected to his basic testimony of the gospel and his love for people? Does his genuine Christ like love for his fellow man have anything to do with his intense missionary efforts? Could his desires to keep the commandments be related to his heightened interest in and devotion to missionary work? The answer of course to each of these questions is yes.

Missionary work in the purest sense is charity, a Christ like love toward one's fellow man. It is a direct measure of our conversion, of the degree of love we have developed for our brothers and sisters, of our willingness to keep all our father's commandments. It is the amount of effort we are putting forth to warn our neighbors.

If we are truly desirous to bring about our Heavenly Father's purposes we will consistently find ourselves involved in gospel conversations with our acquaintances, prayerfully choosing special families to fellowship, and in general looking for every opportunity to bring the gospel to those whom the Lord has chosen. And we will realize that the missionary effort we put forth today will affect the well-being of families for generations to come. Indeed our singular efforts in bringing into the Church a family or two families or three or four today will ultimately bring the gospel of Jesus Christ into the lives of countless thousands in the future.

1. Doctrine and Covenants 38:40-41

Missionary Letter to Grandchildren

SENT TO SEVERAL OF my grandchildren serving missions at various times.

Okay, this is a long one. Here's some grandpa counsel for what it's worth. I understand you have had some legitimate challenges with directives from or actions of your mission president. Let me start off with an experience I had as a missionary.

When I was what they now call a district leader in Sydney back in 1962, the mission president was greatly disturbed by the lack of "production" in the mission and decided it was because he had been too lax. So that began what many missionaries called "the big hate." Arbitrary goals were set for the missionaries and there was a big crackdown in the mission. For example, one time when I received a copy of my district's weekly report from the mission home, scrawled in big letters on it, were the words: "GET TOUGH HANSON. YOUR POSITION DEPENDS ON IT."

Huh?

When my companion and I read that, we just laughed. Granted, my less-than-serious reaction to the note was a result of some valuable experiences I had already had. I had been out well over a year and for the most part had served in rural areas where I was not near any other missionaries other than my companion. It was often very hard, and I had to learn to get on with things rather than depend on others (except the Lord). What was happening in the mission home then rarely affected me. In addition, I was 20 years old when I came on my mission, and I had a year's worth of college and had served in the army. All of that helped boost my maturity level. Most important, I had made the decision I was going to strive to follow Jesus Christ and all that that meant regardless of what was happening around me.

So, what did I decide to do about that situation with things going on that I either didn't agree with, didn't like, or felt were contrary to what the Savior would have me do? Well, to one extent or another, here's what I tried to do.

- I obeyed. Even though I thought that some of what was asked of me was not the best or I disagreed with it.
- I did not bad mouth the mission president or any leaders.
- I tried to be the kind of missionary the Savior wanted me to be. I was far from perfect and was too often judgmental, but I was determined to try to become like Him. It was Him who I was determined to follow in the way I lived my life and in the way I served as a missionary, regardless of the circumstances around me, or what I was being asked to do.

The result? I became a better person and a better missionary. That same mission president ultimately called me to serve in other important positions in the mission including AP. Bottom line, my choosing to obey, in spite of some of what I considered to be bad directives and maybe stupid policies, and choosing to focus my life on the Savior and to seek to do what He would have me do, opened the door for great blessings. The last part of my mission was filled with growth experiences and opportunities to serve that would not have been available if I had chosen to react negatively to the situation rather than roll with it and just be the best missionary I could.

Since that time, I've learned a few other things. I have served in many, many callings both as a Church leader and as a member or counselor trying to follow my Church leaders. Here is what I've found.

1. Every one of us are human, including every leader in the Church from the prophet to your mission president, stake president, bishop, or Elders quorum President. We all are prone to make mistakes and sometimes make dumb decisions. The experiences for each of us are different and, therefore, we vary in our leadership skills and the level of our understanding of the gospel. In addition, we all don't have the same commitment to follow the Savior or the same ability or desire to listen to and follow the Spirit. That this Church survives and thrives in spite of all of us and our weaknesses *at every level* is evidence that Jesus Christ heads it.
2. Sustaining our leaders is very important and *does not mean that we need to agree with everything they say or ask us to do*. It certainly doesn't mean that what they do is every time the best way to do it or even always "right." Sustaining means that we will overlook and learn from their weaknesses and support them in their callings in every way we can to help them succeed in bringing about the Savior's work. It means we will strive to be kind, non-judgmental, and patient. It means that if what they ask us to do is not in direct conflict with what the First presidency and quorum of the Twelve have directed us to do, or the Lord has asked of us, we will obey submissively to the extent that we

can.

3. If we are asked to do something that is contrary to the direction of the Brethren, we have the responsibility to kindly and humbly seek to discuss that conflict as we see it with our leader. In your case it may be with the zone leader, an AP, or with the mission president directly. *The Lord does not require you to disobey Him or His prophet even if your file leader is telling you to do that.* But your approach needs to be as the Savior would do. “With gentleness, meekness, and love unfeigned.” (See Doctrine and Covenants 121:41)
4. Focus your life on Jesus Christ and seek to become one with *Him*. Listen to the Spirit. And love, love, love. It will all work out. The gospel is true and so is the Church. It is all of us members who are trying to get to the “we are also true” level, but are not quite there yet, that are the challenge.

I love you. Thank you for being you. Thank you for wanting to grow up in the Lord and serve Him. Thank you for loving me and your wonderful family.

Grandpa H

TEMPLE AND FAMILY HISTORY

Hearts To The Fathers And Children

Orange Stake 1985

WHEN MORONI FIRST APPEARED to Joseph Smith he did three things. He introduced himself, he told Joseph about the gold record that he, Joseph, would translate, and then he quoted some prophecies of the Old Testament. Given the rarity of an angel's visit to this earth, the brevity of his remarks, and the fact that this was the first direct communication that the Lord had with Joseph since his own personal appearance some four years before, what this messenger of the Lord said must be extraordinarily important.

We don't minimize the significance of the angel's introduction of the Book of Mormon to Joseph. But what he said in addition to that was not just an aside, it was critical to the restoration of the gospel. The angel quoted many scriptures, and in Joseph's personal history he *referred* to some of these by chapter and verse as contained in our present King James version of the Bible. One of these, Joseph *recorded* in his history. It is a prophecy by Malachi, the last of the Old Testament prophets, and Moroni's words were slightly different than what is written in the Bible.

"Behold, I will reveal unto you the priesthood by the hand of Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers. If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming."¹

Those are strong words, and after the Church was established, the Lord directed Joseph to "seek diligently to turn the hearts of the children to their fathers, and the hearts of the fathers to the children...lest I come and smite the whole earth with a curse, and all flesh be consumed before me."²

There are generally two types of commandments the Lord gives us. "Do" commandments and "Don't" commandments. Usually, His warnings of destruction and cursing are associated with us *doing* what we have been commanded *not* to do. But the turning our hearts to our fathers

and to our children, which is a "do" commandment, carries with it a cursing, and destruction, and wasting, if we *do not* do it. It is significant, I think, and certainly singular, that our inaction with respect to this "Do" commandment carries such catastrophic consequences.

Turning our hearts to our fathers and to our children is an action of love. It is a desire on our part to do all that we can to bring about the salvation or well being, and therefore the joy, of our *entire* family. Past, present, and future. This is done by creating an eternal, unbreakable priesthood bond so that our associations and companionship and our oneness with them and the oneness between them may continue without end. In doing so, we all become one with our Heavenly Father and all that includes. Bringing about that oneness begins, of course, as we search out and find our ancestors who have preceded us.

My willingness to be involved in family history work has not always been what it should be. When I received my patriarchal blessing as a young man and I heard the words, "You have a responsibility to seek out your kindred dead and perform the saving ordinances in their behalf," I was a little disappointed. Instead of receiving some exciting promise of great missions and tremendous challenges, I was to do genealogy work. Nothing I could think of could have been more boring or less appealing.

Consequently, the Lord's directive to me through the patriarch stayed at the bottom of my priority list for a long time. I conveniently rationalized, "We've gone back as far as we can go. Aunts on both sides of my family are avid genealogists and there is nothing more I can do." But every once in a while, I'd get this gnawing feeling that maybe, just maybe, there was something I could do. Something I should be doing.

Some years ago, I stepped back and took a close look at myself. I did not like what I saw. I needed to change, and I wanted to change. As part of my renewed commitment to live closer to my Heavenly Father and follow Him more closely, I knew it was time I fulfilled my assignment, my obligation, to do family history work. Once I made that decision to do it, my whole outlook changed. Family history became one of the most exciting things I had ever done. What I previously couldn't even hear about in a church talk without nearly falling asleep, became so fulfilling and exciting I wanted to spend much of my time doing it.

I discovered that my family history was not all done. There were family lines where there had been obstacles, and the work had stopped. I tackled these challenges with a fervor that shocked both me and my family. I even volunteered to be my extended family genealogist. Now that was a shock! To make a long story short, with the help of my mother-in-law, we were able to break through some of these barriers, and several hundreds of my ancestors were sealed to our family as a result.

I had finally repented of my family history neglect.

As we bless our deceased family members by performing eternal ordinances on their behalf in the temple and attending the temple regularly, our own lives are blessed immeasurably. We are performing an act of charity and service. By acting as proxies for those who have died and who cannot perform these ordinances for themselves, we are literally acting as saviors for them. And as a result, our ability to understand Jesus Christ, our Savior, is enhanced.

In addition, the temple is where the Spirit of God dwells. If we are prepared as we enter therein, we can receive revelation from the Holy Ghost to guide and direct us through the decisions and problems we are faced with in our daily lives. Furthermore, the temple is a spiritual haven. An oasis from the cares of the day and the mundaneness of the world. For those who regularly attend the temple, a spiritual rejuvenation takes place as they remember their own covenants while participating in the sacred temple ordinances. It is almost as though new spiritual blood is pumped into us. We have been fed, we are strengthened, we are a little closer to being the kind of person we want to be.

The heart turning that Moroni referred to also involves our own children. Turning our hearts to our children means that we seek to raise them in the Light of the gospel with by teaching them the fruits of following Jesus Christ through our words and actions. Our involvement in the temple helps us be a model of Light and Truth that our children can emulate.

As I have contemplated what I can and must do to fulfill my responsibilities to my children, my heart has turned to my fathers for an example. I think of the influence they have had on me directly and indirectly. How their sacrifices were for me. How their decisions to accept the gospel and live it were not only for them, but for me as well. And I am grateful for those who loved me enough to write to me through their own personal histories and journals, letting me know what they were like, how their experiences affected them, and most importantly, how they felt about Jesus Christ and His Church and gospel.

As I have contemplated the impact the recorded experiences and testimonies of my ancestors have had on me, I have become more aware of the spirit and power of Elijah. For truly as my heart has turned to my fathers and I have seen their concern for me and have come to know them and feel of their testimonies through their written histories, my heart has turned to my own children and my yet unborn posterity. My desire is be that kind of example, an example of love, to my posterity.

We all play a significant role in the salvation, and, therefore, happiness, of our entire family. We affect the past. Through temple work and family history research we can provide our ancestors with the binding ordinances that bring joy. We affect the present. By following and magnifying the righteous example of our fathers and mothers who preceded us, we can teach, by our word and our lives, our children and grandchildren how to have joy. We can affect the future. By writing about our own experiences, feelings, trials, and testimony, we can be a righteous influence on our descendants that we may not see in this life.

Heart turning, I believe, is becoming one with our family on both sides of the veil. It is becoming one with Jesus Christ. It is becoming one with our Heavenly Father and our Heavenly Mother. It is being part of our Heavenly Father's work and glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.³

1. Joseph Smith History, 1:38-39; Doctrine and Covenants 2
2. Doctrine and Covenants 98:16-17
3. See Moses 1:39

The Spirit and Power of Elijah

Orange Stake 2004

WHERE DOES MY HEART turning to my fathers and to my children fit in the Church and in my life?

1. “The longer I study the Gospel of Jesus Christ the more convinced I am that salvation for the dead is the cementing principal which holds together all the other doctrinal divisions of the Church.” (John A. Widtsoe)
2. The “aliveness” of those who are dead. They are no more non-existent than you and I are because we left the spirit world to come here. They are depending on us. We have a great responsibility. We have a debt of gratitude. We emulate the Savior by becoming Saviors on Mt. Zion ourselves.
3. I am empowered when I see myself in context. Royal blood is flowing through my veins. I likewise have the promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I am a child of the promise. I begin to understand the at-one-ment of Jesus Christ
4. My children are likewise empowered. I am the link. Before they can build up the armor of knowledge and wisdom, they can know who they are. The stories of our ancestors can secure them, give them a sense of their real worth.
5. I become a gatherer of the Lord’s elect. I become the magnet sucking out the needles in the haystack for the Lord’s elect will respond to the declaration that they are eternal and literally children of God. And with the Gift of Family History I have a natural, comfortable way of bearing that testimony to them. And my own promises are inextricably tied to my brother who is also a child of the promise

It has been an extraordinary blessing for me to have been part of this. (Referring to our stake’s Gift of Family History & involvement with the Newport Beach Temple) Elijah has everything to do with the preparing of this earth for the coming of the Savior. Why? Because his mission is to plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers. These are the promises

made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Promises of eternal life. Or, in other words, the knowledge of our eternal nature and our divine destiny, and the realization of that destiny. We can only begin to see this divinity in ourselves as we see ourselves in the context of our fathers and our children. I have often asked the question of the members of my stake: “What would your lives be like if you remembered who you are. That you are sons and daughters of a King, literally kings and queens in the making? And what would your lives be like if you remembered that every day and every hour?” Our lives would be changed in the most dramatic way, and to that extent so would this world be changed. The Church would become an extraordinary power of righteousness and the Lord’s elect would flock to it in numbers not even now imagined. Both our children and we would be protected from worldly tugs. We would have peace and have joy in our ancestors as well as our posterity.

As you become immersed in the histories of those who loved you and prepared the way for you, you will begin to remember who you are. As you continue to see yourself in this context, you will be empowered to overcome this world. No power, no influence can sway you from your course.

As I have contemplated the impact the recorded experiences and testimonies of my progenitors have had on me, I have become more aware of the spirit and power of Elijah. For truly as my heart has turned to my fathers and I have seen their concern for me and have learned to know them and feel of their testimonies through their written histories, my heart has turned to my own children and my yet unborn posterity; and my desire is to do for them what my ancestors have done for me. And I realize that I must begin now with my children.

They must be aware of my testimony and my love for them. I must spend time with them. I must teach them of their rich heritage and introduce them to their progenitors through pictures, stories and family histories. I must develop family traditions and create pleasant family memories. I must teach them the Gospel of Jesus Christ by helping them to know and love the scriptures and through my own words and example, and I must record for them and for their children and their children’s children my own experiences, my own thoughts, and my own testimony.

I pray that each of us may seek to gain an appreciation for and knowledge of our ancestors. And that such appreciation may spark within us a resolve that we will not waste their sacrifices but give to our children and grandchildren what our parents and grandparents have given to us, improved and refined by our positive contributions.

We cannot ultimately be held responsible for what our progenitors did or did not do and our responsibility to them is to make certain they are included in our family unit and that the sealing ordinances are performed for them in the temples of the Lord. Our relationship with our descendants is different, however, for our actions and our decisions will affect them, at least temporarily, either for good or for ill. Jacob the brother of Nephi emphasizing this

relationship, admonished his people to "Remember that ye may, because of your filthiness, bring your children unto destruction, and their sins be heaped upon your heads at the last day."¹

Turning our hearts to our children means that we carefully, consciously, systematically develop habits, perform actions, make decisions, record thoughts, testimonies and histories that will tend to draw our children and their descendants to our family unit and to the Lord. It means that we continually seek our Heavenly Father's guidance that we might be this kind of influence on our future family, and that we pray for them constantly. As Nephi ended his record he expressed his feelings for the yet unborn generations that would descend through his loins.

"I Nephi have written what I have written, and I esteem it as of great worth and especially unto my people. For I pray continually for them by day, and mine eyes water my pillow by night because of them; and I cry unto my God in faith, and I know that he will hear my cry. And I know that the Lord God will consecrate my prayers for the gain of my people. And the words which I have written in weakness will be made strong unto them; for it persuadeth them to do good; it maketh known unto them of their fathers; and it speaketh of Jesus and persuadeth them to believe in Him, and to endure to the end, which is life eternal."²

And Nephi's younger brother, Jacob, with this same love for his posterity wrote:

"We labor diligently to engraven these words upon plates, hoping that our beloved...children will receive them with thankful hearts, and look upon them that they may learn with joy and not with sorrow, neither with contempt, concerning their first parents. For, for this intent have we written these things that they may know of Christ, and that we had a hope of His glory."³

This is the feeling that we too must have toward our future generations. And that we through our own lives and through our written personal histories can seek to influence our descendants as Nephi and Jacob sought to influence theirs.

As I have contemplated what I can and must do in fulfilling my responsibility to my children, my heart has turned again to my fathers for an example.

I think of my own mother who constantly bore her testimony to me. Who every week without fail while I was away from her either in the army, on my mission, at school, and even during my married life, wrote me a letter expressing love and keeping me informed of family activities. I think of my father who spent his spare time at home with his family; who went fishing with his boys; who taught his children to appreciate music, hard work, and perseverance. I think of my wife's mother who unselfishly has stayed with us and taken care of us each time we have had a new baby; who has spent countless hours and days in genealogical research and compiling family histories; and who presents to each of my children when they are baptized their own complete book of remembrance. I think of my wife's father, an ardent temple worker who has a love and compassion for all men, and particularly for his children and grandchildren and expresses constantly that love through his words and his outward show of affection.

I think of the influence my grandparents and great-grandparents and great great-grandparents have had on me directly and indirectly. How their sacrifices were for me. How their decisions to accept the gospel and live it were not only for their salvation, but for my salvation as well. And I am grateful for those who thought enough of me to write to me through their own personal histories. Letting me know what they were like, how their experiences affected them, and most importantly how they felt about the Lord and His church.

1. Jacob 3:10
2. 2 Nephi. 33:3-4
3. Jacob 4:3-4

The Responsibility of Heritage

Orange Stake 1983-84

TODAY IS PIONEER DAY. The anniversary of the entrance of Brigham Young into the Salt Lake Valley. As a boy living in Utah and Idaho, I associated the day with carnivals and parades. As I grew older I became impressed with the history of the whole pioneer process and the never-ending stream of anecdotes that it generated. But over the years, the events that transpired during that exciting time of church history have become not as important to me as the people who were actually involved and the way they coped with their situations.

Particularly has this been the case as I have read the journals and personal histories of my own pioneer ancestors about their trials and afflictions. My heart has truly been turned to them as I have asked myself how or what I could learn as a result of their experiences. As I have done this, I have been profoundly affected. My understanding has been enlightened, and I have drawn nearer to them as a result.

As I have studied the scriptures and been faced with afflictions and problems of my own, I believe I am coming to understand more fully the role of adversity in relation to our life here on earth. Maybe I'm becoming less concerned with, "why the adversity?" and more concerned with, "now that I am in it what am I going to do about it? How can I learn from it? How can I become more Christ-like as a result of it?" What I do and how I react.

Do I rationalize or do I overcome? Do I give up or do I endure? Do I become bitter or do I become compassionate? It is always my choice. We are placed here in a telestial world so our desires may be manifested. And if we will, the test itself is the vehicle for us to become more like Jesus Christ. To develop His strength, His wisdom, His compassion, His love, and His joy by experiencing the things which He experienced and *learning* from those experiences.

My own father and mother provided me a firsthand pioneer adventure and learning experience. At 35 years of age (it's hard to imagine I used to think that was old.) My father made a momentous decision that would affect drastically the lives of all eight of us who were members of his family. As an 11 year old boy, I listened intently as my parents gathered us five boys and

my baby sister around them in family council to present to us their decision and to ask for our approval and support.

Since before I started grade school, we lived in Shelley, Idaho, the “spud capitol of the world.” It was a stop light and a block long string of stores just south of Idaho Falls. Dad had a small farm implement business. He had been struggling with it for six years. And now he wanted to be a dentist. He and mother had sat down and carefully planned out the finances. With the money they would raise by selling the business and the house, and by dad working part time and us older children getting jobs to supply most of our clothing and entertainment, we could scrimp by over the five years that it would take for him to get his degree.

Their proposal was both exciting and sad. We sustained their decision and the plan was set in motion. No words can describe the trauma of an 11 year old boy who was used to thinking of Pocatello as a big city, as he moved from a Latter-day Saint only Idaho farm town to St. Louis, Missouri, with a year stop at BYU for Dad to complete his pre—dental schooling. The 1200 mile ride made me a pioneer in reverse and in at least one respect rivaled the tortuous trip my pioneer ancestors experienced.

We had only two days and two nights to get there for Dad to start school. With a trailer loaded to the hilt behind us, we began the trek. It was August, and it was hot. For those of you who don’t remember, most cars didn’t have air conditioning back then. Four in the front seat and four in the back of that old Nash automobile we rode in was our version of a covered wagon. At least it was probably as uncomfortable as a covered wagon and for 1200 miles it bordered on the unbearable.

And just to make it a real test of nerves and discomfort, something went wrong with the axle on the trailer. It would still roll, but we could not travel more than 35 miles per hour. Because of our time limitation, it also meant we had to drive straight through the night. If riding four in a seat was unbearable, sleeping four in a seat was impossible. But we survived and after approximately 40 hours of straight driving, we made it to St. Louis.

Our home for the next four years was a small, old two story house in a poor neighborhood near the southwest corner of St. Louis’ huge Forest Park. The house was not designed for a family of eight to live in. But what it lacked in size and comfort, it made up for in personality, and we loved it.

It was a struggle for us. Everybody who could, worked. Mom tended children in addition to her own. My older brother was janitor for the chapel, and I sold newspapers and scrubbed floors. My dad, when he could, played the piano at night clubs. But as tight as we were for money and time, Mom and Dad were always willing to give to anyone who needed it. I watched as Dad and Mom lent a significant part of the savings that were going to take us through school, to some of Dad’s family members who needed help. They had faith that we would be able to manage

somehow. And I saw Dad refuse to take legal action against the man who bought his business in Shelley but more than a year in arrears according to agreement because he said he was having financial difficulty.

One of the most memorable Christmas' of my life occurred our last year in St. Louis. A week or so before Christmas, we took an accounting of our financial situation. Between my parents, my older brother, and myself, we had about \$25. That was all. Mom asked us boys if we would go without presents so they could use what money we had to buy a Christmas tree and some presents for the younger children. We agreed. We wanted to be part of whatever it took to get by.

But then, just like you read in a feel good novel, things started to happen. Just a few days before Christmas, \$100 came by telegram. My dear Aunt Lucille in Fresno had a premonition that all was not right with us and without asking, she sent us \$100 of her own scant resources. We cried. And then the day before Christmas, Dad received a letter from the man who bought his business some four years before. It contained a check for the balance owing. A year late but perfectly timed.

What started out to be the most challenging Christmas ever became one of the most joyful. The presents were no more than we usually got, but the spirit we felt was different. My brother and I had a warm peace from our willingness to do what we needed to do to help the family and felt a real gratitude to our Heavenly Father for His blessings.

Our financial trials were not quite over, however. With about two months to go before dad graduated, we completely ran out of money. Those who still owed Dad just couldn't pay, and we were down to our last dollar, literally. The Branch President found out about our situation and called in five brethren in the ward. "The Hanson's need money to carry them through graduation," he told them. Without further discussion, each of these men took out their checkbooks and wrote a check for \$100 payable to Dad. Keep in mind that a \$100 back then would be worth well over \$1000 today. They didn't want a note, interest, or a timetable to pay it back. They loved Dad and us and that was enough. Dad graduated, sold our house prior to us leaving St. Louis for California, and paid back these good men with interest.

We had done it. Five long years of school completed. And Mom and Dad had supported his family of eight through it and came out not owing anybody so much as a dime. For me, those were five years of lesson learning. I learned a lot about sacrifice and about not quitting and about accomplishing what appears to be impossible. But the greatest discovery of all for me was the principle of charity. I saw my parents exhibit it through out when they could least afford it. But they understood what I didn't. What you give comes back in one way or another. The prophets, I have since found out, call it the Law of Restoration. I will be eternally grateful to my parents for their example of faith and charity.

As I have contemplated my own experiences and those of my ancestors, I have come to a heightened awareness of my responsibilities both to my forefathers as well as to my posterity. I am the link between them. No one else can take my place. I either weld the future families with the past; or create a devastating break. Indeed I play a significant role in the salvation of my entire family.

I affect the past. Through temple and genealogy work I can provide my ancestors with the necessary saving ordinances. I affect the present. By following and magnifying the righteous example of my parents and grandparents and great-grandparents, I can teach my children and grandchildren the path to salvation. I can affect the future. By writing about my own experiences, feelings, trials, and testimony, I can influence to righteousness my descendants that I may not see in this life.

We are the sum product of all generations past. I will be eternally grateful for the foundation my ancestors and parents have laid for me. And we are an integral part of the foundation for our posterity. Whether our addition to that foundation is of rock or of sand, whether it strengthens or weakens that foundation, is our choice. My personal prayer is that I pass on the extraordinary foundation I have received and add my like part to it.

Blessings of the Temple

Orange Stake 2004

HOW THE TEMPLE HELPS ME..

1. **Holding a recommend.** That I am worthy to hold a recommend carries with it peace and assures me that I am heading in the right direction. It ought to be worth every effort imaginable to be worthy to obtain that recommend. It is a critical key to the sensible ordering of our lives.
2. **The Promises of the Endowment.**¹ With such empowerment I am capable, thru the grace of Christ, to overcome this world. I attack the world from the vantage point of one who is divine in origin and whose destiny is likewise divine. I have all the reason to prioritize my life so as to confirm my origin and obtain my potential, and I am empowered with the grace of Christ through the ordinances of His holy priesthood to do so. I cannot do it without that empowerment.
3. **The Covenants.** The promises we make to the Lord define our priorities. The keeping of them brings us safely to our destination. They are the pathway that takes us successfully through the telestial mine-fields. Without them, we are wanderers in a strange land. With them, we may not know what directly lies ahead, but we do know where our path ultimate ends up. Our covenants help us place our priorities in the sequence, the order, that will allow us to both make sense of our lives and make the most of our lives.
4. **The Perspective.** We have telestial myopia. Unless we can somehow get above our world and the day-to-day aspects of it that keep us from seeing everything in its “real” perspective, we will wander around from stress to stress, from crisis to crisis, without seeing purpose or benefit in anything. In the temple we walk up on the mountain and see the telestial trees below us in their eternal context. And with that perspective we can maintain the prioritization that will allow us to fulfill the measure of our creation.

5. **The Revelation.** In the temple, the gift of the Holy Ghost is enhanced. We learn how to hear it, understand it, and use it. We receive answers to our personal and family questions. We receive line-upon-line enhancement to our understanding of what is real and true and eternal. We come to know Jesus Christ like we cannot know Him anywhere else and, therefore, we come to know ourselves. We receive constant comfort, for the Holy Ghost *is* the Comforter, and the degree to which the Comforter is our companion literally defines our peace.
 6. **The Respite.** That I have a haven that I can go to anytime I want and escape from telestial turmoil is an extraordinary blessing. There is peace in the temple and it will carry with me for a period of time once I leave. Like drinking from a cool, refreshing stream before I hike into the desert, knowing full well that I can at any time come back to slake my thirst.
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1. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:19-22

Coming To Christ Through The Temple

Orange Stake 1989

LIKE MANY OF YOU, my introduction to the temple occurred when I was called on a mission. Although my parents attended the temple as often as they could, they rarely spoke to us children about the temple and never about the specific things that took place there. As a result, what I saw and heard that first day in the Salt Lake Temple was a surprise and even strange and puzzling. Yet there was something familiar about it, and I literally felt the Spirit bearing witness to my soul that it "was right." I was to have several life-changing experiences in that sacred place that day. One was during the washing and anointing. As I listened closely to the words that were said, I felt a cleansing Spirit rush through my body and knew that I was clean from the blood and sins of this generation as if I had been re-baptized.

The second occurred as I passed through the veil. I literally felt that I had entered into the presence of the Lord and felt so overwhelmed at that prospect, my weaknesses and human foibles notwithstanding, that I sought one of the window alcoves in the celestial room and wept.

Since my mission, I have tried to be a regular attender of the temple, but until the last fifteen to twenty years, I did not have the kind of intense spiritual experiences that I was given that first time. I could always feel the peace and the rightness of it all, but until I began to see the temple less as a duty and more the unparalleled blessing it was designed to be, those blessings were not forthcoming in my life. In Paul's words, "When I was a child, I spake as child, I understood as a child, I thought as a...child."¹ As long as I kept myself in that state, I was incapable of the further light and knowledge the Lord was willing to give me. And even though I had served and was serving as a priesthood leader, my ability to help others realize the blessings of the temple was hampered, because I was not realizing those blessings to the extent the Lord would have had me realize them. I have come to understand that I cannot lead anyone to a place or state that I have not experienced. And that in order for me to bring others to Christ through the temple, I must be coming to Christ through the temple as well.

As I look back on that time, I know that I was not realizing the blessings because I was not really *seeking* further light and knowledge as I attended the temple. My participation was perfunctory. And as a result, the Lord had no way to give me what He wanted to have me receive. To begin to receive the blessings of the temple more fully in my life, I began to take it less for granted. I began to attend even more often. I began to be better prepared as I entered it. I became more diligent in my scripture reading, more in control of my thoughts. My daily prayers were more consistent, more earnest. My desire to live the commandments increased. I entered the temple with a prayer to understand, to have the Spirit with me as I observed. And as I participated in the endowment, I tried harder to ponder and to listen.

As my attitude about the temple has changed over the years and my preparation to enter that holy place has improved, I have had even greater experiences than I participated in that first day in the Salt Lake Temple and have begun to catch a glimpse of what the Lord meant when he said, "this greater priesthood...holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God. Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest."²

We cannot lead someone to where we have not been, to where we are not going. As we seek to help those in our charge focus on the temple, our focus must be there as well. And as we continually participate in the endowment process we need to follow the admonition of King Benj amin to "open your ears that ye may hear, and your hearts that ye may understand, and your minds that the mysteries of God may be unfolded to your view."³ It is my testimony that if we will, that is precisely what will happen. "For this is life eternal that they might "*know*...the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom (he) hast sent."⁴ It is within the walls of the temple that knowledge is forthcoming.

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1. I Corinthians 13:11
 2. Doctrine and Covenants 84:19-20
 3. Mosiah 2-9
 4. John 17: 3

Some Thoughts Regarding Sealing Covenants

2023

WE MAKE COVENANTS TO keep *the **LAWS, RITES, and ORDINANCES PERTAINING*** to this holy order of matrimony. What do those terms mean?

PERTAINING TO (Associated with, related to)

LAWS (Eternal, unchanging directives that if kept will bring specified positive results)

Examples:

- Law of obedience
- Law of sacrifice
- Law of the gospel
- Law of chastity\
- Law of consecration

RITES (Beliefs, practices, principles)

Examples:

- Word of wisdom
- Keeping Sabbath day holy
- Tithing
- Family history work

- Attending temple
- Prayers
- Attending Church
- Partaking of the Sacrament (Ordinance renewal)
- Come Follow Me
- Ministering
- Multiplying & replenishing the earth
- Raising children unto the Lord

ORDINANCES (Administered by one authorized by a holder of the keys wherein “the power of godliness” is manifest, covenants are made, and promises are given by God that are contingent on keeping those covenants.)

Examples:

- Baptism (& Confirmation)—By taking upon us the name of Jesus Christ, remembering Him, and keeping his commandments, we are forgiven as we repent, have the Spirit with us constantly, are members of the Kingdom of God on the earth, and heirs of the Celestial Kingdom
- Washing (Endowment)—various parts of our body are empowered (men) and through keeping covenants we are cleansed from the blood and sins of this generation (men and women)
- Anointing (Endowment)—various parts of our body are empowered and through keeping covenants we are prepared to become kings/queens and priests/priestesses
- Clothing (Endowment)—through keeping covenants, the garment is a shield and protection to us and symbolic of taking upon us the name of Jesus Christ
- Endowment (Overall)—through making and keeping covenants, we receive knowledge and keys, and are empowered to enter back into the presence of the Father
- Sealing—through making and keeping covenants, we become eternally one with our spouse, our family, and God, and we receive all that the Father has and is

NOTE: In two instances, the word *appertaining* is used in conferring ordinances. It has a slightly different meaning than *pertaining*.

APPERTAINING (*Complete* association with; *inseparable* from)

Counsel To Covenant People

Orange Stake 2003

AN OUTLINE OF MY talk to members of the stake in a stake conference.

1. Who Are Covenant People

- a. Keep covenants with exactness
 - i. We need more help to *do* this than to know *what* to do
 - 1. Know what we ought to do by experience, scriptures, counsel, the Holy Ghost, the Light of Christ (our conscience)
 - ii. Rationalizing weakness vs recognizing weakness & *repenting*
 - 1. The one damns, the other elevates
- b. Keep covenants with honor
 - i. “I did what I said I would do” That’s Integrity

2. Undeviating Course To Eternal Life

- a. Focus on our eternal existence so we are acting/responding in the real context

3. Appetites And Passions Within Bounds

- a. Young man recent convert: “Limitations of gospel have liberated me”
- b. We can control our minds and bodies and we are put here to learn to do it. That’s what God’s do. If we do not, then “things” control us. We were meant to “Act” not to be “Acted Upon”

4. **Being Patient With Truth. It Will Be Circumscribed into one discernable whole**

- a. Not always what it first appears to be
- b. Must see in the context of eternity. Truth is “knowledge of things as they are, as they were, and as they are to come.” Facts are not truth unless seen in eternal context.
- c. My counsel to our children: You never have to be afraid of truth. Time and eternity will bring it all together.

5. **Constant Nourishment – You Die Without It**

- a. To spirit
 - i. Daily scripture reading and prayer
 - ii. Partaking of the sacrament
 - iii. The temple
 - iv. Personal constant prayers
- b. To body
 - i. Don’t take anything in that would harm your body
 - ii. Nourishing our body directly affects both our physical and spiritual well-being.

6. **Making The Savior Our Focus**

- a. *He is the way, the truth and the life.* Our knee bows to Him & our tongue confesses Him
 - i. Knee bowing—It is our humility before Him that brings us strength
 - ii. Tongue confess—Proclaiming His divinity and the restoration of His gospel molds and forms us into His image. The bearer of the message becomes as the giver of the message.

Preparing For The Temple Is Preparing To Be With God

Orange Stake 2003

OUR PROXIMITY TO OUR Heavenly Father is determined by the laws we are willing to abide by.¹

Entering the temple is going through the gateway that leads to the presence of God. To be *worthy* to enter the temple means that one is striving to live the laws that will sanctify and justify him/her so that he/she may come back to their Heavenly Father. The temple recommend interview embodies those laws that must be obeyed in order for us to overcome the telestial world in which we reside

- *Do you have faith in and a testimony of*...(It is one thing to know eternal truths, and quite another to have faith and act according to that knowledge)
 - God the father, Jesus Christ & the Holy Ghost
 - The atonement of Jesus Christ and his role as Savior & Redeemer
 - The restoration of the gospel in our day
- *Do you sustain* ... (Do we accept the keys and authority of those who have been called by authority to represent the Savior?)
 - The President of the Church as a prophet, seer, and revelator
 - 1st Presidency & Quorum of the Twelve
 - Other general authorities
 - Local leaders

- What does it mean to sustain? To hold up, assist, accept calls and serve, support, recognize leaders are human but see the divine in their potential and in their call.
- Not affiliate with organizations or groups who oppose the Church or Church doctrine, or sympathize with them
- Is your involvement with your family in accordance with the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ? (To become as our Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother is striving to act like a heavenly father and a heavenly mother, a heavenly son/daughter/brother/sister)
- Do you have financial or other obligations to a former spouse... (Are you current in all financial obligations to a former spouse.)
- Do you live the law of... (Transcendent laws that define holiness and obedience)
 - The law of chastity
 - Honesty
 - Tithing
 - Word of Wisdom
- Do you attend your appropriate meetings including priesthood and sacrament meetings... (To help us keep unspotted from the world and to serve others.)
- Do you earnestly strive to keep your covenants... (God establishes his relationship with his children through covenants.)
 - Covenants we have made when baptized
 - Covenants we made when received the priesthood
 - Covenants we made when we went to the temple
 - Wearing the garment according to instruction
 - Do you feel worthy to attend the temple...(Would we feel comfortable coming back into the presence of God?)

The temple helps us prepare to become one with Jesus Christ and empowers us to come back to Him.

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1. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:21-23, 38-39

Salting the Earth

Romania 2009

WE LIKELY HAVE NEPHI’S and Moroni’s in our midst and have had them with us in the past as well. It almost always takes a retrospective vantage point to see who they are. It has been interesting to me to see how many whose works and ideas were not particularly impacting on the vast majority of their contemporaries turn out to be powerfully impacting on future generations. For example Moroni son of Mormon, Joseph Smith, and Jesus Christ Himself.

Because we are eternal beings and because He who determines the timing of the placement of every spirit in the telestial world knows events from beginning to end, it is difficult for me to say whether events define us and the leaders, or the other way around. I believe that God “Salts” the earth with the “right” men and women at the “right” time. And/or uncovers the *latent* salt at the appropriate moment. Spontaneity defines the telestial world because the veil is in place, which veil, I believe, is time. Such an “unpredictable” scenario leaves all of us in a position where our “desires” become fully apparent and the consequences of acting on those “desires” are ultimately experienced so we can “see” what we really want.¹

The salting of the earth with those whom the Lord knows is part of the “magic” of our system, I believe. And this ship righting is done without the “moral agency” inherent within the system being stripped away either by Satan (who wants to but can’t) or God (who can but won’t). It seems that there are “rules” (laws) in place here in the telestial world that restrict “interference” by any external force. For example, apparently God “responds” to requests, rather than acts unilaterally. For example, the restoration of the gospel in the latter days and virtually all revelation regarding doctrine, establishing the order of the Church, etc., came about as a result of one on the earth making a request for it. I believe Satan is under the same “restrictions.” His bounds are set, and he cannot pass. His access to any soul is only by “invitation.” So the telestial drama that is carried out on the macro level is reflective of the “collection” of desires of each individual who is currently on the earth and is carried out in a context that has been created by those who have already been on the earth and have passed away.

I believe that matter and space ultimately become telestial, terrestrial or celestial (or outer darkness) as a result of the “kind” of eternal souls who “reside” there. I don’t believe it is the “place” (or the event) that makes the person, but it is the person who makes the space (or perhaps even the event) either telestial, terrestrial or celestial. Therefore, I believe that each one of us individually has an extraordinarily important role to play in moving this earth out of a telestial order into one of a terrestrial order and ultimately to a celestial order. Every single person is vital, even necessary, in bringing this about. We can change the tone and tenor of the space around us to that of a higher order. And collectively that will ultimately change the entire earth.

Importantly, I believe this is what Elijah’s mission was all about. The binding and sealing of each individual, as a result of their choices and through the ordinances of the priesthood, into a covenantal relationship with God that makes us one with Him and one with every other soul who has entered into that covenant. By definition then, wherever these covenant people are who are keeping their covenants becomes a holy space. A place where God is (e.g. the temple). That is why, I believe, that if this does not happen individually and therefore collectively, the whole earth will be wasted at the coming of the Savior. It is acting individually to bind ourselves to God and to assist those who we have been given stewardship responsibilities for (our families both root and branch among others) to do the same, that changes this earth and prepares it to be a fit place for the Savior to dwell and ultimately for God the Father Himself to dwell.

This will *always* eventually happen because the greed and propensity to become a “law unto themselves” of those who do not desire to live by covenant with God will result in them destroying each other. Thus cleansing the earth of that which is telestial (or less) leaving only those who are terrestrial or celestial in their desires and thus willing and desirous to become one with Christ and therefore one with everyone who has taken upon themselves His name. The world and its space becomes terrestrial and then celestial *because we who dwell on it change it*. Neither price nor democracy is needed to maintain balance in such a society. Everyone will act according to the best interests of everyone else because they are one. They are brothers and sisters.

But in the meantime, I’m very grateful for democracy and a free market and for the salting of the earth. Good and righteous men and women will right the ship when it badly lists. And selfishness and greed will be curtailed by selfishness and greed. It is a grand adventure to be on the earth at this time, and I for one am grateful for the journey.

1. See Moses 5:10-11 for example

Divine Laws

Orange Stake 1977

WHEN WE ARE SPEAKING of divine laws or commandments we must first recognize the eternality and independence of these laws. The Lord has told us that “the light of truth was not created or made, neither indeed can be. (And that) all truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself.”¹

God's laws have always existed and always will. They are not relative but are absolute and not subject to change or modification. In addition, God's laws apply to all beings for “none shall be exempted from the justice and the laws of God, that all things may be done in order and in solemnity before him according to truth and righteousness.”²

By definition then, we as intelligences exist independently of these laws, and our agency is whether we desire to abide by these laws. The Lord has said “(All intelligence is) independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself. Otherwise there is no existence. Behold, here is the agency of man and here is the condemnation of man, because that which was from the beginning is plainly manifest unto them, and they receive not the (truth).”³

The obedience or disobedience, the recognizing of or the ignoring of these eternal laws brings certain, specified consequences. One of the great purposes for which we were separated from God and placed here upon earth was to “prove (us) herewith, to see if (we) will do all things whatsoever the Lord (our) God shall command (us). And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon; and they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate; and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever.”⁴

We are told that “there is a law irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated. And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated.” (Doctrine and Covenants 130:20-21) The logic of obeying law and receiving a blessing or disobeying law and forfeiting the blessing is laid out clearly and concisely in the 88th section of the doctrine and covenants. “That which is (willing to be) governed by law is also preserved by law and perfected and sanctified by the same.

That which breaketh a law, and abideth not by law, but seeketh to become a law unto itself (for that is precisely what happens when we disobey the commandments—we become a law unto ourselves), and willeth to abide in sin, and altogether abideth in sin, cannot be sanctified by law, neither by mercy, justice, or judgment. Therefore they must remain filthy still.”⁵

Now, there are levels of laws just as there are hierarchies of kingdoms, “(for) all kingdoms have a law given; and there are many kingdoms and unto every kingdom is given a law; and unto every law there are certain bounds also and conditions. All beings who abide not in those conditions are not justified.”⁶

If we will not obey the laws associated with a particular kingdom, then we cannot reasonably expect to dwell in that kingdom. The Lord said, “who is not able to abide the law of a celestial kingdom cannot abide a celestial glory. And he who cannot abide the law of a terrestrial kingdom cannot abide a terrestrial glory. And he who cannot abide the law of a telestial kingdom cannot abide a Telestial glory.”⁷ “If you will that I give unto you a place in the celestial world, you must prepare yourselves by doing the things which I have commanded you and required of you.”⁸

Our performance in relationship to eternal laws then has everything to do with the status of our existence. Including before we came to this earth, while we are on this earth, and as we dwell in the eternities. The ultimate potential of our existence is to become as our Father in Heaven and our Mother in Heaven. To participate with Them in the glories, powers, blessings, joys, opportunities for service, and freedoms of a God. To do this we must follow the path God has followed and has laid out for us. It is to abide by eternal laws. By subjecting ourselves completely to those truths which exist independent of us, we become one with truth and light and become emanators of the same. To the extent we will do this, we can become like God. And to the degree we become a “law unto ourselves,” to that extent we are restricted and our freedoms impaired.

Our relationship to God is defined by our abiding eternal laws. We are restricted as we become a law unto ourselves, and we become free and participators of His fulness as we willingly obey these laws.

What are these laws?

Everyone has the means to determine what they are, for “(it) is given unto (us) to judge, that (we) may know good from evil. And the way to judge is as plain, that (we) may know with a perfect knowledge as the day light is from the dark night. For behold, the spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil.”⁹

But we must want to listen to the Spirit of Christ for it to be efficacious for us. Mormon taught “that (we) should search diligently in the light of Christ that (we) may know good from evil; and if (we) will lay hold upon every good thing and condemn it not (we) certainly will be a child of Christ.”¹⁰ In the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord said, “By the prayer of your faith ye shall

receive my law, that ye may...have all things right before me.”¹¹ And “it is impossible for a man to be saved in ignorance.”¹²

We have been given the light of Christ so we can know in and of ourselves what is right, but we must put forth the effort to learn what the Lord would have us do to become as He is. As we diligently and conscientiously search the scriptures and the words of the apostles and prophets, and as we seek personal revelation and guidance by our prayers of faith, the Lord will show us by the spirit of Christ and by the Holy ghost what we are to do to become like Him and enter into his presence.

As we learn what these divine laws and directions are and abide by them, we receive blessings not only in the eternities but here and now on our earthly sojourn. We are able to overcome this world and all that that implies. We are told that “By hearkening to observe all the words which I, the Lord their God shall speak unto them, they shall never cease to prevail until the kingdoms of the world are subdued under my feet, and the earth is given unto the Saints to possess it forever.”¹³ If we do not abide by these eternal laws, we not only do not have this promise, “but inasmuch as they keep not my commandments, and hearken not to observe all my words, the kingdoms of the world shall prevail against them.”¹⁴

By living God’s eternal laws, we overcome Satan, “(For) the gates of hell shall not prevail against you; for my grace is sufficient for you and you shall be lifted up at the last day,”¹⁵ “(But) inasmuch as ye will not keep my commandments ye shall be cut off from the presence of the Lord.”¹⁶

We are given the strength and ability to overcome as we obey God’s laws, for he has said, “inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments ye shall prosper in the land.”¹⁷ On the other hand, unnecessary difficulties and problems can arise as we neglect to keep the word of God. The members of the Church were suffering much difficulty in Jackson County Missouri during the early days of the church. the Lord explained one of the reasons for this. “Behold I say unto you, were it not for the transgressions of my people, they might have been redeemed even (now). But behold, they have not learned to be obedient to the things which I required at their hands but are full of all manner of evil....And Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom. Otherwise I cannot receive her unto myself. And my people must needs be chastened until they learn obedience, if it must needs be by the things which they suffer.”¹⁸

Another blessing that comes by abiding transcendent laws is increasing in knowledge, understanding and holiness. The Savior has promised, “If you keep my commandments you shall receive of (my Father’s) fulness, and be glorified in me as I am in the Father. Therefore, I say unto you, you shall receive grace for grace. (And) he that keepeth his commandments receiveth truth and light until he is glorified in truth and knoweth all things.”¹⁹ “(However) if you keep

not my commandments, the love of the Father shall not continue with you, therefore you shall walk in darkness.”²⁰

The prophet Isaiah describes a beautiful blessing resulting from living divine laws. “And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever, and my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.”²¹

This result of keeping God’s laws contrasts starkly with the fruits of disobedience. The Lord said, “they who do not fear me neither keep my commandments...I will disturb, and cause to tremble and shake to the center.”²² “O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments. Then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea.(But) there is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked.”²³

Each commandment or law the Lord has given us has specific blessings that are predicated upon the obedience of that law. For example, if we live the law known as the Word of Wisdom, we are promised health, strength and knowledge. If we live the law of tithing, we will have sufficient for our needs. If we keep the Sabbath day holy, we will be unspotted from the world yet enjoy the fulness of the earth. If we honor our mother and father, our days will be long upon the earth. And so it is with every law or commandment that comes from the Father.

And eternal blessings will follow as we complete our time here on earth. The Lord said to His righteous children, “Ye are the church of the firstborn, and He will take you up in a cloud and appoint ever man his portion. And he that is a faithful and wise steward shall inherit all things.”²⁴ “And if you keep my commandments and endure to the end, you shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God.”²⁵

But for those who choose not to abide by all of the laws of God, “they...shall also be quickened. Never the less, they shall return again to their own place, to enjoy that which they are willing to receive, because they were not willing to enjoy that which they might have received.

For what doth it profit a man if a gift is bestowed upon him, and he receive not the gift? Behold, he rejoices not in that which is given unto him. Neither rejoices in him who is the giver of the gift.”²⁶ “And no man receiveth a fulness unless he keepeth (the) commandments.”²⁷

On the south side of the Harold B. Lee library at Brigham Young University are several mottos sculptured onto the stone facing. One stands out above the rest. “Truth is obeyed when it is loved.”

We keep the commandments, we follow God’s laws, because that is what we want to do. Because we want to become one with our Father in Heaven. Because we love Him and all that He is.

1. Doctrine and Covenants 93:29-30
2. Doctrine and Covenants 107:84
3. Doctrine and Covenants 93:30-31
4. Abraham 3:25-26
5. Doctrine and Covenants 88:34-35
6. Doctrine and Covenants 88:36-39
7. Doctrine and Covenants 88:22-24
8. Doctrine and Covenants 78:7
9. Moroni 7: 15-16
10. Moroni 7:19
11. Doctrine and Covenants 41:3
12. Doctrine and Covenants 131:6
13. Doctrine and Covenants 103:
14. Doctrine and Covenants 103:8
15. Doctrine and Covenants 17:8
16. Alma 9:13
17. 2 Nephi 1:20
18. Doctrine and Covenants 105:5-6
19. Doctrine and Covenants 93: 20, 28
20. Doctrine and Covenants 95:12
21. Isaiah 3:17-18
22. Doctrine and Covenants 10:56

23. Isaiah 48:18

24. Doctrine and Covenants 78:21-22

25. Doctrine and Covenants 14:7

26. Doctrine and Covenants 88:32-33

27. Doctrine and Covenants 93: 27