**Lesson #1**

**The Book of Mormon Is Another Testament of Jesus Christ**

**1 Nephi 6:4**

4 For the fulness of mine intent is that I may persuade men to come unto the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, and be saved.

**I Nephi 13:40**

40 And the angel spake unto me, saying: These last records, which thou hast seen among the Gentiles, shall establish the truth of the first, which are of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, and shall make known the plain and precious things which have been taken away from them; and shall make known to all kindreds, tongues, and people, that the Lamb of God is the Son of the Eternal Father, and the Savior of the world; and that all men must come unto him, or they cannot be saved.

**2 Nephi 11:2-3**

2 And now I, Nephi, write more of the words of Isaiah, for my soul delighteth in his words. For I will liken his words unto my people, and I will send them forth unto all my children, for he verily saw my Redeemer, even as I have seen him.

3 And my brother, Jacob, also has seen him as I have seen him; wherefore, I will send their words forth unto my children to prove unto them that my words are true. Wherefore, by the words of three, God hath said, I will establish my word. Nevertheless, God sendeth more witnesses, and he proveth all his words.

**2 Nephi 25:17-18**

17 And the Lord will set his hand again the second time to restore his people from their lost and fallen state. Wherefore, he will proceed to do a marvelous work and a wonder among the children of men.

18 Wherefore, he shall bring forth his words unto them, which words shall judge them at the last day, for they shall be given them for the purpose of convincing them of the true Messiah, who was rejected by them; and unto the convincing of them that they need not look forward any more for a Messiah to come, for there should not any come, save it should be a false Messiah which should deceive the people; for there is save one Messiah spoken of by the prophets, and that Messiah is he who should be rejected of the Jews.

**2 Nephi 33:1-2, 4-5, 10-11**

1 And now I, Nephi, cannot write all the things which were taught among my people; neither am I mighty in writing, like unto speaking; for when a man speaketh by the power of the Holy Ghost the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth it unto the hearts of the children of men.

2 But behold, there are many that harden their hearts against the Holy Spirit, that it hath no place in them; wherefore, they cast many things away which are written and esteem them as things of naught.

4 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.

5 And it speaketh harshly against sin, according to the plainness of the truth; wherefore, no man will be angry at the words which I have written save he shall be of the spirit of the devil.

10 And now, my beloved brethren, and also Jew, and all ye ends of the earth, hearken unto these words and believe in Christ; and if ye believe not in these words believe in Christ. And if ye shall believe in Christ ye will believe in these words, for they are the words of Christ, and he hath given them unto me; and they teach all men that they should do good.

11 And if they are not the words of Christ, judge ye—for Christ will show unto you, with power and great glory, that they are his words, at the last day; and you and I shall stand face to face before his bar; and ye shall know that I have been commanded of him to write these things, notwithstanding my weakness.

**Jacob 1:7-8**

7 Wherefore we labored diligently among our people, that we might persuade them to come unto Christ, and partake of the goodness of God, that they might enter into his rest, lest by any means he should swear in his wrath they should not enter in, as in the provocation in the days of temptation while the children of Israel were in the wilderness.

8 Wherefore, we would to God that we could persuade all men not to rebel against God, to provoke him to anger, but that all men would believe in Christ, and view his death, and suffer his cross and bear the shame of the world; wherefore, I, Jacob, take it upon me to fulfil the commandment of my brother Nephi.

**Alma 33:22-23**

22 If so, wo shall come upon you; but if not so, then cast about your eyes and begin to believe in the Son of God, that he will come to redeem his people, and that he shall suffer and die to atone for their sins; and that he shall rise again from the dead, which shall bring to pass the resurrection, that all men shall stand before him, to be judged at the last and judgment day, according to their works.

23 And now, my brethren, I desire that ye shall plant this word in your hearts, and as it beginneth to swell even so nourish it by your faith. And behold, it will become a tree, springing up in you unto everlasting life. And then may God grant unto you that your burdens may be light, through the joy of his Son. And even all this can ye do if ye will. Amen.

**Mormon 1:15**

15 And I, being fifteen years of age and being somewhat of a sober mind, therefore I was visited of the Lord, and tasted and knew of the goodness of Jesus.

**Mormon 3:20-22**

20 And these things doth the Spirit manifest unto me; therefore I write unto you all. And for this cause I write unto you, that ye may know that ye must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, yea, every soul who belongs to the whole human family of Adam; and ye must stand to be judged of your works, whether they be good or evil;

21 And also that ye may believe the gospel of Jesus Christ, which ye shall have among you; and also that the Jews, the covenant people of the Lord, shall have other witness besides him whom they saw and heard, that Jesus, whom they slew, was the very Christ and the very God.

22 And I would that I could persuade all ye ends of the earth to repent and prepare to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.

**Ether 12:38-39, 41**

38 And now I, Moroni, bid farewell unto the Gentiles, yea, and also unto my brethren whom I love, until we shall meet before the judgment-seat of Christ, where all men shall know that my garments are not spotted with your blood.

39 And then shall ye know that I have seen Jesus, and that he hath talked with me face to face, and that he told me in plain humility, even as a man telleth another in mine own language, concerning these things;

41 And now, I would commend you to seek this Jesus of whom the prophets and apostles have written, that the grace of God the Father, and also the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, which beareth record of them, may be and abide in you forever. Amen.

**The Book of Mormon – Keystone of Our Religion**

**Chapter 9 in Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson (2014).**

On January 5, 1986, President Ezra Taft Benson presided at a stake conference in Annandale, Virginia—his first stake conference as President of the Church. Latter-day Saints in attendance were “visibly moved” as they listened to him speak. In his sermon, “he bore testimony of the power of the Book of Mormon to change lives and lead people to Christ.” He issued a “spirited challenge [to] study this book of scripture.”1

This message was not new in President Benson’s ministry. As a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, he had frequently encouraged Latter-day Saints to study the Book of Mormon and follow its teachings.2 But as President of the Church, he was inspired to emphasize the message even more. He said: “The Lord inspired His servant Lorenzo Snow to reemphasize the principle of tithing to redeem the Church from financial bondage. … Now, in our day, the Lord has revealed the need to reemphasize the Book of Mormon.”3 President Benson testified of the Book of Mormon wherever he went: in missionary meetings, stake and regional conferences, general conferences, and meetings with General Authorities.4

In his first general conference address as President of the Church, President Benson shared one reason for the urgency of this message. “Unless we read the Book of Mormon and give heed to its teachings,” he warned, “the Lord has stated in section 84 of the Doctrine and Covenants that the whole Church is under condemnation: ‘And this condemnation resteth upon the children of Zion, even all’ [D&C 84:56]. The Lord continues: ‘And they shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon and the former commandments which I have given them, not only to say, but to do according to that which I have written’ [D&C 84:57].”5

The following quotations, all from sermons President Benson delivered as President of the Church, provide a sampling of his warnings and promises related to the Book of Mormon:

“Now we not only need to say more about the Book of Mormon, but we need to do more with it. Why? The Lord answers: ‘That they may bring forth fruit meet for their Father’s kingdom; otherwise there remaineth a scourge and judgment to be poured out upon the children of Zion’ [D&C 84:58]. We have felt that scourge and judgment!

“… The Book of Mormon has not been, nor is it yet, the center of our personal study, family teaching, preaching, and missionary work. Of this we must repent.”6

“We have not been using the Book of Mormon as we should. Our homes are not as strong unless we are using it to bring our children to Christ. Our families may be corrupted by worldly trends and teachings unless we know how to use the book to expose and combat falsehoods. … Our missionaries are not as effective unless they are [teaching] with it. Social, ethical, cultural, or educational converts will not survive under the heat of the day unless their taproots go down to the fulness of the gospel which the Book of Mormon contains. Our Church classes are not as Spirit-filled unless we hold it up as a standard.”7

“I bless you with increased understanding of the Book of Mormon. I promise you that from this moment forward, if we will daily sup from its pages and abide by its precepts, God will pour out upon each child of Zion and the Church a blessing hitherto unknown—and we will plead to the Lord that He will begin to lift the condemnation—the scourge and judgment. Of this I bear solemn witness.”8

“I do not know fully why God has preserved my life to this age, but I do know this: That for the present hour He has revealed to me the absolute need for us to move the Book of Mormon forward now in a marvelous manner. You must help with this burden and with this blessing which He has placed on the whole Church, even all the children of Zion.

“Moses never entered the promised land. Joseph Smith never saw Zion redeemed. Some of us may not live long enough to see the day when the Book of Mormon floods the earth and when the Lord lifts His condemnation. (See D&C 84:54–58.) But, God willing, I intend to spend all my remaining days in that glorious effort.”9

-1-

The Prophet Joseph Smith said that the Book of Mormon is “the keystone of our religion.”

How important is the Book of Mormon? Joseph Smith called it “the keystone of our religion.” (History of the Church, 4:461.) “Take away the Book of Mormon and the revelations,” he said, “and where is our religion? We have none.” (History of the Church, 2:52.)10

A keystone is the central stone in an arch. It holds all the other stones in place, and if removed, the arch crumbles.

… Just as the arch crumbles if the keystone is removed, so does all the Church stand or fall with the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. The enemies of the Church understand this clearly. This is why they go to such great lengths to try to disprove the Book of Mormon, for if it can be discredited, the Prophet Joseph Smith goes with it. So does our claim to priesthood keys, and revelation, and the restored Church. But in like manner, if the Book of Mormon be true—and millions have now testified that they have the witness of the Spirit that it is indeed true—then one must accept the claims of the Restoration and all that accompanies it.11

Perhaps there is nothing that testifies more clearly of the importance of this book of scripture than what the Lord Himself has said about it.

By His own mouth He has borne witness (1) that it is true (D&C 17:6), (2) that it contains the truth and His words (D&C 19:26), (3) that it was translated by power from on high (D&C 20:8), (4) that it contains the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ (D&C 20:9; 42:12), (5) that it was given by inspiration and confirmed by the ministering of angels (D&C 20:10), (6) that it gives evidence that the holy scriptures are true (D&C 20:11), and (7) that those who receive it in faith shall receive eternal life (D&C 20:14).12

-2-

The Book of Mormon testifies of Jesus Christ and brings us nearer to God.

The major mission of the Book of Mormon, as recorded on its title page, is “to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations.”

The honest seeker after truth can gain the testimony that Jesus is the Christ as he prayerfully ponders the inspired words of the Book of Mormon.13

Do we remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon? In the Bible we have the Old Testament and the New Testament. The word testament is the English rendering of a Greek word that can also be translated as covenant. Is this what the Lord meant when He called the Book of Mormon the “new covenant”? It is indeed another testament or witness of Jesus. This is one of the reasons why we have recently added the words “Another Testament of Jesus Christ” to the title of the Book of Mormon. …

The Book of Mormon is the keystone in our witness of Jesus Christ, who is Himself the cornerstone of everything we do. It bears witness of His reality with power and clarity. Unlike the Bible, which passed through generations of copyists, translators, and corrupt religionists who tampered with the text, the Book of Mormon came from writer to reader in just one inspired step of translation. Therefore, its testimony of the Master is clear, undiluted, and full of power. But it does even more. Much of the Christian world today rejects the divinity of the Savior. They question His miraculous birth, His perfect life, and the reality of His glorious resurrection. The Book of Mormon teaches in plain and unmistakable terms about the truth of all of those. It also provides the most complete explanation of the doctrine of the Atonement. Truly, this divinely inspired book is a keystone in bearing witness to the world that Jesus is the Christ.14

In the Book of Mormon, the testimony of Jesus Christ is “clear, undiluted, and full of power.”

The Prophet Joseph Smith … said, “I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book” [History of the Church, 4:461]. … Is there not something deep in our hearts that longs to draw nearer to God, to be more like Him in our daily walk, to feel His presence with us constantly? If so, then the Book of Mormon will help us do so more than any other book. …

Our beloved brother, President Marion G. Romney, … who knows of himself of the power that resides in this book, testified of the blessings that can come into the lives of those who will read and study the Book of Mormon. He said:

“I feel certain that if, in our homes, parents will read from the Book of Mormon prayerfully and regularly, both by themselves and with their children, the spirit of that great book will come to permeate our homes and all who dwell therein. The spirit of reverence will increase; mutual respect and consideration for each other will grow. The spirit of contention will depart. Parents will counsel their children in greater love and wisdom. Children will be more responsive and submissive to the counsel of their parents. Righteousness will increase. Faith, hope, and charity—the pure love of Christ—will abound in our homes and lives, bringing in their wake peace, joy, and happiness” (Ensign, May 1980, p. 67).

These promises—increased love and harmony in the home, greater respect between parent and child, increased spirituality and righteousness—are not idle promises, but exactly what the Prophet Joseph Smith meant when he said the Book of Mormon will help us draw nearer to God.15

-3-

The Book of Mormon teaches true doctrine, confounds false doctrine, and exposes the enemies of Christ.

The Lord Himself has stated that the Book of Mormon contains the “fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ” (D&C 20:9). That does not mean it contains every teaching, every doctrine ever revealed. Rather, it means that in the Book of Mormon we will find the fulness of those doctrines required for our salvation. And they are taught plainly and simply so that even children can learn the ways of salvation and exaltation. The Book of Mormon offers so much that broadens our understandings of the doctrines of salvation. Without it, much of what is taught in other scriptures would not be nearly so plain and precious.16

As far as preaching the gospel is concerned, the Book of Mormon contains the clearest, most concise, and complete explanation. There is no other record to compare with it. In what record do you get such a complete understanding of the nature of the Fall, the nature of physical and spiritual death, the doctrine of the Atonement, the doctrine of justice and mercy as it relates to the Atonement, and the principles and ordinances of the gospel? The Book of Mormon contains the most comprehensive account of these fundamental doctrines.17

The Book of Mormon … verifies and clarifies the Bible. It removes stumbling blocks, it restores many plain and precious things. We testify that when used together, the Bible and the Book of Mormon confound false doctrines, lay down contentions, and establish peace. (See 2 Ne. 3:12.)18

We … should know the Book of Mormon better than any other book. Not only should we know what history and faith-promoting stories it contains, but we should understand its teachings. If we really do our homework and approach the Book of Mormon doctrinally, we can expose the errors and find the truths to combat many of the current false theories and philosophies of men.

I have noted within the Church a difference in discernment, insight, conviction, and spirit between those who know and love the Book of Mormon and those who do not. That book is a great sifter.19

The Book of Mormon exposes the enemies of Christ. It confounds false doctrines and lays down contention. (See 2 Ne. 3:12.) It fortifies the humble followers of Christ against the evil designs, strategies, and doctrines of the devil in our day. The type of apostates in the Book of Mormon are similar to the type we have today. God, with his infinite foreknowledge, so molded the Book of Mormon that we might see the error and know how to combat false educational, political, religious, and philosophical concepts of our time.20

-4-

The Doctrine and Covenants is the binding link between the Book of Mormon and the continuing work of the Restoration.

I would like to speak particularly about the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants. These two great books of latter-day scripture are bound together as revelations from Israel’s God for the purpose of gathering and preparing His people for the second coming of the Lord. …

To the Prophet Joseph Smith the Lord said, “This generation shall have my word through you” (D&C 5:10). The Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants are part of the fulfillment of that promise. Together these two great works of scripture bring great blessings to this generation. …

Each of these two great latter-day scriptures bears powerful and eloquent witness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Virtually every page of both the Doctrine and Covenants and the Book of Mormon teaches about the Master—His great love for His children and His atoning sacrifice—and teaches us how to live so that we can return to Him and our Heavenly Father.

Each of these two great latter-day books of scripture contains the knowledge and the power to help us live better lives in a time of great wickedness and evil. Those who carefully and prayerfully search the pages of these books will find comfort, counsel, guidance, and the quiet power to improve their lives.21

The Doctrine and Covenants is the binding link between the Book of Mormon and the continuing work of the Restoration through the Prophet Joseph Smith and his successors.

In the Doctrine and Covenants we learn of temple work, eternal families, the degrees of glory, Church organization, and many other great truths of the Restoration. …

The Book of Mormon is the “keystone” of our religion, and the Doctrine and Covenants is the capstone, with continuing latter-day revelation. The Lord has placed His stamp of approval on both the keystone and the capstone.22

The Doctrine and Covenants is a glorious book of scripture given directly to our generation. It contains the will of the Lord for us in these last days that precede the second coming of Christ. It contains many truths and doctrines not fully revealed in other scripture. Like the Book of Mormon, it will strengthen those who carefully and prayerfully study from its pages.

Do we, as Saints of the Most High God, treasure the word He has preserved for us at so great a cost? Are we using these books of latter-day revelation to bless our lives and resist the powers of the evil one? This is the purpose for which they were given. How can we not stand condemned before the Lord if we treat them lightly by letting them do no more than gather dust on our shelves?

My beloved brothers and sisters, I bear my solemn witness that these books contain the mind and the will of the Lord for us in these days of trial and tribulation. They stand with the Bible to give witness of the Lord and His work. These books contain the voice of the Lord to us in these latter days. May we turn to them with full purpose of heart and use them in the way the Lord wishes them to be used.23

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings, Thoughts or Insights From Your Readings or From the Lesson**:

**Lesson #2**

**Heeding the Words of Prophets**

**I Nephi 1:4-15, 18**

4 For it came to pass in the commencement of the first year of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah, (my father, Lehi, having dwelt at Jerusalem in all his days); and in that same year there came many prophets, prophesying unto the people that they must repent, or the great city Jerusalem must be destroyed.

5 Wherefore it came to pass that my father, Lehi, as he went forth prayed unto the Lord, yea, even with all his heart, in behalf of his people.

6 And it came to pass as he prayed unto the Lord, there came a pillar of fire and dwelt upon a rock before him; and he saw and heard much; and because of the things which he saw and heard he did quake and tremble exceedingly.

7 And it came to pass that he returned to his own house at Jerusalem; and he cast himself upon his bed, being overcome with the Spirit and the things which he had seen.

8 And being thus overcome with the Spirit, 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.

9 And it came to pass that he saw One descending out of the midst of heaven, and he beheld that his luster was above that of the sun at noon-day.

10 And he also saw twelve others following him, and their brightness did exceed that of the stars in the firmament.

11 And they came down and went forth upon the face of the earth; and the first came and stood before my father, and gave unto him a book, and bade him that he should read.

12 And it came to pass that as he read, he was filled with the Spirit of the Lord.

13 And he read, saying: Wo, wo, unto Jerusalem, for I have seen thine abominations! Yea, and many things did my father read concerning Jerusalem—that it should be destroyed, and the inhabitants thereof; many should perish by the sword, and many should be carried away captive into Babylon.

14 And it came to pass that when my father had read and seen many great and marvelous things, he did exclaim many things unto the Lord; such as: Great and marvelous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty! Thy throne is high in the heavens, and thy power, and goodness, and mercy are over all the inhabitants of the earth; and, because thou art merciful, thou wilt not suffer those who come unto thee that they shall perish!

15 And after this manner was the language of my father in the praising of his God; for his soul did rejoice, and his whole heart was filled, because of the things which he had seen, yea, which the Lord had shown unto him.

18 Therefore, I would that ye should know, that after the Lord had shown so many marvelous things unto my father, Lehi, yea, concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, behold he went forth among the people, and began to prophesy and to declare unto them concerning the things which he had both seen and heard.

**Mosiah 11:20-25**

20 And it came to pass that there was a man among them whose name was Abinadi; and he went forth among them, and began to prophesy, saying: Behold, thus saith the Lord, and thus hath he commanded me, saying, Go forth, and say unto this people, thus saith the Lord—Wo be unto this people, for I have seen their abominations, and their wickedness, and their whoredoms; and except they repent I will visit them in mine anger.

21 And except they repent and turn to the Lord their God, behold, I will deliver them into the hands of their enemies; yea, and they shall be brought into bondage; and they shall be afflicted by the hand of their enemies.

22 And it shall come to pass that they shall know that I am the Lord their God, and am a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of my people.

23 And it shall come to pass that except this people repent and turn unto the Lord their God, they shall be brought into bondage; and none shall deliver them, except it be the Lord the Almighty God.

24 Yea, and it shall come to pass that when they shall cry unto me I will be slow to hear their cries; yea, and I will suffer them that they be smitten by their enemies.

25 And except they repent in sackcloth and ashes, and cry mightily to the Lord their God, I will not hear their prayers, neither will I deliver them out of their afflictions; and thus saith the Lord, and thus hath he commanded me.

**Mosiah 13:33-35**

33 For behold, did not Moses prophesy unto them concerning the coming of the Messiah, and that God should redeem his people? Yea, and even all the prophets who have prophesied ever since the world began—have they not spoken more or less concerning these things?

34 Have they not said that God himself should come down among the children of men, and take upon him the form of man, and go forth in mighty power upon the face of the earth?

35 Yea, and have they not said also that he should bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, and that he, himself, should be oppressed and afflicted?

**Mosiah 15:10-13**

10 And now I say unto you, who shall declare his generation? Behold, I say unto you, that when his soul has been made an offering for sin he shall see his seed. And now what say ye? And who shall be his seed?

11 Behold I say unto you, that whosoever has heard the words of the prophets, yea, all the holy prophets who have prophesied concerning the coming of the Lord—I say unto you, that all those who have hearkened unto their words, and believed that the Lord would redeem his people, and have looked forward to that day for a remission of their sins, I say unto you, that these are his seed, or they are the heirs of the kingdom of God.

12 For these are they whose sins he has borne; these are they for whom he has died, to redeem them from their transgressions. And now, are they not his seed?

13 Yea, and are not the prophets, every one that has opened his mouth to prophesy, that has not fallen into transgression, I mean all the holy prophets ever since the world began? I say unto you that they are his seed.

**Helaman 13:24-33**

24 Yea, wo unto this people, because of this time which has arrived, that ye do cast out the prophets, and do mock them, and cast stones at them, and do slay them, and do all manner of iniquity unto them, even as they did of old time.

25 And now when ye talk, ye say: If our days had been in the days of our fathers of old, we would not have slain the prophets; we would not have stoned them, and cast them out.

26 Behold ye are worse than they; for as the Lord liveth, if a prophet come among you and declareth unto you the word of the Lord, which testifieth of your sins and iniquities, ye are angry with him, and cast him out and seek all manner of ways to destroy him; yea, you will say that he is a false prophet, and that he is a sinner, and of the devil, because he testifieth that your deeds are evil.

27 But behold, if a man shall come among you and shall say: Do this, and there is no iniquity; do that and ye shall not suffer; yea, he will say: Walk after the pride of your own hearts; yea, walk after the pride of your eyes, and do whatsoever your heart desireth—and if a man shall come among you and say this, ye will receive him, and say that he is a prophet.

28 Yea, ye will lift him up, and ye will give unto him of your substance; ye will give unto him of your gold, and of your silver, and ye will clothe him with costly apparel; and because he speaketh flattering words unto you, and he saith that all is well, then ye will not find fault with him.

29 O ye wicked and ye perverse generation; ye hardened and ye stiffnecked people, how long will ye suppose that the Lord will suffer you? Yea, how long will ye suffer yourselves to be led by foolish and blind guides? Yea, how long will ye choose darkness rather than light?

30 Yea, behold, the anger of the Lord is already kindled against you; behold, he hath cursed the land because of your iniquity.

31 And behold, the time cometh that he curseth your riches, that they become slippery, that ye cannot hold them; and in the days of your poverty ye cannot retain them.

32 And in the days of your poverty ye shall cry unto the Lord; and in vain shall ye cry, for your desolation is already come upon you, and your destruction is made sure; and then shall ye weep and howl in that day, saith the Lord of Hosts. And then shall ye lament, and say:

33 O that I had repented, and had not killed the prophets, and stoned them, and cast them out. Yea, in that day ye shall say: O that we had remembered the Lord our God in the day that he gave us our riches, and then they would not have become slippery that we should lose them; for behold, our riches are gone from us.

**3 Nephi 8:24-25**

24 And in one place they were heard to cry, saying: O that we had repented before this great and terrible day, and then would our brethren have been spared, and they would not have been burned in that great city Zarahemla.

25 And in another place they were heard to cry and mourn, saying: O that we had repented before this great and terrible day, and had not killed and stoned the prophets, and cast them out; then would our mothers and our fair daughters, and our children have been spared, and not have been buried up in that great city Moronihah. And thus were the howlings of the people great and terrible.

**3 Nephi 9:10-11**

10 And behold, the city of Laman, and the city of Josh, and the city of Gad, and the city of Kishkumen, have I caused to be burned with fire, and the inhabitants thereof, because of their wickedness in casting out the prophets, and stoning those whom I did send to declare unto them concerning their wickedness and their abominations.

11 And because they did cast them all out, that there were none righteous among them, I did send down fire and destroy them, that their wickedness and abominations might be hid from before my face, that the blood of the prophets and the saints whom I sent among them might not cry unto me from the ground against them.

**3 Nephi 10:12**

12 And it was the more righteous part of the people who were saved, and it was they who received the prophets and stoned them not; and it was they who had not shed the blood of the saints, who were spared—

**3 Nephi 12:1-2**

1 And it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words unto Nephi, and to those who had been called, (now the number of them who had been called, and received power and authority to baptize, was twelve) and behold, he stretched forth his hand unto the multitude, and cried unto them, saying: Blessed are ye if ye shall give heed unto the words of these twelve whom I have chosen from among you to minister unto you, and to be your servants; and unto them I have given power that they may baptize you with water; and after that ye are baptized with water, behold, I will baptize you with fire and with the Holy Ghost; therefore blessed are ye if ye shall believe in me and be baptized, after that ye have seen me and know that I am.

2 And again, more blessed are they who shall believe in your words because that ye shall testify that ye have seen me, and that ye know that I am. Yea, blessed are they who shall believe in your words, and come down into the depths of humility and be baptized, for they shall be visited with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and shall receive a remission of their sins.

**Ether 7:23-27**

23 And also in the reign of Shule there came prophets among the people, who were sent from the Lord, prophesying that the wickedness and idolatry of the people was bringing a curse upon the land, and they should be destroyed if they did not repent.

24 And it came to pass that the people did revile against the prophets, and did mock them. And it came to pass that king Shule did execute judgment against all those who did revile against the prophets.

25 And he did execute a law throughout all the land, which gave power unto the prophets that they should go whithersoever they would; and by this cause the people were brought unto repentance.

26 And because the people did repent of their iniquities and idolatries the Lord did spare them, and they began to prosper again in the land. And it came to pass that Shule begat sons and daughters in his old age.

27 And there were no more wars in the days of Shule; and he remembered the great things that the Lord had done for his fathers in bringing them across the great deep into the promised land; wherefore he did execute judgment in righteousness all his days.

**Sustaining the Prophets**

**Russell M. Nelson, *Ensign*, Nov. 2014**

President Eyring, we thank you for your instructive and inspiring message. My dear brothers and sisters, we thank you for your faith and devotion. Yesterday, we were each invited to sustain Thomas S. Monson as the prophet of the Lord and President of the Lord’s Church. And often we sing, “We thank thee, O God, for a prophet.”1 Do you and I really understand what that means? Imagine the privilege the Lord has given us of sustaining His prophet, whose counsel will be untainted, unvarnished, unmotivated by any personal aspiration, and utterly true!

How do we really sustain a prophet? Long before he became President of the Church, President Joseph F. Smith explained, “It is an important duty resting upon the Saints who … sustain the authorities of the Church, to do so not only by the lifting of the hand, the mere form, but in deed and in truth.”2

Well do I remember my most unique “deed” to sustain a prophet. As a medical doctor and cardiac surgeon, I had the responsibility of performing open-heart surgery on President Spencer W. Kimball in 1972, when he was Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He needed a very complex operation. But I had no experience doing such a procedure on a 77-year-old patient in heart failure. I did not recommend the operation and so informed President Kimball and the First Presidency. But, in faith, President Kimball chose to have the operation, only because it was advised by the First Presidency. That shows how he sustained his leaders! And his decision made me tremble!

Thanks to the Lord, the operation was a success. When President Kimball’s heart resumed beating, it did so with great power! At that very moment, I had a clear witness of the Spirit that this man would one day become President of the Church!3

You know the outcome. Only 20 months later, President Kimball became President of the Church. And he provided bold and courageous leadership for many years.

Since then we have sustained Presidents Ezra Taft Benson, Howard W. Hunter, Gordon B. Hinckley, and now Thomas S. Monson as Presidents of the Church—prophets in every sense of the word!

My dear brothers and sisters, if the Restoration did anything, it shattered the age-old myth that God had stopped talking to His children. Nothing could be further from the truth. A prophet has stood at the head of God’s Church in all dispensations, from Adam to the present day.4 Prophets testify of Jesus Christ—of His divinity and of His earthly mission and ministry.5 We honor the Prophet Joseph Smith as the prophet of this last dispensation. And we honor each man who has succeeded him as President of the Church.

When we sustain prophets and other leaders,6 we invoke the law of common consent, for the Lord said, “It shall not be given to any one to go forth to preach my gospel, or to build up my church, except he be ordained by some one who has authority, and it is known to the church that he has authority and has been regularly ordained by the heads of the church.”7

This gives us, as members of the Lord’s Church, confidence and faith as we strive to keep the scriptural injunction to heed the Lord’s voice8 as it comes through the voice of His servants the prophets.9 All leaders in the Lord’s Church are called by proper authority. No prophet or any other leader in this Church, for that matter, has ever called himself or herself. No prophet has ever been elected. The Lord made that clear when He said, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you.”10 You and I do not “vote” on Church leaders at any level. We do, though, have the privilege of sustaining them.

The ways of the Lord are different from the ways of man. Man’s ways remove people from office or business when they grow old or become disabled. But man’s ways are not and never will be the Lord’s ways. Our sustaining of prophets is a personal commitment that we will do our utmost to uphold their prophetic priorities. Our sustaining is an oath-like indication that we recognize their calling as a prophet to be legitimate and binding upon us.

Twenty-six years before he became President of the Church, then-Elder George Albert Smith said: “The obligation that we make when we raise our hands … is a most sacred one. It does not mean that we will go quietly on our way and be willing that the prophet of the Lord shall direct this work, but it means … that we will stand behind him; we will pray for him; we will defend his good name, and we will strive to carry out his instructions as the Lord shall direct.”11

The living Lord leads His living Church!12 The Lord reveals His will for the Church to His prophet. Yesterday, after we were invited to sustain Thomas S. Monson as President of the Church, we also had the privilege to sustain him, the counselors in the First Presidency, and members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. Think of that! We sustain 15 men as prophets of God! They hold all the priesthood keys that have ever been conferred upon man in this dispensation.

The calling of 15 men to the holy apostleship provides great protection for us as members of the Church. Why? Because decisions of these leaders must be unanimous.13 Can you imagine how the Spirit needs to move upon 15 men to bring about unanimity? These 15 men have varied educational and professional backgrounds, with differing opinions about many things. Trust me! These 15 men—prophets, seers, and revelators—know what the will of the Lord is when unanimity is reached! They are committed to see that the Lord’s will truly will be done. The Lord’s Prayer provides the pattern for each of these 15 men when they pray: “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”14

The Apostle with the longest seniority in the office of Apostle presides.15 That system of seniority will usually bring older men to the office of President of the Church.16 It provides continuity, seasoned maturity, experience, and extensive preparation, as guided by the Lord.

The Church today has been organized by the Lord Himself. He has put in place a remarkable system of governance that provides redundancy and backup. That system provides for prophetic leadership even when the inevitable illnesses and incapacities may come with advancing age.17 Counterbalances and safeguards abound so that no one can ever lead the Church astray. Senior leaders are constantly being tutored such that one day they are ready to sit in the highest councils. They learn how to hear the voice of the Lord through the whisperings of the Spirit.

While serving as First Counselor to President Ezra Taft Benson, who was then nearing the end of his mortal life, President Gordon B. Hinckley explained:

“The principles and procedures which the Lord has put in place for the governance of His church make provision for any … circumstance. It is important … that there be no doubts or concerns about the governance of the Church and the exercise of the prophetic gifts, including the right to inspiration and revelation in administering the affairs and programs of the Church, when the President may be ill or is not able to function fully.

“The First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles, called and ordained to hold the keys of the priesthood, have the authority and responsibility to govern the Church, to administer its ordinances, to expound its doctrine, and to establish and maintain its practices.”

President Hinckley continued:

“When the President is ill or not able to function fully in all of the duties of his office, his two Counselors together comprise a Quorum of the First Presidency. They carry on with the day-to-day work of the Presidency. …

“… But any major questions of policy, procedures, programs, or doctrine are considered deliberately and prayerfully by the First Presidency and the Twelve together.”18

Last year, when President Monson reached the milestone of 5 years of service as President of the Church, he reflected on his 50 years of apostolic service and made this statement: “Age eventually takes its toll on all of us. However, we join our voices with King Benjamin, who said, … ‘I am like as yourselves, subject to all manner of infirmities in body and mind; yet I have been chosen … and consecrated by my father, … and have been kept and preserved by his matchless power, to serve you with all the might, mind and strength which the Lord hath granted unto me’ (Mosiah 2:11).”

President Monson continued: “Despite any health challenges that may come to us, despite any weakness in body or mind, we serve to the best of our ability. I assure you that the Church is in good hands. The system set up for the Council of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve [Apostles] assures [us] that it will always be in good hands and that, come what may, there is no need to worry or to fear. Our Savior, Jesus Christ, whom we follow, whom we worship, and whom we serve, is ever at the helm.”19

President Monson, we thank you for those truths! And we thank you for your lifetime of exemplary and dedicated service. May I presume to speak for the members of the Church throughout the world in our united and sincere expression of gratitude for you. We honor you! We love you! We sustain you, not only with uplifted hands but with all our hearts and consecrated efforts. Humbly and fervently, “we ever pray for thee, our prophet dear”!20 In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings, Thoughts or Insights From Your Readings or From the Lesson:**

**Lesson #3**

**Obedience Brings**

**Blessings**

**1 Nephi 2:1-20**

1 For behold, it came to pass that the Lord spake unto my father, yea, even in a dream, and said unto him: Blessed art thou Lehi, because of the things which thou hast done; and because thou hast been faithful and declared unto this people the things which I commanded thee, behold, they seek to take away thy life.

2 And it came to pass that the Lord commanded my father, even in a dream, that he should take his family and depart into the wilderness.

3 And it came to pass that he was obedient unto the word of the Lord, wherefore he did as the Lord commanded him.

4 And it came to pass that he departed into the wilderness. And he left his house, and the land of his inheritance, and his gold, and his silver, and his precious things, and took nothing with him, save it were his family, and provisions, and tents, and departed into the wilderness.

5 And he came down by the borders near the shore of the Red Sea; and he traveled in the wilderness in the borders which are nearer the Red Sea; and he did travel in the wilderness with his family, which consisted of my mother, Sariah, and my elder brothers, who were Laman, Lemuel, and Sam.

6 And it came to pass that when he had traveled three days in the wilderness, he pitched his tent in a valley by the side of a river of water.

7 And it came to pass that he built an altar of stones, and made an offering unto the Lord, and gave thanks unto the Lord our God.

8 And it came to pass that he called the name of the river, Laman, and it emptied into the Red Sea; and the valley was in the borders near the mouth thereof.

9 And when my father saw that the waters of the river emptied into the fountain of the Red Sea, he spake unto Laman, saying: O that thou mightest be like unto this river, continually running into the fountain of all righteousness!

10 And he also spake unto Lemuel: O that thou mightest be like unto this valley, firm and steadfast, and immovable in keeping the commandments of the Lord!

11 Now this he spake because of the stiffneckedness of Laman and Lemuel; for behold they did murmur in many things against their father, because he was a visionary man, and had led them out of the land of Jerusalem, to leave the land of their inheritance, and their gold, and their silver, and their precious things, to perish in the wilderness. And this they said he had done because of the foolish imaginations of his heart.

12 And thus Laman and Lemuel, being the eldest, did murmur against their father. And they did murmur because they knew not the dealings of that God who had created them.

13 Neither did they believe that Jerusalem, that great city, could be destroyed according to the words of the prophets. And they were like unto the Jews who were at Jerusalem, who sought to take away the life of my father.

14 And it came to pass that my father did speak unto them in the valley of Lemuel, with power, being filled with the Spirit, until their frames did shake before him. And he did confound them, that they durst not utter against him; wherefore, they did as he commanded them.

15 And my father dwelt in a tent.

16 And it came to pass that I, Nephi, being exceedingly young, nevertheless being large in stature, and also having great desires to know of the mysteries of God, wherefore, I did cry unto the Lord; and behold he did visit me, and did soften my heart that I did believe all the words which had been spoken by my father; wherefore, I did not rebel against him like unto my brothers.

17 And I spake unto Sam, making known unto him the things which the Lord had manifested unto me by his Holy Spirit. And it came to pass that he believed in my words.

18 But, behold, Laman and Lemuel would not hearken unto my words; and being grieved because of the hardness of their hearts I cried unto the Lord for them.

19 And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto me, saying: Blessed art thou, Nephi, because of thy faith, for thou hast sought me diligently, with lowliness of heart.

20 And inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper, and shall be led to a land of promise; yea, even a land which I have prepared for you; yea, a land which is choice above all other lands.

**I Nephi 3:4-7, 15-16**

4 Wherefore, the Lord hath commanded me that thou and thy brothers should go unto the house of Laban, and seek the records, and bring them down hither into the wilderness.

5 And now, behold thy brothers murmur, saying it is a hard thing which I have required of them; but behold I have not required it of them, but it is a commandment of the Lord.

6 Therefore go, my son, and thou shalt be favored of the Lord, because thou hast not murmured.

7 And it came to pass that I, Nephi, said unto my father: 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.

15 But behold I said unto them that: As the Lord liveth, and as we live, we will not go down unto our father in the wilderness until we have accomplished the thing which the Lord hath commanded us.

16 Wherefore, let us be faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord; therefore let us go down to the land of our father’s inheritance, for behold he left gold and silver, and all manner of riches. And all this he hath done because of the commandments of the Lord.

**I Nephi 4:1-2**

1 And it came to pass that I spake unto my brethren, saying: Let us go up again unto Jerusalem, and let us be faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord; for behold he is mightier than all the earth, then why not mightier than Laban and his fifty, yea, or even than his tens of thousands?

2 Therefore let us go up; let us be strong like unto Moses; for he truly spake unto the waters of the Red Sea and they divided hither and thither, and our fathers came through, out of captivity, on dry ground, and the armies of Pharaoh did follow and were drowned in the waters of the Red Sea.

**I Nephi 7:12**

12 Yea, and how is it that ye have forgotten that the Lord is able to do all things according to his will, for the children of men, if it so be that they exercise faith in him? Wherefore, let us be faithful to him.

**I Nephi 17:1-31**

1 And it came to pass that we did again take our journey in the wilderness; and we did travel nearly eastward from that time forth. And we did travel and wade through much affliction in the wilderness; and our women did bear children in the wilderness.

2 And so great were the blessings of the Lord upon us, that while we did live upon raw meat in the wilderness, our women did give plenty of suck for their children, and were strong, yea, even like unto the men; and they began to bear their journeyings without murmurings.

3 And thus we see that the commandments of God must be fulfilled. And if it so be that the children of men keep the commandments of God he doth nourish them, and strengthen them, and provide means whereby they can accomplish the thing which he has commanded them; wherefore, he did provide means for us while we did sojourn in the wilderness.

4 And we did sojourn for the space of many years, yea, even eight years in the wilderness.

5 And we did come to the land which we called Bountiful, because of its much fruit and also wild honey; and all these things were prepared of the Lord that we might not perish. And we beheld the sea, which we called Irreantum, which, being interpreted, is many waters.

6 And it came to pass that we did pitch our tents by the seashore; and notwithstanding we had suffered many afflictions and much difficulty, yea, even so much that we cannot write them all, we were exceedingly rejoiced when we came to the seashore; and we called the place Bountiful, because of its much fruit.

7 And it came to pass that after I, Nephi, had been in the land of Bountiful for the space of many days, the voice of the Lord came unto me, saying: Arise, and get thee into the mountain. And it came to pass that I arose and went up into the mountain, and cried unto the Lord.

8 And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto me, saying: Thou shalt construct a ship, after the manner which I shall show thee, that I may carry thy people across these waters.

9 And I said: Lord, whither shall I go that I may find ore to molten, that I may make tools to construct the ship after the manner which thou hast shown unto me?

10 And it came to pass that the Lord told me whither I should go to find ore, that I might make tools.

11 And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did make a bellows wherewith to blow the fire, of the skins of beasts; and after I had made a bellows, that I might have wherewith to blow the fire, I did smite two stones together that I might make fire.

12 For the Lord had not hitherto suffered that we should make much fire, as we journeyed in the wilderness; for he said: I will make thy food become sweet, that ye cook it not;

13 And I will also be your light in the wilderness; and I will prepare the way before you, if it so be that ye shall keep my commandments; wherefore, inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments ye shall be led towards the promised land; and ye shall know that it is by me that ye are led.

14 Yea, and the Lord said also that: After ye have arrived in the promised land, ye shall know that I, the Lord, am God; and that I, the Lord, did deliver you from destruction; yea, that I did bring you out of the land of Jerusalem.

15 Wherefore, I, Nephi, did strive to keep the commandments of the Lord, and I did exhort my brethren to faithfulness and diligence.

16 And it came to pass that I did make tools of the ore which I did molten out of the rock.

17 And when my brethren saw that I was about to build a ship, they began to murmur against me, saying: Our brother is a fool, for he thinketh that he can build a ship; yea, and he also thinketh that he can cross these great waters.

18 And thus my brethren did complain against me, and were desirous that they might not labor, for they did not believe that I could build a ship; neither would they believe that I was instructed of the Lord.

19 And now it came to pass that I, Nephi, was exceedingly sorrowful because of the hardness of their hearts; and now when they saw that I began to be sorrowful they were glad in their hearts, insomuch that they did rejoice over me, saying: We knew that ye could not construct a ship, for we knew that ye were lacking in judgment; wherefore, thou canst not accomplish so great a work.

20 And thou art like unto our father, led away by the foolish imaginations of his heart; yea, he hath led us out of the land of Jerusalem, and we have wandered in the wilderness for these many years; and our women have toiled, being big with child; and they have borne children in the wilderness and suffered all things, save it were death; and it would have been better that they had died before they came out of Jerusalem than to have suffered these afflictions.

21 Behold, these many years we have suffered in the wilderness, which time we might have enjoyed our possessions and the land of our inheritance; yea, and we might have been happy.

22 And we know that the people who were in the land of Jerusalem were a righteous people; for they kept the statutes and judgments of the Lord, and all his commandments, according to the law of Moses; wherefore, we know that they are a righteous people; and our father hath judged them, and hath led us away because we would hearken unto his words; yea, and our brother is like unto him. And after this manner of language did my brethren murmur and complain against us.

23 And it came to pass that I, Nephi, spake unto them, saying: Do ye believe that our fathers, who were the children of Israel, would have been led away out of the hands of the Egyptians if they had not hearkened unto the words of the Lord?

24 Yea, do ye suppose that they would have been led out of bondage, if the Lord had not commanded Moses that he should lead them out of bondage?

25 Now ye know that the children of Israel were in bondage; and ye know that they were laden with tasks, which were grievous to be borne; wherefore, ye know that it must needs be a good thing for them, that they should be brought out of bondage.

26 Now ye know that Moses was commanded of the Lord to do that great work; and ye know that by his word the waters of the Red Sea were divided hither and thither, and they passed through on dry ground.

27 But ye know that the Egyptians were drowned in the Red Sea, who were the armies of Pharaoh.

28 And ye also know that they were fed with manna in the wilderness.

29 Yea, and ye also know that Moses, by his word according to the power of God which was in him, smote the rock, and there came forth water, that the children of Israel might quench their thirst.

30 And notwithstanding they being led, the Lord their God, their Redeemer, going before them, leading them by day and giving light unto them by night, and doing all things for them which were expedient for man to receive, they hardened their hearts and blinded their minds, and reviled against Moses and against the true and living God.

31 And it came to pass that according to his word he did destroy them; and according to his word he did lead them; and according to his word he did do all things for them; and there was not any thing done save it were by his word.

**I Nephi 18:1-4**

1 And it came to pass that they did worship the Lord, and did go forth with me; and we did work timbers of curious workmanship. And the Lord did show me from time to time after what manner I should work the timbers of the ship.

2 Now I, Nephi, did not work the timbers after the manner which was learned by men, neither did I build the ship after the manner of men; but I did build it after the manner which the Lord had shown unto me; wherefore, it was not after the manner of men.

3 And I, Nephi, did go into the mount oft, and I did pray oft unto the Lord; wherefore the Lord showed unto me great things.

4 And it came to pass that after I had finished the ship, according to the word of the Lord, my brethren beheld that it was good, and that the workmanship thereof was exceedingly fine;

wherefore, they did humble themselves again before the Lord.

**2 Nephi 31:6-10, 15-16**

6 And now, I would ask of you, my beloved brethren, wherein the Lamb of God did fulfil all righteousness in being baptized by water?

7 Know ye not that he was holy? But notwithstanding he being holy, he showeth unto the children of men that, according to the flesh he humbleth himself before the Father, and witnesseth unto the Father that he would be obedient unto him in keeping his commandments.

8 Wherefore, after he was baptized with water the Holy Ghost descended upon him in the form of a dove.

9 And again, it showeth unto the children of men the straitness of the path, and the narrowness of the gate, by which they should enter, he having set the example before them.

10 And he said unto the children of men: Follow thou me. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, can we follow Jesus save we shall be willing to keep the commandments of the Father?

15 And I heard a voice from the Father, saying: Yea, the words of my Beloved are true and faithful. He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.

16 And now, my beloved brethren, I know by this that unless a man shall endure to the end, in following the example of the Son of the living God, he cannot be saved.

**Mosiah 2:20-24, 41**

20 I say unto you, my brethren, that if you should render all the thanks and praise which your whole soul has power to possess, to that God who has created you, and has kept and preserved you, and has caused that ye should rejoice, and has granted that ye should live in peace one with another—

21 I say unto you that if ye should serve him 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.

22 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.

23 And now, in the first place, he hath created you, and granted unto you your lives, for which ye are indebted unto him.

24 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; therefore, of what have ye to boast?

41 And moreover, I would desire that ye should consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. For behold, they are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual; and if they hold out faithful to the end they are received into heaven, that thereby they may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness. O remember, remember that these things are true; for the Lord God hath spoken it.

**Mosiah 15:7**

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.

**3 Nephi 11:11**

11 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.

**3 Nephi 12:19-20, 48**

19 And behold, I have given you the law and the commandments of my Father, that ye shall believe in me, and that ye shall repent of your sins, and come unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Behold, ye have the commandments before you, and the law is fulfilled.

20 Therefore come unto me and be ye saved; for verily I say unto you, that except ye shall keep my commandments, which I have commanded you at this time, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

48 Therefore I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect.

**Obedience Brings Blessings**

**Thomas S. Monson, Ensign, May 2013**

My beloved brothers and sisters, how grateful I am to be with you this morning. I seek an interest in your faith and prayers as I respond to the privilege to address you.

Throughout the ages, men and women have sought for knowledge and understanding concerning this mortal existence and their place and purpose in it, as well as for the way to peace and happiness. Such a search is undertaken by each of us.

This knowledge and understanding are available to all mankind. They are contained in truths which are eternal. In Doctrine and Covenants section 1, verse 39, we read, “Behold, and lo, the Lord is God, and the Spirit beareth record, and the record is true, and the truth abideth forever and ever.”

The poet wrote:

Tho the heavens depart and the earth’s fountains burst,

Truth, the sum of existence, will weather the worst,

Eternal, unchanged, evermore.1

Some would ask, “Where is such truth to be found, and how are we to recognize it?” In a revelation given through the Prophet Joseph Smith at Kirtland, Ohio, in May of 1833, the Lord declared:

“Truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come. …

“The Spirit of truth is of God. …

“And no man receiveth a fulness unless he keepeth his commandments.

“He that keepeth [God’s] commandments receiveth truth and light, until he is glorified in truth and knoweth all things.”2

What a glorious promise! “He that keepeth [God’s] commandments receiveth truth and light, until he is glorified in truth and knoweth all things.”

There is no need for you or for me, in this enlightened age when the fulness of the gospel has been restored, to sail uncharted seas or to travel unmarked roads in search of truth. A loving Heavenly Father has plotted our course and provided an unfailing guide—even obedience. A knowledge of truth and the answers to our greatest questions come to us as we are obedient to the commandments of God.

We learn obedience throughout our lives. Beginning when we are very young, those responsible for our care set forth guidelines and rules to ensure our safety. Life would be simpler for all of us if we would obey such rules completely. Many of us, however, learn through experience the wisdom of being obedient.

When I was growing up, each summer from early July until early September, my family stayed at our cabin at Vivian Park in Provo Canyon in Utah.

One of my best friends during those carefree days in the canyon was Danny Larsen, whose family also owned a cabin at Vivian Park. Each day he and I roamed this boy’s paradise, fishing in the stream and the river, collecting rocks and other treasures, hiking, climbing, and simply enjoying each minute of each hour of each day.

One morning Danny and I decided we wanted to have a campfire that evening with all our canyon friends. We just needed to clear an area in a nearby field where we could all gather. The June grass which covered the field had become dry and prickly, making the field unsuitable for our purposes. We began to pull at the tall grass, planning to clear a large, circular area. We tugged and yanked with all our might, but all we could get were small handfuls of the stubborn weeds. We knew this task would take the entire day, and already our energy and enthusiasm were waning.

And then what I thought was the perfect solution came into my eight-year-old mind. I said to Danny, “All we need is to set these weeds on fire. We’ll just burn a circle in the weeds!” He readily agreed, and I ran to our cabin to get a few matches.

Lest any of you think that at the tender age of eight we were permitted to use matches, I want to make it clear that both Danny and I were forbidden to use them without adult supervision. Both of us had been warned repeatedly of the dangers of fire. However, I knew where my family kept the matches, and we needed to clear that field. Without so much as a second thought, I ran to our cabin and grabbed a few matchsticks, making certain no one was watching. I hid them quickly in one of my pockets.

Back to Danny I ran, excited that in my pocket I had the solution to our problem. I recall thinking that the fire would burn only as far as we wanted and then would somehow magically extinguish itself.

I struck a match on a rock and set the parched June grass ablaze. It ignited as though it had been drenched in gasoline. At first Danny and I were thrilled as we watched the weeds disappear, but it soon became apparent that the fire was not about to go out on its own. We panicked as we realized there was nothing we could do to stop it. The menacing flames began to follow the wild grass up the mountainside, endangering the pine trees and everything else in their path.

Finally we had no option but to run for help. Soon all available men and women at Vivian Park were dashing back and forth with wet burlap bags, beating at the flames in an attempt to extinguish them. After several hours the last remaining embers were smothered. The ages-old pine trees had been saved, as were the homes the flames would eventually have reached.

Danny and I learned several difficult but important lessons that day—not the least of which was the importance of obedience.

There are rules and laws to help ensure our physical safety. Likewise, the Lord has provided guidelines and commandments to help ensure our spiritual safety so that we might successfully navigate this often-treacherous mortal existence and return eventually to our Heavenly Father.

Centuries ago, to a generation steeped in the tradition of animal sacrifice, Samuel boldly declared, “To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.”3

In this dispensation, the Lord revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith that He requires “the heart and a willing mind; and the willing and obedient shall eat the good of the land of Zion in these last days.”4

All prophets, ancient and modern, have known that obedience is essential to our salvation. Nephi declared, “I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded.”5 Though others faltered in their faith and their obedience, never once did Nephi fail to do that which the Lord asked of him. Untold generations have been blessed as a result.

A soul-stirring account of obedience is that of Abraham and Isaac. How painfully difficult it must have been for Abraham, in obedience to God’s command, to take his beloved Isaac into the land of Moriah to offer him as a sacrifice. Can we imagine the heaviness of Abraham’s heart as he journeyed to the appointed place? Surely anguish must have racked his body and tortured his mind as he bound Isaac, laid him on the altar, and took the knife to slay him. With unwavering faith and implicit trust in the Lord, he responded to the Lord’s command. How glorious was the pronouncement, and with what wondered welcome did it come: “Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.”6

Abraham had been tried and tested, and for his faithfulness and obedience the Lord gave him this glorious promise: “In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.”7

Although we are not asked to prove our obedience in such a dramatic and heart-wrenching way, obedience is required of us as well.

Declared President Joseph F. Smith in October 1873, “Obedience is the first law of heaven.”8

Said President Gordon B. Hinckley, “The happiness of the Latter-day Saints, the peace of the Latter-day Saints, the progress of the Latter-day Saints, the prosperity of the Latter-day Saints, and the eternal salvation and exaltation of this people lie in walking in obedience to the counsels of … God.”9

Obedience is a hallmark of prophets; it has provided strength and knowledge to them throughout the ages. It is essential for us to realize that we, as well, are entitled to this source of strength and knowledge. It is readily available to each of us today as we obey God’s commandments.

Throughout the years, I have known countless individuals who have been particularly faithful and obedient. I have been blessed and inspired by them. May I share with you an account of two such individuals.

Walter Krause was a steadfast member of the Church who, with his family, lived in what became known as East Germany following the Second World War. Despite the hardships he faced because of the lack of freedom in that area of the world at the time, Brother Krause was a man who loved and served the Lord. He faithfully and conscientiously fulfilled each assignment given to him.

The other man, Johann Denndorfer, a native of Hungary, was converted to the Church in Germany and was baptized there in 1911 at the age of 17. Not too long afterward he returned to Hungary. Following the Second World War, he found himself virtually a prisoner in his native land, in the city of Debrecen. Freedom had also been taken from the people of Hungary.

Brother Walter Krause, who did not know Brother Denndorfer, received the assignment to be his home teacher and to visit him on a regular basis. Brother Krause called his home teaching companion and said to him, “We have received an assignment to visit Brother Johann Denndorfer. Would you be available to go with me this week to see him and give him a gospel message?” And then he added, “Brother Denndorfer lives in Hungary.”

His startled companion asked, “When will we leave?”

“Tomorrow,” came the reply from Brother Krause.

“When will we return home?” asked the companion.

Brother Krause responded, “Oh, in about a week—if we get back.”

Away the two home teaching companions went to visit Brother Denndorfer, traveling by train and bus from the northeastern area of Germany to Debrecen, Hungary—a substantial journey. Brother Denndorfer had not had home teachers since before the war. Now, when he saw these servants of the Lord, he was overwhelmed with gratitude that they had come. At first he declined to shake hands with them. Rather, he went to his bedroom and took from a small cabinet a box containing his tithing that he had saved for years. He presented the tithing to his home teachers and said, “Now I am current with the Lord. Now I feel worthy to shake the hands of servants of the Lord!” Brother Krause told me later that he had been touched beyond words to think that this faithful brother, who had no contact with the Church for many years, had obediently and consistently taken from his meager earnings 10 percent with which to pay his tithing. He had saved it not knowing when or if he might have the privilege of paying it.

Brother Walter Krause passed away nine years ago at the age of 94. He served faithfully and obediently throughout his life and was an inspiration to me and to all who knew him. When asked to fulfill assignments, he never questioned, he never murmured, and he never made excuses.

My brothers and sisters, the great test of this life is obedience. “We will prove them herewith,” said the Lord, “to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them.”10

Declared the Savior, “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.”11

No greater example of obedience exists than that of our Savior. Of Him, Paul observed:

“Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

“And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.”12

The Savior demonstrated genuine love of God by living the perfect life, by honoring the sacred mission that was His. Never was He haughty. Never was He puffed up with pride. Never was He disloyal. Ever was He humble. Ever was He sincere. Ever was He obedient.

Though He was tempted by that master of deceit, even the devil, though He was physically weakened from fasting 40 days and 40 nights and was an hungered, yet when the evil one proffered Jesus the most alluring and tempting proposals, He gave to us a divine example of obedience by refusing to deviate from what He knew was right.13

When faced with the agony of Gethsemane, where He endured such pain that “his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground,”14 He exemplified the obedient Son by saying, “Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.”15

As the Savior instructed His early Apostles, so He instructs you and me, “Follow thou me.”16 Are we willing to obey?

The knowledge which we seek, the answers for which we yearn, and the strength which we desire today to meet the challenges of a complex and changing world can be ours when we willingly obey the Lord’s commandments. I quote once again the words of the Lord: “He that keepeth [God’s] commandments receiveth truth and light, until he is glorified in truth and knoweth all things.”17

It is my humble prayer that we may be blessed with the rich rewards promised to the obedient. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, amen.

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings, Thoughts or Insights From Your Readings or From the Lesson:**

**Lesson # 4**

**The Fall of Adam and the Gift of Agency**

**2 Nephi 2:14, 16, 19-29**

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.

19 And after Adam and Eve had partaken of the forbidden fruit they were driven out of the garden of Eden, to till the earth.

20 And they have brought forth children; yea, even the family of all the earth.

21 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; for he showed unto all men that they were lost, because of the transgression of their parents.

22 And now, 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.

23 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.

24 But behold, all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things.

25 Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy.

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.

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; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself.

28 And now, my sons, I would that ye should look to the great Mediator, and hearken unto his great commandments; and be faithful unto his words, and choose eternal life, according to the will of his Holy Spirit;

29 And not choose eternal death, according to the will of the flesh and the evil which is therein, which giveth the spirit of the devil power to captivate, to bring you down to hell, that he may reign over you in his own kingdom.

**Alma 42:6-10, 14**

6 But behold, it was appointed unto man to die—therefore, as they were cut off from the tree of life they should be cut off from the face of the earth—and man became lost forever, yea, they became fallen man.

7 And now, ye see by this that our first parents were cut off both temporally and spiritually from the presence of the Lord; and thus we see they became subjects to follow after their own will.

8 Now behold, it was not expedient that man should be reclaimed from this temporal death, for that would destroy the great plan of happiness.

9 Therefore, as the soul could never die, and the fall had brought upon all mankind a spiritual death as well as a temporal, that is, they were cut off from the presence of the Lord, it was expedient that mankind should be reclaimed from this spiritual death.

10 Therefore, 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.

14 And thus we see that all mankind were fallen, and they were in the grasp of justice; yea, the justice of God, which consigned them forever to be cut off from his presence.

**Helaman 14:30-31**

30 And now remember, remember, my brethren, that whosoever perisheth, perisheth unto himself; and whosoever doeth iniquity, doeth it unto himself; for behold, ye are free; ye are permitted to act for yourselves; for behold, God hath given unto you a knowledge and he hath made you free.

31 He hath given unto you that ye might know good from evil, and 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 have that which is good restored unto you; or ye can do evil, and have that which is evil restored unto you.

**3 Nephi 27:13**

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

**Moses 5:5-9**

5 And he gave unto them commandments, that they should worship the Lord their God, and should offer the firstlings of their flocks, for an offering unto the Lord. And Adam was obedient unto the commandments of the Lord.

6 And after many days an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam, saying: Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord? And Adam said unto him: I know not, save the Lord commanded me.

7 And then the angel spake, saying: This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth.

8 Wherefore, thou shalt do all that thou doest in the name of the Son, and thou shalt repent and call upon God in the name of the Son forevermore.

9 And in that day the Holy Ghost fell upon Adam, which beareth record of the Father and the Son, saying: 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.

**Where Justice, Love, and Mercy Meet**

**Jeffrey R. Holland, *Ensign*, May 2015**

Without safety ropes, harnesses, or climbing gear of any kind, two brothers—Jimmy, age 14, and John, age 19 (though those aren’t their real names)—attempted to scale a sheer canyon wall in Snow Canyon State Park in my native southern Utah. Near the top of their laborious climb, they discovered that a protruding ledge denied them their final few feet of ascent. They could not get over it, but neither could they now retreat from it. They were stranded. After careful maneuvering, John found enough footing to boost his younger brother to safety on top of the ledge. But there was no way to lift himself. The more he strained to find finger or foot leverage, the more his muscles began to cramp. Panic started to sweep over him, and he began to fear for his life.

Unable to hold on much longer, John decided his only option was to try to jump vertically in an effort to grab the top of the overhanging ledge. If successful, he might, by his considerable arm strength, pull himself to safety.

In his own words, he said:

“Prior to my jump I told Jimmy to go search for a tree branch strong enough to extend down to me, although I knew there was nothing of the kind on this rocky summit. It was only a desperate ruse. If my jump failed, the least I could do was make certain my little brother did not see me falling to my death.

“Giving him enough time to be out of sight, I said my last prayer—that I wanted my family to know I loved them and that Jimmy could make it home safely on his own—then I leapt. There was enough adrenaline in my spring that the jump extended my arms above the ledge almost to my elbows. But as I slapped my hands down on the surface, I felt nothing but loose sand on flat stone. I can still remember the gritty sensation of hanging there with nothing to hold on to—no lip, no ridge, nothing to grab or grasp. I felt my fingers begin to recede slowly over the sandy surface. I knew my life was over.

“But then suddenly, like a lightning strike in a summer storm, two hands shot out from somewhere above the edge of the cliff, grabbing my wrists with a strength and determination that belied their size. My faithful little brother had not gone looking for any fictitious tree branch. Guessing exactly what I was planning to do, he had never moved an inch. He had simply waited—silently, almost breathlessly—knowing full well I would be foolish enough to try to make that jump. When I did, he grabbed me, held me, and refused to let me fall. Those strong brotherly arms saved my life that day as I dangled helplessly above what would surely have been certain death.”1

My beloved brothers and sisters, today is Easter Sunday. Although we should always remember (we promise in our weekly sacramental prayers that we will), nevertheless this is the most sacred day of the year for special remembrance of brotherly hands and determined arms that reached into the abyss of death to save us from our fallings and our failings, from our sorrows and our sins. Against the background of this story reported by John and Jimmy’s family, I express my gratitude for the Atonement and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and acknowledge events in the divine plan of God that led up to and give meaning to “the love Jesus offers [us].”2

In our increasingly secular society, it is as uncommon as it is unfashionable to speak of Adam and Eve or the Garden of Eden or of a “fortunate fall” into mortality. Nevertheless, the simple truth is that we cannot fully comprehend the Atonement and Resurrection of Christ and we will not adequately appreciate the unique purpose of His birth or His death—in other words, there is no way to truly celebrate Christmas or Easter—without understanding that there was an actual Adam and Eve who fell from an actual Eden, with all the consequences that fall carried with it.

I do not know the details of what happened on this planet before that, but I do know these two were created under the divine hand of God, that for a time they lived alone in a paradisiacal setting where there was neither human death nor future family, and that through a sequence of choices they transgressed a commandment of God which required that they leave their garden setting but which allowed them to have children before facing physical death.3 To add further sorrow and complexity to their circumstance, their transgression had spiritual consequences as well, cutting them off from the presence of God forever. Because we were then born into that fallen world and because we too would transgress the laws of God, we also were sentenced to the same penalties that Adam and Eve faced.

What a plight! The entire human race in free fall—every man, woman, and child in it physically tumbling toward permanent death, spiritually plunging toward eternal anguish. Is that what life was meant to be? Is this the grand finale of the human experience? Are we all just hanging in a cold canyon somewhere in an indifferent universe, each of us searching for a toehold, each of us seeking for something to grip—with nothing but the feeling of sand sliding under our fingers, nothing to save us, nothing to hold on to, much less anything to hold on to us? Is our only purpose in life an empty existential exercise—simply to leap as high as we can, hang on for our prescribed three score years and ten, then fail and fall, and keep falling forever?

The answer to those questions is an unequivocal and eternal no! With prophets ancient and modern, I testify that “all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things.”4 Thus, from the moment those first parents stepped out of the Garden of Eden, the God and Father of us all, anticipating Adam and Eve’s decision, dispatched the very angels of heaven to declare to them—and down through time to us—that this entire sequence was designed for our eternal happiness. It was part of His divine plan, which provided for a Savior, the very Son of God Himself—another “Adam,” the Apostle Paul would call Him5—who would come in the meridian of time to atone for the first Adam’s transgression. That Atonement would achieve complete victory over physical death, unconditionally granting resurrection to every person who has been born or ever will be born into this world. Mercifully it would also provide forgiveness for the personal sins of all, from Adam to the end of the world, conditioned upon repentance and obedience to divine commandments.

As one of His ordained witnesses, I declare this Easter morning that Jesus of Nazareth was and is that Savior of the world, the “last Adam,”6 the Author and Finisher of our faith, the Alpha and Omega of eternal life. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive,”7 Paul declared. And from the prophet-patriarch Lehi: “Adam fell that men might be. … And the Messiah cometh in the fulness of time, that he may redeem the children of men from the fall.”8 Most thoroughly of all, the Book of Mormon prophet Jacob taught as part of a two-day sermon on the Atonement of Jesus Christ that “the resurrection must … come … by reason of the fall.”9

So today we celebrate the gift of victory over every fall we have ever experienced, every sorrow we have ever known, every discouragement we have ever had, every fear we have ever faced—to say nothing of our resurrection from death and forgiveness for our sins. That victory is available to us because of events that transpired on a weekend precisely like this nearly two millennia ago in Jerusalem.

Beginning in the spiritual anguish of the Garden of Gethsemane, moving to the Crucifixion on a cross at Calvary, and concluding on a beautiful Sunday morning inside a donated tomb, a sinless, pure, and holy man, the very Son of God Himself, did what no other deceased person had ever done nor ever could do. Under His own power, He rose from death, never to have His body separated from His spirit again. Of His own volition, He shed the burial linen with which He had been bound, carefully putting the burial napkin that had been placed over His face “in a place by itself,”10 the scripture says.

That first Easter sequence of Atonement and Resurrection constitutes the most consequential moment, the most generous gift, the most excruciating pain, and the most majestic manifestation of pure love ever to be demonstrated in the history of this world. Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, suffered, died, and rose from death in order that He could, like lightning in a summer storm, grasp us as we fall, hold us with His might, and through our obedience to His commandments, lift us to eternal life.

This Easter I thank Him and the Father, who gave Him to us, that Jesus still stands triumphant over death, although He stands on wounded feet. This Easter I thank Him and the Father, who gave Him to us, that He still extends unending grace, although He extends it with pierced palms and scarred wrists. This Easter I thank Him and the Father, who gave Him to us, that we can sing before a sweat-stained garden, a nail-driven cross, and a gloriously empty tomb:

How great, how glorious, how complete

Redemption’s grand design,

Where justice, love, and mercy meet

In harmony divine!11

In the sacred name of the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings, Thoughts or Insights From Your Readings or From the Lesson:**

**Lesson #5**

**The Infinite Atonement of Jesus Christ**

**2 Nephi 9:6-12, 20-22**

6 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, and the resurrection must needs come unto man by reason of the fall; and the fall came by reason of transgression; and because man became fallen they were cut off from the presence of the Lord.

7 Wherefore, it must needs be an infinite atonement—save it should be an infinite atonement this corruption could not put on incorruption. Wherefore, the first judgment which came upon man must needs have remained to an endless duration. And if so, this flesh must have laid down to rot and to crumble to its mother earth, to rise no more.

8 O the wisdom of God, his mercy and grace! For behold, if the flesh should rise no more our spirits must become subject to that angel who fell from before the presence of the Eternal God, and became the devil, to rise no more.

9 And our spirits must have become like unto him, and we become devils, angels to a devil, to be shut out from the presence of our God, and to remain with the father of lies, in misery, like unto himself; yea, to that being who beguiled our first parents, who transformeth himself nigh unto an angel of light, and stirreth up the children of men unto secret combinations of murder and all manner of secret works of darkness.

10 O how great the goodness of our God, who prepareth a way for our escape from the grasp of this awful monster; yea, that monster, death and hell, which I call the death of the body, and also the death of the spirit.

11 And because of the way of deliverance of our God, the Holy One of Israel, this death, of which I have spoken, which is the temporal, shall deliver up its dead; which death is the grave.

12 And this death of which I have spoken, which is the spiritual death, shall deliver up its dead; which spiritual death is hell; wherefore, death and hell must deliver up their dead, and hell must deliver up its captive spirits, and the grave must deliver up its captive bodies, and the bodies and the spirits of men will be restored one to the other; and it is by the power of the resurrection of the Holy One of Israel.

20 O how great the holiness of our God! For he knoweth all things, and there is not anything save he knows it.

21 And he cometh into the world that he may save all men if they will hearken unto his voice; for behold, he suffereth the pains of all men, yea, the pains of every living creature, both men, women, and children, who belong to the family of Adam.

22 And he suffereth this that the resurrection might pass upon all men, that all might stand before him at the great and judgment day.

**Mosiah 3:5-11, 16**

5 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 shall go forth amongst men, working mighty miracles, such as healing the sick, raising the dead, causing the lame to walk, the blind to receive their sight, and the deaf to hear, and curing all manner of diseases.

6 And he shall cast out devils, or the evil spirits which dwell in the hearts of the children of men.

7 And lo, 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.

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; and his mother shall be called Mary.

9 And lo, he cometh unto his own, that salvation might come unto the children of men even through faith on his name; and even after all this they shall consider him a man, and say that he hath a devil, and shall scourge him, and shall crucify him.

10 And he shall rise the third day from the dead; and behold, he standeth to judge the world; and behold, all these things are done that a righteous judgment might come upon the children of men.

11 For behold, and also his blood atoneth for the sins of those who have fallen by the transgression of Adam, who have died not knowing the will of God concerning them, or who have ignorantly sinned.

16 And even if it were possible that little children could sin they could not be saved; but I say unto you they are blessed; for behold, as in Adam, or by nature, they fall, even so the blood of Christ atoneth for their sins.

**Mosiah 15:7-9**

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.

8 And thus God breaketh the bands of death, having gained the victory over death; giving the Son power to make intercession for the children of men—

9 Having ascended into heaven, having the bowels of mercy; being filled with compassion towards the children of men; standing betwixt them and justice; having broken the bands of death, taken upon himself their iniquity and their transgressions, having redeemed them, and satisfied the demands of justice.

**Alma 7:11-13**

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.

**Alma 34:8-12**

8 And now, behold, I will testify unto you of myself that these things are true. Behold, I say unto you, that I do know that Christ shall come among the children of men, to take upon him the transgressions of his people, and that he shall atone for the sins of the world; for the Lord God hath spoken it.

9 For it is 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; yea, all are hardened; yea, all are fallen and are lost, and must perish except it be through the atonement which it is expedient should be made.

10 For it is expedient that there should be a great and last sacrifice; yea, not a sacrifice of man, neither of beast, neither of any manner of fowl; for it shall not be a human sacrifice; but it must be an infinite and eternal sacrifice.

11 Now there is not any man that can sacrifice his own blood which will atone for the sins of another. Now, if a man murdereth, behold will our law, which is just, take the life of his brother? I say unto you, Nay.

12 But the law requireth the life of him who hath murdered; therefore there can be nothing which is short of an infinite atonement which will suffice for the sins of the world.

**Moroni 8:8-12**

8 Listen to the words of Christ, your Redeemer, your Lord and your God. Behold, I came into the world not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance; the whole need no physician, but they that are sick; wherefore, little children are whole, for they are not capable of committing sin; wherefore the curse of Adam is taken from them in me, that it hath no power over them; and the law of circumcision is done away in me.

9 And after this manner did the Holy Ghost manifest the word of God unto me; wherefore, my beloved son, I know that it is solemn mockery before God, that ye should baptize little children.

10 Behold I say unto you that this thing shall ye teach—repentance and baptism unto those who are accountable and capable of committing sin; yea, teach parents that they must repent and be baptized, and humble themselves as their little children, and they shall all be saved with their little children.

11 And their little children need no repentance, neither baptism. Behold, baptism is unto repentance to the fulfilling the commandments unto the remission of sins.

12 But little children are alive in Christ, even from the foundation of the world; if not so, God is a partial God, and also a changeable God, and a respecter to persons; for how many little children have died without baptism!

**D&C 137:7-9**

7 Thus came the voice of the Lord unto me, saying: All who have died without a knowledge of this gospel, who would have received it if they had been permitted to tarry, shall be heirs of the celestial kingdom of God;

8 Also all that shall die henceforth without a knowledge of it, who would have received it with all their hearts, shall be heirs of that kingdom;

9 For I, the Lord, will judge all men according to their works, according to the desire of their hearts.

**Redemption**

**D. Todd Christofferson, *Ensign*, May 2013**

In colonial times, labor was in great demand in America. During the 18th and early 19th centuries, potential immigrant laborers were recruited in Great Britain, Germany, and other European countries, but many who were willing to go could not afford the cost of travel. It was not uncommon for these to travel under an indenture or contract, promising to work after their arrival for a certain period of time without wages as payment for their passage. Others came with the promise that family members already in America would pay their fare upon arrival, but if that didn’t happen, the newcomers were obliged to pay their own costs through indentured service. The term used to describe these indentured immigrants was “redemptioners.” They had to redeem the cost of their passage—in a sense, purchase their freedom—by their labor.1

Among the most significant of Jesus Christ’s descriptive titles is Redeemer. As indicated in my brief account of immigrant “redemptioners,” the word redeem means to pay off an obligation or a debt. Redeem can also mean to rescue or set free as by paying a ransom. If someone commits a mistake and then corrects it or makes amends, we say he has redeemed himself. Each of these meanings suggests different facets of the great Redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ through His Atonement, which includes, in the words of the dictionary, “to deliver from sin and its penalties, as by a sacrifice made for the sinner.”2

The Savior’s Redemption has two parts. First, it atones for Adam’s transgression and the consequent Fall of man by overcoming what could be called the direct effects of the Fall—physical death and spiritual death. Physical death is well understood; spiritual death is the separation of man from God. In the words of Paul, “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22). This redemption from physical and spiritual death is both universal and without condition.3

The second aspect of the Savior’s Atonement is redemption from what might be termed the indirect consequences of the Fall—our own sins as opposed to Adam’s transgression. By virtue of the Fall, we are born into a mortal world where sin—that is, disobedience to divinely instituted law—is pervasive. Speaking of all of us, the Lord says:

“Even so when they begin to grow up, sin conceiveth in their hearts, and they taste the bitter, that they may know to prize the good.

“And it is given unto them to know good from evil; wherefore they are agents unto themselves” (Moses 6:55–56).

Because we are accountable and we make the choices, the redemption from our own sins is conditional—conditioned on confessing and abandoning sin and turning to a godly life, or in other words, conditioned on repentance (see D&C 58:43). “Wherefore,” commands the Lord, “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” (Moses 6:57).

The Savior’s suffering in Gethsemane and His agony on the cross redeem us from sin by satisfying the demands that justice has upon us. He extends mercy and pardons those who repent. The Atonement also satisfies the debt justice owes to us by healing and compensating us for any suffering we innocently endure. “For behold, he suffereth the pains of all men, yea, the pains of every living creature, both men, women, and children, who belong to the family of Adam” (2 Nephi 9:21; see also Alma 7:11–12).4

Inasmuch as we follow Christ, we seek to participate in and further His redemptive work. The greatest service we can provide to others in this life, beginning with those of our own family, is to bring them to Christ through faith and repentance so they may experience His Redemption—peace and joy now and immortality and eternal life in the world to come. The work of our missionaries is a magnificent expression of the Lord’s redeeming love. As His authorized messengers, they offer the incomparable blessings of faith in Jesus Christ, repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, opening the way to spiritual rebirth and redemption.

We can also assist in the Lord’s redemption of those beyond the grave. “The faithful elders of this dispensation, when they depart from mortal life, continue their labors in the preaching of the gospel of repentance and redemption, through the sacrifice of the Only Begotten Son of God, among those who are in darkness and under the bondage of sin in the great world of the spirits of the dead” (D&C 138:57). With the benefit of vicarious rites we offer them in the temples of God, even those who died in bondage to sin can be freed.5

While the most important aspects of redemption have to do with repentance and forgiveness, there is a very significant temporal aspect as well. Jesus is said to have gone about doing good (see Acts 10:38), which included healing the sick and infirm, supplying food to hungry multitudes, and teaching a more excellent way. “The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28). So may we, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, go about doing good in the redemptive pattern of the Master.

This kind of redemptive work means helping people with their problems. It means befriending the poor and the weak, alleviating suffering, righting wrongs, defending truth, strengthening the rising generation, and achieving security and happiness at home. Much of our redemptive work on earth is to help others grow and achieve their just hopes and aspirations.

An example from Victor Hugo’s novel Les Misérables, though fictional, has always touched and inspired me. Near the beginning of the story, Bishop Bienvenu gives food and overnight shelter to the homeless Jean Valjean, who has just been released from 19 years in prison for having stolen a loaf of bread to feed his sister’s starving children. Hardened and embittered, Valjean rewards Bishop Bienvenu’s kindness by stealing his silver goods. Later detained by suspicious gendarmes, Valjean falsely claims the silver was a gift to him. When the gendarmes drag him back to the bishop’s house, to Valjean’s great surprise, Bishop Bienvenu confirms his story and for good effect says, “‘But! I gave you the candlesticks also, which are silver like the rest, and would bring two hundred francs. Why did you not take them along with your plates?’ …

“The bishop approached him, and said, in a low voice:

“‘Forget not, never forget that you have promised me to use this silver to become an honest man.’

“Jean Valjean, who had no recollection of this promise, stood confounded. The bishop … continued, solemnly:

“‘Jean Valjean, my brother: you belong no longer to evil, but to good. It is your soul that I am buying for you. I withdraw it from dark thoughts and from the spirit of perdition, and I give it to God!’”

Jean Valjean indeed became a new man, an honest man and a benefactor to many. Throughout his life he kept the two silver candlesticks to remind him that his life had been redeemed for God.6

Some forms of temporal redemption come by collaborative effort. It is one of the reasons the Savior created a church. Being organized in quorums and auxiliaries and in stakes, wards, and branches, we can not only teach and encourage each other in the gospel, but we can also bring to bear people and resources to deal with the exigencies of life. People acting alone or in ad hoc groups cannot always provide means on a scale needed to address larger challenges. As followers of Jesus Christ we are a community of Saints organized to help redeem the needs of our fellow Saints and as many others as we can reach across the globe.

Because of our humanitarian efforts, mentioned by Elder Dallin H. Oaks, specifically this past year, 890,000 people in 36 countries have clean water, 70,000 people in 57 countries have wheelchairs, 75,000 people in 25 countries have improved vision, and people in 52 countries received aid following natural disasters. Acting with others, the Church has helped immunize some 8 million children and has helped Syrians in refugee camps in Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan with the necessities of life. At the same time, members of the Church in need received millions of dollars in fast-offering and other welfare assistance during 2012. Thank you for your generosity.

All of this does not begin to count the individual acts of kindness and support—gifts of food, clothing, money, care, and a thousand other forms of comfort and compassion—by which we may participate in the Christlike work of redemption. As a boy I witnessed my own mother’s actions to redeem a woman in need. Many years ago when her children were young, my mother underwent a serious operation that nearly took her life and left her bedridden much of the time for nearly a year. During this time, family and ward members helped Mother and our family. For additional help, the ward Relief Society president, Sister Abraham, recommended that my parents hire a woman in the ward who desperately needed work. In recounting this story, I will use the fictional names Sara and Annie for this woman and her daughter. This is my mother’s account:

“I can see it as plain as if it were only yesterday. There I lay in bed, and Sister Abraham brought Sara to the bedroom door. My heart sank. There stood the least attractive person I had ever met—so thin; scraggly, unkempt hair; round-shouldered; head bowed looking at the floor. She wore an old housedress four sizes too big. She wouldn’t look up and spoke so softly I couldn’t hear her. Hiding behind her was a little girl about three years old. What in the world was I to do with this creature? After they left the room, I cried and cried. I needed help, not more problems. Sister Abraham stayed awhile with her, and they soon whipped the house into shape and prepared some good meals. Sister Abraham asked me to try it for a few days, [saying] that this girl had had a really hard time and needed help.

“The next morning when Sara came, I finally got her to come over by the bed where I could hear her. She asked what I wanted her to do. I told her and then said, ‘But the most important thing is my boys; spend time with them, read to them—they are more important than the house.’ She was a good cook and kept the house clean, the washing done, and she was good to the boys.

“Through the weeks, I learned Sara’s story. [Because she was hard of hearing, she didn’t do well in school and eventually dropped out. She married young to a dissolute man. Annie was born and became the joy of Sara’s life. One winter night her husband came home drunk, forced Sara and Annie into the car in their bedclothes, and then dropped them off by the side of the highway. They never saw him again. Barefoot and freezing, Sara and Annie walked several miles to her mother’s home.] Her mother agreed to let them stay in exchange for doing all the housework and cooking, and caring for her sister and brother who were in high school.

“We took Sara to an ear doctor, and she got a hearing aid. … We got her to take adult schooling, and she got her high school diploma. She went to night school and later graduated from college and taught special education. She bought a little home. Annie was married in the temple and had two children. Sara eventually had some operations on her ears and was finally able to hear well. Years later she retired and served a mission. … Sara thanked us often and said she learned so much from me, especially when I told her that my sons were more important than the house. She said it taught her to be that way with Annie. … Sara is a very special woman.”

As disciples of Jesus Christ, we ought to do all we can to redeem others from suffering and burdens. Even so, our greatest redemptive service will be to lead them to Christ. Without His Redemption from death and from sin, we have only a gospel of social justice. That may provide some help and reconciliation in the present, but it has no power to draw down from heaven perfect justice and infinite mercy. Ultimate redemption is in Jesus Christ and in Him alone. I humbly and gratefully acknowledge Him as the Redeemer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings, Thoughts or Insights From Your Readings or From the Lesson:**

**Lesson #6**

**The Book of Mormon Was Written for Our Day**

**2 Nephi 25:17-18**

17 And the Lord will set his hand again the second time to restore his people from their lost and fallen state. Wherefore, he will proceed to do a marvelous work and a wonder among the children of men.

18 Wherefore, he shall bring forth his words unto them, which words shall judge them at the last day, for they shall be given them for the purpose of convincing them of the true Messiah, who was rejected by them; and unto the convincing of them that they need not look forward any more for a Messiah to come, for there should not any come, save it should be a false Messiah which should deceive the people; for there is save one Messiah spoken of by the prophets, and that Messiah is he who should be rejected of the Jews.

**3 Nephi 21:9-11**

9 For in that day, for my sake shall the Father work a work, which shall be a great and a marvelous work among them; and there shall be among them those who will not believe it, although a man shall declare it unto them.

10 But behold, the life of my servant shall be in my hand; therefore they shall not hurt him, although he shall be marred because of them. Yet I will heal him, for I will show unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil.

11 Therefore it shall come to pass that whosoever will not believe in my words, who am Jesus Christ, which the Father shall cause him to bring forth unto the Gentiles, and shall give unto him power that he shall bring them forth unto the Gentiles, (it shall be done even as Moses said) they shall be cut off from among my people who are of the covenant.

**3 Nephi 29:1-4**

1 And now behold, I say unto you that when the Lord shall see fit, in his wisdom, that these sayings shall come unto the Gentiles according to his word, then ye may know that the covenant which the Father hath made with the children of Israel, concerning their restoration to the lands of their inheritance, is already beginning to be fulfilled.

2 And ye may know that the words of the Lord, which have been spoken by the holy prophets, shall all be fulfilled; and ye need not say that the Lord delays his coming unto the children of Israel.

3 And ye need not imagine in your hearts that the words which have been spoken are vain, for behold, the Lord will remember his covenant which he hath made unto his people of the house of Israel.

4 And when ye shall see these sayings coming forth among you, then ye need not any longer spurn at the doings of the Lord, for the sword of his justice is in his right hand; and behold, at that day, if ye shall spurn at his doings he will cause that it shall soon overtake you.

**Mormon 8:1-5, 26-35**

1 Behold I, Moroni, do finish the record of my father, Mormon. Behold, I have but few things to write, which things I have been commanded by my father.

2 And now it came to pass that after the great and tremendous battle at Cumorah, behold, the Nephites who had escaped into the country southward were hunted by the Lamanites, until they were all destroyed.

3 And my father also was killed by them, and I even remain alone to write the sad tale of the destruction of my people. But behold, they are gone, and I fulfil the commandment of my father. And whether they will slay me, I know not.

4 Therefore I will write and hide up the records in the earth; and whither I go it mattereth not.

5 Behold, my father hath made this record, and he hath written the intent thereof. And behold, I would write it also if I had room upon the plates, but I have not; and ore I have none, for I am alone. My father hath been slain in battle, and all my kinsfolk, and I have not friends nor whither to go; and how long the Lord will suffer that I may live I know not.

26 And no one need say they shall not come, for they surely shall, for the Lord hath spoken it; for out of the earth shall they come, by the hand of the Lord, and none can stay it; and it shall come in a day when it shall be said that miracles are done away; and it shall come even as if one should speak from the dead.

27 And it shall come in a day when the blood of saints shall cry unto the Lord, because of secret combinations and the works of darkness.

28 Yea, it shall come in a day when the power of God shall be denied, and churches become defiled and be lifted up in the pride of their hearts; yea, even in a day when leaders of churches and teachers shall rise in the pride of their hearts, even to the envying of them who belong to their churches.

29 Yea, it shall come in a day when there shall be heard of fires, and tempests, and vapors of smoke in foreign lands;

30 And there shall also be heard of wars, rumors of wars, and earthquakes in divers places.

31 Yea, it shall come in a day when there shall be great pollutions upon the face of the earth; there shall be murders, and robbing, and lying, and deceivings, and whoredoms, and all manner of abominations; when there shall be many who will say, Do this, or do that, and it mattereth not, for the Lord will uphold such at the last day. But wo unto such, for they are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity.

32 Yea, it shall come in a day when there shall be churches built up that shall say: Come unto me, and for your money you shall be forgiven of your sins.

33 O ye wicked and perverse and stiffnecked people, why have ye built up churches unto yourselves to get gain? Why have ye transfigured the holy word of God, that ye might bring damnation upon your souls? Behold, look ye unto the revelations of God; for behold, the time cometh at that day when all these things must be fulfilled.

34 Behold, the Lord hath shown unto me great and marvelous things concerning that which must shortly come, at that day when these things shall come forth among you.

35 Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not. But behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing.

**Ether 12:22-26**

22 And it is by faith that my fathers have obtained the promise that these things should come unto their brethren through the Gentiles; therefore the Lord hath commanded me, yea, even Jesus Christ.

23 And I said unto him: Lord, the Gentiles will mock at these things, because of our weakness in writing; for Lord thou hast made us mighty in word by faith, but thou hast not made us mighty in writing; for thou hast made all this people that they could speak much, because of the Holy Ghost which thou hast given them;

24 And thou hast made us that we could write but little, because of the awkwardness of our hands. Behold, thou hast not made us mighty in writing like unto the brother of Jared, for thou madest him that the things which he wrote were mighty even as thou art, unto the overpowering of man to read them.

25 Thou hast also made our words powerful and great, even that we cannot write them; wherefore, when we write we behold our weakness, and stumble because of the placing of our words; and I fear lest the Gentiles shall mock at our words.

26 And when I had said this, the Lord spake unto me, saying: Fools mock, but they shall mourn; and my grace is sufficient for the meek, that they shall take no advantage of your weakness;

**Moses 7:62**

62 And righteousness will I send down out of heaven; and truth will I send forth out of the earth, to bear testimony of mine Only Begotten; his resurrection from the dead; yea, and also the resurrection of all men; and righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out mine elect from the four quarters of the earth, unto a place which I shall prepare, an Holy City, that my people may gird up their loins, and be looking forth for the time of my coming; for there shall be my tabernacle, and it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem.

**Joseph Smith – History 1:34**

34 He said there was a book deposited, written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent, and the source from whence they sprang. He also said that the fulness of the everlasting Gospel was contained in it, as delivered by the Savior to the ancient inhabitants;

**Flooding the Earth and Our Lives with the Book of Mormon**

**Chapter 10 in Teachings of Presidents of the Church**

**Ezra Taft Benson**

“There is a power in [the Book of Mormon] which will begin to flow into your lives the moment you begin a serious study of the book.”

**From the Life of Ezra Taft Benson**

In the April 1989 general conference, President Thomas S. Monson read a message from President Ezra Taft Benson to the children of the Church. In this message, President Benson said:

“I know you are reading the Book of Mormon, for I have received hundreds of personal letters from you telling me that you are reading this sacred book. It makes me weep for joy when I hear this. …

“How pleased I am to hear of your love for the Book of Mormon. I love it too, and Heavenly Father wants you to continue to learn from the Book of Mormon every day. It’s Heavenly Father’s special gift to you. By following its teachings, you will learn to do the will of our Father in Heaven.”1

Throughout the Church, Latter-day Saints heeded this counsel from their prophet. The following accounts provide examples of the blessings that came to those who answered President Benson’s call to “flood the earth and [their] lives with the Book of Mormon.”2

“‘He can’t be serious!’ thought Margo Merrill … when she first heard President Ezra Taft Benson’s request that parents read the Book of Mormon with their children. ‘My children are only six, five, and two years old. I’ll just be wasting my time and patience.’

“Brother and Sister Merrill decided to try reading the Book of Mormon with their children anyway. When they came to the story of Nephi and his broken bow, six-year-old Melissa became ill with pneumonia.

“‘Melissa pleaded with me to let her go back to school even though she was sick,’ [said] Margo. ‘She said that if she didn’t go back, her friend, Pamela—who is a member of another church—wouldn’t know what happened to Nephi. Then Melissa sobbed and slumped into my arms. I dried her tears and suggested she call Pamela on the telephone and tell her what had happened to Nephi.

“‘As I heard Melissa relate in detail the incident regarding Nephi’s broken bow, I remembered my earlier thoughts about wasting my time and patience reading the Book of Mormon to my young children. Oh, how I had underestimated their ability to learn the lessons of the Book of Mormon!’”3

Howard J. McOmber II pondered President Benson’s exhortation to flood the earth with the Book of Mormon. He wondered, “How could I as an individual be a significant part of such a flood?

“Then one night,” Brother McOmber said, “as I was pondering this problem I realized that I could give every individual on my street the opportunity to receive a copy of the Book of Mormon.

“But there was a problem—they knew me. They knew about my dog that barked too often—and too early in the morning. They knew that my yard was not the garden spot of the neighborhood. They knew my shortcomings as a neighbor; they would probably turn me away.

“I determined to have faith and go ahead anyway. I would offer them the book—even if they might throw it away, or let it collect dust on their shelves for years. Yet I found myself thinking negatively; I had almost convinced myself that nothing could come of my efforts.

“Then I remembered that I knew my neighbors at least as well as they knew me. A few had told questionable jokes at the last community development meeting, and a few had drunk too much at the last neighborhood barbecue. Some seemed to have little purpose in their lives. I wondered what I would have been like if I weren’t a member of the Church, or if I’d never heard of the Book of Mormon. Clearly, this book could help those who would give it a chance.

“So I contacted everyone on my street and offered them a copy of the Book of Mormon—and they all thanked me! It went so well that I went to the next street, completed my subdivision, and then went on to the next subdivision. When I was through, I had visited 104 houses and placed forty books.

“It started to become easier to offer copies of the Book of Mormon to acquaintances.

“In time I had given all seventy-five employees at my work copies of the Book of Mormon. Twenty-three of them took the missionary discussions. Seven were later baptized, and four children belonging to my coworkers also joined the Church. One man took two discussions but then lost interest in investigating the Church. Seven months later, after he had moved on to a job at another company, he called to tell me that he had been reading the Book of Mormon and had realized that he was feeling the calm, peaceful touch of the Spirit, just as I had described it. He, too, soon finished the discussions and was baptized.

“I love the Book of Mormon. I think of it as the Lord’s calling card, and I have been amazed at how easy it is to start a spiritual flood with it on a personal scale. When we do the work of the Lord, we have his help.”4

Another member told of the transformation that occurred in his testimony as he followed President Benson’s counsel to read the Book of Mormon: “When President Benson challenged us to read the Book of Mormon, I was 15 years old. I was already a faithful scripture reader, focusing mostly on the New Testament. But at President Benson’s urging, I started to study the Book of Mormon every day. That was a major turning point for me. The New Testament had taught me about the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ, and I will always be grateful for that. But I needed the depth that came from a study of the Book of Mormon. While the Bible helped me know about what Jesus did for people in the Holy Land, the Book of Mormon gave me a deeper understanding of what He has done for me. Through a study of the Book of Mormon, I gained a testimony of the infinite Atonement of my Savior. And later, when I faced crises that tested my faith, I turned to the Book of Mormon for comfort and strength. Now I never let a day go by without reading the Book of Mormon.”5

Millions have come unto Christ because of the truths in the book that Moroni delivered to Joseph Smith.

**The Book of Mormon was written for us**.

The Book of Mormon … was written for our day. The Nephites never had the book; neither did the Lamanites of ancient times. It was meant for us. Mormon wrote near the end of the Nephite civilization. Under the inspiration of God, who sees all things from the beginning, he abridged centuries of records, choosing the stories, speeches, and events that would be most helpful to us.

Each of the major writers of the Book of Mormon testified that he wrote for future generations. … If they saw our day and chose those things which would be of greatest worth to us, is not that how we should study the Book of Mormon? We should constantly ask ourselves, “Why did the Lord inspire Mormon (or Moroni or Alma) to include that in his record? What lesson can I learn from that to help me live in this day and age?”

And there is example after example of how that question will be answered. For example, in the Book of Mormon we find a pattern for preparing for the Second Coming. A major portion of the book centers on the few decades just prior to Christ’s coming to America. By careful study of that time period, we can determine why some were destroyed in the terrible judgments that preceded His coming and what brought others to stand at the temple in the land of Bountiful and thrust their hands into the wounds of His hands and feet.

From the Book of Mormon we learn how disciples of Christ live in times of war. From the Book of Mormon we see the evils of secret combinations portrayed in graphic and chilling reality. In the Book of Mormon we find lessons for dealing with persecution and apostasy. We learn much about how to do missionary work. And more than anywhere else, we see in the Book of Mormon the dangers of materialism and setting our hearts on the things of the world. Can anyone doubt that this book was meant for us and that in it we find great power, great comfort, and great protection?6

**As we study the Book of Mormon daily, the power of the book will flow into our lives.**

It is not just that the Book of Mormon teaches us truth, though it indeed does that. It is not just that the Book of Mormon bears testimony of Christ, though it indeed does that, too. But there is something more. There is a power in the book which will begin to flow into your lives the moment you begin a serious study of the book. You will find greater power to resist temptation. You will find the power to avoid deception. You will find the power to stay on the strait and narrow path. The scriptures are called “the words of life” (D&C 84:85), and nowhere is that more true than it is of the Book of Mormon. When you begin to hunger and thirst after those words, you will find life in greater and greater abundance.7

Men may deceive each other, but God does not deceive men. Therefore, the Book of Mormon sets forth the best test for determining its truthfulness—namely, read it and then ask God if it is true [see Moroni 10:4]. …

This, then, is the supreme assurance for the honest in heart—to know by personal revelation from God that the Book of Mormon is true. Millions have put it to that test and know, and increasing millions will yet know.

Now the spirit, as well as the body, is in need of constant nourishment. Yesterday’s meal is not enough to sustain today’s needs. So also an infrequent reading of “the most correct of any book on earth,” as Joseph Smith called it, is not enough. (History of the Church, 4:461.)

Not all truths are of equal value, nor are all scriptures of the same worth. What better way to nourish the spirit than to frequently feast from the book which the Prophet Joseph Smith said would get a man “nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book”? (History of the Church, 4:461.)8

**Do eternal consequences rest upon our response to this book? Yes, either to our blessing or our condemnation**.

Every Latter-day Saint should make the study of this book a lifetime pursuit. Otherwise, he is placing his soul in jeopardy and neglecting that which could give spiritual and intellectual unity to his whole life. There is a difference between a convert who is built on the rock of Christ through the Book of Mormon and stays hold on the iron rod, and one who [is] not.9

We have an increasing number who have been convinced, through the Book of Mormon, that Jesus is the Christ. Now we need an increasing number who will use the Book of Mormon to become committed to Christ. We need to be convinced and committed.

… My beloved brethren and sisters, let us read the Book of Mormon and be convinced that Jesus is the Christ. Let us continually reread the Book of Mormon so that we might more fully come to Christ, be committed to Him, centered in Him, and consumed in Him.

We are meeting the adversary every day. The challenges of this era will rival any of the past, and these challenges will increase both spiritually and temporally. We must be close to Christ, we must daily take His name upon us, always remember Him, and keep His commandments.10

**We must flood the earth and our lives with the Book of Mormon.**

We each need to get our own testimony of the Book of Mormon through the Holy Ghost. Then our testimony, coupled with the Book of Mormon, should be shared with others so that they, too, can know through the Holy Ghost of its truthfulness.11

Can you imagine what would happen with an increasing number of copies of the Book of Mormon in the hands of an increasing number of missionaries who know how to use it and who have been born of God? When this happens, we will get the bounteous harvest of souls that the Lord promised.12

“I have a vision of flooding the earth with the Book of Mormon.”

I have a conviction: The more we teach and preach from the Book of Mormon, the more we shall please the Lord and the greater will be our power of speaking. By so doing, we shall greatly increase our converts, both within the Church and among those we proselyte. … Our commission then is to teach the principles of the gospel which are in the Bible and the Book of Mormon. “These shall be their teachings, as they shall be directed by the Spirit” (D&C 42:13).13

The Book of Mormon is the instrument that God designed to “sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out [His] elect.” (Moses 7:62.) This sacred volume of scripture needs to become more central in our preaching, our teaching, and our missionary work.

… In this age of the electronic media and the mass distribution of the printed word, God will hold us accountable if we do not now move the Book of Mormon in a monumental way.

We have the Book of Mormon, we have the members, we have the missionaries, we have the resources, and the world has the need. The time is now!

My beloved brothers and sisters, we hardly fathom the power of the Book of Mormon, nor the divine role it must play, nor the extent to which it must be moved. …

I challenge all of us to prayerfully consider steps that we can personally take to bring this new witness for Christ more fully into our own lives and into a world that so desperately needs it.

I have a vision of homes alerted, of classes alive, and of pulpits aflame with the spirit of Book of Mormon messages.

I have a vision of home teachers and visiting teachers, ward and branch officers, and stake and mission leaders counseling our people out of the most correct of any book on earth—the Book of Mormon.

I have a vision of artists putting into film, drama, literature, music, and paintings great themes and great characters from the Book of Mormon.

I have a vision of thousands of missionaries going into the mission field with hundreds of passages memorized from the Book of Mormon so that they might feed the needs of a spiritually famished world.

I have a vision of the whole Church getting nearer to God by abiding by the precepts of the Book of Mormon.

Indeed, I have a vision of flooding the earth with the Book of Mormon.14

May I commend you faithful Saints who are striving to flood the earth and your lives with the Book of Mormon. Not only must we move forward in a monumental manner more copies of the Book of Mormon, but we must move boldly forward into our own lives and throughout the earth more of its marvelous messages.15

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings, thoughts or Insights From Your Readings or From the Lesson:**

**Lesson #7**

**The Book of Mormon and the Bible**

**Ezekiel 37:15-19**

15 ¶The word of the Lord came again unto me, saying,

16 Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions:

17 And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand.

18 ¶And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not shew us what thou meanest by these?

19 Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand.

**1 Nephi 13:20-41**

20 And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld that they did prosper in the land; and I beheld a book, and it was carried forth among them.

21 And the angel said unto me: Knowest thou the meaning of the book?

22 And I said unto him: I know not.

23 And he said: Behold it proceedeth out of the mouth of a Jew. And I, Nephi, beheld it; and he said unto me: The book that thou beholdest is a record of the Jews, which contains the covenants of the Lord, which he hath made unto the house of Israel; and it also containeth many of the prophecies of the holy prophets; and it is a record like unto the engravings which are upon the plates of brass, save there are not so many; nevertheless, they contain the covenants of the Lord, which he hath made unto the house of Israel; wherefore, they are of great worth unto the Gentiles.

24 And the angel of the Lord said unto me: Thou hast beheld that the book proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew; and when it proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew it contained the fulness of the gospel of the Lord, of whom the twelve apostles bear record; and they bear record according to the truth which is in the Lamb of God.

25 Wherefore, these things go forth from the Jews in purity unto the Gentiles, according to the truth which is in God.

26 And after they go forth by the hand of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, from the Jews unto the Gentiles, thou seest the formation of that great and abominable church, which is most abominable above all other churches; for behold, they have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants of the Lord have they taken away.

27 And all this have they done that they might pervert the right ways of the Lord, that they might blind the eyes and harden the hearts of the children of men.

28 Wherefore, thou seest that after the book hath gone forth through the hands of the great and abominable church, that there are many plain and precious things taken away from the book, which is the book of the Lamb of God.

29 And after these plain and precious things were taken away it goeth forth unto all the nations of the Gentiles; and after it goeth forth unto all the nations of the Gentiles, yea, even across the many waters which thou hast seen with the Gentiles which have gone forth out of captivity, thou seest—because of the many plain and precious things which have been taken out of the book, which were plain unto the understanding of the children of men, according to the plainness which is in the Lamb of God—because of these things which are taken away out of the gospel of the Lamb, an exceedingly great many do stumble, yea, insomuch that Satan hath great power over them.

30 Nevertheless, thou beholdest that the Gentiles who have gone forth out of captivity, and have been lifted up by the power of God above all other nations, upon the face of the land which is choice above all other lands, which is the land that the Lord God hath covenanted with thy father that his seed should have for the land of their inheritance; wherefore, thou seest that the Lord God will not suffer that the Gentiles will utterly destroy the mixture of thy seed, which are among thy brethren.

31 Neither will he suffer that the Gentiles shall destroy the seed of thy brethren.

32 Neither will the Lord God suffer that the Gentiles shall forever remain in that awful state of blindness, which thou beholdest they are in, because of the plain and most precious parts of the gospel of the Lamb which have been kept back by that abominable church, whose formation thou hast seen.

33 Wherefore saith the Lamb of God: I will be merciful unto the Gentiles, unto the visiting of the remnant of the house of Israel in great judgment.

34 And it came to pass that the angel of the Lord spake unto me, saying: Behold, saith the Lamb of God, after I have visited the remnant of the house of Israel—and this remnant of whom I speak is the seed of thy father—wherefore, after I have visited them in judgment, and smitten them by the hand of the Gentiles, and after the Gentiles do stumble exceedingly, because of the most plain and precious parts of the gospel of the Lamb which have been kept back by that abominable church, which is the mother of harlots, saith the Lamb—I will be merciful unto the Gentiles in that day, insomuch that I will bring forth unto them, in mine own power, much of my gospel, which shall be plain and precious, saith the Lamb.

35 For, behold, saith the Lamb: I will manifest myself unto thy seed, that they shall write many things which I shall minister unto them, which shall be plain and precious; and after thy seed shall be destroyed, and dwindle in unbelief, and also the seed of thy brethren, behold, these things shall be hid up, to come forth unto the Gentiles, by the gift and power of the Lamb.

36 And in them shall be written my gospel, saith the Lamb, and my rock and my salvation.

37 And blessed are they who shall seek to bring forth my Zion at that day, for they shall have the gift and the power of the Holy Ghost; and if they endure unto the end they shall be lifted up at the last day, and shall be saved in the everlasting kingdom of the Lamb; and whoso shall publish peace, yea, tidings of great joy, how beautiful upon the mountains shall they be.

38 And it came to pass that I beheld the remnant of the seed of my brethren, and also the book of the Lamb of God, which had proceeded forth from the mouth of the Jew, that it came forth from the Gentiles unto the remnant of the seed of my brethren.

39 And after it had come forth unto them I beheld other books, which came forth by the power of the Lamb, from the Gentiles unto them, unto the convincing of the Gentiles and the remnant of the seed of my brethren, and also the Jews who were scattered upon all the face of the earth, that the records of the prophets and of the twelve apostles of the Lamb are true.

40 And the angel spake unto me, saying: These last records, which thou hast seen among the Gentiles, shall establish the truth of the first, which are of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, and shall make known the plain and precious things which have been taken away from them; and shall make known to all kindreds, tongues, and people, that the Lamb of God is the Son of the Eternal Father, and the Savior of the world; and that all men must come unto him, or they cannot be saved.

41 And they must come according to the words which shall be established by the mouth of the Lamb; and the words of the Lamb shall be made known in the records of thy seed, as well as in the records of the twelve apostles of the Lamb; wherefore they both shall be established in one; for there is one God and one Shepherd over all the earth.

**2 Nephi 3:11-14**

11 But a seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy loins; and unto him will I give power to bring forth my word unto the seed of thy loins—and not to the bringing forth my word only, saith the Lord, but to the convincing them of my word, which shall have already gone forth among them.

12 Wherefore, the fruit of thy loins shall write; and the fruit of the loins of Judah shall write; and that which shall be written by the fruit of thy loins, and also that which shall be written by the fruit of the loins of Judah, shall grow together, unto the confounding of false doctrines and laying down of contentions, and establishing peace among the fruit of thy loins, and bringing them to the knowledge of their fathers in the latter days, and also to the knowledge of my covenants, saith the Lord.

13 And out of weakness he shall be made strong, in that day when my work shall commence among all my people, unto the restoring thee, O house of Israel, saith the Lord.

14 And thus prophesied Joseph, saying: Behold, that seer will the Lord bless; and they that seek to destroy him shall be confounded; for this promise, which I have obtained of the Lord, of the fruit of my loins, shall be fulfilled. Behold, I am sure of the fulfilling of this promise;

**2 Nephi 29:1-14**

1 But behold, there shall be many—at that day when I shall proceed to do a marvelous work among them, that I may remember my covenants which I have made unto the children of men, that I may set my hand again the second time to recover my people, which are of the house of Israel;

2 And also, that I may remember the promises which I have made unto thee, Nephi, and also unto thy father, that I would remember your seed; and that the words of your seed should proceed forth out of my mouth unto your seed; and my words shall hiss forth unto the ends of the earth, for a standard unto my people, which are of the house of Israel;

3 And because my words shall hiss forth—many of the Gentiles shall say: A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible.

4 But thus saith the Lord God: O fools, they shall have a Bible; and it shall proceed forth from the Jews, mine ancient covenant people. And what thank they the Jews for the Bible which they receive from them? Yea, what do the Gentiles mean? Do they remember the travails, and the labors, and the pains of the Jews, and their diligence unto me, in bringing forth salvation unto the Gentiles?

5 O ye Gentiles, have ye remembered the Jews, mine ancient covenant people? Nay; but ye have cursed them, and have hated them, and have not sought to recover them. But behold, I will return all these things upon your own heads; for I the Lord have not forgotten my people.

6 Thou fool, that shall say: A Bible, we have got a Bible, and we need no more Bible. Have ye obtained a Bible save it were by the Jews?

7 Know ye not that there are more nations than one? Know ye not that I, the Lord your God, have created all men, and that I remember those who are upon the isles of the sea; and that I rule in the heavens above and in the earth beneath; and I bring forth my word unto the children of men, yea, even upon all the nations of the earth?

8 Wherefore murmur ye, because that ye shall receive more of my word? Know ye not that the testimony of two nations is a witness unto you that I am God, that I remember one nation like unto another? Wherefore, I speak the same words unto one nation like unto another. And when the two nations shall run together the testimony of the two nations shall run together also.

9 And I do this that I may prove unto many that I am the same yesterday, today, and forever; and that I speak forth my words according to mine own pleasure. And because that I have spoken one word ye need not suppose that I cannot speak another; for my work is not yet finished; neither shall it be until the end of man, neither from that time henceforth and forever.

10 Wherefore, because that ye have a Bible ye need not suppose that it contains all my words; neither need ye suppose that I have not caused more to be written.

11 For I command all men, both in the east and in the west, and in the north, and in the south, and in the islands of the sea, that they shall write the words which I speak unto them; for out of the books which shall be written I will judge the world, every man according to their works, according to that which is written.

12 For behold, I shall speak unto the Jews and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto the Nephites and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto the other tribes of the house of Israel, which I have led away, and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto all nations of the earth and they shall write it.

13 And it shall come to pass that the Jews shall have the words of the Nephites, and the Nephites shall have the words of the Jews; and the Nephites and the Jews shall have the words of the lost tribes of Israel; and the lost tribes of Israel shall have the words of the Nephites and the Jews.

14 And it shall come to pass that my people, which are of the house of Israel, shall be gathered home unto the lands of their possessions; and my word also shall be gathered in one. And I will show unto them that fight against my word and against my people, who are of the house of Israel, that I am God, and that I covenanted with Abraham that I would remember his seed forever.

**Scriptural Witnesses**

**Russell M. Nelson, *Ensign*, Nov. 2007**

We express love and admiration for President Henry B. Eyring, Elder Quentin L. Cook, and Elder Walter F. González and pray for the Lord’s blessings to attend them in their new callings.

We extend heartfelt feelings of gratitude to each of you, brothers and sisters. Throughout the world, your examples of service and compassion are receiving a great deal of attention. At the same time, many people are wondering about this Church’s history and doctrines. Among those questioners are some who choose to cast aspersions at the Book of Mormon. 1

Disregard for the Book of Mormon or for any other sacred scripture concerns me deeply. In addressing that concern, I have titled my remarks “Scriptural Witnesses.”

**Definitions**

I will define the term scriptural as pertaining to the Bible and the scriptures of the Restoration. 2 Members of the Church “believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.” 3 Scriptures of the Restoration also include the Doctrine and Covenants as well as the Pearl of Great Price.

A dictionary defines the noun witness as an “attestation of a fact or event: [a] testimony.” 4 The term witness bears special significance when applied to the word of God. In the Bible we read this important declaration: “In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.” 5 This assures God’s children that divine doctrines are confirmed by more than one scriptural witness.

**Scriptures Testify of Jesus Christ**

The Bible and the Book of Mormon are both witnesses of Jesus Christ. They teach that He is the Son of God, that He lived an exemplary life, that He atoned for all mankind, that He died upon the cross and rose again as the resurrected Lord. They teach that He is the Savior of the world.

Scriptural witnesses authenticate each other. This concept was explained long ago when a prophet wrote that the Book of Mormon was “written for the intent that ye may believe [the Bible]; and if ye believe [the Bible] ye will believe [the Book of Mormon] also.” 6 Each book refers to the other. Each book stands as evidence that God lives and speaks to His children by revelation to His prophets. 7

Love for the Book of Mormon expands one’s love for the Bible and vice versa. Scriptures of the Restoration do not compete with the Bible; they complement the Bible. We are indebted to martyrs who gave their lives so that we could have the Bible. It establishes the everlasting nature of the gospel and of the plan of happiness. The Book of Mormon restores and underscores biblical doctrines such as tithing, 8 the temple, 9 the Sabbath day, 10 and the priesthood. 11

An angel proclaimed that the Book of Mormon 12 shall establish the truth of the Bible. 13 He also revealed that writings in the Bible available in our day are not as complete as they were when originally written by prophets and apostles. 14 He declared that the Book of Mormon shall restore plain and precious things taken away from the Bible. 15

A prophecy in the Book of Mormon warned that some people would object to the notion of additional scriptures. To those who think they “need no more Bible,” 16 consider this God-given counsel:

“Know ye not that there are more nations than one? Know ye not that I, the Lord your God, … created all men, … and that I rule in the heavens above and in the earth beneath; and I bring forth my word unto the children of men, yea, even upon all the nations of the earth?

“… Know ye not that the testimony of two nations is a witness unto you that I am God, that I remember one nation like unto another? Wherefore, I speak the same words unto one nation like unto another. And … the testimony of the two nations shall run together also.” 17

The scriptural story of Jesus Christ is indeed a two-hemisphere story. 18 While Mary and Joseph in the East were making preparations for the holy child’s birth in Bethlehem, 19 Nephi in the West was being taught by the premortal Messiah. To Nephi the Lord said, “Be of good cheer; … 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.” 20

To doubters of that second witness—the Book of Mormon—the Lord issued a warning: “Because you have treated lightly the things you have received … [you] shall remain under … condemnation until [you] repent and remember … the Book of Mormon and the former commandments which I have given … , [the Bible, and] … do according to that which I have written.” 21

The Lord provided other scriptures of the Restoration 22 and declared that those words will also be fulfilled. 23 With these scriptural witnesses, false doctrines will be confounded. 24 With these scriptural witnesses, doctrines of the Bible are not only reaffirmed but clarified.

**Restoration Scriptures Clarify the Bible**

How do scriptures of the Restoration clarify the Bible? Many examples exist. I will cite but a few, beginning with the Old Testament.

Isaiah wrote, “Thou shalt … speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be, as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust.” 25 Could any words be more descriptive of the Book of Mormon, coming as it did “out of the ground” to “whisper out of the dust” to people of our day? 26

But Isaiah was not the only Old Testament prophet who foretold the Book of Mormon. Ezekiel wrote:

“Take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel … : then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel … :

“And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand.” 27

Today, Saints living in many nations of the earth gratefully hold the Bible (the stick of Judah) and the Book of Mormon (the stick of Ephraim) bound as one in their hands.

What about the New Testament? The Book of Mormon also stands as a scriptural witness to its teachings. Examples include the miraculous birth of the babe in Bethlehem, 28 His Sermon on the Mount, 29 and the intense suffering of the Savior. 30 The doctrine of the Resurrection is mentioned more frequently in the Book of Mormon than in the Bible. 31

The need for the Holy Ghost was mentioned by Paul. He asked, “Have ye received the Holy Ghost … ? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.” 32 That doctrine is clarified by another scriptural witness, conveyed through the Lord’s prophet of the Restoration. He taught us to “believe in the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands.” 33 That precious and powerful gift is again available to children of God.

Paul referred to the three degrees of postmortal glory when he taught that “there is one glory of the sun, … another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars.” 34 That glimpse into postmortal glory has been clarified by another scriptural witness. The Lord revealed that “the glory of the celestial is one, even as the glory of the sun is one.

“And the glory of the terrestrial is one, even as the glory of the moon is one.

“And the glory of the telestial is one, even as the glory of the stars is one.” 35

The highest of these kingdoms, the celestial, is reserved for those who obey the law of that kingdom:

“They who are not sanctified through the law … of Christ, must inherit another kingdom, even that of a terrestrial kingdom, or that of a telestial kingdom.

“For he who is not able to abide the law of a celestial kingdom cannot abide a celestial glory.” 36

These three degrees of glory relate to postmortal life. They relate to the immortality of the human soul. That gift of immortality became a reality because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. 37 This important word—atonement—in any of its forms, is mentioned only once in the King James Version of the New Testament! 38 In the Book of Mormon, it appears 39 times! 39

John, writing in the New Testament’s book of Revelation, foresaw “another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.” 40 One specific angel held keys of responsibility for the Book of Mormon. 41 That was the angel Moroni! These examples are but a few of many biblical doctrines that are clarified by scriptures of the Restoration. 42

**The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ**

Willingly we share scriptures of the Restoration with people across the world. The Book of Mormon records the personal ministry of the resurrected Lord to people of ancient America. Ponder these everlasting truths that He proclaimed:

“Behold, I am Jesus Christ the Son of God. I created the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are. I was with the Father from the beginning. …

“… The scriptures concerning my coming are fulfilled. …

“I am the light and the life of the world.”

The Savior continued:

“Whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost. …

“… I have come unto the world to bring redemption unto the world, to save the world from sin.

“Therefore, whoso repenteth and cometh unto me as a little child, him will I receive, for of such is the kingdom of God. … I have laid down my life, and have taken it up again; therefore repent, and come unto me … and be saved.” 43

Those declarations of the Lord summarize who He really is and who He really wants us to be. He wants us to come unto Him and, in due course, be embraced gloriously in His loving arms.

I express my profound gratitude for scriptural witnesses. I have seen the mighty change that comes to people who apply the Lord’s teachings in their lives. Such transformation leads to the blessing of eternal life. 44

I know that God lives. Jesus is the Christ. His gospel has been restored in these latter days. President Gordon B. Hinckley is His prophet at this time. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings, Thoughts or Insights From Your Readings or From the Lesson:**

**Lesson #8**

**Salvation Comes through Jesus Christ**

**2 Nephi 2:6-9**

6 Wherefore, redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah; for he is full of grace and truth.

7 Behold, he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered.

8 Wherefore, how great the importance to make these things known unto the inhabitants of the earth, that they may know that there is no flesh that can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah, who layeth down his life according to the flesh, and taketh it again by the power of the Spirit, that he may bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, being the first that should rise.

9 Wherefore, he is the firstfruits unto God, inasmuch as he shall make intercession for all the children of men; and they that believe in him shall be saved.

**2 Nephi 25:23**

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 31:2-21**

2 Wherefore, the things which I have written sufficeth me, save it be a few words which I must speak concerning the doctrine of Christ; wherefore, I shall speak unto you plainly, according to the plainness of my prophesying.

3 For my soul delighteth in plainness; for after this manner doth the Lord God work among the children of men. For the Lord God giveth light unto the understanding; for he speaketh unto men according to their language, unto their understanding.

4 Wherefore, I would that ye should remember that I have spoken unto you concerning that prophet which the Lord showed unto me, that should baptize the Lamb of God, which should take away the sins of the world.

5 And now, if the Lamb of God, he being holy, should have need to be baptized by water, to fulfil all righteousness, O then, how much more need have we, being unholy, to be baptized, yea, even by water!

6 And now, I would ask of you, my beloved brethren, wherein the Lamb of God did fulfil all righteousness in being baptized by water?

7 Know ye not that he was holy? But notwithstanding he being holy, he showeth unto the children of men that, according to the flesh he humbleth himself before the Father, and witnesseth unto the Father that he would be obedient unto him in keeping his commandments.

8 Wherefore, after he was baptized with water the Holy Ghost descended upon him in the form of a dove.

9 And again, it showeth unto the children of men the straitness of the path, and the narrowness of the gate, by which they should enter, he having set the example before them.

10 And he said unto the children of men: Follow thou me. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, can we follow Jesus save we shall be willing to keep the commandments of the Father?

11 And the Father said: Repent ye, repent ye, and be baptized in the name of my Beloved Son.

12 And also, the voice of the Son came unto me, saying: He that is baptized in my name, to him will the Father give the Holy Ghost, like unto me; wherefore, follow me, and do the things which ye have seen me do.

13 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, I know that if ye shall follow the Son, with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God, but with real intent, repenting of your sins, witnessing unto the Father that ye are willing to take upon you the name of Christ, by baptism—yea, by following your Lord and your Savior down into the water, according to his word, behold, then shall ye receive the Holy Ghost; yea, then cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost; and then can ye speak with the tongue of angels, and shout praises unto the Holy One of Israel.

14 But, behold, my beloved brethren, thus came the voice of the Son unto me, saying: After ye have repented of your sins, and witnessed unto the Father that ye are willing to keep my commandments, by the baptism of water, and have received the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost, and can speak with a new tongue, yea, even with the tongue of angels, and after this should deny me, it would have been better for you that ye had not known me.

15 And I heard a voice from the Father, saying: Yea, the words of my Beloved are true and faithful. He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.

16 And now, my beloved brethren, I know by this that unless a man shall endure to the end, in following the example of the Son of the living God, he cannot be saved.

17 Wherefore, do the things which I have told you I have seen that your Lord and your Redeemer should do; for, for this cause have they been shown unto me, that ye might know the gate by which ye should enter. For the gate by which ye should enter is repentance and baptism by water; and then cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost.

18 And then are ye in this strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life; yea, ye have entered in by the gate; ye have done according to the commandments of the Father and the Son; and ye have received the Holy Ghost, which witnesses of the Father and the Son, unto the fulfilling of the promise which he hath made, that if ye entered in by the way ye should receive.

19 And now, my beloved brethren, after ye have gotten into this strait and narrow path, I would ask if all is done? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; for ye have not come thus far save it were by the word of Christ with unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save.

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.

21 And now, behold, my beloved brethren, this is the way; and there is none other way nor name given under heaven whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God. And now, behold, this is the doctrine of Christ, and the only and true doctrine of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, which is one God, without end. Amen.

**Mosiah 4:6-8**

6 I say unto you, if ye have come to a knowledge of the goodness of God, and his matchless power, and his wisdom, and his patience, and his long-suffering towards the children of men; and also, the atonement which has been prepared from the foundation of the world, that thereby salvation might come to him that should put his trust in the Lord, and should be diligent in keeping his commandments, and continue in the faith even unto the end of his life, I mean the life of the mortal body—

7 I say, that this is the man who receiveth salvation, through the atonement which was prepared from the foundation of the world for all mankind, which ever were since the fall of Adam, or who are, or who ever shall be, even unto the end of the world.

8 And this is the means whereby salvation cometh. And there is none other salvation save this which hath been spoken of; neither are there any conditions whereby man can be saved except the conditions which I have told you.

**3 Nephi 11:31-40**

31 Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, I will declare unto you my doctrine.

32 And this is my doctrine, and it is the doctrine which the Father hath given unto me; and I bear record of the Father, and the Father beareth record of me, and the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and me; and I bear record that the Father commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent and believe in me.

33 And whoso believeth in me, and is baptized, the same shall be saved; and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God.

34 And whoso believeth not in me, and is not baptized, shall be damned.

35 Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and I bear record of it from the Father; and whoso believeth in me believeth in the Father also; and unto him will the Father bear record of me, for he will visit him with fire and with the Holy Ghost.

36 And thus will the Father bear record of me, and the Holy Ghost will bear record unto him of the Father and me; for the Father, and I, and the Holy Ghost are one.

37 And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and become as a little child, and be baptized in my name, or ye can in nowise receive these things.

38 And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and be baptized in my name, and become as a little child, or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God.

39 Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and whoso buildeth upon this buildeth upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them.

40 And whoso shall declare more or less than this, and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil, and is not built upon my rock; but he buildeth upon a sandy foundation, and the gates of hell stand open to receive such when the floods come and the winds beat upon them.

**3 Nephi 27:13-22**

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

14 And my Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross; and after that I had been lifted up upon the cross, that I might draw all men unto me, that as I have been lifted up by men even so should men be lifted up by the Father, to stand before me, to be judged of their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil—

15 And for this cause have I been lifted up; therefore, according to the power of the Father I will draw all men unto me, that they may be judged according to their works.

16 And it shall come to pass, that whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled; and if he endureth to the end, behold, him will I hold guiltless before my Father at that day when I shall stand to judge the world.

17 And he that endureth not unto the end, the same is he that is also hewn down and cast into the fire, from whence they can no more return, because of the justice of the Father.

18 And this is the word which he hath given unto the children of men. And for this cause he fulfilleth the words which he hath given, and he lieth not, but fulfilleth all his words.

19 And no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom; therefore nothing entereth into his rest save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood, because of their faith, and the repentance of all their sins, and their faithfulness unto the end.

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

21 Verily, verily, I say unto you, this is my gospel; and ye know the things that ye must do in my church; for the works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do; for that which ye have seen me do even that shall ye do;

22 Therefore, if ye do these things blessed are ye, for ye shall be lifted up at the last day.

**The Gift of Grace**

**Dieter F. Uchtdorf, *Ensign*, May 2015**

On Easter Sunday we celebrate the most long-awaited and glorious event in the history of the world.

It is the day that changed everything.

On that day, my life changed.

Your life changed.

The destiny of all God’s children changed.

On that blessed day, the Savior of mankind, who had taken upon Himself the chains of sin and death that held us captive, burst those chains and set us free.

Because of the sacrifice of our beloved Redeemer, death has no sting, the grave has no victory,1 Satan has no lasting power, and we are “begotten … again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”2

Truly, the Apostle Paul was correct when he said we can “comfort one another with these words.”3

**God’s Grace**

We often speak of the Savior’s Atonement—and rightly so!

In Jacob’s words, “Why not speak of the atonement of Christ, and attain to a perfect knowledge of him?”4 But as “we talk of Christ, … rejoice in Christ, … preach of Christ, [and] prophesy of Christ”5 at every opportunity, we must never lose our sense of awe and profound gratitude for the eternal sacrifice of the Son of God.

The Savior’s Atonement cannot become commonplace in our teaching, in our conversation, or in our hearts. It is sacred and holy, for it was through this “great and last sacrifice” that Jesus the Christ brought “salvation to all those who shall believe on his name.”6

I marvel to think that the Son of God would condescend to save us, as imperfect, impure, mistake-prone, and ungrateful as we often are. I have tried to understand the Savior’s Atonement with my finite mind, and the only explanation I can come up with is this: God loves us deeply, perfectly, and everlastingly. I cannot even begin to estimate “the breadth, and length, and depth, and height … [of] the love of Christ.”7

A powerful expression of that love is what the scriptures often call the grace of God—the divine assistance and endowment of strength by which we grow from the flawed and limited beings we are now into exalted beings of “truth and light, until [we are] glorified in truth and [know] all things.”8

It is a most wondrous thing, this grace of God. Yet it is often misunderstood.9 Even so, we should know about God’s grace if we intend to inherit what has been prepared for us in His eternal kingdom.

To that end I would like to speak of grace. In particular, first, how grace unlocks the gates of heaven and, second, how it opens the windows of heaven.

**First: Grace Unlocks the Gates of Heaven**

Because we have all “sinned, and come short of the glory of God”10 and because “there cannot any unclean thing enter into the kingdom of God,”11 every one of us is unworthy to return to God’s presence.

Even if we were to serve God with our whole souls, it is not enough, for we would still be “unprofitable servants.”12 We cannot earn our way into heaven; the demands of justice stand as a barrier, which we are powerless to overcome on our own.

But all is not lost.

The grace of God is our great and everlasting hope.

Through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the plan of mercy appeases the demands of justice13 “and [brings] about means unto men that they may have faith unto repentance.”14

Our sins, though they may be as scarlet, can become white as snow.15 Because our beloved Savior “gave himself a ransom for all,”16 an entrance into His everlasting kingdom is provided unto us.17

The gate is unlocked!

But the grace of God does not merely restore us to our previous innocent state. If salvation means only erasing our mistakes and sins, then salvation—as wonderful as it is—does not fulfill the Father’s aspirations for us. His aim is much higher: He wants His sons and daughters to become like Him.

With the gift of God’s grace, the path of discipleship does not lead backward; it leads upward.

It leads to heights we can scarcely comprehend! It leads to exaltation in the celestial kingdom of our Heavenly Father, where we, surrounded by our loved ones, receive “of his fulness, and of his glory.”18 All things are ours, and we are Christ’s.19 Indeed, all that the Father hath shall be given unto us.20

To inherit this glory, we need more than an unlocked gate; we must enter through this gate with a heart’s desire to be changed—a change so dramatic that the scriptures describe it as being “born again; yea, born of God, changed from [our worldly] and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters.”21

**Second: Grace Opens the Windows of Heaven**

Another element of God’s grace is the opening of the windows of heaven, through which God pours out blessings of power and strength, enabling us to achieve things that otherwise would be far beyond our reach. It is by God’s amazing grace that His children can overcome the undercurrents and quicksands of the deceiver, rise above sin, and “be perfect[ed] in Christ.”22

Though we all have weaknesses, we can overcome them. Indeed it is by the grace of God that, if we humble ourselves and have faith, weak things can become strong.23

Throughout our lives, God’s grace bestows temporal blessings and spiritual gifts that magnify our abilities and enrich our lives. His grace refines us. His grace helps us become our best selves.

**Who Can Qualify?**

In the Bible we read of Christ’s visit to the home of Simon the Pharisee.

Outwardly, Simon seemed to be a good and upright man. He regularly checked off his to-do list of religious obligations: he kept the law, paid his tithing, observed the Sabbath, prayed daily, and went to the synagogue.

But while Jesus was with Simon, a woman approached, washed the Savior’s feet with her tears, and anointed His feet with fine oil.

Simon was not pleased with this display of worship, for he knew that this woman was a sinner. Simon thought that if Jesus didn’t know this, He must not be a prophet or He would not have let the woman touch him.

Perceiving his thoughts, Jesus turned to Simon and asked a question. “There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: … one owed five hundred pence, … the other fifty.

“And when they [both] had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?”

Simon answered that it was the one who was forgiven the most.

Then Jesus taught a profound lesson: “Seest thou this woman? … Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.”24

Which of these two people are we most like?

Are we like Simon? Are we confident and comfortable in our good deeds, trusting in our own righteousness? Are we perhaps a little impatient with those who are not living up to our standards? Are we on autopilot, going through the motions, attending our meetings, yawning through Gospel Doctrine class, and perhaps checking our cell phones during sacrament service?

Or are we like this woman, who thought she was completely and hopelessly lost because of sin?

Do we love much?

Do we understand our indebtedness to Heavenly Father and plead with all our souls for the grace of God?

When we kneel to pray, is it to replay the greatest hits of our own righteousness, or is it to confess our faults, plead for God’s mercy, and shed tears of gratitude for the amazing plan of redemption?25

Salvation cannot be bought with the currency of obedience; it is purchased by the blood of the Son of God.26 Thinking that we can trade our good works for salvation is like buying a plane ticket and then supposing we own the airline. Or thinking that after paying rent for our home, we now hold title to the entire planet earth.

**Why Then Obey?**

If grace is a gift of God, why then is obedience to God’s commandments so important? Why bother with God’s commandments—or repentance, for that matter? Why not just admit we’re sinful and let God save us?

Or, to put the question in Paul’s words, “Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?” Paul’s answer is simple and clear: “God forbid.”27

Brothers and sisters, we obey the commandments of God—out of love for Him!

Trying to understand God’s gift of grace with all our heart and mind gives us all the more reasons to love and obey our Heavenly Father with meekness and gratitude. As we walk the path of discipleship, it refines us, it improves us, it helps us to become more like Him, and it leads us back to His presence. “The Spirit of the Lord [our God]” brings about such “a mighty change in us, … that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually.”28

Therefore, our obedience to God’s commandments comes as a natural outgrowth of our endless love and gratitude for the goodness of God. This form of genuine love and gratitude will miraculously merge our works with God’s grace. Virtue will garnish our thoughts unceasingly, and our confidence will wax strong in the presence of God.29

Dear brothers and sisters, living the gospel faithfully is not a burden. It is a joyful rehearsal—a preparation for inheriting the grand glory of the eternities. We seek to obey our Heavenly Father because our spirits will become more attuned to spiritual things. Vistas are opened that we never knew existed. Enlightenment and understanding come to us when we do the will of the Father.30

Grace is a gift of God, and our desire to be obedient to each of God’s commandments is the reaching out of our mortal hand to receive this sacred gift from our Heavenly Father.

**All We Can Do**

The prophet Nephi made an important contribution to our understanding of God’s grace when he declared, “We labor diligently … 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.”31

However, I wonder if sometimes we misinterpret the phrase “after all we can do.” We must understand that “after” does not equal “because.”

We are not saved “because” of all that we can do. Have any of us done all that we can do? Does God wait until we’ve expended every effort before He will intervene in our lives with His saving grace?

Many people feel discouraged because they constantly fall short. They know firsthand that “the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”32 They raise their voices with Nephi in proclaiming, “My soul grieveth because of mine iniquities.”33

I am certain Nephi knew that the Savior’s grace allows and enables us to overcome sin.34 This is why Nephi labored so diligently to persuade his children and brethren “to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God.”35

After all, that is what we can do! And that is our task in mortality!

**Grace Is Available to All**

When I think of what the Savior did for us leading up to that first Easter Sunday, I want to lift up my voice and shout praises to the Most High God and His Son, Jesus Christ!

The gates of heaven are unlocked!

The windows of heaven are opened!

Today and forevermore God’s grace is available to all whose hearts are broken and whose spirits are contrite.36 Jesus Christ has cleared the way for us to ascend to heights incomprehensible to mortal minds.37

I pray that we will see with new eyes and a new heart the eternal significance of the Savior’s atoning sacrifice. I pray that we will show our love for God and our gratitude for the gift of God’s infinite grace by keeping His commandments and joyfully “walk[ing] in [a] newness of life.”38 In the sacred name of our Master and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, amen.

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings, Thoughts or Insights From Your Readings or From the Lesson:**

**Lesson #9**

**Seek Ye for the Kingdom of God**

**Matthew 6:33**

33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

**Jacob 2:12-28**

12 And now behold, my brethren, this is the word which I declare unto you, that many of you have begun to search for gold, and for silver, and for all manner of precious ores, in the which this land, which is a land of promise unto you and to your seed, doth abound most plentifully.

13 And the hand of providence hath smiled upon you most pleasingly, that you have obtained many riches; and because some of you have obtained more abundantly than that of your brethren ye are lifted up in the pride of your hearts, and wear stiff necks and high heads because of the costliness of your apparel, and persecute your brethren because ye suppose that ye are better than they.

14 And now, my brethren, do ye suppose that God justifieth you in this thing? Behold, I say unto you, Nay. But he condemneth you, and if ye persist in these things his judgments must speedily come unto you.

15 O that he would show you that he can pierce you, and with one glance of his eye he can smite you to the dust!

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!

17 Think of your brethren like unto yourselves, and be familiar with all and free with your substance, that they may be rich like unto you.

18 But before ye seek for riches, seek ye for the kingdom of God.

19 And after ye have obtained a hope in Christ ye shall obtain riches, if ye seek them; and ye will seek them for the intent to do good—to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry, and to liberate the captive, and administer relief to the sick and the afflicted.

20 And now, my brethren, I have spoken unto you concerning pride; and those of you which have afflicted your neighbor, and persecuted him because ye were proud in your hearts, of the things which God hath given you, what say ye of it?

21 Do ye not suppose that such things are abominable unto him who created all flesh? And the one being is as precious in his sight as the other. And all flesh is of the dust; and for the selfsame end hath he created them, that they should keep his commandments and glorify him forever.

22 And now I make an end of speaking unto you concerning this pride. And were it not that I must speak unto you concerning a grosser crime, my heart would rejoice exceedingly because of you.

23 But the word of God burdens me because of your grosser crimes. For behold, thus saith the Lord: This people begin to wax in iniquity; they understand not the scriptures, for they seek to excuse themselves in committing whoredoms, because of the things which were written concerning David, and Solomon his son.

24 Behold, David and Solomon truly had many wives and concubines, which thing was abominable before me, saith the Lord.

25 Wherefore, thus saith the Lord, I have led this people forth out of the land of Jerusalem, by the power of mine arm, that I might raise up unto me a righteous branch from the fruit of the loins of Joseph.

26 Wherefore, I the Lord God will not suffer that this people shall do like unto them of old.

27 Wherefore, my brethren, hear me, and hearken to the word of the Lord: For there shall not any man among you have save it be one wife; and concubines he shall have none;

28 For I, the Lord God, delight in the chastity of women. And whoredoms are an abomination before me; thus saith the Lord of Hosts.

**Jacob 3:10-12**

10 Wherefore, ye shall remember your children, how that ye have grieved their hearts because of the example that ye have set before them; and also, 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.

11 O my brethren, hearken unto my words; arouse the faculties of your souls; shake yourselves that ye may awake from the slumber of death; and loose yourselves from the pains of hell that ye may not become angels to the devil, to be cast into that lake of fire and brimstone which is the second death.

12 And now I, Jacob, spake many more things unto the people of Nephi, warning them against fornication and lasciviousness, and every kind of sin, telling them the awful consequences of them.

**Mosiah 2:20-25**

20 I say unto you, my brethren, that if you should render all the thanks and praise which your whole soul has power to possess, to that God who has created you, and has kept and preserved you, and has caused that ye should rejoice, and has granted that ye should live in peace one with another—

21 I say unto you that if ye should serve him 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.

22 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.

23 And now, in the first place, he hath created you, and granted unto you your lives, for which ye are indebted unto him.

24 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; therefore, of what have ye to boast?

25 And now I ask, can ye say aught of yourselves? I answer you, Nay. Ye cannot say that ye are even as much as the dust of the earth; yet ye were created of the dust of the earth; but behold, it belongeth to him who created you.

**Mosiah 4:13, 21-26**

13 And ye 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.

21 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, in faith, believing that ye shall receive, O then, how ye ought to impart of the substance that ye have one to another.

22 And if ye judge the man who putteth up his petition to you for your substance that he perish not, and condemn him, how much more just will be your condemnation for withholding your substance, which doth not belong to you but to God, to whom also your life belongeth; and yet ye put up no petition, nor repent of the thing which thou hast done.

23 I say unto you, wo be unto that man, for his substance shall perish with him; and now, I say these things unto those who are rich as pertaining to the things of this world.

24 And again, I say unto the poor, ye who have not and yet have sufficient, that ye remain from day to day; I mean all 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.

25 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.

26 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, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and administering to their relief, both spiritually and temporally, according to their wants.

**Alma 7:14-16, 19, 21-24**

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.

19 For I perceive that ye are in the paths of righteousness; I perceive that ye are in the path which leads to the kingdom of God; yea, I perceive that ye are making his paths straight.

21 And he doth not dwell in unholy temples; neither can filthiness or anything which is unclean be received into the kingdom of God; therefore I say unto you the time shall come, yea, and it shall be at the last day, that he who is filthy shall remain in his filthiness.

22 And now my beloved brethren, I have said these things unto you that I might awaken you to a sense of your duty to God, that ye may walk blameless before him, that ye may walk after the holy order of God, after which ye have been received.

23 And now I would that ye should be humble, and be submissive and gentle; easy to be entreated; full of patience and long-suffering; being temperate in all things; being diligent in keeping the commandments of God at all times; asking for whatsoever things ye stand in need, both spiritual and temporal; always returning thanks unto God for whatsoever things ye do receive.

24 And see that ye have faith, hope, and charity, and then ye will always abound in good works.

**3 Nephi 12:27-30**

27 Behold, it is written by them of old time, that thou shalt not commit adultery;

28 But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman, to lust after her, hath committed adultery already in his heart.

29 Behold, I give unto you a commandment, that ye suffer none of these things to enter into your heart;

30 For it is better that ye should deny yourselves of these things, wherein ye will take up your cross, than that ye should be cast into hell.

**The Great Commandment – Love the Lord**

**Chapter 1 in Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson, 2014**

President Ezra Taft Benson’s life reflected his love for the Lord and his steadfast commitment to living the gospel. An extended family member once said, “To Ezra and his family religion is a complete way of life—something to be lived seven days a week. It takes first place in his consideration when the time comes for making decisions.”1

People outside the Benson family also noticed President Benson’s love for the Lord. In 1939, when President Benson was serving as a stake president, he was invited to Washington, D.C., to meet with the directors of the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives. “After looking him over and questioning him, the board of trustees offered him the position of executive secretary of that organization. … Though he was thrilled by this unsolicited bid for his services, he did not wish to accept it. As he understood it, the job would entail lobbying by the use of cocktail parties, which would not be compatible with his religion.

“‘Mr. Benson,’ Judge John D. Miller, head of the group, replied, ‘that is why we selected you. We know what your standards are.’ With full assurance from the board that he would not be expected to seek an understanding of agricultural problems over cocktail glasses, he was delighted to accept the position, but only after consultation with the First Presidency and his wife.”2

President Benson taught that we manifest our love for the Lord by our willingness to do the Lord’s will. He said: “I wish that every Latter-day Saint could say and mean it with all his heart: ‘I’ll go where you want me to go. I’ll say what you want me to say. I’ll be what you want me to be’ [see Hymns, no. 270]. If we could all do that, we would be assured of the maximum of happiness here and exaltation in the celestial kingdom of God hereafter.”3

In a sermon at the April 1988 general conference—the sermon upon which this chapter is based—President Benson focused on the first and great commandment: to love God. Regarding this sermon, Elder Francis M. Gibbons of the Seventy observed, “All that President Ezra Taft Benson worked for, all that he stood for, and all that he hoped for—for himself, for his family, and for the Church—is embodied in this sermon.”4

As the Savior taught the rich young man, we show our love for the Lord when we help other people (see Matthew 19:16–21).

**The first and great commandment is to love the Lord.**

The great test of life is obedience to God. “We will prove them herewith,” said the Lord, “to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them” (Abraham 3:25).

The great task of life is to learn the will of the Lord and then do it.

The great commandment of life is to love the Lord.

“Come unto Christ,” exhorts Moroni in his closing testimony, “… and love God with all your might, mind and strength” (Moroni 10:32).

This, then, is the first and great commandment: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength” (Mark 12:30; see also Matthew 22:37; Deuteronomy 6:5; Luke 10:27; Moroni 10:32; D&C 59:5).

It is the pure love of Christ, called charity, that the Book of Mormon testifies is the greatest of all—that never faileth, that endureth forever, that all men should have, and that without which they are nothing (see Moroni 7:44–47; 2 Nephi 26:30).

“Wherefore, my beloved brethren,” pleads Moroni, “pray unto the Father with all the energy of [your] 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” (Moroni 7:48).

In the closing accounts of both the Jaredites and the Nephites, Moroni records that except men shall have this pure love of Christ, called charity, they cannot inherit that place which Christ has prepared in the mansions of His Father nor can they be saved in the kingdom of God (see Ether 12:34; Moroni 10:21).

The fruit that Lehi partook of in his vision and that filled his soul with exceeding great joy and that was most desirable above all things was the love of God.5

When I think of charity, I … think of my father and that day he was called on his mission [see pages 4–6 in this book]. I suppose some in the world might say that his acceptance of that call was proof he did not really love his family. To leave seven children and an expectant wife at home alone for two years, how could that be true love? But my father knew a greater vision of love. He knew that “all things shall work together for good to them that love God” (Romans 8:28). He knew that the best thing he could do for his family was to obey God.6

To love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength is all-consuming and all-encompassing. It is no lukewarm endeavor. It is total commitment of our very being—physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually—to a love of the Lord.

The breadth, depth, and height of this love of God extend into every facet of one’s life. Our desires, be they spiritual or temporal, should be rooted in a love of the Lord. Our thoughts and affections should be centered on the Lord. “Let all thy thoughts be directed unto the Lord,” said Alma, “yea, let the affections of thy heart be placed upon the Lord forever” (Alma 37:36).7

**We show our love for God when we put Him first in our lives.**

Why did God put the first commandment first? Because He knew that if we truly loved Him we would want to keep all of His other commandments. “For this is the love of God,” says John, “that we keep his commandments” (1 John 5:3; see also 2 John 1:6).

We must put God in the forefront of everything else in our lives. He must come first, just as He declares in the first of His Ten Commandments: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3).

When we put God first, all other things fall into their proper place or drop out of our lives. Our love of the Lord will govern the claims for our affection, the demands on our time, the interests we pursue, and the order of our priorities.

We should put God ahead of everyone else in our lives.

When Joseph was in Egypt, what came first in his life—God, his job, or Potiphar’s wife? When she tried to seduce him, he responded by saying, “How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (Genesis 39:9).

Joseph was put in prison because he put God first. If we were faced with a similar choice, where would we place our first loyalty? Can we put God ahead of security, peace, passions, wealth, and the honors of men?

When Joseph was forced to choose, he was more anxious to please God than to please his employer’s wife. When we are required to choose, are we more anxious to please God than our boss, our teacher, our neighbor, or our date?

Joseph of Egypt was willing to go to prison rather than deny his loyalty to God.

The Lord said, “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me” (Matthew 10:37). One of the most difficult tests of all is when you have to choose between pleasing God or pleasing someone you love or respect—particularly a family member.

Nephi faced that test and handled it well when his good father temporarily murmured against the Lord (see 1 Nephi 16:18–25). Job maintained his integrity with the Lord even though his wife told him to curse God and die (see Job 2:9–10).

The scripture says, “Honour thy father and thy mother” (Exodus 20:12; see also Mosiah 13:20). Sometimes one must choose to honor Heavenly Father over a mortal father.

We should give God, the Father of our spirits, an exclusive preeminence in our lives. He has a prior parental claim on our eternal welfare, ahead of all other ties that may bind us here or hereafter.

God, our Father; Jesus, our Elder Brother and our Redeemer; and the Holy Ghost, the Testator, are perfect. They know us best and love us most and will not leave one thing undone for our eternal welfare. Should we not love them for it and honor them first?

There are faithful members who joined the Church in spite of the objections of their mortal relatives. By putting God first, many later became the instruments to lead those loved ones into the kingdom of God.

Jesus said, “I do always those things that please [God]” (John 8:29).

What is the condition in our homes? Are we striving to put the Lord first and to please Him?

Fathers, would it please the Lord if there were daily family prayer and scripture reading in your home? And what about the holding of weekly home evenings and periodically having individual time with your wife and each child? And if your child went temporarily astray, do you think it would please the Lord and He would honor your efforts if you continued to live an exemplary life, consistently prayed and frequently fasted for that child, and kept the name of that son or daughter on the temple prayer roll?

You mothers, who are especially charged with the righteous rearing of the youth of Zion, are you not putting God first when you honor your divine calling? … Our mothers put God first when they fill their highest mission within the walls of their own homes.

Children, do you pray for your parents? Do you try to support them in their noble endeavors? They will make mistakes, like you, but they have a divine mission to accomplish in your life. Will you help them do so? Will you add honor to their name and bring comfort and support to them in their older years?

If someone wants to marry you outside the temple, whom will you strive to please—God or a mortal? If you insist on a temple marriage, you will be pleasing the Lord and blessing the other party. Why? Because that person will either become worthy to go to the temple—which would be a blessing—or will leave—which could also be a blessing—because neither of you should want to be unequally yoked (see 2 Corinthians 6:14).

You should qualify for the temple. Then you will know that there is no one good enough for you to marry outside the temple. If such individuals are that good, they will get themselves in a condition so that they too can be married in the temple.8

**When we choose to put God first in our lives, His blessings come in abundance**.

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. He will deepen their joys, expand their vision, quicken their minds, strengthen their muscles, lift their spirits, multiply their blessings, increase their opportunities, comfort their souls, raise up friends, and pour out peace. Whoever will lose his life in the service of God will find eternal life.9

God asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. Had Abraham loved Isaac more than God, would he have consented? As the Lord indicates in the Doctrine and Covenants, both Abraham and Isaac now sit as gods (see D&C 132:37). They were willing to offer or to be offered up as God required. They have a deeper love and respect for each other because both were willing to put God first.

The Book of Mormon teaches that “it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things” (2 Nephi 2:11)—and so there is. Opposition provides choices, and choices bring consequences—good or bad.

The Book of Mormon explains that men “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” (2 Nephi 2:27).

God loves us; the devil hates us. God wants us to have a fulness of joy as He has. The devil wants us to be miserable as he is. God gives us commandments to bless us. The devil would have us break these commandments to curse us.

Daily, constantly, we choose by our desires, our thoughts, and our actions whether we want to be blessed or cursed, happy or miserable. One of the trials of life is that we do not usually receive immediately the full blessing for righteousness or the full cursing for wickedness. That it will come is certain, but ofttimes there is a waiting period that occurs, as was the case with Job and Joseph.

In the meantime the wicked think they are getting away with something. The Book of Mormon teaches that the wicked “have joy in their works for a season, [but] by and by the end cometh, and they are hewn down and cast into the fire, from whence there is no return” (3 Nephi 27:11).

During this testing time the righteous must continue to love God, trust in His promises, be patient, and be assured, as the poet said, that “who does God’s work will get God’s pay.” …

I testify to you that God’s pay is the best pay that this world or any other world knows anything about. And it comes in full abundance only to those who love the Lord and put Him first.

The great test of life is obedience to God.

The great task of life is to learn the will of the Lord and then do it.

The great commandment of life is, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength” (Mark 12:30).

May God bless us to put the first commandment first and, as a result, reap peace in this life and eternal life with a fulness of joy in the life to come.10

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings, Thoughts or Insights From Your Readings or From the Lesson:**

**Lesson #10**

**Prayer and Revelation**

**1 Nephi 10:17-19**

17 And it came to pass after I, Nephi, having heard all the words of my father, concerning the things which he saw in a vision, and also the things which he spake by the power of the Holy Ghost, which power he received by faith on the Son of God—and the Son of God was the Messiah who should come—I, Nephi, was desirous also that I might see, and hear, and know of these things, by the power of the Holy Ghost, which is the gift of God unto all those who diligently seek him, as well in times of old as in the time that he should manifest himself unto the children of men.

18 For he is the same yesterday, today, and forever; and the way is prepared for all men from the foundation of the world, if it so be that they repent and come unto him.

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.

**I Nephi 15:1-3, 7-11**

1 And it came to pass that after I, Nephi, had been carried away in the Spirit, and seen all these things, I returned to the tent of my father.

2 And it came to pass that I beheld my brethren, and they were disputing one with another concerning the things which my father had spoken unto them.

3 For he truly spake many great things unto them, which were hard to be understood, save a man should inquire of the Lord; and they being hard in their hearts, therefore they did not look unto the Lord as they ought.

7 And they said: Behold, we cannot understand the words which our father hath spoken concerning the natural branches of the olive tree, and also concerning the Gentiles.

8 And I said unto them: Have ye inquired of the Lord?

9 And they said unto me: We have not; for the Lord maketh no such thing known unto us.

10 Behold, I said unto them: How is it that ye do not keep the commandments of the Lord? How is it that ye will perish, because of the hardness of your hearts?

11 Do ye not remember the things which the Lord hath said?—If ye will not harden your hearts, and ask me in faith, believing that ye shall receive, with diligence in keeping my commandments, surely these things shall be made known unto you.

**I Nephi 18:1-3**

1 And it came to pass that they did worship the Lord, and did go forth with me; and we did work timbers of curious workmanship. And the Lord did show me from time to time after what manner I should work the timbers of the ship.

2 Now I, Nephi, did not work the timbers after the manner which was learned by men, neither did I build the ship after the manner of men; but I did build it after the manner which the Lord had shown unto me; wherefore, it was not after the manner of men.

3 And I, Nephi, did go into the mount oft, and I did pray oft unto the Lord; wherefore the Lord showed unto me great things.

**2 Nephi 28:30**

30 For behold, thus saith the Lord God: I will give unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little; and 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.

**2 Nephi 32:8-9**

8 And now, my beloved brethren, I perceive that ye ponder still in your hearts; and it grieveth me that I must speak concerning this thing. For if ye would hearken unto the Spirit which teacheth a man to pray, ye would know that ye must pray; for the evil spirit teacheth not a man to pray, but teacheth him that he must not pray.

9 But behold, I say unto you that ye must pray always, and not faint; that ye must not perform any thing unto the Lord save in the first place ye shall pray unto the Father in the name of Christ, that he will consecrate thy performance unto thee, that thy performance may be for the welfare of thy soul.

**Jacob 4:6**

6 Wherefore, we search the prophets, and we have many revelations and the spirit of prophecy; and having all these witnesses we obtain a hope, and our faith becometh unshaken, insomuch that we truly can command in the name of Jesus and the very trees obey us, or the mountains, or the waves of the sea.

**Alma 12:9-11**

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.

10 And therefore, he that will harden his heart, the same receiveth the lesser portion of the word; and he that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word, until it is given unto him to know the mysteries of God until he know them in full.

11 And they that will harden their hearts, to them is given the lesser portion of the word until they know nothing concerning his mysteries; and then they are taken captive by the devil, and led by his will down to destruction. Now this is what is meant by the chains of hell.

**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.

**3 Nephi 14:7-11**

7 Ask, and it shall be given unto you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

8 For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.

9 Or what man is there of you, who, if his son ask bread, will give him a stone?

10 Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?

11 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

**The Spirit of Revelation**

**David A. Bednar, Ensign, May 2011**

I express gratitude for the inspiration that attended the selection of the hymn that will follow my remarks, “Have I Done Any Good?” (Hymns, no. 223). I get the hint.

I invite you to consider two experiences most of us have had with light.

The first experience occurred as we entered a dark room and turned on a light switch. Remember how in an instant a bright flood of illumination filled the room and caused the darkness to disappear. What previously had been unseen and uncertain became clear and recognizable. This experience was characterized by immediate and intense recognition of light.

The second experience took place as we watched night turn into morning. Do you recall the slow and almost imperceptible increase in light on the horizon? In contrast to turning on a light in a dark room, the light from the rising sun did not immediately burst forth. Rather, gradually and steadily the intensity of the light increased, and the darkness of night was replaced by the radiance of morning. Eventually, the sun did dawn over the skyline. But the visual evidence of the sun’s impending arrival was apparent hours before the sun actually appeared over the horizon. This experience was characterized by subtle and gradual discernment of light.

From these two ordinary experiences with light, we can learn much about the spirit of revelation. I pray the Holy Ghost will inspire and instruct us as we now focus upon the spirit of revelation and basic patterns whereby revelation is received.

**The Spirit of Revelation**

Revelation is communication from God to His children on the earth and one of the great blessings associated with the gift and constant companionship of the Holy Ghost. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught, “The Holy Ghost is a revelator,” and “no man can receive the Holy Ghost without receiving revelations” (Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith [2007], 132).

The spirit of revelation is available to every person who receives by proper priesthood authority the saving ordinances of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins and the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost—and who is acting in faith to fulfill the priesthood injunction to “receive the Holy Ghost.” This blessing is not restricted to the presiding authorities of the Church; rather, it belongs to and should be operative in the life of every man, woman, and child who reaches the age of accountability and enters into sacred covenants. Sincere desire and worthiness invite the spirit of revelation into our lives.

Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery gained valuable experience with the spirit of revelation as they translated the Book of Mormon. These brethren learned they could receive whatever knowledge was necessary to complete their work if they asked in faith, with an honest heart, believing they would receive. And over time they increasingly understood the spirit of revelation typically functions as thoughts and feelings that come into our minds and hearts by the power of the Holy Ghost. (See D&C 8:1–2; 100:5–8.) As the Lord instructed them: “Now, behold, this is the spirit of revelation; behold, this is the spirit by which Moses brought the children of Israel through the Red Sea on dry ground. Therefore this is thy gift; apply unto it” (D&C 8:3–4).

I emphasize the phrase “apply unto it” in relation to the spirit of revelation. In the scriptures, the influence of the Holy Ghost frequently is described as “a still small voice” (1 Kings 19:12; 1 Nephi 17:45; see also 3 Nephi 11:3) and a “voice of perfect mildness” (Helaman 5:30). Because the Spirit whispers to us gently and delicately, it is easy to understand why we should shun inappropriate media, pornography, and harmful, addictive substances and behaviors. These tools of the adversary can impair and eventually destroy our capacity to recognize and respond to the subtle messages from God delivered by the power of His Spirit. Each of us should consider seriously and ponder prayerfully how we can reject the devil’s enticements and righteously “apply unto it,” even the spirit of revelation, in our personal lives and families.

**Patterns of Revelation**

Revelations are conveyed in a variety of ways, including, for example, dreams, visions, conversations with heavenly messengers, and inspiration. Some revelations are received immediately and intensely; some are recognized gradually and subtly. The two experiences with light I described help us to better understand these two basic patterns of revelation.

A light turned on in a dark room is like receiving a message from God quickly, completely, and all at once. Many of us have experienced this pattern of revelation as we have been given answers to sincere prayers or been provided with needed direction or protection, according to God’s will and timing. Descriptions of such immediate and intense manifestations are found in the scriptures, recounted in Church history, and evidenced in our own lives. Indeed, these mighty miracles do occur. However, this pattern of revelation tends to be more rare than common.

The gradual increase of light radiating from the rising sun is like receiving a message from God “line upon line, precept upon precept” (2 Nephi 28:30). Most frequently, revelation comes in small increments over time and is granted according to our desire, worthiness, and preparation. Such communications from Heavenly Father gradually and gently “distil upon [our souls] as the dews from heaven” (D&C 121:45). This pattern of revelation tends to be more common than rare and is evident in the experiences of Nephi as he tried several different approaches before successfully obtaining the plates of brass from Laban (see 1 Nephi 3–4). Ultimately, he was led by the Spirit to Jerusalem, “not knowing beforehand the things which [he] should do” (1 Nephi 4:6). And he did not learn how to build a ship of curious workmanship all at one time; rather, Nephi was shown by the Lord “from time to time after what manner [he] should work the timbers of the ship” (1 Nephi 18:1).

Both the history of the Church and our personal lives are replete with examples of the Lord’s pattern for receiving revelation “line upon line, precept upon precept.” For example, the fundamental truths of the restored gospel were not delivered to the Prophet Joseph Smith all at once in the Sacred Grove. These priceless treasures were revealed as circumstances warranted and as the timing was right.

President Joseph F. Smith explained how this pattern of revelation occurred in his life: “As a boy … I would frequently … ask the Lord to show me some marvelous thing, in order that I might receive a testimony. But the Lord withheld marvels from me, and showed me the truth, line upon line … , until He made me to know the truth from the crown of my head to the soles of my feet, and until doubt and fear had been absolutely purged from me. He did not have to send an angel from the heavens to do this, nor did He have to speak with the trump of an archangel. By the whisperings of the still small voice of the spirit of the living God, He gave to me the testimony I possess. And by this principle and power He will give to all the children of men a knowledge of the truth that will stay with them, and it will make them to know the truth, as God knows it, and to do the will of the Father as Christ does it. And no amount of marvelous manifestations will ever accomplish this” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1900, 40–41).

We as members of the Church tend to emphasize marvelous and dramatic spiritual manifestations so much that we may fail to appreciate and may even overlook the customary pattern by which the Holy Ghost accomplishes His work. The very “simpleness of the way” (1 Nephi 17:41) of receiving small and incremental spiritual impressions that over time and in totality constitute a desired answer or the direction we need may cause us to look “beyond the mark” (Jacob 4:14).

I have talked with many individuals who question the strength of their personal testimony and underestimate their spiritual capacity because they do not receive frequent, miraculous, or strong impressions. Perhaps as we consider the experiences of Joseph in the Sacred Grove, of Saul on the road to Damascus, and of Alma the Younger, we come to believe something is wrong with or lacking in us if we fall short in our lives of these well-known and spiritually striking examples. If you have had similar thoughts or doubts, please know that you are quite normal. Just keep pressing forward obediently and with faith in the Savior. As you do so, you “cannot go amiss” (D&C 80:3).

President Joseph F. Smith counseled: “Show me Latter-day Saints who have to feed upon miracles, signs and visions in order to keep them steadfast in the Church, and I will show you members … who are not in good standing before God, and who are walking in slippery paths. It is not by marvelous manifestations unto us that we shall be established in the truth, but it is by humility and faithful obedience to the commandments and laws of God” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1900, 40).

Another common experience with light helps us learn an additional truth about the “line upon line, precept upon precept” pattern of revelation. Sometimes the sun rises on a morning that is cloudy or foggy. Because of the overcast conditions, perceiving the light is more difficult, and identifying the precise moment when the sun rises over the horizon is not possible. But on such a morning we nonetheless have sufficient light to recognize a new day and to conduct our affairs.

In a similar way, we many times receive revelation without recognizing precisely how or when we are receiving revelation. An important episode from Church history illustrates this principle.

In the spring of 1829, Oliver Cowdery was a schoolteacher in Palmyra, New York. As he learned about Joseph Smith and the work of translating the Book of Mormon, Oliver felt impressed to offer his assistance to the young prophet. Consequently, he traveled to Harmony, Pennsylvania, and became Joseph’s scribe. The timing of his arrival and the help he provided were vital to the coming forth of the Book of Mormon.

The Savior subsequently revealed to Oliver that as often as he had prayed for guidance, he had received direction from the Spirit of the Lord. “If it had not been so,” the Lord declared, “thou wouldst not have come to the place where thou art at this time. Behold, thou knowest that thou hast inquired of me and I did enlighten thy mind; and now I tell thee these things that thou mayest know that thou hast been enlightened by the Spirit of truth” (D&C 6:14–15).

Thus, Oliver received a revelation through the Prophet Joseph Smith informing him that he had been receiving revelation. Apparently Oliver had not recognized how and when he had been receiving direction from God and needed this instruction to increase his understanding about the spirit of revelation. In essence, Oliver had been walking in the light as the sun was rising on a cloudy morning.

In many of the uncertainties and challenges we encounter in our lives, God requires us to do our best, to act and not be acted upon (see 2 Nephi 2:26), and to trust in Him. We may not see angels, hear heavenly voices, or receive overwhelming spiritual impressions. We frequently may press forward hoping and praying—but without absolute assurance—that we are acting in accordance with God’s will. But as we honor our covenants and keep the commandments, as we strive ever more consistently to do good and to become better, we can walk with the confidence that God will guide our steps. And we can speak with the assurance that God will inspire our utterances. This is in part the meaning of the scripture that declares, “Then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God” (D&C 121:45).

As you appropriately seek for and apply unto the spirit of revelation, I promise you will “walk in the light of the Lord” (Isaiah 2:5; 2 Nephi 12:5). Sometimes the spirit of revelation will operate immediately and intensely, other times subtly and gradually, and often so delicately you may not even consciously recognize it. But regardless of the pattern whereby this blessing is received, the light it provides will illuminate and enlarge your soul, enlighten your understanding (see Alma 5:7; 32:28), and direct and protect you and your family.

I declare my apostolic witness that the Father and the Son live. The spirit of revelation is real—and can and does function in our individual lives and in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I testify of these truths in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings, Thoughts or Insights From Your Readings or From the Lesson:**

**Lesson # 11**

**Protecting Ourselves against the False Doctrines of the Last Days**

**2 Nephi 26:29**

29 He commandeth that there shall be no priestcrafts; for, behold, priestcrafts are that men preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world; but they seek not the welfare of Zion.

**2 Nephi 28:3-9, 12-15**

3 For it shall come to pass in that day that the churches which are built up, and not unto the Lord, when the one shall say unto the other: Behold, I, I am the Lord’s; and the others shall say: I, I am the Lord’s; and thus shall every one say that hath built up churches, and not unto the Lord—

4 And they shall contend one with another; and their priests shall contend one with another, and they shall teach with their learning, and deny the Holy Ghost, which giveth utterance.

5 And they deny the power of God, the Holy One of Israel; and they say unto the people: Hearken unto us, and hear ye our precept; for behold there is no God today, for the Lord and the Redeemer hath done his work, and he hath given his power unto men;

6 Behold, hearken ye unto my precept; if they shall say there is a miracle wrought by the hand of the Lord, believe it not; for this day he is not a God of miracles; he hath done his work.

7 Yea, and there shall be many which shall say: Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die; and it shall be well with us.

8 And there shall also be many which shall say: Eat, drink, and be merry; nevertheless, fear God—he will justify in committing a little sin; yea, lie a little, take the advantage of one because of his words, dig a pit for thy neighbor; there is no harm in this; and do all these things, for tomorrow we die; and if it so be that we are guilty, God will beat us with a few stripes, and at last we shall be saved in the kingdom of God.

9 Yea, and there shall be many which shall teach after this manner, false and vain and foolish doctrines, and shall be puffed up in their hearts, and shall seek deep to hide their counsels from the Lord; and their works shall be in the dark.

12 Because of pride, and because of false teachers, and false doctrine, their churches have become corrupted, and their churches are lifted up; because of pride they are puffed up.

13 They rob the poor because of their fine sanctuaries; they rob the poor because of their fine clothing; and they persecute the meek and the poor in heart, because in their pride they are puffed up.

14 They wear stiff necks and high heads; yea, and because of pride, and wickedness, and abominations, and whoredoms, they have all gone astray save it be a few, who are the humble followers of Christ; nevertheless, they are led, that in many instances they do err because they are taught by the precepts of men.

15 O the wise, and the learned, and the rich, that are puffed up in the pride of their hearts, and all those who preach false doctrines, and all those who commit whoredoms, and pervert the right way of the Lord, wo, wo, wo be unto them, saith the Lord God Almighty, for they shall be thrust down to hell!

**Jacob 7:1-12**

1 And now it came to pass after some years had passed away, there came a man among the people of Nephi, whose name was Sherem.

2 And it came to pass that he began to preach among the people, and to declare unto them that there should be no Christ. And he preached many things which were flattering unto the people; and this he did that he might overthrow the doctrine of Christ.

3 And he labored diligently that he might lead away the hearts of the people, insomuch that he did lead away many hearts; and he knowing that I, Jacob, had faith in Christ who should come, he sought much opportunity that he might come unto me.

4 And he was learned, that he had a perfect knowledge of the language of the people; wherefore, he could use much flattery, and much power of speech, according to the power of the devil.

5 And he had hope to shake me from the faith, notwithstanding the many revelations and the many things which I had seen concerning these things; for I truly had seen angels, and they had ministered unto me. And also, I had heard the voice of the Lord speaking unto me in very word, from time to time; wherefore, I could not be shaken.

6 And it came to pass that he came unto me, and on this wise did he speak unto me, saying: Brother Jacob, I have sought much opportunity that I might speak unto you; for I have heard and also know that thou goest about much, preaching that which ye call the gospel, or the doctrine of Christ.

7 And ye have led away much of this people that they pervert the right way of God, and keep not the law of Moses which is the right way; and convert the law of Moses into the worship of a being which ye say shall come many hundred years hence. And now behold, I, Sherem, declare unto you that this is blasphemy; for no man knoweth of such things; for he cannot tell of things to come. And after this manner did Sherem contend against me.

8 But behold, the Lord God poured in his Spirit into my soul, insomuch that I did confound him in all his words.

9 And I said unto him: Deniest thou the Christ who shall come? And he said: If there should be a Christ, I would not deny him; but I know that there is no Christ, neither has been, nor ever will be.

10 And I said unto him: Believest thou the scriptures? And he said, Yea.

11 And I said unto him: Then ye do not understand them; for they truly testify of Christ. Behold, I say unto you that none of the prophets have written, nor prophesied, save they have spoken concerning this Christ.

12 And this is not all—it has been made manifest unto me, for I have heard and seen; and it also has been made manifest unto me by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, I know if there should be no atonement made all mankind must be lost.

**Alma 1:2-6**

2 And it came to pass that in the first year of the reign of Alma in the judgment-seat, there was a man brought before him to be judged, a man who was large, and was noted for his much strength.

3 And he had gone about among the people, preaching to them that which he termed to be the word of God, bearing down against the church; declaring unto the people that every priest and teacher ought to become popular; and they ought not to labor with their hands, but that they ought to be supported by the people.

4 And he also testified unto the people that all mankind should be saved at the last day, and that they need not fear nor tremble, but that they might lift up their heads and rejoice; for the Lord had created all men, and had also redeemed all men; and, in the end, all men should have eternal life.

5 And it came to pass that he did teach these things so much that many did believe on his words, even so many that they began to support him and give him money.

6 And he began to be lifted up in the pride of his heart, and to wear very costly apparel, yea, and even began to establish a church after the manner of his preaching.

**Alma 30:12-18, 39-44**

12 And this Anti-Christ, whose name was Korihor, (and the law could have no hold upon him) began to preach unto the people that there should be no Christ. And after this manner did he preach, saying:

13 O ye that are bound down under a foolish and a vain hope, why do ye yoke yourselves with such foolish things? Why do ye look for a Christ? For no man can know of anything which is to come.

14 Behold, these things which ye call prophecies, which ye say are handed down by holy prophets, behold, they are foolish traditions of your fathers.

15 How do ye know of their surety? Behold, ye cannot know of things which ye do not see; therefore ye cannot know that there shall be a Christ.

16 Ye look forward and say that ye see a remission of your sins. But behold, it is the effect of a frenzied mind; and this derangement of your minds comes because of the traditions of your fathers, which lead you away into a belief of things which are not so.

17 And many more such things did he say unto them, telling them that there could be no atonement made for the sins of men, but every man fared in this life according to the management of the creature; therefore every man prospered according to his genius, and that every man conquered according to his strength; and whatsoever a man did was no crime.

18 And thus he did preach unto them, leading away the hearts of many, causing them to lift up their heads in their wickedness, yea, leading away many women, and also men, to commit whoredoms—telling them that when a man was dead, that was the end thereof.

39 Now Alma said unto him: Will ye deny again that there is a God, and also deny the Christ? For behold, I say unto you, I know there is a God, and also that Christ shall come.

40 And now what evidence have ye that there is no God, or that Christ cometh not? I say unto you that ye have none, save it be your word only.

41 But, behold, I have all things as a testimony that these things are true; and ye also have all things as a testimony unto you that they are true; and will ye deny them? Believest thou that these things are true?

42 Behold, I know that thou believest, but thou art possessed with a lying spirit, and ye have put off the Spirit of God that it may have no place in you; but the devil has power over you, and he doth carry you about, working devices that he may destroy the children of God.

43 And now Korihor said unto Alma: If thou wilt show me a sign, that I may be convinced that there is a God, yea, show unto me that he hath power, and then will I be convinced of the truth of thy words.

44 But Alma said unto him: Thou hast had signs enough; will ye tempt your God? Will ye say, Show unto me a sign, when ye have the testimony of all these thy brethren, and also all the holy prophets? The scriptures are laid before thee, yea, and all things denote there is a God; yea, even the earth, and all things that are upon the face of it, yea, and its motion, yea, and also all the planets which move in their regular form do witness that there is a Supreme Creator.

**3 Nephi 18:24**

24 Therefore, hold up your light that it may shine unto the world. Behold I am the light which ye shall hold up—that which ye have seen me do. Behold ye see that I have prayed unto the Father, and ye all have witnessed.

**3 Nephi 27:27**

27 And know ye that ye shall be judges of this people, according to the judgment which I shall give unto you, which shall be just. Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am.

**Ether 4:11-12**

11 But he that believeth these things which I have spoken, him will I visit with the manifestations of my Spirit, and he shall know and bear record. For because of my Spirit he shall know that these things are true; for it persuadeth men to do good.

12 And whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do good is of me; for good cometh of none save it be of me. I am the same that leadeth men to all good; he that will not believe my words will not believe me—that I am; and he that will not believe me will not believe the Father who sent me. For behold, I am the Father, I am the light, and the life, and the truth of the world.

**Moroni 7:12-17**

12 Wherefore, all things which are good cometh of God; and that which is evil cometh of the devil; for the devil is an enemy unto God, and fighteth against him continually, and inviteth and enticeth to sin, and to do that which is evil continually.

13 But behold, that which is of God inviteth and enticeth to do good continually; wherefore, every thing which inviteth and enticeth to do good, and to love God, and to serve him, is inspired of God.

14 Wherefore, take heed, my beloved brethren, that ye do not judge that which is evil to be of God, or that which is good and of God to be of the devil.

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 every thing 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.

**Joseph Smith – Matthew 1:22**

22 For in those days there shall also arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch, that, if possible, they shall deceive the very elect, who are the elect according to the covenant.

**Spiritual Whirlwinds**

**Neil L. Andersen, *Ensign*, May 2014**

I greet you this morning—especially the young people who are both here in the Conference Center and throughout the world. Yours is a chosen generation of destiny, and I speak especially to you.

Many years ago while we were visiting our family in Florida, a tornado touched down not too far from us. One woman living in a mobile home went into her bathroom for safety. The mobile home began to shake. A few moments passed. Then she heard her neighbor’s voice: “I am here in the front room.” Coming out of the bathroom, to her great astonishment, she discovered that the tornado had lifted and carried her mobile home through the air, landing it perfectly upright on the top of her neighbor’s mobile home.

My young friends, the world will not glide calmly toward the Second Coming of the Savior. The scriptures declare that “all things shall be in commotion.”1 Brigham Young said, “It was revealed to me in the commencement of this Church, that the Church would spread, prosper, grow and extend, and that in proportion to the spread of the Gospel among the nations of the earth, so would the power of Satan rise.”2

More concerning than the prophesied earthquakes and wars3 are the spiritual whirlwinds that can uproot you from your spiritual foundations and land your spirit in places you never imagined possible, sometimes with you barely noticing that you have been moved.

The worst whirlwinds are the temptations of the adversary. Sin has always been part of the world, but it has never been so accessible, insatiable, and acceptable. There is, of course, a powerful force that will subdue the whirlwinds of sin. It is called repentance.

Not all the whirlwinds in life are of your own making. Some come because of the wrong choices of others, and some come just because this is mortality.

As a young boy, President Boyd K. Packer suffered from the crippling disease of polio. When Elder Dallin H. Oaks was seven years old, his father died suddenly. When Sister Carol F. McConkie of the Young Women general presidency was a teenager, her parents divorced. Challenges will come to you, but as you trust in God, they will strengthen your faith.

In nature, trees that grow up in a windy environment become stronger. As winds whip around a young sapling, forces inside the tree do two things. First, they stimulate the roots to grow faster and spread farther. Second, the forces in the tree start creating cell structures that actually make the trunk and branches thicker and more flexible to the pressure of the wind. These stronger roots and branches protect the tree from winds that are sure to return.4

You are infinitely more precious to God than a tree. You are His son or His daughter. He made your spirit strong and capable of being resilient to the whirlwinds of life. The whirlwinds in your youth, like the wind against a young tree, can increase your spiritual strength, preparing you for the years ahead.

How do you prepare for your whirlwinds? “Remember … 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, … his shafts in the whirlwind, … when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power … to drag you down … because of the rock upon which ye are built.”5 This is your safety in the whirlwind.

President Thomas S. Monson has said, “Where once the standards of the Church and the standards of society were mostly compatible, now there is a wide chasm between us, and it’s growing ever wider.”6 This chasm, for some, stirs strong spiritual whirlwinds. Let me share an example.

This past month the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve published a letter to leaders of the Church across the world. In part it read: “Changes in the civil law do not, indeed cannot, change the moral law that God has established. God expects us to uphold and keep His commandments regardless of divergent opinions or trends in society. His law of chastity is clear: sexual relations are proper only between a man and a woman who are legally and lawfully wedded as husband and wife. We urge you to review … the doctrine contained in ‘The Family: A Proclamation to the World.’”7

As the world slips away from the Lord’s law of chastity, we do not. President Monson said: “The Savior of mankind described Himself as being in the world but not of the world. We also can be in the world but not of the world as we reject false concepts and false teachings and remain true to that which God has commanded.”8

While many governments and well-meaning individuals have redefined marriage, the Lord has not. In the very beginning, God initiated marriage between a man and a woman—Adam and Eve. He designated the purposes of marriage to go far beyond the personal satisfaction and fulfillment of adults to, more importantly, advancing the ideal setting for children to be born, reared, and nurtured. Families are the treasure of heaven.9

Why do we continue to talk about this? As Paul said, “We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.”10 As Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ, we have the responsibility to teach our Creator’s plan for His children and to warn of the consequences of disregarding His commandments.

Recently, I spoke with a Laurel from the United States. I quote from her email:

“This past year some of my friends on Facebook began posting their position on marriage. Many favored same-sex marriage, and several LDS youth indicated they ‘liked’ the postings. I made no comment.

“I decided to declare my belief in traditional marriage in a thoughtful way.

“With my profile picture, I added the caption ‘I believe in marriage between a man and a woman.’ Almost instantly I started receiving messages. ‘You are selfish.’ ‘You are judgmental.’ One compared me to a slave owner. And I received this post from a great friend who is a strong member of the Church: ‘You need to catch up with the times. Things are changing and so should you.’

“I did not fight back,” she said, “but I did not take my statement down.”

She concludes: “Sometimes, as President Monson said, ‘You have to stand alone.’ Hopefully as youth, we will stand together in being true to God and to the teachings of His living prophets.”11

Of special concern to us should be those who struggle with same-sex attraction. It is a whirlwind of enormous velocity. I want to express my love and admiration for those who courageously confront this trial of faith and stay true to the commandments of God!12 But everyone, independent of his or her decisions and beliefs, deserves our kindness and consideration.13

The Savior taught us to love not only our friends but also those who disagree with us—and even those who repudiate us. He said: “For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? … And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others?”14

The Prophet Joseph Smith warned us to “beware of self-righteousness” and to enlarge our hearts toward all men and women until we feel “to take them upon our shoulders.”15 In the gospel of Jesus Christ, there is no place for ridicule, bullying, or bigotry.

If you have a question about counsel from the leaders of the Church, please discuss your honest concerns with your parents and leaders. You need the strength that comes from trusting the Lord’s prophets. President Harold B. Lee said: “The only safety we have as members of this church is to … learn to give heed to the words and commandments that the Lord shall give through His prophet. … There will be some things that take patience and faith. You may not like what comes. … It may contradict your political views … your social views … interfere with … your social life. But if you listen to these things, as if from the mouth of the Lord Himself, … ‘the gates of hell shall not prevail against you … and the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before you …’ (D&C 21:6).”16

Another powerful protection from the whirlwinds of life is the Book of Mormon.

When President Henry B. Eyring was a teenager, his family moved to a new city. He initially found the move unpleasant and made few friends. He felt like he didn’t fit in with the students in his high school. The whirlwinds were swirling. What did he do? He threw his energy into the Book of Mormon, reading it many times.17 Years later, President Eyring testified: “I [love to] go back to the Book of Mormon and drink deeply and often.”18 “[It] is the most powerful written testimony we have that Jesus is the Christ.”19

The Lord has given you another way to stand firm, a spiritual gift more powerful than the whirlwinds of the adversary! He said, “Stand … in holy places, and be not moved.”20

When I was a teenager, there were only 13 temples in the Church. Now there are 142. Eighty-five percent of Church members live within 200 miles (320 km) of a temple. The Lord has given your generation greater access to His holy temples than any other generation in the history of the world.

Have you ever stood in the temple, dressed in white, waiting to do baptisms? How did you feel? There is a tangible feeling of holiness in the temple. The peace of the Savior subdues the swirling whirlwinds of the world.

The way you feel in the temple is a pattern for how you want to feel in your life.21

Find your grandfathers and grandmothers and your distant cousins who have gone before you. Take their names to the temple with you.22 As you learn about your ancestors, you will see patterns of life, of marriage, of children; patterns of righteousness; and occasionally patterns that you will want to avoid.23

Later in the temple you will learn more about the Creation of the world, about the patterns in the lives of Adam and Eve, and most importantly, about our Savior, Jesus Christ.

My young brothers and sisters, how we love you, admire you, and pray for you. Don’t let the whirlwinds drag you down. These are your days—to stand strong as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.24

Build more firmly your foundation upon the rock of your Redeemer.

Treasure more completely His incomparable life and teachings.

Follow more diligently His example and His commandments.

Embrace more deeply His love, His mercy and grace, and the powerful gifts of His Atonement.

As you do, I promise you that you will see the whirlwinds for what they are—tests, temptations, distractions, or challenges to help you grow. And as you live righteously year after year, I assure you that your experiences will confirm to you again and again that Jesus is the Christ. The spiritual rock under your feet will be solid and secure. You will rejoice that God has placed you here to be a part of the final preparations for Christ’s glorious return.

The Savior said, “I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.”25 This is His promise to you. I know this promise is real. I know that He lives, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings, Thoughts or Insights From Your Readings or From the Lesson:**

**Lesson #12**

**Our Need for Spiritual Rebirth**

**Mosiah 3:19**

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 5:1-5, 7-8**

1 And now, it came to pass that when king Benjamin had thus spoken to his people, he sent among them, desiring to know of his people if they believed the words which he had spoken unto them.

2 And they all cried with one voice, saying: Yea, we believe all the words which thou hast spoken unto us; and also, we know of their surety and truth, because of the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, which has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually.

3 And we, ourselves, also, through the infinite goodness of God, and the manifestations of his Spirit, have great views of that which is to come; and were it expedient, we could prophesy of all things.

4 And it is the faith which we have had on the things which our king has spoken unto us that has brought us to this great knowledge, whereby we do rejoice with such exceedingly great joy.

5 And we are willing to enter into a covenant with our God to do his will, and to be obedient to his commandments in all things that he shall command us, all the remainder of our days, that we may not bring upon ourselves a never-ending torment, as has been spoken by the angel, that we may not drink out of the cup of the wrath of God.

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.

**Mosiah 16:2-5**

2 And then shall the wicked be cast out, and they shall have cause to howl, and weep, and wail, and gnash their teeth; and this because they would not hearken unto the voice of the Lord; therefore the Lord redeemeth them not.

3 For they are carnal and devilish, and the devil has power over them; yea, even that old serpent that did beguile our first parents, which was the cause of their fall; which was the cause of all mankind becoming carnal, sensual, devilish, knowing evil from good, subjecting themselves to the devil.

4 Thus all mankind were lost; and behold, they would have been endlessly lost were it not that God redeemed his people from their lost and fallen state.

5 But remember that he that persists in his own carnal nature, and goes on in the ways of sin and rebellion against God, remaineth in his fallen state and the devil hath all power over him. Therefore he is as though there was no redemption made, being an enemy to God; and also is the devil an enemy to God.

**Mosiah 27:24-26**

24 For, said he, I have repented of my sins, and have been redeemed of the Lord; behold I am born of the Spirit.

25 And the Lord said unto me: Marvel not that all mankind, yea, men and women, all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, 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;

26 And thus they become new creatures; and unless they do this, they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God.

**Alma 5:14, 26-27**

14 And now behold, 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?

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?

27 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 come to redeem his people from their sins?

**Alma 41:10-11**

10 Do not suppose, because it has been spoken concerning restoration, that ye shall be restored from sin to happiness. Behold, I say unto you, wickedness never was happiness.

11 And now, my son, all men that are in a state of nature, or I would say, 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.

**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.

**The Atonement and the Journey of Mortality**

**David A. Bednar, *Ensign*, Apr. 2012**

The grand objective of the Savior’s gospel was summarized succinctly by President David O. McKay (1873–1970): “The purpose of the gospel is … to make bad men good and good men better, and to change human nature.”1 Thus, the journey of mortality is to progress from bad to good to better and to experience the mighty change of heart—to have our fallen natures changed (see Mosiah 5:2).

The Book of Mormon is our handbook of instructions as we travel the pathway from bad to good to better and strive to have our hearts changed. King Benjamin teaches about the journey of mortality and the role of the Atonement in navigating successfully that journey: “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” (Mosiah 3:19; emphasis added).

I draw your attention to two specific phrases. First—“putteth off the natural man.” The journey from bad to good is the process of putting off the natural man or the natural woman in each of us. In mortality we all are tempted by the flesh. The very elements out of which our bodies were created are by nature fallen and ever subject to the pull of sin, corruption, and death. But we can increase our capacity to overcome the desires of the flesh and temptations “through the atonement of Christ.” When we make mistakes, as we transgress and sin, we can repent and become clean through the redeeming power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

Second—“becometh a saint.” This phrase describes the continuation and second phase of life’s journey to make “good men better” or, in other words, to become more like a saint. This second part of the journey, this process of going from good to better, is a topic about which we do not study or teach frequently enough nor understand adequately.

I suspect that many Church members are much more familiar with the nature of the redeeming and cleansing power of the Atonement than they are with the strengthening and enabling power. It is one thing to know that Jesus Christ came to earth to die for us—that is fundamental and foundational to the doctrine of Christ. But we also need to appreciate that the Lord desires, through His Atonement and by the power of the Holy Ghost, to live in us—not only to direct us but also to empower us.

Most of us know that when we do wrong things, we need help to overcome the effects of sin in our lives. The Savior has paid the price and made it possible for us to become clean through His redeeming power. Most of us clearly understand that the Atonement is for sinners. I am not so sure, however, that we know and understand that the Atonement is also for saints—for good men and women who are obedient, worthy, and conscientious and who are striving to become better and serve more faithfully. We may mistakenly believe we must make the journey from good to better and become a saint all by ourselves, through sheer grit, willpower, and discipline, and with our obviously limited capacities.

The gospel of the Savior is not simply about avoiding bad in our lives; it also is essentially about doing and becoming good. And the Atonement provides help for us to overcome and avoid bad and to do and become good. Help from the Savior is available for the entire journey of mortality—from bad to good to better and to change our very nature.

I am not suggesting that the redeeming and enabling powers of the Atonement are separate and discrete. Rather, these two dimensions of the Atonement are connected and complementary; they both need to be operational during all phases of the journey of life. And it is eternally important for all of us to recognize that both of these essential elements of the journey of mortality—both putting off the natural man and becoming a saint, both overcoming bad and becoming good—are accomplished through the power of the Atonement. Individual willpower, personal determination and motivation, effective planning and goal setting are necessary but ultimately insufficient for us to triumphantly complete this mortal journey. Truly, we must come to rely upon “the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah” (2 Nephi 2:8).

**Grace and the Enabling Power of the Atonement**

In the Bible Dictionary we learn that the word grace frequently is used in the scriptures to connote enabling power:

“[Grace is] a word that occurs frequently in the New Testament, especially in the writings of Paul. The main idea of the word is divine means of help or strength, given through the bounteous mercy and love of Jesus Christ.

“It is through the grace of the Lord Jesus, made possible by his atoning sacrifice, that mankind will be raised in immortality, every person receiving his body from the grave in a condition of everlasting life. It is likewise through the grace of the Lord that individuals, through faith in the atonement of Jesus Christ and repentance of their sins, receive strength and assistance to do good works that they otherwise would not be able to maintain if left to their own means. This grace is an enabling power that allows men and women to lay hold on eternal life and exaltation after they have expended their own best efforts.”2

Grace is the divine assistance or heavenly help each of us desperately needs to qualify for the celestial kingdom. Thus, the enabling power of the Atonement strengthens us to do and be good and to serve beyond our own individual desire and natural capacity.

In my personal scripture study, I often insert the term “enabling power” whenever I encounter the word grace. Consider, for example, this verse with which we are all familiar: “We know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do” (2 Nephi 25:23). I believe we can learn much about this vital aspect of the Atonement if we will insert “enabling and strengthening power” each time we find the word grace in the scriptures.

**Illustrations and Implications**

The journey of mortality is to go from bad to good to better and to have our very natures changed. The Book of Mormon is replete with examples of disciples and prophets who knew, understood, and were transformed by the enabling power of the Atonement in making that journey. As we come to better understand this sacred power, our gospel perspective will be greatly enlarged and enriched. Such a perspective will change us in remarkable ways.

Nephi is an example of one who knew, understood, and relied upon the enabling power of the Savior. Recall that the sons of Lehi had returned to Jerusalem to enlist Ishmael and his household in their cause. Laman and others in the party traveling with Nephi from Jerusalem back to the wilderness rebelled, and Nephi exhorted his brethren to have faith in the Lord. It was at this point in their journey that Nephi’s brothers bound him with cords and planned his destruction. Please note Nephi’s prayer: “O Lord, according to my faith which is in thee, wilt thou deliver me from the hands of my brethren; yea, even give me strength that I may burst these bands with which I am bound” (1 Nephi 7:17; emphasis added).

Do you know what I likely would have prayed for if I had been tied up by my brothers? “Please get me out of this mess NOW!” It is especially interesting to me that Nephi did not pray to have his circumstances changed. Rather, he prayed for the strength to change his circumstances. And I believe he prayed in this manner precisely because he knew, understood, and had experienced the enabling power of the Atonement.

I do not think the bands with which Nephi was bound just magically fell from his hands and wrists. Rather, I suspect he was blessed with both persistence and personal strength beyond his natural capacity, that he then “in the strength of the Lord” (Mosiah 9:17) worked and twisted and tugged on the cords, and ultimately and literally was enabled to break the bands.

The implication of this episode for each of us is straightforward. As you and I come to understand and employ the enabling power of the Atonement in our personal lives, we will pray and seek for strength to change our circumstances rather than praying for our circumstances to be changed. We will become agents who act rather than objects that are acted upon (see 2 Nephi 2:14).

Consider the example in the Book of Mormon as Alma and his people are persecuted by Amulon. The voice of the Lord came to these good people in their affliction and indicated:

“I will also ease the burdens which are put upon your shoulders, that even you cannot feel them upon your backs. …

“And now it came to pass that the burdens which were laid upon Alma and his brethren were made light; yea, the Lord did strengthen them that they could bear up their burdens with ease, and they did submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord” (Mosiah 24:14–15; emphasis added).

What was changed in this episode? It was not the burden that changed; the challenges and difficulties of persecution were not immediately removed from the people. But Alma and his followers were strengthened, and their increased capacity and strength made the burdens they bore lighter. These good people were empowered through the Atonement to act as agents and impact their circumstances. And “in the strength of the Lord” Alma and his people were then directed to safety in the land of Zarahemla.

You legitimately may be wondering, “What makes the episode with Alma and his people an example of the enabling power of the Atonement?” The answer is found in a comparison of Mosiah 3:19 and Mosiah 24:15.

“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 3:19; emphasis added).

As we progress in the journey of mortality from bad to good to better, as we put off the natural man or woman in each of us, and as we strive to become saints and have our very natures changed, then the attributes detailed in this verse increasingly should describe the type of person you and I are becoming. We will become more childlike, more submissive, more patient, and more willing to submit.

Now compare these characteristics in Mosiah 3:19 with those used to describe Alma and his people: “And they did submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord” (Mosiah 24:15; emphasis added).

I find the parallels between the attributes described in these verses striking and an indication that Alma’s good people were becoming a better people through the enabling power of the Atonement of Christ the Lord.

Recall the story of Alma and Amulek contained in Alma 14. In this incident many faithful Saints had been put to death by fire, and these two servants of the Lord had been imprisoned and beaten. Consider this petition offered by Alma as he prayed in prison: “O Lord, give us strength according to our faith which is in Christ, even unto deliverance” (Alma 14:26; emphasis added).

Here again we see Alma’s understanding of and confidence in the enabling power of the Atonement reflected in his request. And note the result of this prayer:

“And they [Alma and Amulek] broke the cords with which they were bound; and when the people saw this, they began to flee, for the fear of destruction had come upon them. …

“And Alma and Amulek came forth out of the prison, and they were not hurt; for the Lord had granted unto them power, according to their faith which was in Christ” (Alma 14:26, 28; emphasis added).

Once again the enabling power is evident as good people struggle against evil and strive to become even better and serve more effectively “in the strength of the Lord.”

Another example from the Book of Mormon is instructive. In Alma 31, Alma is directing a mission to reclaim the apostate Zoramites, who, after building their Rameumptom, offer a prescribed and prideful prayer.

Notice the plea for strength in Alma’s personal prayer: “O Lord, wilt thou grant unto me that I may have strength, that I may suffer with patience these afflictions which shall come upon me, because of the iniquity of this people” (Alma 31:31; emphasis added).

Alma also prays that his missionary companions will receive a similar blessing: “Wilt thou grant unto them that they may have strength, that they may bear their afflictions which shall come upon them because of the iniquities of this people” (Alma 31:33; emphasis added).

Alma did not pray to have his afflictions removed. He knew he was an agent of the Lord, and he prayed for the power to act and affect his situation.

The key point of this example is contained in the final verse of Alma 31: “[The Lord] gave them strength, that they should suffer no manner of afflictions, save it were swallowed up in the joy of Christ. Now this was according to the prayer of Alma; and this because he prayed in faith” (verse 38; emphasis added).

The afflictions were not removed. But Alma and his companions were strengthened and blessed through the enabling power of the Atonement to “suffer no manner of afflictions, save it were swallowed up in the joy of Christ.” What a marvelous blessing. And what a lesson each of us should learn.

Examples of the enabling power are not found only in the scriptures. Daniel W. Jones was born in 1830 in Missouri, and he joined the Church in California in 1851. In 1856 he participated in the rescue of handcart companies that were stranded in Wyoming by severe snowstorms. After the rescue party had found the suffering Saints, provided what immediate comfort they could, and made arrangements for the sick and the feeble to be transported to Salt Lake City, Daniel and several other young men volunteered to remain with and safeguard the company’s possessions. The food and supplies left with Daniel and his colleagues were meager and rapidly expended. The following quote from Daniel Jones’s personal journal describes the events that followed.

“Game soon became so scarce that we could kill nothing. We ate all the poor meat; one would get hungry eating it. Finally that was all gone, nothing now but hides were left. We made a trial of them. A lot was cooked and eaten without any seasoning and it made the whole company sick. …

“Things looked dark, for nothing remained but the poor raw hides taken from starved cattle. We asked the Lord to direct us what to do. The brethren did not murmur, but felt to trust in God. … Finally I was impressed how to fix the stuff and gave the company advice, telling them how to cook it; for them to scorch and scrape the hair off; this had a tendency to kill and purify the bad taste that scalding gave it. After scraping, boil one hour in plenty of water, throwing the water away which had extracted all the glue, then wash and scrape the hide thoroughly, washing in cold water, then boil to a jelly and let it get cold, and then eat with a little sugar sprinkled on it. This was considerable trouble, but we had little else to do and it was better than starving.

“We asked the Lord to bless our stomachs and adapt them to this food. … On eating now all seemed to relish the feast. We were three days without eating before this second attempt was made. We enjoyed this sumptuous fare for about six weeks.”3

In those circumstances I probably would have prayed for something else to eat: “Heavenly Father, please send me a quail or a buffalo.” It likely would not have occurred to me to pray that my stomach would be strengthened and adapted to the food we had. What did Daniel W. Jones know? He knew about the enabling power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. He did not pray that his circumstances would be changed. He prayed that he would be strengthened to deal with his circumstances. Just as Alma and his people, Amulek, and Nephi were strengthened, Daniel W. Jones had the spiritual insight to know what to ask for in that prayer.

The enabling power of the Atonement of Christ strengthens us to do things we could never do on our own. Sometimes I wonder if in our latter-day world of ease—in our world of microwave ovens and cell phones and air-conditioned cars and comfortable homes—we ever learn to acknowledge our daily dependence upon the enabling power of the Atonement.

Sister Bednar is a remarkably faithful and competent woman, and I have learned important lessons about the strengthening power from her quiet example. I watched her persevere through intense and continuous morning sickness—literally sick all day every day for eight months—during each of her three pregnancies. Together we prayed that she would be blessed, but that challenge was never removed. Instead, she was enabled to do physically what she could not do in her own power. Over the years I have also watched how she has been magnified to handle the mocking and scorn that come from a secular society when a Latter-day Saint woman heeds prophetic counsel and makes the family and the nurturing of children her highest priorities. I thank and pay tribute to Susan for helping me to learn such invaluable lessons.

**The Savior Knows and Understands**

In Alma chapter 7 we learn how and why the Savior is able to provide the enabling power:

“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.

“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” (Alma 7:11–12; emphasis added).

The Savior has suffered not just for our iniquities but also for the inequality, the unfairness, the pain, the anguish, and the emotional distresses that so frequently beset us. There is no physical pain, no anguish of soul, no suffering of spirit, no infirmity or weakness that you or I ever experience during our mortal journey that the Savior did not experience first. You and I in a moment of weakness may cry out, “No one understands. No one knows.” No human being, perhaps, knows. But the Son of God perfectly knows and understands, for He felt and bore our burdens before we ever did. And because He paid the ultimate price and bore that burden, He has perfect empathy and can extend to us His arm of mercy in so many phases of our life. He can reach out, touch, succor—literally run to us—and strengthen us to be more than we could ever be and help us to do that which we could never do through relying upon only our own power.

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

“For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28–30).

I declare my witness of and appreciation for the infinite and eternal sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. I know the Savior lives. I have experienced both His redeeming power and His enabling power, and I testify that these powers are real and available to each of us. Indeed, “in the strength of the Lord” we can do and overcome all things as we press forward on our journey of mortality.

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings, Thoughts or Insights From Your Readings or From the Lesson:**

**Lesson #13**

**The Baptismal Covenant, the Sabbath, and the Sacrament**

**Exodus 31:13, 16-17**

13 Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you.

16 Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant.

17 It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.

**Mosiah 18:8-10, 23**

8 And it came to pass that he said unto them: Behold, here are the waters of Mormon (for thus were they called) and 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;

9 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—

10 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?

23 And he commanded them that they should observe the sabbath day, and keep it holy, and also every day they should give thanks to the Lord their God.

**Mosiah 25:23-24**

23 And now there were seven churches in the land of Zarahemla. And it came to pass that whosoever were desirous to take upon them the name of Christ, or of God, they did join the churches of God;

24 And they were called the people of God. And the Lord did pour out his Spirit upon them, and they were blessed, and prospered in the land.

**3 Nephi 18: 1-11**

1 And it came to pass that Jesus commanded his disciples that they should bring forth some bread and wine unto him.

2 And while they were gone for bread and wine, he commanded the multitude that they should sit themselves down upon the earth.

3 And when the disciples had come with bread and wine, he took of the bread and brake and blessed it; and he gave unto the disciples and commanded that they should eat.

4 And when they had eaten and were filled, he commanded that they should give unto the multitude.

5 And when the multitude had eaten and were filled, he said unto the disciples: Behold there shall one be ordained among you, and to him will I give power that he shall break bread and bless it and give it unto the people of my church, unto all those who shall believe and be baptized in my name.

6 And this shall ye always observe to do, even as I have done, even as I have broken bread and blessed it and given it unto you.

7 And this shall ye do in remembrance of my body, which I have shown unto you. And it shall be a testimony unto the Father that ye do always remember me. And if ye do always remember me ye shall have my Spirit to be with you.

8 And it came to pass that when he said these words, he commanded his disciples that they should take of the wine of the cup and drink of it, and that they should also give unto the multitude that they might drink of it.

9 And it came to pass that they did so, and did drink of it and were filled; and they gave unto the multitude, and they did drink, and they were filled.

10 And when the disciples had done this, Jesus said unto them: Blessed are ye for this thing which ye have done, for this is fulfilling my commandments, and this doth witness unto the Father that ye are willing to do that which I have commanded you.

11 And this shall ye always do to those who repent and are baptized in my name; and ye shall do it in remembrance of my blood, which I have shed for you, that ye may witness unto the Father that ye do always remember me. And if ye do always remember me ye shall have my Spirit to be with you.

**3 Nephi 20:3-9**

3 And it came to pass that he brake bread again and blessed it, and gave to the disciples to eat.

4 And when they had eaten he commanded them that they should break bread, and give unto the multitude.

5 And when they had given unto the multitude he also gave them wine to drink, and commanded them that they should give unto the multitude.

6 Now, there had been no bread, neither wine, brought by the disciples, neither by the multitude;

7 But he truly gave unto them bread to eat, and also wine to drink.

8 And he said unto them: He that eateth this bread eateth of my body to his soul; and he that drinketh of this wine drinketh of my blood to his soul; and his soul shall never hunger nor thirst, but shall be filled.

9 Now, when the multitude had all eaten and drunk, behold, they were filled with the Spirit; and they did cry out with one voice, and gave glory to Jesus, whom they both saw and heard.

**Moroni 4:3**

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

**Moroni 5:2**

2 O God, the Eternal Father, we ask thee, in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this wine to the souls of all those who drink of it, that they may do it in remembrance of the blood of thy Son, which was shed for them; that they may witness unto thee, O God, the Eternal Father, that they do always remember him, that they may have his Spirit to be with them. Amen.

**Moroni 6:4-6**

4 And after they had been received unto baptism, and were wrought upon and cleansed by the power of the Holy Ghost, they were numbered among the people of the church of Christ; and their names were taken, that they might be remembered and nourished by the good word of God, to keep them in the right way, to keep them continually watchful unto prayer, relying alone upon the merits of Christ, who was the author and the finisher of their faith.

5 And the church did meet together oft, to fast and to pray, and to speak one with another concerning the welfare of their souls.

6 And they did meet together oft to partake of bread and wine, in remembrance of the Lord Jesus.

**The Sabbath Is a Delight**

**Russell M. Nelson, *Ensign*, May 2015**

Dear brothers and sisters, these two days of conference have been glorious. We have been uplifted by inspiring music and eloquent prayers. Our spirits have been edified by messages of light and truth. On this Easter Sunday, we again unitedly and sincerely thank God for a prophet!

The question for each of us is: because of what I have heard and felt during this conference, how will I change? Whatever your answer might be, may I invite you also to examine your feelings about, and your behavior on, the Sabbath day.

I am intrigued by the words of Isaiah, who called the Sabbath “a delight.”1 Yet I wonder, is the Sabbath really a delight for you and for me?

I first found delight in the Sabbath many years ago when, as a busy surgeon, I knew that the Sabbath became a day for personal healing. By the end of each week, my hands were sore from repeatedly scrubbing them with soap, water, and a bristle brush. I also needed a breather from the burden of a demanding profession. Sunday provided much-needed relief.

What did the Savior mean when He said that “the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath”?2 I believe He wanted us to understand that the Sabbath was His gift to us, granting real respite from the rigors of daily life and an opportunity for spiritual and physical renewal. God gave us this special day, not for amusement or daily labor but for a rest from duty, with physical and spiritual relief.

In Hebrew, the word Sabbath means “rest.” The purpose of the Sabbath dates back to the Creation of the world, when after six days of labor the Lord rested from the work of creation.3 When He later revealed the Ten Commandments to Moses, God commanded that we “remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.”4 Later, the Sabbath was observed as a reminder of the deliverance of Israel from their bondage in Egypt.5 Perhaps most important, the Sabbath was given as a perpetual covenant, a constant reminder that the Lord may sanctify His people.6

In addition, we now partake of the sacrament on the Sabbath day in remembrance of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.7 Again, we covenant that we are willing to take upon us His holy name.8

The Savior identified Himself as Lord of the Sabbath.9 It is His day! Repeatedly, He has asked us to keep the Sabbath10 or to hallow the Sabbath day.11 We are under covenant to do so.

How do we hallow the Sabbath day? In my much younger years, I studied the work of others who had compiled lists of things to do and things not to do on the Sabbath. It wasn’t until later that I learned from the scriptures that my conduct and my attitude on the Sabbath constituted a sign between me and my Heavenly Father.12 With that understanding, I no longer needed lists of dos and don’ts. When I had to make a decision whether or not an activity was appropriate for the Sabbath, I simply asked myself, “What sign do I want to give to God?” That question made my choices about the Sabbath day crystal clear.

Though the doctrine pertaining to the Sabbath day is of ancient origin, it has been renewed in these latter days as part of a new covenant with a promise. Listen to the power of this divine decree:

“That thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day;

“For verily this is a day appointed unto you to rest from your labors, and to pay thy devotions unto the Most High. …

“And on this day … let thy food be prepared with singleness of heart that thy fasting may be perfect, … that thy joy may be full. …

“And inasmuch as ye do these things with thanksgiving, with cheerful hearts and countenances, … the fulness of the earth is yours.”13

Imagine the scope of that statement! The fulness of the earth is promised to those who keep the Sabbath day holy.14 No wonder Isaiah called the Sabbath “a delight.”

How can you ensure that your behavior on the Sabbath will lead to joy and rejoicing? In addition to your going to church, partaking of the sacrament, and being diligent in your specific call to serve, what other activities would help to make the Sabbath a delight for you? What sign will you give to the Lord to show your love for Him?

The Sabbath provides a wonderful opportunity to strengthen family ties. After all, God wants each of us, as His children, to return to Him as endowed Saints, sealed in the temple as families, to our ancestors, and to our posterity.15

We make the Sabbath a delight when we teach the gospel to our children. Our responsibility as parents is abundantly clear. The Lord said, “Inasmuch as parents have children in Zion … that 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 the hands, when eight years old, the sin be upon the heads of the parents.”16

Years ago the First Presidency stressed the importance of quality family time. They wrote:

“We call upon parents to devote their best efforts to the teaching and rearing of their children in gospel principles which will keep them close to the Church. The home is the basis of a righteous life, and no other instrumentality can take its place or fulfill its essential functions in carrying forward this God-given responsibility.

“We counsel parents and children to give highest priority to family prayer, family home evening, gospel study and instruction, and wholesome family activities. However worthy and appropriate other demands or activities may be, they must not be permitted to displace the divinely-appointed duties that only parents and families can adequately perform.”17

When I ponder this counsel, I almost wish I were a young father once again. Now parents have such wonderful resources available to help them make family time more meaningful, on the Sabbath and other days as well. They have LDS.org, Mormon.org, the Bible videos, the Mormon Channel, the Media Library, the Friend, the New Era, the Ensign, the Liahona, and more—much more. These resources are so very helpful to parents in discharging their sacred duty to teach their children. No other work transcends that of righteous, intentional parenting!

As you teach the gospel, you will learn more. This is the Lord’s way of helping you to comprehend His gospel. He said:

“I give unto you a commandment that you shall teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom.

“Teach ye diligently … , that you may be instructed more perfectly … in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God.”18

Such study of the gospel makes the Sabbath a delight. This promise pertains regardless of family size, composition, or location.

In addition to time with family, you can experience true delight on the Sabbath from family history work. Searching for and finding family members who have preceded you on earth—those who did not have an opportunity to accept the gospel while here—can bring immense joy.

I have seen this firsthand. Several years ago, my dear wife Wendy determined to learn how to do family history research. Her progress at first was slow, but little by little she learned how easy it is to do this sacred work. And I have never seen her happier. You too need not travel to other countries or even to a family history center. At home, with the aid of a computer or mobile device, you can identify souls who are yearning for their ordinances. Make the Sabbath a delight by finding your ancestors and liberating them from spirit prison!19

Make the Sabbath a delight by rendering service to others, especially those who are not feeling well or those who are lonely or in need.20 Lifting their spirits will lift yours as well.

When Isaiah described the Sabbath as “a delight,” he also taught us how to make it delightful. He said:

“If thou turn away … from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, … and shalt honour [the Lord], not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words:

“Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord.”21

Not pursuing your “own pleasure” on the Sabbath requires self-discipline. You may have to deny yourself of something you might like. If you choose to delight yourself in the Lord, you will not permit yourself to treat it as any other day. Routine and recreational activities can be done some other time.

Think of this: In paying tithing, we return one-tenth of our increase to the Lord. In keeping the Sabbath holy, we reserve one day in seven as His. So it is our privilege to consecrate both money and time to Him who lends us life each day.22

Faith in God engenders a love for the Sabbath; faith in the Sabbath engenders a love for God. A sacred Sabbath truly is a delight.

Now, as this conference comes to a close, we know that wherever we live we are to be examples of the believers among our families, neighbors, and friends.23 True believers keep the Sabbath day holy.

I conclude with the farewell plea of Moroni, as he closed the Book of Mormon. He wrote, “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 … are ye sanctified in Christ.”24

With love in my heart, I leave this with you as my prayer, testimony, and blessing in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings, Thoughts or Insights From Your Readings or From the Lesson:**

**Lesson #14**

**God’s Power of Deliverance**

**1 Nephi 1:20**

20 And when the Jews heard these things they were angry with him; yea, even as with the prophets of old, whom they had cast out, and stoned, and slain; and they also sought his life, that they might take it away. But behold, I, Nephi, will show unto you that the tender mercies of the Lord are over all those whom he hath chosen, because of their faith, to make them mighty even unto the power of deliverance.

**1 Nephi 6:4**

4 For the fulness of mine intent is that I may persuade men to come unto the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, and be saved.

**Mosiah 7:33**

33 But if ye will turn to the Lord with full purpose of heart, and put your trust in him, and serve him with all diligence of mind, if ye do this, he will, according to his own will and pleasure, deliver you out of bondage.

**Mosiah 21:2-5, 14-16**

2 And it came to pass that after many days the Lamanites began again to be stirred up in anger against the Nephites, and they began to come into the borders of the land round about.

3 Now they durst not slay them, because of the oath which their king had made unto Limhi; but they would smite them on their cheeks, and exercise authority over them; and began to put heavy burdens upon their backs, and drive them as they would a dumb ass—

4 Yea, all this was done that the word of the Lord might be fulfilled.

5 And now the afflictions of the Nephites were great, and there was no way that they could deliver themselves out of their hands, for the Lamanites had surrounded them on every side.

14 And they did humble themselves even in the depths of humility; and they did cry mightily to God; yea, even all the day long did they cry unto their God that he would deliver them out of their afflictions.

15 And now the Lord was slow to hear their cry because of their iniquities; nevertheless the Lord did hear their cries, and began to soften the hearts of the Lamanites that they began to ease their burdens; yet the Lord did not see fit to deliver them out of bondage.

16 And it came to pass that they began to prosper by degrees in the land, and began to raise grain more abundantly, and flocks, and herds, that they did not suffer with hunger.

**Mosiah 23:23-24**

23 For behold, I will show unto you that they were brought into bondage, and none could deliver them but the Lord their God, yea, even the God of Abraham and Isaac and of Jacob.

24 And it came to pass that he did deliver them, and he did show forth his mighty power unto them, and great were their rejoicings.

**Mosiah 24:13-15, 21**

13 And it came to pass that the voice of the Lord came to them in their afflictions, saying: Lift up your heads and be of good comfort, for I know of the covenant which ye have made unto me; and I will covenant with my people and deliver them out of bondage.

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.

15 And now it came to pass that the burdens which were laid upon Alma and his brethren were made light; yea, the Lord did strengthen them that they could bear up their burdens with ease, and they did submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord.

21 Yea, and in the valley of Alma they poured out their thanks to God because he had been merciful unto them, and eased their burdens, and had delivered them out of bondage; for they were in bondage, and none could deliver them except it were the Lord their God.

**Mosiah 29:20**

20 But behold, he did deliver them because they did humble themselves before him; and because they cried mightily unto him he did deliver them out of bondage; and thus doth the Lord work with his power in all cases among the children of men, extending the arm of mercy towards them that put their trust in him.

**Alma 34:9**

9 For it is 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; yea, all are hardened; yea, all are fallen and are lost, and must perish except it be through the atonement which it is expedient should be made.

**Alma 36:1-3, 27-29**

1 My son, give ear to my words; for I swear unto you, that inasmuch as ye shall keep the commandments of God ye shall prosper in the land.

2 I would that ye should do as I have done, in remembering the captivity of our fathers; for they were in bondage, and none could deliver them except it was the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; and he surely did deliver them in their afflictions.

3 And now, O my son Helaman, behold, thou art in thy youth, and therefore, 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.

27 And I have been supported under trials and troubles of every kind, yea, and in all manner of afflictions; yea, God has delivered me from prison, and from bonds, and from death; yea, and I do put my trust in him, and he will still deliver me.

28 And I know that he will raise me up at the last day, to dwell with him in glory; yea, and I will praise him forever, for he has brought our fathers out of Egypt, and he has swallowed up the Egyptians in the Red Sea; and he led them by his power into the promised land; yea, and he has delivered them out of bondage and captivity from time to time.

29 Yea, and he has also brought our fathers out of the land of Jerusalem; and he has also, by his everlasting power, delivered them out of bondage and captivity, from time to time even down to the present day; and I have always retained in remembrance their captivity; yea, and ye also ought to retain in remembrance, as I have done, their captivity.

**Alma 58:10-11**

10 Therefore we did pour out our souls in prayer to God, that he would strengthen us and deliver us out of the hands of our enemies, yea, and also give us strength that we might retain our cities, and our lands, and our possessions, for the support of our people.

11 Yea, and it came to pass that the Lord our God did visit us with assurances that he would deliver us; yea, insomuch that he did speak peace to our souls, and did grant unto us great faith, and did cause us that we should hope for our deliverance in him.

**Helaman 5:9**

9 O remember, remember, my sons, the words which king Benjamin spake unto his people; yea, remember that there is no other way nor means whereby man can be saved, only through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, who shall come; yea, remember that he cometh to redeem the world.

**3 Nephi 4:33**

33 And their hearts were swollen with joy, unto the gushing out of many tears, because of the great goodness of God in delivering them out of the hands of their enemies; and they knew it was because of their repentance and their humility that they had been delivered from an everlasting destruction.

**The Power of Deliverance**

**L. Tom Perry, *Ensign*, May 2012**

I have a very good friend who sends me a new tie to wear during the session I speak at each general conference. He has excellent taste, don’t you think?

My young friend has some difficult challenges. They limit him in some ways, but in other ways he is extraordinary. For example, his boldness as a missionary rivals the sons of Mosiah. The simplicity of his beliefs makes his convictions incredibly firm and steady. I believe that in Scott’s mind it’s unimaginable that everyone isn’t a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and that everyone hasn’t read the Book of Mormon and doesn’t have a testimony of its truthfulness.

Let me tell you of an event in Scott’s life when he was making his first airplane flight alone to visit his brother. A neighbor who was seated nearby overheard Scott’s conversation with the person next to him:

“Hello, my name is Scott. What is yours?”

His seatmate shared his name.

“What do you do?”

“I am an engineer.”

“That’s nice. Where do you live?”

“In Las Vegas.”

“We have a temple there. Do you know where the Mormon temple is?”

“Yes. It is a beautiful building.”

“Are you a Mormon?”

“No.”

“Well, you should be. It is a great religion. Have you read the Book of Mormon?”

“No.”

“Well, you should. It’s a great book.”

I agree wholeheartedly with Scott—the Book of Mormon is a great book. The words of the Prophet Joseph Smith cited on the introduction page of the Book of Mormon have always resonated with me: “I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.”

This year in our Sunday School classes, we are studying the Book of Mormon. As we prepare and participate, may we be motivated to follow Scott’s bold example to share our love of this special scripture with others not of our faith.

A dominant theme of the Book of Mormon is expressed in the final verse of the first chapter of 1 Nephi. Nephi writes, “But behold, I, Nephi, will show unto you that the tender mercies of the Lord are over all those whom he hath chosen, because of their faith, to make them mighty even unto the power of deliverance” (1 Nephi 1:20).

I wish to speak about how the Book of Mormon, which is a tender mercy of the Lord preserved for these latter days, delivers us by teaching us in a pure and “most correct” way the doctrine of Christ.

Many of the stories of the Book of Mormon are stories of deliverance. Lehi’s departure into the wilderness with his family was about deliverance from the destruction of Jerusalem. The story of the Jaredites is a story of deliverance, as is the story of the Mulekites. Alma the Younger was delivered from sin. Helaman’s stripling warriors were delivered in battle. Nephi and Lehi were delivered from prison. The theme of deliverance is evident throughout the entire Book of Mormon.

There are two stories in the Book of Mormon which are very similar and teach an important lesson. The first is from the book of Mosiah, starting with the 19th chapter. Here we learn of King Limhi living in the land of Nephi. The Lamanites had waged war against the people of Limhi. The result of the war was that the Lamanites would allow King Limhi to rule over his own people, but they would be in bondage to them. It was a very uneasy peace. (See Mosiah 19–20.)

When Limhi’s people had their fill of Lamanite abuses, they convinced their king to go against the Lamanites in battle. Three times Limhi’s people were defeated. Heavy burdens were laid upon them. Finally they humbled themselves and cried mightily unto the Lord that He would deliver them. (See Mosiah 21:1–14.) Verse 15 of chapter 21 tells us of the Lord’s response: “And now the Lord was slow to hear their cry because of their iniquities; nevertheless the Lord did hear their cries, and began to soften the hearts of the Lamanites that they began to ease their burdens; yet the Lord did not see fit to deliver them out of bondage.”

Soon after, Ammon and a small band of men from Zarahemla arrived, and with Gideon—one of the leaders of Limhi’s people—they worked out a plan which was successful, and they escaped from the Lamanite abuses. The Lord was slow to hear their cries. Why? Because of their iniquities.

The second story is similar in many respects but also different. The account is recorded in Mosiah 24.

Alma and his people had settled in the land of Helam, when an army of the Lamanites came into the borders of the land. They met and worked out a peaceful solution. (See Mosiah 23:25–29.) Soon the leaders of the Lamanites began to impose their will on the people of Alma and placed heavy burdens on them to bear (see Mosiah 24:8). In verse 13 we read, “And it came to pass that the voice of the Lord came to them in their afflictions, saying: Lift up your heads and be of good comfort, for I know of the covenant which ye have made unto me; and I will covenant with my people and deliver them out of bondage.”

The people of Alma were delivered from the hands of the Lamanites and safely made their way back to be united with the people of Zarahemla.

What was the difference between the people of Alma and the people of King Limhi? Obviously, there were several differences: the people of Alma were peaceful and more righteous; they had already been baptized and entered into a covenant with the Lord; they humbled themselves before the Lord even before their tribulations started. All these differences made it appropriate and fair that the Lord would deliver them quickly in a miraculous way from the hand which kept them in bondage. These scriptures teach us of the Lord’s power of deliverance.

Prophecies foretelling the life and mission of Jesus Christ promise us the deliverance that He will provide. His Atonement and Resurrection provide all of us an escape from physical death and, if we repent, an escape from spiritual death, bringing with it the blessings of eternal life. The promises of the Atonement and Resurrection, the promises of deliverance from physical and spiritual death, were declared by God to Moses when He said, “For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39).

In contrast to the beautifully designed beliefs for us in the holy scriptures, we find the opposing forces of secularism engaged in challenging the long-standing beliefs in the holy writings—writings which have given us guidance through these many centuries in defining the eternal values and standards for our conduct through life. They declare that the teachings in the Bible are false and the teachings of the Master out of date. Their voices cry that each person must have the freedom to set his or her own standards; they attempt to alter the rights of the believers, contrary to that which is taught in the scriptures and in the words of the prophets.

What a blessing it is to have the account of the mission of our Lord and Savior declared in the Book of Mormon to add a second witness to the doctrine declared in the Bible. Why is it important for the world to have both the Bible and the Book of Mormon? I believe the answer is found in the 13th chapter of 1 Nephi. Nephi records: “And the angel spake unto me, saying: These last records, which thou hast seen among the Gentiles [the Book of Mormon], shall establish the truth of the first [the Bible], which are of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, and shall make known the plain and precious things which have been taken away from them; and shall make known to all kindreds, tongues, and people, that the Lamb of God is the Son of the Eternal Father, and the Savior of the world; and that all men must come unto him, or they cannot be saved” (verse 40).

Neither the Bible nor the Book of Mormon in and of themselves is sufficient. Both are necessary for us to teach and learn about the full and complete doctrine of Christ. The need for the other does not diminish either one of them. Both the Bible and the Book of Mormon are necessary for our salvation and exaltation. As President Ezra Taft Benson so powerfully taught, “When used together, the Bible and the Book of Mormon confound false doctrines” (“A New Witness for Christ,” Ensign, Nov. 1984, 8).

I want to close by noting two stories—one from the Old Testament, the other from the Book of Mormon—to show how the books work harmoniously together.

The story of Abraham begins with his deliverance from the idol-worshipping Chaldeans (see Genesis 11:27–31; Abraham 2:1–4). He and his wife Sarah were later delivered from their sorrow and promised that through their posterity all the nations of the earth would be blessed (see Genesis 18:18).

The Old Testament contains the account of Abraham taking Lot, his nephew, with him out of Egypt. Given a choice of land, Lot chose the plain of Jordan, and he pitched his tent facing Sodom, a city of great wickedness. (See Genesis 13:1–12.) Most of the problems that Lot later encountered in his life, and there were several, can be traced back to his early decision to position the door of his tent to look upon Sodom.

Abraham, the father of the faithful, experienced life differently. Certainly there were many challenges, but it was to be a blessed life. We do not know which way Abraham’s tent door faced, but there’s a strong hint in the last verse of the 13th chapter of Genesis. It reports, “Then Abram [or Abraham] removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the Lord” (Genesis 13:18).

While I do not know, I personally believe the door of Abraham’s tent faced the altar he built unto the Lord. How do I draw this conclusion? It is because I know the Book of Mormon story about King Benjamin’s instructions to his people when they gathered to hear his final address. King Benjamin instructed them to position the doors of their tents facing the temple (see Mosiah 2:1–6).

We can be delivered from the ways of evil and wickedness by turning to the teachings of the holy scriptures. The Savior is the Great Deliverer, for He delivers us from death and from sin (see Romans 11:26; 2 Nephi 9:12).

I declare that Jesus is the Christ and that we can draw close to Him by reading the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon is another testament of Jesus Christ. The first testaments of our Savior are the Old and New Testaments—or the Bible.

Again, let’s remember my friend Scott’s description of the Book of Mormon: “It’s a great book.” I testify to you that much of the Book of Mormon’s greatness stems from its harmony with the Holy Bible, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings, Thoughts or Insights From Your Readings or From the Lesson**:

**Lesson #15**

**Becoming Instruments in the Hands of God**

**1 Nephi 13:37**

37 And blessed are they who shall seek to bring forth my Zion at that day, for they shall have the gift and the power of the Holy Ghost; and if they endure unto the end they shall be lifted up at the last day, and shall be saved in the everlasting kingdom of the Lamb; and whoso shall publish peace, yea, tidings of great joy, how beautiful upon the mountains shall they be.

**Mosiah 15:14-19, 26-28**

14 And these are they who have published peace, who have brought good tidings of good, who have published salvation; and said unto Zion: Thy God reigneth!

15 And O how beautiful upon the mountains were their feet!

16 And again, how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those that are still publishing peace!

17 And again, how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those who shall hereafter publish peace, yea, from this time henceforth and forever!

18 And behold, I say unto you, this is not all. For O how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that is the founder of peace, yea, even the Lord, who has redeemed his people; yea, him who has granted salvation unto his people;

19 For were it not for the redemption which he hath made for his people, which was prepared from the foundation of the world, I say unto you, were it not for this, all mankind must have perished.

26 But behold, and fear, and tremble before God, for ye ought to tremble; for the Lord redeemeth none such that rebel against him and die in their sins; yea, even all those that have perished in their sins ever since the world began, that have wilfully rebelled against God, that have known the commandments of God, and would not keep them; these are they that have no part in the first resurrection.

27 Therefore ought ye not to tremble? For salvation cometh to none such; for the Lord hath redeemed none such; yea, neither can the Lord redeem such; for he cannot deny himself; for he cannot deny justice when it has its claim.

28 And now I say unto you that the time shall come that the salvation of the Lord shall be declared to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.

**Mosiah 28:3**

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 17: 2-3, 6, 9-12, 16, 25**

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.

6 Now these were their journeyings: Having taken leave of their father, Mosiah, in the first year of the judges; having refused the kingdom which their father was desirous to confer upon them, and also this was the minds of the people;

9 And it came to pass that they journeyed many days in the wilderness, and they fasted much and prayed much that the Lord would grant unto them a portion of his Spirit to go with them, and abide with them, that they might be an instrument in the hands of God to bring, if it were possible, their brethren, the Lamanites, to the knowledge of the truth, to the knowledge of the baseness of the traditions of their fathers, which were not correct.

10 And it came to pass that the Lord did visit them with his Spirit, and said unto them: Be comforted. And they were comforted.

11 And the Lord said unto them also: Go forth among the Lamanites, thy brethren, and establish my word; yet ye shall be patient in long-suffering and afflictions, that ye may show forth good examples unto them in me, and I will make an instrument of thee in my hands unto the salvation of many souls.

12 And it came to pass that the hearts of the sons of Mosiah, and also those who were with them, took courage to go forth unto the Lamanites to declare unto them the word of God.

16 Therefore, this was the cause for which the sons of Mosiah had undertaken the work, that perhaps they might bring them unto repentance; that perhaps they might bring them to know of the plan of redemption.

25 But Ammon said unto him: Nay, but I will be thy servant. Therefore Ammon became a servant to king Lamoni. And it came to pass that he was set among other servants to watch the flocks of Lamoni, according to the custom of the Lamanites.

**Alma 18:10, 33-35**

10 Now when king Lamoni heard that Ammon was preparing his horses and his chariots he was more astonished, because of the faithfulness of Ammon, saying: Surely there has not been any servant among all my servants that has been so faithful as this man; for even he doth remember all my commandments to execute them.

33 And king Lamoni said: I believe all these things which thou hast spoken. Art thou sent from God?

34 Ammon said unto him: I am a man; and man in the beginning was created after the image of God, and I am called by his Holy Spirit to teach these things unto this people, that they may be brought to a knowledge of that which is just and true;

35 And a portion of that Spirit dwelleth in me, which giveth me knowledge, and also power according to my faith and desires which are in God.

**Alma 21:16**

16 And they went forth whithersoever they were led by the Spirit of the Lord, preaching the word of God in every synagogue of the Amalekites, or in every assembly of the Lamanites where they could be admitted.

**Alma 22:1, 12-14**

1 Now, as Ammon was thus teaching the people of Lamoni continually, we will return to the account of Aaron and his brethren; for after he departed from the land of Middoni he was led by the Spirit to the land of Nephi, even to the house of the king which was over all the land save it were the land of Ishmael; and he was the father of Lamoni.

12 And it came to pass that when Aaron saw that the king would believe his words, he began from the creation of Adam, reading the scriptures unto the king—how God created man after his own image, and that God gave him commandments, and that because of transgression, man had fallen.

13 And Aaron did expound unto him the scriptures from the creation of Adam, laying the fall of man before him, and their carnal state and also the plan of redemption, which was prepared from the foundation of the world, through Christ, for all whosoever would believe on his name.

14 And since man had fallen he could not merit anything of himself; but the sufferings and death of Christ atone for their sins, through faith and repentance, and so forth; and that he breaketh the bands of death, that the grave shall have no victory, and that the sting of death should be swallowed up in the hopes of glory; and Aaron did expound all these things unto the king.

**Alma 23:5-6**

5 And thousands were brought to the knowledge of the Lord, yea, thousands were brought to believe in the traditions of the Nephites; and they were taught the records and prophecies which were handed down even to the present time.

6 And as sure as the Lord liveth, so sure as many as believed, or as many as were brought to the knowledge of the truth, through the preaching of Ammon and his brethren, according to the spirit of revelation and of prophecy, and the power of God working miracles in them—yea, I say unto you, as the Lord liveth, as many of the Lamanites as believed in their preaching, and were converted unto the Lord, never did fall away.

**Alma 26:2-5, 11-12, 15, 26-29**

2 And now, I ask, what great blessings has he bestowed upon us? Can ye tell?

3 Behold, I answer for you; for our brethren, the Lamanites, were in darkness, yea, even in the darkest abyss, but behold, how many of them are brought to behold the marvelous light of God! And this is the blessing which hath been bestowed upon us, that we have been made instruments in the hands of God to bring about this great work.

4 Behold, thousands of them do rejoice, and have been brought into the fold of God.

5 Behold, the field was ripe, and blessed are ye, for ye did thrust in the sickle, and did reap with your might, yea, all the day long did ye labor; and behold the number of your sheaves! And they shall be gathered into the garners, that they are not wasted.

11 But Ammon said unto him: I do not boast in my own strength, nor in my own wisdom; but behold, my joy is full, yea, my heart is brim with joy, and I will rejoice in my God.

12 Yea, I know that I am nothing; as to my strength I am weak; therefore I will not boast of myself, but I will boast of my God, for in his strength I can do all things; yea, behold, many mighty miracles we have wrought in this land, for which we will praise his name forever.

15 Yea, they were encircled about with everlasting darkness and destruction; but behold, he has brought them into his everlasting light, yea, into everlasting salvation; and they are encircled about with the matchless bounty of his love; yea, and we have been instruments in his hands of doing this great and marvelous work.

26 But behold, my beloved brethren, we came into the wilderness not with the intent to destroy our brethren, but with the intent that perhaps we might save some few of their souls.

27 Now when our hearts were depressed, and we were about to turn back, behold, the Lord comforted us, and said: Go amongst thy brethren, the Lamanites, and bear with patience thine afflictions, and I will give unto you success.

28 And now behold, we have come, and been forth amongst them; and we have been patient in our sufferings, and we have suffered every privation; yea, we have traveled from house to house, relying upon the mercies of the world—not upon the mercies of the world alone but upon the mercies of God.

29 And we have entered into their houses and taught them, and we have taught them in their streets; yea, and we have taught them upon their hills; and we have also entered into their temples and their synagogues and taught them; and we have been cast out, and mocked, and spit upon, and smote upon our cheeks; and we have been stoned, and taken and bound with strong cords, and cast into prison; and through the power and wisdom of God we have been delivered again.

**Alma 29:9-10**

9 I know that which the Lord hath commanded me, and I glory in it. I do not glory of myself, but I glory in that which the Lord hath commanded me; yea, and this is my glory, that perhaps I may be an instrument in the hands of God to bring some soul to repentance; and this is my joy.

10 And behold, when I see many of my brethren truly penitent, and coming to the Lord their God, then is my soul filled with joy; then do I remember what the Lord has done for me, yea, even that he hath heard my prayer; yea, then do I remember his merciful arm which he extended towards me.

**Alma 31:30-34**

30 O Lord God, how long wilt thou suffer that such wickedness and infidelity shall be among this people? O Lord, wilt thou give me strength, that I may bear with mine infirmities. For I am infirm, and such wickedness among this people doth pain my soul.

31 O Lord, my heart is exceedingly sorrowful; wilt thou comfort my soul in Christ. O Lord, wilt thou grant unto me that I may have strength, that I may suffer with patience these afflictions which shall come upon me, because of the iniquity of this people.

32 O Lord, wilt thou comfort my soul, and give unto me success, and also my fellow laborers who are with me—yea, Ammon, and Aaron, and Omner, and also Amulek and Zeezrom, and also my two sons—yea, even all these wilt thou comfort, O Lord. Yea, wilt thou comfort their souls in Christ.

33 Wilt thou grant unto them that they may have strength, that they may bear their afflictions which shall come upon them because of the iniquities of this people.

34 O Lord, wilt thou grant unto us that we may have success in bringing them again unto thee in Christ.

**Put Your Trust in the Lord**

**M. Russell Ballard, *Ensign*, Nov. 2013**

Sister Ballard and I recently returned from an assignment to five countries in Europe. There we had the privilege of meeting with many of our missionaries, perhaps some of your sons and your daughters. Since President Thomas S. Monson’s announcement of the lowering of the age for our young men and our young women to serve, I have had the privilege of meeting with over 3,000 of them. The Light of Christ radiates in their faces, and they are eager to move the work forward—to find and teach, to baptize, to activate, and to strengthen and to build the kingdom of God. Meeting with them, one quickly comes to know, however, that they cannot do this work alone. Today I want to speak to all members of the Church, because there is an urgency for each one of us to be engaged in sharing the gospel.

As has been quoted many times, the Prophet Joseph Smith declared that “after all that has been said, the greatest and most important duty is to preach the Gospel” (Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith [2007], 330).

In 1974 President Spencer W. Kimball said this: “Perhaps the greatest reason for missionary work is to give the world its chance to hear and accept the gospel. The scriptures are replete with commands and promises and calls and rewards for teaching the gospel. I use the word command deliberately for it seems to be an insistent directive from which we, singly and collectively, cannot escape” (“When the World Will Be Converted,” Ensign, Oct. 1974, 4).

In July of that same year, Sister Ballard and I left with our children to preside over the Canada Toronto Mission. The words of President Kimball were ringing in my ears, especially when he said: “My brethren, I wonder if we are doing all we can. Are we complacent in our approach to teaching all the world? We have been proselyting now 144 years. Are we prepared to lengthen our stride? To enlarge our vision?” (Ensign, Oct. 1974, 5).

He also asked us to quicken our pace, working together to build up the Church and kingdom of God.

This past June President Thomas S. Monson echoed exactly the same message to members of the Church. The President said: “Now is the time for members and missionaries to come together … [and] labor in the Lord’s vineyard to bring souls unto Him. He has prepared the means for us to share the gospel in a multitude of ways, and He will assist us in our labors if we will act in faith to fulfill His work” (“Faith in the Work of Salvation” [address given at a special broadcast, June 23, 2013]; lds.org/broadcasts).

It is good, brothers and sisters, to reflect on the teachings of the prophets from the time of Joseph Smith to today. They have encouraged and called upon the leadership and the members of the Church to be anxiously engaged in bringing the message of the Restoration of the gospel to all of our Heavenly Father’s children in all of the world.

My message this afternoon is that the Lord is hastening His work. In our day this can be done only when every member of the Church reaches out with love to share the truths of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. We need to work together in partnership with our 80,000 missionaries now serving. Information about this great work, especially the assignments for the stake and ward council leaders, is clearly outlined on the LDS.org website entitled “Hastening the Work of Salvation.”

We know from our research that most active members of the Church want the blessings of the gospel to be part of the lives of others whom they love, even those whom they have never met. But we also know that many members hesitate to do missionary work and share the gospel for two basic reasons.

The first one is fear. Many members do not even pray for opportunities to share the gospel, fearing that they might receive divine promptings to do something they think they are not capable of doing.

The second reason is misunderstanding of what missionary work is.

We know that when someone gets up to give a talk in sacrament meeting and says, “Today I’ll be talking about missionary work,” or perhaps even when Elder Ballard gets up in general conference and says the same thing, some of you listening may think, “Oh no, not again; we have heard this before.”

Now, we know that no one likes feeling guilty. Perhaps you feel you may be asked to do unrealistic things in your relationships with friends or neighbors. With the help of the Lord, let me remove any fear you or any of our full-time missionaries may have in sharing the gospel with others.

Make the decision to do what Jesus Christ has asked us to do. The Savior has said:

“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:

“For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

“Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?

“Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?

“If ye … know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?” (Matthew 7:7–11).

Brothers and sisters, fear will be replaced with faith and confidence when members and the full-time missionaries kneel in prayer and ask the Lord to bless them with missionary opportunities. Then, we must demonstrate our faith and watch for opportunities to introduce the gospel of Jesus Christ to our Heavenly Father’s children, and surely those opportunities will come. These opportunities will never require a forced or a contrived response. They will flow as a natural result of our love for our brothers and sisters. Just be positive, and those whom you speak with will feel your love. They will never forget that feeling, though the timing may not be right for them to embrace the gospel. That too may change in the future when their circumstances change.

It is impossible for us to fail when we do our best when we are on the Lord’s errand. While the outcome is a result of the exercise of one’s agency, sharing the gospel is our responsibility.

Trust the Lord. He is the Good Shepherd. He knows His sheep, and His sheep know His voice; and today the voice of the Good Shepherd is your voice and my voice. And if we are not engaged, many who would hear the message of the Restoration will be passed by. Simply stated, it’s a matter of faith and action on our part. The principles are pretty simple—pray, personally and in your family, for missionary opportunities. The Lord has said in the Doctrine and Covenants that many people have been kept from the truth only “because they know not where to find it” (D&C 123:12).

You don’t have to be an outgoing person or an eloquent, persuasive teacher. If you have an abiding love and hope within you, the Lord has promised if you “lift up your voices unto this people [and] speak the thoughts that [He] shall put into your hearts, … you shall not be confounded before men;

“[And] it shall be given you … in the very moment, what ye shall say” (D&C 100:5–6).

Preach My Gospel reminds all of us that “nothing happens in missionary work until [we] find someone to teach. Talk with as many people as you can each day. It is natural to be somewhat apprehensive about talking to people, but you can pray for the faith and strength to be more bold in opening your mouth to proclaim the restored gospel” ([2004], 156–57). You full-time missionaries, if you want to teach more, you must talk to more people every day. This has always been what the Lord has sent missionaries forth to do.

The Lord knows us. He knows we have our challenges. I realize that some of you may feel heavy laden, but I pray that none of you would ever feel that reaching out in normal, pleasant ways to share the gospel would ever be a burden. Rather, it is a privilege! There is no greater joy in life than being anxiously engaged in the service of the Lord.

The key is that you be inspired of God, that you ask Him for direction and then go and do as the Spirit prompts you. When members view the work of salvation as their responsibility alone, it can be intimidating. When they view it as an invitation to follow the Lord in bringing souls unto Him to be taught by the full-time elders and sisters, it is inspiring, invigorating, and uplifting.

We are not asking everyone to do everything. We are simply asking all members to pray, knowing that if every member, young and old, will reach out to just “one” between now and Christmas, millions will feel the love of the Lord Jesus Christ. And what a wonderful gift to the Savior.

Six weeks ago I received a letter from a very successful member missionary family, the Munns family of Florida. They wrote:

“Dear Elder Ballard, 30 minutes after the worldwide broadcast on hastening the work of salvation, we held our family missionary council. We were thrilled to find that our teenage grandchildren wanted to be included. We’re happy to report that since our council meeting, we have expanded our family teaching pool by 200 percent.

“We have had grandchildren bring friends to church, have enjoyed sacrament meetings with some of our less-active friends, and have had some of our new contacts commit to take the missionary discussions. One of our less-active sisters has not only returned to church but has brought new investigators with her.

“No one has turned down the invitation to take the missionary discussions. What an exciting time to be a member of this Church” (personal letter, Aug. 15, 2013).

Heed the promptings of the Spirit. Supplicate the Lord in mighty prayer. Become engaged in doing what you can in sharing the great message of the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I quote from another successful member missionary, Clayton Christensen: “Every time you take someone figuratively by the hand and introduce him or her to Jesus Christ, you will feel how deeply our Savior loves you and loves the person whose hand is in yours” (The Power of Everyday Missionaries: The What and How of Sharing the Gospel [2013], 1).

God bless you, brothers and sisters, to find the great joy that comes from experiencing miracles through your faith. As we are taught in Moroni chapter 7:

“Christ hath said: If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me. …

“… For it is by faith that miracles are wrought; and it is by faith that angels appear and minister unto men; wherefore, if these things have ceased wo be unto the children of men, for it is because of unbelief, and all is vain” (Moroni 7:33, 37).

From my own experience I can testify to you that the Lord will hear your prayers and you will have many opportunities now and for years to come to introduce the gospel of Jesus Christ to Heavenly Father’s precious children. President Monson, we have listened. We will all seek to find the one. I pray that all of us may experience the great joy that comes from missionary service, in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings, Thoughts or Insights From Your Readings or From the Lesson:**

**Lesson #16**

**Repentance and Forgiveness**

**Enos 1:4-8**

4 And my soul hungered; and I kneeled down before my Maker, and I cried unto him in mighty prayer and supplication for mine own soul; and all the day long did I cry unto him; yea, and when the night came I did still raise my voice high that it reached the heavens.

5 And there came a voice unto me, saying: Enos, thy sins are forgiven thee, and thou shalt be blessed.

6 And I, Enos, knew that God could not lie; wherefore, my guilt was swept away.

7 And I said: Lord, how is it done?

8 And he said unto me: Because of thy faith in Christ, whom thou hast never before heard nor seen. And many years pass away before he shall manifest himself in the flesh; wherefore, go to, thy faith hath made thee whole.

**Mosiah 4:1-3, 11-12, 26**

1 And now, it came to pass that when king Benjamin had made an end of speaking the words which had been delivered unto him by the angel of the Lord, that he cast his eyes round about on the multitude, and behold they had fallen to the earth, for the fear of the Lord had come upon them.

2 And they had 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; for we believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who created heaven and earth, and all things; who shall come down among the children of men.

3 And it came to pass that after they had spoken these words the Spirit of the Lord came upon them, and they were filled with joy, having received a remission of their sins, and having peace of conscience, because of the exceeding faith which they had in Jesus Christ who should come, according to the words which king Benjamin had spoken unto them.

11 And again I say unto you as I have said before, that as ye have come to the knowledge of the glory of God, or if ye have known of his goodness and have tasted of his love, and have received a remission of your sins, which causeth such exceedingly great joy in your souls, even so 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, and humble yourselves even in the depths of humility, calling on the name of the Lord daily, and standing steadfastly in the faith of that which is to come, which was spoken by the mouth of the angel.

12 And behold, I say unto you that if ye do this ye shall always rejoice, and be filled with the love of God, and always retain a remission of your sins; and ye shall grow in the knowledge of the glory of him that created you, or in the knowledge of that which is just and true.

26 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, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and administering to their relief, both spiritually and temporally, according to their wants.

**Alma 19:29-30, 33-36**

29 And it came to pass that she went and took the queen by the hand, that perhaps she might raise her from the ground; and as soon as she touched her hand she arose and stood upon her feet, and cried with a loud voice, saying: O blessed Jesus, who has saved me from an awful hell! O blessed God, have mercy on this people!

30 And when she had said this, she clasped her hands, being filled with joy, speaking many words which were not understood; and when she had done this, she took the king, Lamoni, by the hand, and behold he arose and stood upon his feet.

33 And it came to pass that when Ammon arose he also administered unto them, and also did all the servants of Lamoni; and they did all declare unto the people the selfsame thing—that their hearts had been changed; that they had no more desire to do evil.

34 And behold, many did declare unto the people that they had seen angels and had conversed with them; and thus they had told them things of God, and of his righteousness.

35 And it came to pass that there were many that did believe in their words; and as many as did believe were baptized; and they became a righteous people, and they did establish a church among them.

36 And thus the work of the Lord did commence among the Lamanites; thus the Lord did begin to pour out his Spirit upon them; and we see that his arm is extended to all people who will repent and believe on his name.

**Alma 34:15-17**

15 And thus he shall bring salvation to all those who shall believe on his name; this being the intent of this last sacrifice, to bring about the bowels of mercy, which overpowereth justice, and bringeth about means unto men that they may have faith unto repentance.

16 And thus mercy can satisfy the demands of justice, and encircles them in the arms of safety, while he that exercises no faith unto repentance is exposed to the whole law of the demands of justice; therefore only unto him that has faith unto repentance is brought about the great and eternal plan of redemption.

17 Therefore may God grant unto you, my brethren, that ye may begin to exercise your faith unto repentance, that ye begin to call upon his holy name, that he would have mercy upon you;

**Alma 36:19-21**

19 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.

20 And oh, what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain!

21 Yea, I say unto you, my son, that there could be nothing so exquisite and so bitter as were my pains. Yea, and again I say unto you, my son, that on the other hand, there can be nothing so exquisite and sweet as was my joy.

**3 Nephi 9:13-14, 19-22**

13 O all ye that are spared because ye were more righteous than they, will ye not now return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you?

14 Yea, verily I say unto you, if ye will come unto me ye shall have eternal life. Behold, mine arm of mercy is extended towards you, and whosoever will come, him will I receive; and blessed are those who come unto me.

19 And ye shall offer up unto me no more the shedding of blood; yea, your sacrifices and your burnt offerings shall be done away, for I will accept none of your sacrifices and your burnt offerings.

20 And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit. And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost, even as the Lamanites, because of their faith in me at the time of their conversion, were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and they knew it not.

21 Behold, I have come unto the world to bring redemption unto the world, to save the world from sin.

22 Therefore, whoso repenteth and cometh unto me as a little child, him will I receive, for of such is the kingdom of God. Behold, for such I have laid down my life, and have taken it up again; therefore repent, and come unto me ye ends of the earth, and be saved.

**Repent. . .That I May Heal You**

**Neil L. Andersen, *Ensign*, Nov. 2009**

My brothers and sisters, it has been six months since my call to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. To now serve with men who have long been my examples and teachers remains a very humbling experience. I deeply appreciate your prayers and sustaining vote. For me, this has been a time of fervent prayer, of earnestly seeking the acceptance of the Lord. I have felt His love in sacred and unforgettable ways. I testify that He lives and that this is His holy work.

We love President Thomas S. Monson, the Lord’s prophet. I will forever remember his kindness as he extended my call last April. At the conclusion of our interview, he opened his arms to embrace me. President Monson is a tall man. As he wrapped his long arms around me and pulled me close, I felt like a little boy being held in the protective arms of a loving father.

In the months since that experience, I have thought of the Lord’s invitation to come unto Him and to spiritually be wrapped in His arms. He said, “Behold, [my arms] of mercy [are] extended towards you, and whosoever will come, him will I receive; and blessed are those who come unto me.” 1

The scriptures speak of His arms being open, 2 extended, 3 stretched out, 4 and encircling. 5 They are described as mighty 6 and holy, 7 arms of mercy, 8 arms of safety, 9 arms of love, 10 “lengthened out all the day long.” 11

We have each felt to some extent these spiritual arms around us. We have felt His forgiveness, His love and comfort. The Lord has said, “I am he [who] comforteth you.” 12

The Lord’s desire that we come unto Him and be wrapped in His arms is often an invitation to repent. “Behold, he sendeth an invitation unto all men, for the arms of mercy are extended towards them, and he saith: Repent, and I will receive you.” 13

When we sin, we turn away from God. When we repent, we turn back toward God.

The invitation to repent is rarely a voice of chastisement but rather a loving appeal to turn around and to “re-turn” toward God. 14 It is the beckoning of a loving Father and His Only Begotten Son to be more than we are, to reach up to a higher way of life, to change, and to feel the happiness of keeping the commandments. Being disciples of Christ, we rejoice in the blessing of repenting and the joy of being forgiven. They become part of us, shaping the way we think and feel.

Among the tens of thousands listening to this conference, there are many degrees of personal worthiness and righteousness. Yet repentance is a blessing to all of us. We each need to feel the Savior’s arms of mercy through the forgiveness of our sins.

Years ago, I was asked to meet with a man who, long before our visit, had had a period of riotous living. As a result of his bad choices, he lost his membership in the Church. He had long since returned to the Church and was faithfully keeping the commandments, but his previous actions haunted him. Meeting with him, I felt his shame and his deep remorse at having set his covenants aside. Following our interview, I placed my hands upon his head to give him a priesthood blessing. Before speaking a word, I felt an overpowering sense of the Savior’s love and forgiveness for him. Following the blessing, we embraced and the man wept openly.

I am amazed at the Savior’s encircling arms of mercy and love for the repentant, no matter how selfish the forsaken sin. I testify that the Savior is able and eager to forgive our sins. Except for the sins of those few who choose perdition after having known a fulness, there is no sin that cannot be forgiven. 15 What a marvelous privilege for each of us to turn away from our sins and to come unto Christ. Divine forgiveness is one of the sweetest fruits of the gospel, removing guilt and pain from our hearts and replacing them with joy and peace of conscience. Jesus declares, “Will ye not now return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you?” 16

Some listening today may need “a mighty change [of] heart” 17 to confront serious sins. The help of a priesthood leader might be necessary. For most, repenting is quiet and quite private, daily seeking the Lord’s help to make needed changes.

For most, repentance is more a journey than a one-time event. It is not easy. To change is difficult. It requires running into the wind, swimming upstream. Jesus said, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.” 18 Repentance is turning away from some things, such as dishonesty, pride, anger, and impure thoughts, and turning toward other things, such as kindness, unselfishness, patience, and spirituality. It is “re-turning” toward God.

How do we decide where our repentance should be focused? When a loved one or friend suggests things we need to change, the natural man in us sometimes pops up his head and responds, “Oh, you think I should change? Well, let me tell you about some of your problems.” A better approach is to humbly petition the Lord: “Father, what wouldst Thou have me do?” The answers come. We feel the changes we need to make. The Lord tells us in our mind and in our heart. 19

We then are allowed to choose: will we repent, or will we pull the shades down over our open window into heaven?

Alma warned, “Do not endeavor to excuse yourself in the least point.” 20 When we “pull the shades down,” we stop believing that spiritual voice inviting us to change. We pray but we listen less. Our prayers lack that faith that leads to repentance. 21

At this very moment, someone is saying, “Brother Andersen, you don’t understand. You can’t feel what I have felt. It is too difficult to change.”

You are correct; I don’t fully understand. But there is One who does. He knows. He has felt your pain. He has declared, “I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.” 22 The Savior is there, reaching out to each of us, bidding us: “Come unto me.” 23 We can repent. We can!

Realizing where we need to change, we sorrow for the sadness we have caused. This leads to sincere and heartfelt confession to the Lord and, when needed, to others. 24 When possible, we restore what we have wrongly harmed or taken.

Repentance becomes part of our daily lives. Our weekly taking of the sacrament is so important—to come meekly, humbly before the Lord, acknowledging our dependence upon Him, asking Him to forgive and to renew us, and promising to always remember Him.

Sometimes in our repentance, in our daily efforts to become more Christlike, we find ourselves repeatedly struggling with the same difficulties. As if we were climbing a tree-covered mountain, at times we don’t see our progress until we get closer to the top and look back from the high ridges. Don’t be discouraged. If you are striving and working to repent, you are in the process of repenting.

As we improve, we see life more clearly and feel the Holy Ghost working more strongly within us.

Sometimes we wonder why we remember our sins long after we have forsaken them. Why does the sadness for our mistakes at times continue following our repentance?

You will remember a tender story told by President James E. Faust. “As a small boy on the farm … , I remember my grandmother … cooking our delicious meals on a hot woodstove. When the wood box next to the stove became empty, Grandmother would silently pick up the box, go out to refill it from the pile of cedar wood outside, and bring the heavily laden box back into the house.”

President Faust’s voice then filled with emotion as he continued: “I was so insensitive … I sat there and let my beloved grandmother refill the kitchen wood box. I feel ashamed of myself and have regretted my [sin of] omission for all of my life. I hope someday to ask for her forgiveness.” 25

More than 65 years had passed. If President Faust still remembered and regretted not helping his grandmother after all those years, should we be surprised with some of the things we still remember and regret?

The scriptures do not say that we will forget our forsaken sins in mortality. Rather, they declare that the Lord will forget. 26

The forsaking of sins implies never returning. Forsaking requires time. To help us, the Lord at times allows the residue of our mistakes to rest in our memory. 27 It is a vital part of our mortal learning.

As we honestly confess our sins, restore what we can to the offended, and forsake our sins by keeping the commandments, we are in the process of receiving forgiveness. With time, we will feel the anguish of our sorrow subside, taking “away the guilt from our hearts” 28 and bringing “peace of conscience.” 29

For those who are truly repentant but seem unable to feel relief: continue keeping the commandments. I promise you, relief will come in the timetable of the Lord. Healing also requires time.

If you are concerned, counsel with your bishop. A bishop has the power of discernment. 30 He will help you.

The scriptures warn us, “Do not procrastinate the day of your repentance.” 31 But, in this life, it is never too late to repent.

Once I was asked to meet an older couple returning to the Church. They had been taught the gospel by their parents. After their marriage, they left the Church. Now, 50 years later, they were returning. I remember the husband coming into the office pulling an oxygen tank. They expressed regret at not having remained faithful. I told them of our happiness because of their return, assuring them of the Lord’s welcoming arms to those who repent. The elderly man responded, “We know this, Brother Andersen. But our sadness is that our children and grandchildren do not have the blessings of the gospel. We are back, but we are back alone.”

They were not back alone. Repentance not only changes us, but it also blesses our families and those we love. With our righteous repentance, in the timetable of the Lord, the lengthened-out arms of the Savior will not only encircle us but will also extend into the lives of our children and posterity. Repentance always means that there is greater happiness ahead.

I bear witness that our Savior can deliver us from our sins. I have personally felt His redeeming power. I have unmistakably seen His healing hand upon thousands in nations throughout the world. I testify that His divine gift removes guilt from our heart and brings peace to our conscience.

He loves us. We are members of His Church. He invites each of us to repent, turn away from our sins, and come unto Him. I witness that He is there in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings, Thoughts or Insights From Your Readings or From the Lesson:**

**Lesson #17**

**The Power of the Word**

**1 Nephi 3:19-20**

19 And behold, it is wisdom in God that we should obtain these records, that we may preserve unto our children the language of our fathers;

20 And also that we may preserve unto them the words which have been spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets, which have been delivered unto them by the Spirit and power of God, since the world began, even down unto this present time.

**I Nephi 5:21-22**

21 And we had obtained the records which the Lord had commanded us, and searched them and found that they were desirable; yea, even of great worth unto us, insomuch that we could preserve the commandments of the Lord unto our children.

22 Wherefore, it was wisdom in the Lord that we should carry them with us, as we journeyed in the wilderness towards the land of promise.

**I Nephi 8:21-24 29-30**

21 And I saw numberless concourses of people, many of whom were pressing forward, that they might obtain the path which led unto the tree by which I stood.

22 And it came to pass that they did come forth, and commence in the path which led to the tree.

23 And it came to pass that there arose a mist of darkness; yea, even an exceedingly great mist of darkness, insomuch that they who had commenced in the path did lose their way, that they wandered off and were lost.

24 And it came to pass that I beheld others pressing forward, and they came forth and caught hold of the end of the rod of iron; and they did press forward through the mist of darkness, clinging to the rod of iron, even until they did come forth and partake of the fruit of the tree.

29 And now I, Nephi, do not speak all the words of my father.

30 But, to be short in writing, behold, he saw other multitudes pressing forward; and they came and caught hold of the end of the rod of iron; and they did press their way forward, continually holding fast to the rod of iron, until they came forth and fell down and partook of the fruit of the tree.

**I Nephi 15:23-24**

23 And they said unto me: What meaneth the rod of iron which our father saw, that led to the tree?

24 And I said unto them that it was the word of God; and whoso would hearken unto the word of God, and would hold fast unto it, they would never perish; neither could the temptations and the fiery darts of the adversary overpower them unto blindness, to lead them away to destruction.

**2 Nephi 3:12**

12 Wherefore, the fruit of thy loins shall write; and the fruit of the loins of Judah shall write; and that which shall be written by the fruit of thy loins, and also that which shall be written by the fruit of the loins of Judah, shall grow together, unto the confounding of false doctrines and laying down of contentions, and establishing peace among the fruit of thy loins, and bringing them to the knowledge of their fathers in the latter days, and also to the knowledge of my covenants, saith the Lord.

**2 Nephi 32:3**

3 Angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ. Wherefore, I said unto you, feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do.

**2 Nephi 33:4-5**

4 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.

5 And it speaketh harshly against sin, according to the plainness of the truth; wherefore, no man will be angry at the words which I have written save he shall be of the spirit of the devil.

**Jacob 2:8**

8 And it supposeth me that they have come up hither to hear the pleasing word of God, yea, the word which healeth the wounded soul.

**Jacob 7:10-11**

10 And I said unto him: Believest thou the scriptures? And he said, Yea.

11 And I said unto him: Then ye do not understand them; for they truly testify of Christ. Behold, I say unto you that none of the prophets have written, nor prophesied, save they have spoken concerning this Christ.

**Omni 1:14-17**

14 And they discovered a people, who were called the people of Zarahemla. Now, there was great rejoicing among the people of Zarahemla; and also Zarahemla did rejoice exceedingly, because the Lord had sent the people of Mosiah with the plates of brass which contained the record of the Jews.

15 Behold, it came to pass that Mosiah discovered that the people of Zarahemla came out from Jerusalem at the time that Zedekiah, king of Judah, was carried away captive into Babylon.

16 And they journeyed in the wilderness, and were brought by the hand of the Lord across the great waters, into the land where Mosiah discovered them; and they had dwelt there from that time forth.

17 And at the time that Mosiah discovered them, they had become exceedingly numerous. Nevertheless, they had had many wars and serious contentions, and had fallen by the sword from time to time; and their language had become corrupted; and they had brought no records with them; and they denied the being of their Creator; and Mosiah, nor the people of Mosiah, could understand them.

**Mosiah 1:3-5**

3 And he also taught them concerning the records which were engraven on the plates of brass, saying: My sons, I would that ye should remember that were it not for these plates, which contain these records and these commandments, we must have suffered in ignorance, even at this present time, not knowing the mysteries of God.

4 For it were not possible that our father, Lehi, could have remembered all these things, to have taught them to his children, except it were for the help of these plates; for he having been taught in the language of the Egyptians therefore he could read these engravings, and teach them to his children, that thereby they could teach them to their children, and so fulfilling the commandments of God, even down to this present time.

5 I say unto you, my sons, were it not for these things, which have been kept and preserved by the hand of God, that we might read and understand of his mysteries, and have his commandments always before our eyes, that even our fathers would have dwindled in unbelief, and we should have been like unto our brethren, the Lamanites, who know nothing concerning these things, or even do not believe them when they are taught them, because of the traditions of their fathers, which are not correct.

**Alma 5:10-13**

10 And now I ask of you on what conditions are they saved? Yea, what grounds had they to hope for salvation? What is the cause of their being loosed from the bands of death, yea, and also the chains of hell?

11 Behold, I can tell you—did not my father Alma believe in the words which were delivered by the mouth of Abinadi? And was he not a holy prophet? Did he not speak the words of God, and my father Alma believe them?

12 And according to his faith there was a mighty change wrought in his heart. Behold I say unto you that this is all true.

13 And behold, he preached the word unto your fathers, and a mighty change was also wrought in their hearts, and they humbled themselves and put their trust in the true and living God. And behold, they were faithful until the end; therefore they were saved.

**Alma 31:5**

5 And now, as the preaching of the word had a great tendency to lead the people to do that which was just—yea, it had had more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than the sword, or anything else, which had happened unto them—therefore Alma thought it was expedient that they should try the virtue of the word of God.

**Alma 37:2-4, 8-10, 38-46**

2 And I also command you that ye keep a record of this people, according as I have done, upon the plates of Nephi, and keep all these things sacred which I have kept, even as I have kept them; for it is for a wise purpose that they are kept.

3 And these plates of brass, which contain these engravings, which have the records of the holy scriptures upon them, which have the genealogy of our forefathers, even from the beginning—

4 Behold, it has been prophesied by our fathers, that they should be kept and handed down from one generation to another, and be kept and preserved by the hand of the Lord until they should go forth unto every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, that they shall know of the mysteries contained thereon.

8 And now, it has hitherto been wisdom in God that these things should be preserved; for behold, they have enlarged the memory of this people, yea, and convinced many of the error of their ways, and brought them to the knowledge of their God unto the salvation of their souls.

9 Yea, I say unto you, were it not for these things that these records do contain, which are on these plates, Ammon and his brethren could not have convinced so many thousands of the Lamanites of the incorrect tradition of their fathers; yea, these records and their words brought them unto repentance; that is, they brought them to the knowledge of the Lord their God, and to rejoice in Jesus Christ their Redeemer.

10 And who knoweth but what they will be the means of bringing many thousands of them, yea, and also many thousands of our stiffnecked brethren, the Nephites, who are now hardening their hearts in sin and iniquities, to the knowledge of their Redeemer?

38 And now, my son, I have somewhat to say concerning the thing which our fathers call a ball, or director—or our fathers called it Liahona, which is, being interpreted, a compass; and the Lord prepared it.

39 And behold, there cannot any man work after the manner of so curious a workmanship. And behold, it was prepared to show unto our fathers the course which they should travel in the wilderness.

40 And it did work for them according to their faith in God; therefore, if they had faith to believe that God could cause that those spindles should point the way they should go, behold, it was done; therefore they had this miracle, and also many other miracles wrought by the power of God, day by day.

41 Nevertheless, because those miracles were worked by small means it did show unto them marvelous works. They were slothful, and forgot to exercise their faith and diligence and then those marvelous works ceased, and they did not progress in their journey;

42 Therefore, they tarried in the wilderness, or did not travel a direct course, and were afflicted with hunger and thirst, because of their transgressions.

43 And now, my son, I would that ye should understand that these things are not without a shadow; for as our fathers were slothful to give heed to this compass (now these things were temporal) they did not prosper; even so it is with things which are spiritual.

44 For behold, it is as easy to give heed to the word of Christ, which will point to you a straight course to eternal bliss, as it was for our fathers to give heed to this compass, which would point unto them a straight course to the promised land.

45 And now I say, is there not a type in this thing? For just as surely as this director did bring our fathers, by following its course, to the promised land, shall the words of Christ, if we follow their course, carry us beyond this vale of sorrow into a far better land of promise.

46 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.

**Helaman 3:29-30**

29 Yea, we see that whosoever will may lay hold upon the word of God, which is quick and powerful, which shall divide asunder all the cunning and the snares and the wiles of the devil, and lead the man of Christ in a strait and narrow course across that everlasting gulf of misery which is prepared to engulf the wicked—

30 And land their souls, yea, their immortal souls, at the right hand of God in the kingdom of heaven, to sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and with Jacob, and with all our holy fathers, to go no more out.

**Helaman 15:7-8**

7 And behold, ye do know of yourselves, for ye have witnessed it, that as many of them as are brought to the knowledge of the truth, and to know of the wicked and abominable traditions of their fathers, and are led to believe the holy scriptures, yea, the prophecies of the holy prophets, which are written, which leadeth them to faith on the Lord, and unto repentance, which faith and repentance bringeth a change of heart unto them—

8 Therefore, as many as have come to this, ye know of yourselves are firm and steadfast in the faith, and in the thing wherewith they have been made free.

**The Power of Scripture**

**Richard G. Scott, *Ensign*, Nov. 2011**

Those of us who come to this pulpit during conference feel the power of your prayers. We need them, and we thank you for them.

Our Father in Heaven understood that for us to make desired progress during our mortal probation, we would need to face difficult challenges. Some of these would be almost overpowering. He provided tools to help us be successful in our mortal probation. One set of those tools is the scriptures.

Throughout the ages, Father in Heaven has inspired select men and women to find, through the guidance of the Holy Ghost, solutions to life’s most perplexing problems. He has inspired those authorized servants to record those solutions as a type of handbook for those of His children who have faith in His plan of happiness and in His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. We have ready access to this guidance through the treasure we call the standard works—that is, the Old and New Testaments, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price.

Because scriptures are generated from inspired communication through the Holy Ghost, they are pure truth. We need not be concerned about the validity of concepts contained in the standard works since the Holy Ghost has been the instrument which has motivated and inspired those individuals who have recorded the scriptures.

Scriptures are like packets of light that illuminate our minds and give place to guidance and inspiration from on high. They can become the key to open the channel to communion with our Father in Heaven and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

The scriptures provide the strength of authority to our declarations when they are cited correctly. They can become stalwart friends that are not limited by geography or calendar. They are always available when needed. Their use provides a foundation of truth that can be awakened by the Holy Ghost. Learning, pondering, searching, and memorizing scriptures is like filling a filing cabinet with friends, values, and truths that can be called upon anytime, anywhere in the world.

Great power can come from memorizing scriptures. To memorize a scripture is to forge a new friendship. It is like discovering a new individual who can help in time of need, give inspiration and comfort, and be a source of motivation for needed change. For example, committing to memory this psalm has been for me a source of power and understanding:

“The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.

“For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.

“Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?

“He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.

“He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation” (Psalm 24:1–5).

Pondering a scripture like that gives great direction to life. The scriptures can form a foundation of support. They can provide an incredibly large resource of willing friends who can help us. A memorized scripture becomes an enduring friend that is not weakened with the passage of time.

Pondering a passage of scripture can be a key to unlock revelation and the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Ghost. Scriptures can calm an agitated soul, giving peace, hope, and a restoration of confidence in one’s ability to overcome the challenges of life. They have potent power to heal emotional challenges when there is faith in the Savior. They can accelerate physical healing.

Scriptures can communicate different meanings at different times in our life, according to our needs. A scripture that we may have read many times can take on nuances of meaning that are refreshing and insightful when we face a new challenge in life.

How do you personally use the scriptures? Do you mark your copy? Do you put notes in the margin to remember a moment of spiritual guidance or an experience that has taught you a profound lesson? Do you use all of the standard works, including the Old Testament? I have found precious truths in the pages of the Old Testament that are key ingredients to the platform of truth that guides my life and acts as a resource when I try to share a gospel message with others. For that reason, I love the Old Testament. I find precious jewels of truth spread throughout its pages. For example:

“And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams” (1 Samuel 15:22).

“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

“In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

“Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the Lord, and depart from evil. …

“My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of his correction:

“For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.

“Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding” (Proverbs 3:5–7, 11–13).

The New Testament is also a source of diamond truth:

“Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

“This is the first and great commandment.

“And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

“On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:37–40).

“And the Lord 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.

“And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.

“And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me. …

“But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him.

“And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not.

“And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not.

“And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilaean.

“And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew.

“And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.

“And Peter went out, and wept bitterly” (Luke 22:31–34, 56–62).

How my heart aches for what happened to Peter on that occasion.

This scripture from the Doctrine and Covenants has blessed my life richly: “Seek not to declare my word, but first seek to obtain my word, and then shall your tongue be loosed; then, if you desire, you shall have my Spirit and my word, yea, the power of God unto the convincing of men” (D&C 11:21).

In my judgment, the Book of Mormon teaches truth with unique clarity and power. For example:

“And now I would that ye should be humble, and be submissive and gentle; easy to be entreated; full of patience and long-suffering; being temperate in all things; being diligent in keeping the commandments of God at all times; asking for whatsoever things ye stand in need, both spiritual and temporal; always returning thanks unto God for whatsoever things ye do receive.

“And see that ye have faith, hope, and charity, and then ye will always abound in good works” (Alma 7:23–24).

And another:

“And charity suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is 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, if ye have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth. Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail—

“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.

“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” (Moroni 7:45–48).

My precious wife, Jeanene, loved the Book of Mormon. In her youth, as a teenager, it became the foundation of her life. It was a source of testimony and teaching during her full-time missionary service in the northwest United States. When we served in the mission field in Córdoba, Argentina, she strongly encouraged the use of the Book of Mormon in our proselytizing efforts. Jeanene confirmed early in her life that those who consistently read the Book of Mormon are blessed with an added measure of the Spirit of the Lord, a greater resolve to obey His commandments, and a stronger testimony of the divinity of the Son of God.1 For I don’t know how many years, as the end of the year approached, I would see her sitting quietly, carefully finishing the entire Book of Mormon yet another time before year’s end.

In 1991 I wanted to give a special Christmas gift to my family. In recording the fulfillment of that desire, my personal journal states: “It is 12:38 p.m., Wednesday, December 18, 1991. I’ve just concluded an audio recording of the Book of Mormon for my family. This has been an experience that has increased my testimony of this divine work and strengthened in me a desire to be more familiar with its pages to distill from these scriptures truths to be used in my service to the Lord. I love this book. I testify with my soul that it is true, that it was prepared for the blessing of the House of Israel, and all of its component parts spread throughout the world. All who will study its message in humility, in faith believing in Jesus Christ, will know of its truthfulness and will find a treasure to lead them to greater happiness, peace, and attainment in this life. I testify by all that is sacred, this book is true.”

May each of us avail ourselves of the wealth of blessings that result from scripture study, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings, Thoughts or Insights From Your Readings or From the Lesson:**

**Lesson #18**

**Preparing for the Final Day of Judgment**

**2 Nephi 9:12-13**

12 And this death of which I have spoken, which is the spiritual death, shall deliver up its dead; which spiritual death is hell; wherefore, death and hell must deliver up their dead, and hell must deliver up its captive spirits, and the grave must deliver up its captive bodies, and the bodies and the spirits of men will be restored one to the other; and it is by the power of the resurrection of the Holy One of Israel.

13 O how great the plan of our God! For on the other hand, the paradise of God must deliver up the spirits of the righteous, and the grave deliver up the body of the righteous; and the spirit and the body is restored to itself again, and all men become incorruptible, and immortal, and they are living souls, having a perfect knowledge like unto us in the flesh, save it be that our knowledge shall be perfect.

**Mosiah 15:21-26**

21 And there cometh a resurrection, even a first resurrection; yea, even a resurrection of those that have been, and who are, and who shall be, even until the resurrection of Christ—for so shall he be called.

22 And now, the resurrection of all the prophets, and all those that have believed in their words, or all those that have kept the commandments of God, shall come forth in the first resurrection; therefore, they are the first resurrection.

23 They are raised to dwell with God who has redeemed them; thus they have eternal life through Christ, who has broken the bands of death.

24 And these are those who have part in the first resurrection; and these are they that have died before Christ came, in their ignorance, not having salvation declared unto them. And thus the Lord bringeth about the restoration of these; and they have a part in the first resurrection, or have eternal life, being redeemed by the Lord.

25 And little children also have eternal life.

26 But behold, and fear, and tremble before God, for ye ought to tremble; for the Lord redeemeth none such that rebel against him and die in their sins; yea, even all those that have perished in their sins ever since the world began, that have wilfully rebelled against God, that have known the commandments of God, and would not keep them; these are they that have no part in the first resurrection.

**Mosiah 16:6-11**

6 And now if Christ had not come into the world, speaking of things to come as though they had already come, there could have been no redemption.

7 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.

8 But there is a resurrection, therefore the grave hath no victory, and the sting of death is swallowed up in Christ.

9 He is the light and the life of the world; yea, a light that is endless, that can never be darkened; yea, and also a life which is endless, that there can be no more death.

10 Even this mortal shall put on immortality, and this corruption shall put on incorruption, and shall be brought to stand before the bar of God, to be judged of him according to their works whether they be good or whether they be evil—

11 If they be good, to the resurrection of endless life and happiness; and if they be evil, to the resurrection of endless damnation, being delivered up to the devil, who hath subjected them, which is damnation—

**Alma 5:15-21**

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 raised in incorruption, to stand before God to be judged according to the deeds which have been done in the mortal body?

16 I say unto you, can you imagine to yourselves that ye hear the voice of the Lord, saying unto you, in that day: Come unto me ye blessed, for behold, your works have been the works of righteousness upon the face of the earth?

17 Or do ye imagine to yourselves that ye can lie unto the Lord in that day, and say—Lord, our works have been righteous works upon the face of the earth—and that he will save you?

18 Or otherwise, can ye imagine yourselves brought before the tribunal of God with your souls filled with guilt and remorse, having a remembrance of all your guilt, yea, a perfect remembrance of all your wickedness, yea, a remembrance that ye have set at defiance the commandments of God?

19 I say unto you, can ye look up to God at that day with a pure heart and clean hands? I say unto you, can you look up, having the image of God engraven upon your countenances?

20 I say unto you, can ye think of being saved when you have yielded yourselves to become subjects to the devil?

21 I say unto you, ye will know at that day that ye cannot be saved; for there can no man be saved except his garments are washed white; yea, his garments must be purified until they are cleansed from all stain, through the blood of him of whom it has been spoken by our fathers, who should come to redeem his people from their sins.

**Alma 7:21-25**

21 And he doth not dwell in unholy temples; neither can filthiness or anything which is unclean be received into the kingdom of God; therefore I say unto you the time shall come, yea, and it shall be at the last day, that he who is filthy shall remain in his filthiness.

22 And now my beloved brethren, I have said these things unto you that I might awaken you to a sense of your duty to God, that ye may walk blameless before him, that ye may walk after the holy order of God, after which ye have been received.

23 And now I would that ye should be humble, and be submissive and gentle; easy to be entreated; full of patience and long-suffering; being temperate in all things; being diligent in keeping the commandments of God at all times; asking for whatsoever things ye stand in need, both spiritual and temporal; always returning thanks unto God for whatsoever things ye do receive.

24 And see that ye have faith, hope, and charity, and then ye will always abound in good works.

25 And may the Lord bless you, and keep your garments spotless, that ye may at last be brought to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the holy prophets who have been ever since the world began, having your garments spotless even as their garments are spotless, in the kingdom of heaven to go no more out.

**Alma 11:40-45**

40 And he shall come into the world to redeem his people; and he shall take upon him the transgressions of those who believe on his name; and these are they that shall have eternal life, and salvation cometh to none else.

41 Therefore the wicked remain as though there had been no redemption made, except it be the loosing of the bands of death; for behold, the day cometh that all shall rise from the dead and stand before God, and be judged according to their works.

42 Now, there is a death which is called a temporal death; and the death of Christ shall loose the bands of this temporal death, that all shall be raised from this temporal death.

43 The spirit and the body shall be reunited again in its perfect form; both limb and joint shall be restored to its proper frame, even as we now are at this time; and we shall be brought to stand before God, knowing even as we know now, and have a bright recollection of all our guilt.

44 Now, this restoration shall come to all, both old and young, both bond and free, both male and female, both the wicked and the righteous; and even there shall not so much as a hair of their heads be lost; but every thing shall be restored to its perfect frame, as it is now, or in the body, and shall be brought and be arraigned before the bar of Christ the Son, and God the Father, and the Holy Spirit, which is one Eternal God, to be judged according to their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil.

45 Now, behold, I have spoken unto you concerning the death of the mortal body, and also concerning the resurrection of the mortal body. I say unto you that this mortal body is raised to an immortal body, that is from death, even from the first death unto life, that they can die no more; their spirits uniting with their bodies, never to be divided; thus the whole becoming spiritual and immortal, that they can no more see corruption.

**Alma 16:6-11**

6 And it came to pass that Alma inquired of the Lord concerning the matter. And Alma returned and said unto them: Behold, the Lamanites will cross the river Sidon in the south wilderness, away up beyond the borders of the land of Manti. And behold there shall ye meet them, on the east of the river Sidon, and there the Lord will deliver unto thee thy brethren who have been taken captive by the Lamanites.

7 And it came to pass that Zoram and his sons crossed over the river Sidon, with their armies, and marched away beyond the borders of Manti into the south wilderness, which was on the east side of the river Sidon.

8 And they came upon the armies of the Lamanites, and the Lamanites were scattered and driven into the wilderness; and they took their brethren who had been taken captive by the Lamanites, and there was not one soul of them had been lost that were taken captive. And they were brought by their brethren to possess their own lands.

9 And thus ended the eleventh year of the judges, the Lamanites having been driven out of the land, and the people of Ammonihah were destroyed; yea, every living soul of the Ammonihahites was destroyed, and also their great city, which they said God could not destroy, because of its greatness.

10 But behold, in one day it was left desolate; and the carcasses were mangled by dogs and wild beasts of the wilderness.

11 Nevertheless, after many days their dead bodies were heaped up upon the face of the earth, and they were covered with a shallow covering. And now so great was the scent thereof that the people did not go in to possess the land of Ammonihah for many years. And it was called Desolation of Nehors; for they were of the profession of Nehor, who were slain; and their lands remained desolate.

**Alma 34:32-34**

32 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.

33 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.

34 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.

**Alma 40:4-7, 11-14, 19-24**

4 Behold, there is a time appointed that all shall come forth from the dead. Now when this time cometh no one knows; but God knoweth the time which is appointed.

5 Now, whether there shall be one time, or a second time, or a third time, that men shall come forth from the dead, it mattereth not; for God knoweth all these things; and it sufficeth me to know that this is the case—that there is a time appointed that all shall rise from the dead.

6 Now there must needs be a space betwixt the time of death and the time of the resurrection.

7 And now I would inquire what becometh of the souls of men from this time of death to the time appointed for the resurrection?

11 Now, concerning the state of the soul between death and the resurrection—Behold, it has been made known unto me by an angel, that the spirits of all men, as soon as they are departed from this mortal body, yea, the spirits of all men, whether they be good or evil, are taken home to that God who gave them life.

12 And then shall it come to pass, that the spirits of those who are righteous are received into a state of happiness, which is called paradise, a state of rest, a state of peace, where they shall rest from all their troubles and from all care, and sorrow.

13 And then shall it come to pass, that the spirits of the wicked, yea, who are evil—for behold, they have no part nor portion of the Spirit of the Lord; for behold, they chose evil works rather than good; therefore the spirit of the devil did enter into them, and take possession of their house—and these shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, and this because of their own iniquity, being led captive by the will of the devil.

14 Now this is the state of the souls of the wicked, yea, in darkness, and a state of awful, fearful looking for the fiery indignation of the wrath of God upon them; thus they remain in this state, as well as the righteous in paradise, until the time of their resurrection.

19 Now, whether the souls and the bodies of those of whom has been spoken shall all be reunited at once, the wicked as well as the righteous, I do not say; let it suffice, that I say that they all come forth; or in other words, their resurrection cometh to pass before the resurrection of those who die after the resurrection of Christ.

20 Now, my son, I do not say that their resurrection cometh at the resurrection of Christ; but behold, I give it as my opinion, that the souls and the bodies are reunited, of the righteous, at the resurrection of Christ, and his ascension into heaven.

21 But whether it be at his resurrection or after, I do not say; but this much I say, that there is a space between death and the resurrection of the body, and a state of the soul in happiness or in misery until the time which is appointed of God that the dead shall come forth, and be reunited, both soul and body, and be brought to stand before God, and be judged according to their works.

22 Yea, this bringeth about the restoration of those things of which has been spoken by the mouths of the prophets.

23 The soul shall be restored to the body, and the body to the soul; yea, and every limb and joint shall be restored to its body; yea, even a hair of the head shall not be lost; but all things shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame.

24 And now, my son, this is the restoration of which has been spoken by the mouths of the prophets—

**Alma 41:2-6**

2 I say unto thee, my son, that the plan of restoration is requisite with the justice of God; for it is requisite that all things should be restored to their proper order. Behold, it is requisite and just, according to the power and resurrection of Christ, that the soul of man should be restored to its body, and that every part of the body should be restored to itself.

3 And it is requisite with the justice of God that men should be judged according to their works; and if their works were good in this life, and the desires of their hearts were good, that they should also, at the last day, be restored unto that which is good.

4 And if their works are evil they shall be restored unto them for evil. Therefore, all things shall be restored to their proper order, every thing to its natural frame—mortality raised to immortality, corruption to incorruption—raised to endless happiness to inherit the kingdom of God, or to endless misery to inherit the kingdom of the devil, the one on one hand, the other on the other—

5 The one raised to happiness according to his desires of happiness, or good according to his desires of good; and the other to evil according to his desires of evil; for as he has desired to do evil all the day long even so shall he have his reward of evil when the night cometh.

6 And so it is on the other hand. If he hath repented of his sins, and desired righteousness until the end of his days, even so he shall be rewarded unto righteousness.

**Resurrection**

**Dallin H. Oaks, *Ensign*, May 2000**

The book of Job poses the universal question, “If a man die, shall he live again?” (Job 14:14). The question of resurrection from the dead is a central subject of scripture, ancient and modern. The resurrection is a pillar of our faith. It adds meaning to our doctrine, motivation to our behavior, and hope for our future.

**I. The Resurrection of Jesus**

The universal resurrection became a reality with the Resurrection of Jesus Christ (see Matt. 27:52–53). On the third day after His death and burial, Jesus came forth out of the tomb. He appeared to several men and women, and then to the assembled Apostles. Three of the Gospels describe this event. Luke is the most complete:

“Jesus … 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. …

“Then opened he their understanding, …

“And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day” (Luke 24:36–39, 45–46).

The Savior gave the Apostles a second witness. Thomas, one of the Twelve, had not been with them when Jesus came. He insisted that he would not believe unless he could see and feel for himself. John records:

“And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.

“Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.

“And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.

“Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed” (John 20:26–29).

Despite these biblical witnesses, many who call themselves Christians reject or confess serious doubts about the reality of the resurrection. As if to anticipate and counter such doubts, the Bible records many appearances of the risen Christ. In some of these He appeared to a single individual, such as to Mary Magdalene at the sepulchre. In others He appeared to large or small groups, such as when “he was seen of [about] five hundred brethren at once” (1 Cor. 15:6).

The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ records the experience of hundreds who saw the risen Lord in person and touched Him, feeling the prints of the nails in His hands and feet and thrusting their hands into His side. The Savior invited a multitude to have this experience “one by one” (3 Ne. 11:15) so that they could know that He was “the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and [had] been slain for the sins of the world” (3 Ne. 11:14).

During the course of His personal ministry among these faithful people, the resurrected Christ healed the sick and also “took their little children, one by one, and blessed them” (3 Ne. 17:21). This tender episode was witnessed by about 2,500 men, women, and children (see 3 Ne. 17:25).

**II. The Resurrection of Mortals**

The possibility that a mortal who has died will be brought forth and live again in a resurrected body has awakened hope and stirred controversy through much of recorded history. Relying on clear scriptural teachings, Latter-day Saints join in affirming that Christ has “broken the bands of death” (Mosiah 16:7) and that “death is swallowed up in victory” (1 Cor. 15:54; see also Morm. 7:5; Mosiah 15:8; Mosiah 16:7–8; Alma 22:14). Because we believe the Bible and Book of Mormon descriptions of the literal Resurrection of Jesus Christ, we also readily accept the numerous scriptural teachings that a similar resurrection will come to all mortals who have ever lived upon this earth (see 1 Cor. 15:22; 2 Ne. 9:22; Hel. 14:17; Morm. 9:13; D&C 29:26; D&C 76:39, 42–44). As Jesus taught, “Because I live, ye shall live also” (John 14:19).

The literal and universal nature of the resurrection is vividly described in the Book of Mormon. The prophet Amulek taught:

“The death of Christ shall loose the bands of this temporal death, that all shall be raised from this temporal death.

“The spirit and the body shall be reunited again in its perfect form; both limb and joint shall be restored to its proper frame, even as we now are at this time; …

“Now, this restoration shall come to all, both old and young, both bond and free, both male and female, both the wicked and the righteous; and even there shall not so much as a hair of their heads be lost; but every thing shall be restored to its perfect frame” (Alma 11:42–44).

Alma also taught that in the resurrection “all things shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame” (Alma 40:23).

Many living witnesses can testify to the literal fulfillment of these scriptural assurances of the resurrection. Many, including some in my own extended family, have seen a departed loved one in vision or personal appearance and have witnessed their restoration in “proper and perfect frame” in the prime of life. Whether these were manifestations of persons already resurrected or of righteous spirits awaiting an assured resurrection, the reality and nature of the resurrection of mortals is evident. What a comfort to know that all who have been disadvantaged in life from birth defects, from mortal injuries, from disease, or from the natural deterioration of old age will be resurrected in “proper and perfect frame.”

**III. The Significance of the Resurrection**

I wonder if we fully appreciate the enormous significance of our belief in a literal, universal resurrection. The assurance of immortality is fundamental to our faith. The Prophet Joseph Smith declared:

“The fundamental principles of our religion are the testimony of the Apostles and Prophets, concerning Jesus Christ, that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven; and all other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it” (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1938], 121).

Of all things in that glorious ministry, why did the Prophet Joseph Smith use the testimony of the Savior’s death, burial, and Resurrection as the fundamental principle of our religion, saying that “all other things … are only appendages to it”? The answer is found in the fact that the Savior’s Resurrection is central to what the prophets have called “the great and eternal plan of deliverance from death” (2 Ne. 11:5).

In our eternal journey, the resurrection is the mighty milepost that signifies the end of mortality and the beginning of immortality. The Lord described the importance of this vital transition when He declared, “And thus did I, the Lord God, appoint unto man the days of his probation—that by his natural death he might be raised in immortality unto eternal life, even as many as would believe” (D&C 29:43). Similarly, the Book of Mormon teaches, “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” (2 Ne. 9:6). We also know, from modern revelation, that without the reuniting of our spirits and our bodies in the resurrection we could not receive a “fulness of joy” (D&C 93:33–34).

When we understand the vital position of the resurrection in the “plan of redemption” that governs our eternal journey (Alma 12:25), we see why the Apostle Paul taught, “If there be no resurrection of the dead, then … is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain” (1 Cor. 15:13–14). We also see why the Apostle Peter referred to the fact that God the Father, in His abundant mercy, “hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Pet. 1:3; see also 1 Thes. 4:13–18).

**IV. The Resurrection Changes Our View of Mortality**

The “lively hope” we are given by the resurrection is our conviction that death is not the conclusion of our identity but merely a necessary step in the destined transition from mortality to immortality. This hope changes the whole perspective of mortal life. The assurance of resurrection and immortality affects how we look on the physical challenges of mortality, how we live our mortal lives, and how we relate to those around us.

The assurance of resurrection gives us the strength and perspective to endure the mortal challenges faced by each of us and by those we love, such things as the physical, mental, or emotional deficiencies we bring with us at birth or acquire during mortal life. Because of the resurrection, we know that these mortal deficiencies are only temporary!

The assurance of resurrection also gives us a powerful incentive to keep the commandments of God during our mortal lives. Resurrection is much more than merely reuniting a spirit to a body held captive by the grave. We know from the Book of Mormon that the resurrection is a restoration that brings back “carnal for carnal” and “good for that which is good” (Alma 41:13; see also Alma 41:2–4 and Hel. 14:31). The prophet Amulek taught, “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” (Alma 34:34). As a result, when persons leave this life and go on to the next, “they who are righteous shall be righteous still” (2 Ne. 9:16), and “whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life … will rise with us in the resurrection” (D&C 130:18).

The principle of restoration also means that persons who are not righteous in mortal life will not rise up righteous in the resurrection (see 2 Ne. 9:16; 1 Cor. 15:35–44; D&C 88:27–32). Moreover, unless our mortal sins have been cleansed and blotted out by repentance and forgiveness (see Alma 5:21; 2 Ne. 9:45–46; D&C 58:42), we will be resurrected with a “bright recollection” (Alma 11:43) and a “perfect knowledge of all of our guilt, and our uncleanness” (2 Ne. 9:14; see also Alma 5:18). The seriousness of that reality is emphasized by the many scriptures suggesting that the resurrection is followed immediately by the Final Judgment (see 2 Ne. 9:15, 22; Mosiah 26:25; Alma 11:43–44; Alma 42:23; Morm. 7:6; Morm. 9:13–14). Truly, “this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God” (Alma 34:32).

The assurance that the resurrection will include an opportunity to be with our family members—husband, wife, parents, brothers and sisters, children, and grandchildren—is a powerful encouragement for us to fulfill our family responsibilities in mortality. It helps us live together in love in this life in anticipation of joyful reunions and associations in the next.

Our sure knowledge of a resurrection to immortality also gives us the courage to face our own death—even a death that we might call premature. Thus, the people of Ammon in the Book of Mormon “never did look upon death with any degree of terror, for their hope and views of Christ and the resurrection; therefore, death was swallowed up to them by the victory of Christ over it” (Alma 27:28).

The assurance of immortality also helps us bear the mortal separations involved in the death of our loved ones. Every one of us has wept at a death, grieved through a funeral, or stood in pain at a graveside. I am surely one who has. We should all praise God for the assured resurrection that makes our mortal separations temporary and gives us the hope and strength to carry on.

**V. The Resurrection and Temples**

We are living in a glorious season of temple building. This is also a consequence of our faith in the resurrection. Just a few months ago I was privileged to accompany President Hinckley to the dedication of a new temple. In that sacred setting I heard him say:

“Temples stand as a witness of our conviction of immortality. Our temples are concerned with life beyond the grave. For example, there is no need for marriage in the temple if we were only concerned with being married for the period of our mortal lives.”

This prophetic teaching enlarged my understanding. Our temples are living, working testimonies to our faith in the reality of the resurrection. They provide the sacred settings where living proxies can perform all of the necessary ordinances of mortal life in behalf of those who live in the world of the spirits. None of this would be meaningful if we did not have the assurance of universal immortality and the opportunity for eternal life because of the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

We believe in the literal, universal resurrection of all mankind because of “the resurrection of the Holy One of Israel” (2 Ne. 9:12). We also testify of “The Living Christ,” as was said in the recent apostolic declaration of that same name:

“We solemnly testify that His life, which is central to all human history, neither began in Bethlehem nor concluded on Calvary. …

“We bear testimony, as His duly ordained Apostles—that Jesus is the Living Christ, the immortal Son of God. He is the great King Immanuel, who stands today on the right hand of His Father. He is the light, the life, and the hope of the world. His way is the path that leads to happiness in this life and eternal life in the world to come” (“The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles,” 1 Jan. 2000).

I testify of that reality and of the reality of His Resurrection and ours, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings, Thoughts or Insights From Your Readings or From the Lesson:**

**Lesson #19**

**Defending Religious Freedom**

**Mosiah 29:10-11, 16-18, 25-26, 32**

10 And now let us be wise and look forward to these things, and do that which will make for the peace of this people.

11 Therefore I will be your king the remainder of my days; nevertheless, let us appoint judges, to judge this people according to our law; and we will newly arrange the affairs of this people, for we will appoint wise men to be judges, that will judge this people according to the commandments of God.

16 Now I say unto you, that because all men are not just it is not expedient that ye should have a king or kings to rule over you.

17 For behold, how much iniquity doth one wicked king cause to be committed, yea, and what great destruction!

18 Yea, remember king Noah, his wickedness and his abominations, and also the wickedness and abominations of his people. Behold what great destruction did come upon them; and also because of their iniquities they were brought into bondage.

25 Therefore, choose you by the voice of this people, judges, that ye may be judged according to the laws which have been given you by our fathers, which are correct, and which were given them by the hand of the Lord.

26 Now it is not common that the voice of the people desireth anything contrary to that which is right; but it is common for the lesser part of the people to desire that which is not right; therefore this shall ye observe and make it your law—to do your business by the voice of the people.

32 And now I desire that this inequality should be no more in this land, especially among this my people; but I desire that this land be a land of liberty, and every man may enjoy his rights and privileges alike, so long as the Lord sees fit that we may live and inherit the land, yea, even as long as any of our posterity remains upon the face of the land.

**Alma 2:1-10, 12, 27-28**

1 And it came to pass in the commencement of the fifth year of their reign there began to be a contention among the people; for a certain man, being called Amlici, he being a very cunning man, yea, a wise man as to the wisdom of the world, he being after the order of the man that slew Gideon by the sword, who was executed according to the law—

2 Now this Amlici had, by his cunning, drawn away much people after him; even so much that they began to be very powerful; and they began to endeavor to establish Amlici to be a king over the people.

3 Now this was alarming to the people of the church, and also to all those who had not been drawn away after the persuasions of Amlici; for they knew that according to their law that such things must be established by the voice of the people.

4 Therefore, if it were possible that Amlici should gain the voice of the people, he, being a wicked man, would deprive them of their rights and privileges of the church; for it was his intent to destroy the church of God.

5 And it came to pass that the people assembled themselves together throughout all the land, every man according to his mind, whether it were for or against Amlici, in separate bodies, having much dispute and wonderful contentions one with another.

6 And thus they did assemble themselves together to cast in their voices concerning the matter; and they were laid before the judges.

7 And it came to pass that the voice of the people came against Amlici, that he was not made king over the people.

8 Now this did cause much joy in the hearts of those who were against him; but Amlici did stir up those who were in his favor to anger against those who were not in his favor.

9 And it came to pass that they gathered themselves together, and did consecrate Amlici to be their king.

10 Now when Amlici was made king over them he commanded them that they should take up arms against their brethren; and this he did that he might subject them to him.

12 Therefore the people of the Nephites were aware of the intent of the Amlicites, and therefore they did prepare to meet them; yea, they did arm themselves with swords, and with cimeters, and with bows, and with arrows, and with stones, and with slings, and with all manner of weapons of war, of every kind.

27 And behold, as they were crossing the river Sidon, the Lamanites and the Amlicites, being as numerous almost, as it were, as the sands of the sea, came upon them to destroy them.

28 Nevertheless, the Nephites being strengthened by the hand of the Lord, having prayed mightily to him that he would deliver them out of the hands of their enemies, therefore the Lord did hear their cries, and did strengthen them, and the Lamanites and the Amlicites did fall before them.

**Alma 30:7-9**

7 Now there was no law against a man’s belief; for it was strictly contrary to the commands of God that there should be a law which should bring men on to unequal grounds.

8 For thus saith the scripture: Choose ye this day, whom ye will serve.

9 Now if a man desired to serve God, it was his privilege; or rather, if he believed in God it was his privilege to serve him; but if he did not believe in him there was no law to punish him.

**Alma 44:1-5**

1 And it came to pass that they did stop and withdrew a pace from them. And Moroni said unto Zerahemnah: Behold, Zerahemnah, that we do not desire to be men of blood. Ye know that ye are in our hands, yet we do not desire to slay you.

2 Behold, we have not come out to battle against you that we might shed your blood for power; neither do we desire to bring any one to the yoke of bondage. But this is the very cause for which ye have come against us; yea, and ye are angry with us because of our religion.

3 But now, ye behold that the Lord is with us; and ye behold that he has delivered you into our hands. And now I would that ye should understand that this is done unto us because of our religion and our faith in Christ. And now ye see that ye cannot destroy this our faith.

4 Now ye see that this is the true faith of God; yea, ye see that God will support, and keep, and preserve us, so long as we are faithful unto him, and unto our faith, and our religion; and never will the Lord suffer that we shall be destroyed except we should fall into transgression and deny our faith.

5 And now, Zerahemnah, I command you, in the name of that all-powerful God, who has strengthened our arms that we have gained power over you, by our faith, by our religion, and by our rites of worship, and by our church, and by the sacred support which we owe to our wives and our children, by that liberty which binds us to our lands and our country; yea, and also by the maintenance of the sacred word of God, to which we owe all our happiness; and by all that is most dear unto us—

**Alma 46:4-5, 10-16, 20-22**

4 And Amalickiah was desirous to be a king; and those people who were wroth were also desirous that he should be their king; and they were the greater part of them the lower judges of the land, and they were seeking for power.

5 And they had been led by the flatteries of Amalickiah, that if they would support him and establish him to be their king that he would make them rulers over the people.

10 Yea, we see that Amalickiah, because he was a man of cunning device and a man of many flattering words, that he led away the hearts of many people to do wickedly; yea, and to seek to destroy the church of God, and to destroy the foundation of liberty which God had granted unto them, or which blessing God had sent upon the face of the land for the righteous’ sake.

11 And now it came to pass that when Moroni, who was the chief commander of the armies of the Nephites, had heard of these dissensions, he was angry with Amalickiah.

12 And it came to pass that he rent his coat; and he took a piece thereof, and wrote upon it—In memory of our God, our religion, and freedom, and our peace, our wives, and our children—and he fastened it upon the end of a pole.

13 And he fastened on his head-plate, and his breastplate, and his shields, and girded on his armor about his loins; and he took the pole, which had on the end thereof his rent coat, (and he called it the title of liberty) and he bowed himself to the earth, and he prayed mightily unto his God for the blessings of liberty to rest upon his brethren, so long as there should a band of Christians remain to possess the land—

14 For thus were all the true believers of Christ, who belonged to the church of God, called by those who did not belong to the church.

15 And those who did belong to the church were faithful; yea, all those who were true believers in Christ took upon them, gladly, the name of Christ, or Christians as they were called, because of their belief in Christ who should come.

16 And therefore, at this time, Moroni prayed that the cause of the Christians, and the freedom of the land might be favored.

20 Behold, whosoever will maintain this title upon the land, let them come forth in the strength of the Lord, and enter into a covenant that they will maintain their rights, and their religion, that the Lord God may bless them.

21 And it came to pass that when Moroni had proclaimed these words, behold, the people came running together with their armor girded about their loins, rending their garments in token, or as a covenant, that they would not forsake the Lord their God; or, in other words, if they should transgress the commandments of God, or fall into transgression, and be ashamed to take upon them the name of Christ, the Lord should rend them even as they had rent their garments.

22 Now this was the covenant which they made, and they cast their garments at the feet of Moroni, saying: We covenant with our God, that we shall be destroyed, even as our brethren in the land northward, if we shall fall into transgression; yea, he may cast us at the feet of our enemies, even as we have cast our garments at thy feet to be trodden under foot, if we shall fall into transgression.

**Preserving Agency, Protecting Religious Freedom**

**Robert D. Hales, *Ensign*, May 2015**

This is Easter Sunday: a day of gratitude and remembrance honoring our Savior Jesus Christ’s Atonement and Resurrection for all mankind. We worship Him, grateful for our freedom of religion, freedom of assembly, freedom of speech, and our God-given right of agency.

As prophets foretold about these latter days in which we live, there are many confused about who we are and what we believe. Some are “false accusers … [and] despisers of those that are good.”1 Others “call evil good, and good evil; [and] put darkness for light, and light for darkness.”2

As those around us make choices about how to respond to our beliefs, we must not forget that moral agency is an essential part of God’s plan for all His children. That eternal plan, presented to us in the premortal Council in Heaven, included the gift of agency.3

In that Grand Council, Lucifer, known as Satan, used his agency to oppose God’s plan. God said: “Because … Satan rebelled against me, and sought to destroy the agency of man, which I, the Lord God, had given him, … I caused that he should be cast down.”4

He continued: “And also a third part of the hosts of heaven turned he away from me because of their agency.”5

As a result, Heavenly Father’s spirit children who chose to reject His plan and follow Lucifer lost their divine destiny.

Jesus Christ, using His agency, said:

“Here am I, send me.”6

“Thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever.”7

Jesus, who exercised His agency to sustain Heavenly Father’s plan, was identified and appointed by the Father as our Savior, foreordained to perform the atoning sacrifice for all. Similarly, our exercise of agency to keep the commandments enables us to fully understand who we are and receive all of the blessings our Heavenly Father has—including the opportunity to have a body, to progress, to experience joy, to have a family, and to inherit eternal life.

To keep the commandments, we need to know the official doctrine of the Church so we are not diverted from Christ’s leadership by the ever-changing whims of individuals.

The blessings we enjoy now are because we made the choice to follow the Savior before this life. To everyone hearing or reading these words, whoever you are and whatever your past may be, remember this: it is not too late to make that same choice again and follow Him.

Through our faith in Jesus Christ, believing in His Atonement, repenting of our sins, and being baptized, we may then receive the supernal gift of the Holy Ghost. This gift provides knowledge and understanding, guidance and strength to learn and gain a testimony, power, cleansing to overcome sin, and comfort and encouragement to be faithful in tribulation. These incomparable blessings of the Spirit increase our freedom and power to do what is right, for “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”8

As we walk the path of spiritual liberty in these last days, we must understand that the faithful use of our agency depends upon our having religious freedom. We already know that Satan does not want this freedom to be ours. He attempted to destroy moral agency in heaven, and now on earth he is fiercely undermining, opposing, and spreading confusion about religious freedom—what it is and why it is essential to our spiritual life and our very salvation.

There are four cornerstones of religious freedom that we as Latter-day Saints must rely upon and protect.

The first is freedom to believe. No one should be criticized, persecuted, or attacked by individuals, or governments either, for what he or she believes about God. It is very personal and very important. An early declaration of our beliefs regarding religious liberty states:

“No government can exist in peace, except such laws are framed and held inviolate as will secure to each individual the free exercise of conscience. …

“… The civil magistrate should restrain crime, but never control conscience [or] suppress the freedom of the soul.”9

This fundamental freedom of belief has since been acknowledged by the United Nations in its Universal Declaration of Human Rights and by other national and international human rights documents.10

The second cornerstone of religious liberty is the freedom to share our faith and our beliefs with others. The Lord commands us, “Ye shall teach [the gospel to] your children … when thou sittest in thine house.”11 He also said to His disciples, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”12 As parents, full-time missionaries, and member missionaries, we rely on religious freedom in order to teach the Lord’s doctrine in our families and throughout the world.

The third cornerstone of religious liberty is the freedom to form a religious organization, a church, to worship peacefully with others. The eleventh article of faith declares, “We claim the privilege of worshiping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may.” International human rights documents and many national constitutions support this principle.

The fourth cornerstone of religious liberty is the freedom to live our faith—free exercise of faith not just in the home and chapel but also in public places. The Lord commands us not only to pray privately13 but also to go forth and “let [our] light so shine before men, that they may see [our] good works, and glorify [our] Father which is in heaven.”14

Some are offended when we bring our religion into the public square, yet the same people who insist that their viewpoints and actions be tolerated in society are often very slow to give that same tolerance to religious believers who also wish their viewpoints and actions to be tolerated. The general lack of respect for religious viewpoints is quickly devolving into social and political intolerance for religious people and institutions.

As we face increased pressure to bow to secular standards, forfeit our religious liberties, and compromise our agency, consider what the Book of Mormon teaches about our responsibilities. In the book of Alma we read of Amlici, “a very cunning” and “wicked man” who sought to be king over the people and “deprive them of their rights and privileges,” which “was alarming to the people of the church.”15 They were taught by King Mosiah to raise their voices for what they felt was right.16 Therefore they “assembled themselves together throughout all the land, every man according to his mind, whether it were for or against Amlici, in separate bodies, having much dispute … one with another.”17

In these discussions, members of the Church and others had the opportunity to come together, experience the spirit of unity, and be influenced by the Holy Ghost. “And it came to pass that the voice of the people came against Amlici, that he was not made king.”18

As disciples of Jesus Christ we have a responsibility to work together with like-minded believers, to raise our voices for what is right. While members should never claim or even imply that they are speaking for the Church, we are all invited, in our capacity as citizens, to share our personal witness with conviction and love—“every man [and woman] according to his [or her own] mind.”19

Said the Prophet Joseph Smith:

“I am bold to declare before Heaven that I am just as ready to die in defending the rights of a Presbyterian, a Baptist, or a good man of any other denomination [as for a Mormon]; for the same principle which would trample upon the rights of the Latter-day Saints would trample upon the rights of the Roman Catholics, or of any other denomination who may be unpopular and too weak to defend themselves.

“It is a love of liberty which inspires my soul—civil and religious liberty to the whole of the human race.”20

Brothers and sisters, we are responsible to safeguard these sacred freedoms and rights for ourselves and our posterity. What can you and I do?

First, we can become informed. Be aware of issues in your community that could have an impact on religious liberty.

Second, in your individual capacity, join with others who share our commitment to religious freedom. Work side by side to protect religious freedom.

Third, live your life to be a good example of what you believe—in word and deed. How we live our religion is far more important than what we may say about our religion.

Our Savior’s Second Coming is drawing nearer. Let us not delay in this great cause. Remember Captain Moroni, who hoisted the title of liberty inscribed with the words “In memory of our God, our religion, and freedom, and our peace, our wives, and our children.”21 Let us remember the people’s response: exercising their agency, they “came running together” with a covenant to act.22

My beloved brothers and sisters, don’t walk! Run! Run to receive the blessings of agency by following the Holy Ghost and exercising the freedoms God has given us to do His will.

I bear my special witness on this special Easter day that Jesus Christ used His agency to do our Father’s will.

Of our Savior, we sing, “His precious blood he freely spilt; His life he freely gave.”23 And because He did, we have the priceless opportunity “to choose liberty and eternal life” through the power and blessings of His Atonement.24 May we freely choose to follow Him today and always, I pray in His holy name, even Jesus Christ, amen.

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings, Thoughts or Insights From Your Readings or From the Lesson:**

**Lesson #20**

**Strengthening Our Faith and Testimony**

**1 Nephi 15:7-11**

7 And they said: Behold, we cannot understand the words which our father hath spoken concerning the natural branches of the olive tree, and also concerning the Gentiles.

8 And I said unto them: Have ye inquired of the Lord?

9 And they said unto me: We have not; for the Lord maketh no such thing known unto us.

10 Behold, I said unto them: How is it that ye do not keep the commandments of the Lord? How is it that ye will perish, because of the hardness of your hearts?

11 Do ye not remember the things which the Lord hath said?—If ye will not harden your hearts, and ask me in faith, believing that ye shall receive, with diligence in keeping my commandments, surely these things shall be made known unto you.

**2 Nephi 1:10-11**

10 But behold, when the time cometh that they shall dwindle in unbelief, after they have received so great blessings from the hand of the Lord—having a knowledge of the creation of the earth, and all men, knowing the great and marvelous works of the Lord from the creation of the world; having power given them to do all things by faith; having all the commandments from the beginning, and having been brought by his infinite goodness into this precious land of promise—behold, I say, if the day shall come that they will reject the Holy One of Israel, the true Messiah, their Redeemer and their God, behold, the judgments of him that is just shall rest upon them.

11 Yea, he will bring other nations unto them, and he will give unto them power, and he will take away from them the lands of their possessions, and he will cause them to be scattered and smitten.

**2 Nephi 9:28**

28 O that cunning plan of the evil one! O the vainness, and the frailties, and the foolishness of men! When they are learned they think they are wise, and they hearken not unto the counsel of God, for they set it aside, supposing they know of themselves, wherefore, their wisdom is foolishness and it profiteth them not. And they shall perish.

**2 Nephi 25:28-29**

28 And now behold, my people, ye are a stiffnecked people; wherefore, I have spoken plainly unto you, that ye cannot misunderstand. And the words which I have spoken shall stand as a testimony against you; for they are sufficient to teach any man the right way; for the right way is to believe in Christ and deny him not; for by denying him ye also deny the prophets and the law.

29 And now behold, I say unto you that the right way is to believe in Christ, and deny him not; and Christ is the Holy One of Israel; wherefore ye must bow down before him, and worship him with all your might, mind, and strength, and your whole soul; and if ye do this ye shall in nowise be cast out.

**2 Nephi 28:21-23**

21 And others will he pacify, and lull them away into carnal security, that they will say: All is well in Zion; yea, Zion prospereth, all is well—and thus the devil cheateth their souls, and leadeth them away carefully down to hell.

22 And behold, others he flattereth away, and telleth them there is no hell; and he saith unto them: I am no devil, for there is none—and thus he whispereth in their ears, until he grasps them with his awful chains, from whence there is no deliverance.

23 Yea, they are grasped with death, and hell; and death, and hell, and the devil, and all that have been seized therewith must stand before the throne of God, and be judged according to their works, from whence they must go into the place prepared for them, even a lake of fire and brimstone, which is endless torment.

**Mosiah 2:36-37**

36 And now, I say unto you, my brethren, that after ye have known and have been taught all these things, if ye should transgress and go contrary to that which has been spoken, that ye do withdraw yourselves from the Spirit of the Lord, that it may have no place in you to guide you in wisdom’s paths that ye may be blessed, prospered, and preserved—

37 I say unto you, that the man that doeth this, the same cometh out in open rebellion against God; therefore he listeth to obey the evil spirit, and becometh an enemy to all righteousness; therefore, the Lord has no place in him, for he dwelleth not in unholy temples.

**Mosiah 4:11-12**

11 And again I say unto you as I have said before, that as ye have come to the knowledge of the glory of God, or if ye have known of his goodness and have tasted of his love, and have received a remission of your sins, which causeth such exceedingly great joy in your souls, even so 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, and humble yourselves even in the depths of humility, calling on the name of the Lord daily, and standing steadfastly in the faith of that which is to come, which was spoken by the mouth of the angel.

12 And behold, I say unto you that if ye do this ye shall always rejoice, and be filled with the love of God, and always retain a remission of your sins; and ye shall grow in the knowledge of the glory of him that created you, or in the knowledge of that which is just and true.

**Mosiah 15:11**

11 Behold I say unto you, that whosoever has heard the words of the prophets, yea, all the holy prophets who have prophesied concerning the coming of the Lord—I say unto you, that all those who have hearkened unto their words, and believed that the Lord would redeem his people, and have looked forward to that day for a remission of their sins, I say unto you, that these are his seed, or they are the heirs of the kingdom of God.

**Mosiah 26:1-4**

1 Now it came to pass that there were many of the rising generation that could not understand the words of king Benjamin, being little children at the time he spake unto his people; and they did not believe the tradition of their fathers.

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

3 And now because of their unbelief they could not understand the word of God; and their hearts were hardened.

4 And they would not be baptized; neither would they join the church. And they were a separate people as to their faith, and remained so ever after, even in their carnal and sinful state; for they would not call upon the Lord their God.

**Alma 12:9-11**

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.

10 And therefore, he that will harden his heart, the same receiveth the lesser portion of the word; and he that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word, until it is given unto him to know the mysteries of God until he know them in full.

11 And they that will harden their hearts, to them is given the lesser portion of the word until they know nothing concerning his mysteries; and then they are taken captive by the devil, and led by his will down to destruction. Now this is what is meant by the chains of hell.

**Alma 31:8-11**

8 Now the Zoramites were dissenters from the Nephites; therefore they had had the word of God preached unto them.

9 But they had fallen into great errors, for they would not observe to keep the commandments of God, and his statutes, according to the law of Moses.

10 Neither would they observe the performances of the church, to continue in prayer and supplication to God daily, that they might not enter into temptation.

11 Yea, in fine, they did pervert the ways of the Lord in very many instances; therefore, for this cause, Alma and his brethren went into the land to preach the word unto them.

**Alma 46:7-8**

7 And there were many in the church who believed in the flattering words of Amalickiah, therefore they dissented even from the church; and thus were the affairs of the people of Nephi exceedingly precarious and dangerous, notwithstanding their great victory which they had had over the Lamanites, and their great rejoicings which they had had because of their deliverance by the hand of the Lord.

8 Thus we see how quick the children of men do forget the Lord their God, yea, how quick to do iniquity, and to be led away by the evil one.

**Helaman 4:11-13**

11 Now this great loss of the Nephites, and the great slaughter which was among them, would not have happened had it not been for their wickedness and their abomination which was among them; yea, and it was among those also who professed to belong to the church of God.

12 And it was because of the pride of their hearts, because of their exceeding riches, yea, it was because of their oppression to the poor, withholding their food from the hungry, withholding their clothing from the naked, and smiting their humble brethren upon the cheek, making a mock of that which was sacred, denying the spirit of prophecy and of revelation, murdering, plundering, lying, stealing, committing adultery, rising up in great contentions, and deserting away into the land of Nephi, among the Lamanites—

13 And because of this their great wickedness, and their boastings in their own strength, they were left in their own strength; therefore they did not prosper, but were afflicted and smitten, and driven before the Lamanites, until they had lost possession of almost all their lands.

**Helaman 13:24-26**

24 Yea, wo unto this people, because of this time which has arrived, that ye do cast out the prophets, and do mock them, and cast stones at them, and do slay them, and do all manner of iniquity unto them, even as they did of old time.

25 And now when ye talk, ye say: If our days had been in the days of our fathers of old, we would not have slain the prophets; we would not have stoned them, and cast them out.

26 Behold ye are worse than they; for as the Lord liveth, if a prophet come among you and declareth unto you the word of the Lord, which testifieth of your sins and iniquities, ye are angry with him, and cast him out and seek all manner of ways to destroy him; yea, you will say that he is a false prophet, and that he is a sinner, and of the devil, because he testifieth that your deeds are evil.

**Helaman 15:7-8**

7 And behold, ye do know of yourselves, for ye have witnessed it, that as many of them as are brought to the knowledge of the truth, and to know of the wicked and abominable traditions of their fathers, and are led to believe the holy scriptures, yea, the prophecies of the holy prophets, which are written, which leadeth them to faith on the Lord, and unto repentance, which faith and repentance bringeth a change of heart unto them—

8 Therefore, as many as have come to this, ye know of yourselves are firm and steadfast in the faith, and in the thing wherewith they have been made free.

**Mormon 5:16-18**

16 For behold, the Spirit of the Lord hath already ceased to strive with their fathers; and they are without Christ and God in the world; and they are driven about as chaff before the wind.

17 They were once a delightsome people, and they had Christ for their shepherd; yea, they were led even by God the Father.

18 But now, behold, they are led about by Satan, even as chaff is driven before the wind, or as a vessel is tossed about upon the waves, without sail or anchor, or without anything wherewith to steer her; and even as she is, so are they.

**Mormon 9:7-8**

7 And again I speak unto you who deny the revelations of God, and say that they are done away, that there are no revelations, nor prophecies, nor gifts, nor healing, nor speaking with tongues, and the interpretation of tongues;

8 Behold I say unto you, he that denieth these things knoweth not the gospel of Christ; yea, he has not read the scriptures; if so, he does not understand them.

**Choose to Believe**

**L. Whitney Clayton, *Ensign*, May 2015**

Last January, seven-year-old Sailor Gutzler and her family were flying from Florida to Illinois in a private airplane. Sailor’s father was at the controls. Just after nightfall, the aircraft developed mechanical problems and crashed in the pitch-dark hills of Kentucky, upside down in very rough terrain. Everyone but Sailor died in the accident. Her wrist was broken in the crash. She suffered cuts and scrapes and had lost her shoes. The temperature was 38 degrees Fahrenheit (or 3 degrees Celsius)—it was a cold, rainy Kentucky winter’s night—and Sailor was wearing only shorts, a T-shirt, and one sock.

She cried out for her mother and father, but no one answered. Summoning every ounce of courage, she set off barefoot across the countryside in search of help, wading through creeks, crossing ditches, and braving blackberry briars. From the top of one small hill, Sailor spotted a light in the distance, about a mile away. Stumbling through the darkness and brush toward that light, she eventually arrived at the home of a kind man she had never met before who sprang to her care. Sailor was safe. She would soon be taken to a hospital and helped on her way to recovery.1

Sailor survived because she saw a light in the distance and fought her way to it—notwithstanding the wild countryside, the depth of the tragedy she faced, and the injuries she had sustained. It is hard to imagine how Sailor managed to do what she did that night. But what we do know is that she recognized in the light of that distant house a chance for rescue. There was hope. She took courage in the fact that no matter how bad things were, her rescue would be found in that light.

Few of us will ever endure an experience as harrowing as Sailor’s. But all of us will, at some time or another, have to traverse our own spiritual wilderness and undertake our own rugged emotional journeys. In those moments, however dark or seemingly hopeless they may be, if we search for it, there will always be a spiritual light that beckons to us, giving us the hope of rescue and relief. That light shines from the Savior of all mankind, who is the Light of the World.

Perceiving spiritual light is different from seeing physical light. Recognizing the Savior’s spiritual light begins with our willingness to believe. God requires that initially we at least desire to believe. “If ye will awake and arouse your faculties … and exercise a particle of faith,” the prophet Alma teaches, “yea, even if ye can no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you, even until ye believe in a manner that ye can give place for a portion of [the Savior’s] words.”2

Alma’s call for us to desire to believe and to “give place” in our hearts for the Savior’s words reminds us that belief and faith require our personal choice and action. We must “awake and arouse [our] faculties.” We ask before it is given unto us; we seek before we find; we knock before it is opened unto us. We are then given this promise: “For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.”3

No more impassioned plea for us to believe has come than from the Savior Himself, during His earthly ministry, when He appealed to His disbelieving listeners:

“If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not.

“But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.”4

Every day each of us faces a test. It is the test of our lifetimes: will we choose to believe in Him and allow the light of His gospel to grow within us, or will we refuse to believe and insist on traveling alone in the dark? The Savior provides His gospel as a light to guide those who choose to believe in and follow Him.

After the crash, Sailor had a choice. She could have chosen to stay by the airplane in the dark, alone and afraid. But there was a long night ahead, and it was just going to get colder. She chose another way. Sailor climbed up a hill, and there she saw a light on the horizon.

Gradually, as she made her way through the night toward the light, it grew brighter. Still, there must have been times when she could not see it. Perhaps it went out of view when she was in a ravine or behind trees or bushes, but she pressed on. Whenever she could see the light, Sailor had evidence that she was on the right path. She did not yet know precisely what that light was, but she kept walking toward it based on what she knew, trusting and hoping that she would see it again if she kept moving in the right direction. By so doing, she may have saved her life.

Our lives can be like that too. There may be times when we have been hurt, when we are tired, and when our lives seem dark and cold. There may be times when we cannot see any light on the horizon, and we may feel like giving up. If we are willing to believe, if we desire to believe, if we choose to believe, then the Savior’s teachings and example will show us the pathway forward.

**Choose to Believe**

Just as Sailor had to believe that she would find safety in that distant light, so we too must choose to open our hearts to the divine reality of the Savior—to His eternal light and His healing mercy. Prophets across the ages have encouraged us and even implored us to believe in Christ. Their exhortations reflect a fundamental fact: God does not force us to believe. Instead He invites us to believe by sending living prophets and apostles to teach us, by providing scriptures, and by beckoning to us through His Spirit. We are the ones who must choose to embrace those spiritual invitations, electing to see with inward eyes the spiritual light with which He calls us. The decision to believe is the most important choice we ever make. It shapes all our other decisions.

God does not compel us to believe any more than He compels us to keep any commandments, despite His perfect desire to bless us. Yet His call to us to believe in Him—to exercise that particle of faith and to give place for His words—remains in effect today. As the Savior said, “I bear record that the Father commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent and believe in me.”5

Belief and testimony and faith are not passive principles. They do not just happen to us. Belief is something we choose—we hope for it, we work for it, and we sacrifice for it. We will not accidentally come to believe in the Savior and His gospel any more than we will accidentally pray or pay tithing. We actively choose to believe, just like we choose to keep other commandments.

**Put Belief into Action**

Sailor could not know at first if what she was doing as she pushed her way through the underbrush would actually work. She was lost and injured; it was dark and cold. But she left the crash site and ventured out in hope of rescue, crawling and scraping her way forward until she saw a light in the distance. Once she had seen it, she did her best to move toward it, remembering what she had seen.

We likewise must give place for the hope that we will find spiritual light by embracing belief rather than choosing to doubt. Our actions are the evidence of our belief and become the substance of our faith. We are choosing to believe when we pray and when we read the scriptures. We are choosing to believe when we fast, when we keep the Sabbath day holy, and when we worship in the temple. We are choosing to believe when we are baptized and when we partake of the sacrament. We are choosing to believe when we repent and seek divine forgiveness and healing love.

**Never Give Up**

Sometimes progress in spiritual things can seem slow or intermittent. Sometimes we may feel that we have lost ground, that we have made mistakes, or that our best efforts to find the Savior are not working. If you feel this way, please do not give up—ever. Go right on believing in Him and in His gospel and His Church. Align your actions with that belief. In those moments when the light of your faith has dimmed, let your hope for the Savior’s love and grace, found in His gospel and His Church, overcome your doubt. I promise that He stands ready to receive you. Over time you will come to see that you have made the best choice you could possibly have made. Your courageous decision to believe in Him will bless you immeasurably and forever.

**The Blessings of Belief**

I have felt the merciful love of the Savior in my life. I have searched for Him in my own moments of darkness, and He has reached out to me with His healing light. One of the great joys of my life has been traveling with my wife, Kathy, to meet with members of the Church in many corners of the globe. These wonderful encounters have taught me and taught us about God’s love for His children. They have shown me the limitless potential for happiness that becomes the blessing of those who choose to follow the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. I have learned that believing in Him and in His redemptive power is the true path to “peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come.”*6*

I testify that Jesus Christ is the source of light and hope for all of us. I pray that we may all choose to believe in Him. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings, Thoughts or Insights From Your Readings or From the Lesson:**

**Lesson #21**

**The Coming of Jesus Christ**

**Helaman 14:20-30**

20 But behold, as I said unto you concerning another sign, a sign of his death, behold, in that day that he shall suffer death the sun shall be darkened and refuse to give his light unto you; and also the moon and the stars; and there shall be no light upon the face of this land, even from the time that he shall suffer death, for the space of three days, to the time that he shall rise again from the dead.

21 Yea, at the time that he shall yield up the ghost there shall be thunderings and lightnings for the space of many hours, and the earth shall shake and tremble; and the rocks which are upon the face of this earth, which are both above the earth and beneath, which ye know at this time are solid, or the more part of it is one solid mass, shall be broken up;

22 Yea, they shall be rent in twain, and shall ever after be found in seams and in cracks, and in broken fragments upon the face of the whole earth, yea, both above the earth and beneath.

23 And behold, there shall be great tempests, and there shall be many mountains laid low, like unto a valley, and there shall be many places which are now called valleys which shall become mountains, whose height is great.

24 And many highways shall be broken up, and many cities shall become desolate.

25 And many graves shall be opened, and shall yield up many of their dead; and many saints shall appear unto many.

26 And behold, thus hath the angel spoken unto me; for he said unto me that there should be thunderings and lightnings for the space of many hours.

27 And he said unto me that while the thunder and the lightning lasted, and the tempest, that these things should be, and that darkness should cover the face of the whole earth for the space of three days.

28 And the angel said unto me that many shall see greater things than these, to the intent that they might believe that these signs and these wonders should come to pass upon all the face of this land, to the intent that there should be no cause for unbelief among the children of men—

29 And this to the intent that whosoever will believe might be saved, and that whosoever will not believe, a righteous judgment might come upon them; and also if they are condemned they bring upon themselves their own condemnation.

30 And now remember, remember, my brethren, that whosoever perisheth, perisheth unto himself; and whosoever doeth iniquity, doeth it unto himself; for behold, ye are free; ye are permitted to act for yourselves; for behold, God hath given unto you a knowledge and he hath made you free.

**Helaman 16:1-5**

1 And now, it came to pass that there were many who heard the words of Samuel, the Lamanite, which he spake upon the walls of the city. And as many as believed on his word went forth and sought for Nephi; and when they had come forth and found him they confessed unto him their sins and denied not, desiring that they might be baptized unto the Lord.

2 But as many as there were who did not believe in the words of Samuel were angry with him; and they cast stones at him upon the wall, and also many shot arrows at him as he stood upon the wall; but the Spirit of the Lord was with him, insomuch that they could not hit him with their stones neither with their arrows.

3 Now when they saw that they could not hit him, there were many more who did believe on his words, insomuch that they went away unto Nephi to be baptized.

4 For behold, Nephi was baptizing, and prophesying, and preaching, crying repentance unto the people, showing signs and wonders, working miracles among the people, that they might know that the Christ must shortly come—

5 Telling them of things which must shortly come, that they might know and remember at the time of their coming that they had been made known unto them beforehand, to the intent that they might believe; therefore as many as believed on the words of Samuel went forth unto him to be baptized, for they came repenting and confessing their sins.

**3 Nephi 9:1-5, 12-14**

1 And it came to pass that there was a voice heard among all the inhabitants of the earth, upon all the face of this land, crying:

2 Wo, wo, wo unto this people; wo unto the inhabitants of the whole earth except they shall repent; for the devil laugheth, and his angels rejoice, because of the slain of the fair sons and daughters of my people; and it is because of their iniquity and abominations that they are fallen!

3 Behold, that great city Zarahemla have I burned with fire, and the inhabitants thereof.

4 And behold, that great city Moroni have I caused to be sunk in the depths of the sea, and the inhabitants thereof to be drowned.

5 And behold, that great city Moronihah have I covered with earth, and the inhabitants thereof, to hide their iniquities and their abominations from before my face, that the blood of the prophets and the saints shall not come any more unto me against them.

12 And many great destructions have I caused to come upon this land, and upon this people, because of their wickedness and their abominations.

13 O all ye that are spared because ye were more righteous than they, will ye not now return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you?

14 Yea, verily I say unto you, if ye will come unto me ye shall have eternal life. Behold, mine arm of mercy is extended towards you, and whosoever will come, him will I receive; and blessed are those who come unto me.

**3 Nephi 10:12**

12 And it was the more righteous part of the people who were saved, and it was they who received the prophets and stoned them not; and it was they who had not shed the blood of the saints, who were spared—

**3 Nephi 11:1-17**

1 And now it came to pass that there were a great multitude gathered together, of the people of Nephi, round about the temple which was in the land Bountiful; and they were marveling and wondering one with another, and were showing one to another the great and marvelous change which had taken place.

2 And they were also conversing about this Jesus Christ, of whom the sign had been given concerning his death.

3 And it came to pass that while they were thus 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.

4 And it came to pass that again they heard the voice, and they understood it not.

5 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.

6 And behold, the third time they did understand the voice which they heard; and it said unto them:

7 Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name—hear ye him.

8 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.

9 And it came to pass that he stretched forth his hand and spake unto the people, saying:

10 Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world.

11 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.

12 And it came to pass that 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.

13 And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto them saying:

14 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.

15 And it came to pass that 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.

16 And when they had all gone forth and had witnessed for themselves, they did cry out with one accord, saying:

17 Hosanna! Blessed be the name of the Most High God! And they did fall down at the feet of Jesus, and did worship him.

**Preparation for the Second Coming**

**Dallin H. Oaks, *Ensign*, May 2004**

In modern revelation we have the promise that if we are prepared we need not fear (see D&C 38:30). I was introduced to that principle 60 years ago this summer when I became a Boy Scout and learned the Scout motto: “Be prepared.” Today I have felt prompted to speak of the importance of preparation for a future event of supreme importance to each of us—the Second Coming of the Lord.

The scriptures are rich in references to the Second Coming, an event eagerly awaited by the righteous and dreaded or denied by the wicked. The faithful of all ages have pondered the sequence and meaning of the many events prophesied to precede and follow this hinge point of history.

Four matters are indisputable to Latter-day Saints: (1) The Savior will return to the earth in power and great glory to reign personally during a millennium of righteousness and peace. (2) At the time of His coming there will be a destruction of the wicked and a resurrection of the righteous. (3) No one knows the time of His coming, but (4) the faithful are taught to study the signs of it and to be prepared for it. I wish to speak about the fourth of these great realities: the signs of the Second Coming and what we should do to prepare for it.

**I.**

The Lord has declared, “He that feareth me shall be looking forth for the great day of the Lord to come, even for the signs of the coming of the Son of Man,” signs that will be shown “in the heavens above, and in the earth beneath” (D&C 45:39–40).

The Savior taught this in the parable of the fig tree whose tender new branches give a sign of the coming of summer. “So likewise,” when the elect shall see the signs of His coming “they shall know that he is near, even at the doors” (JS—M 1:38–39; see also Matt. 24:32–33; D&C 45:37–38).

Biblical and modern prophecies give many signs of the Second Coming. These include:

1. The fulness of the gospel restored and preached in all the world for a witness to all nations.

2. False Christs and false prophets, deceiving many.

3. Wars and rumors of wars, with nation rising against nation.

4. Earthquakes in divers places.

5. Famine and pestilence.

6. An overflowing scourge, a desolating sickness covering the land.

7. Iniquity abounding.

8. The whole earth in commotion.

9. Men’s hearts failing them.

(See Matt. 24:5–15; JS—M 1:22, 28–32; D&C 45:26–33.)

In another revelation the Lord declares that some of these signs are His voice calling His people to repentance:

“Hearken, O ye nations of the earth, and hear the words of that God who made you. …

“How oft have I called upon you by the mouth of my servants, and by the ministering of angels, and by mine own voice, and by the voice of thunderings, and by the voice of lightnings, and by the voice of tempests, and by the voice of earthquakes, and great hailstorms, and by the voice of famines and pestilences of every kind, … and would have saved you with an everlasting salvation, but ye would not!” (D&C 43:23, 25).

These signs of the Second Coming are all around us and seem to be increasing in frequency and intensity. For example, the list of major earthquakes in The World Almanac and Book of Facts, 2004 shows twice as many earthquakes in the decades of the 1980s and 1990s as in the two preceding decades (pp. 189–90). It also shows further sharp increases in the first several years of this century. The list of notable floods and tidal waves and the list of hurricanes, typhoons, and blizzards worldwide show similar increases in recent years (pp. 188–89). Increases by comparison with 50 years ago can be dismissed as changes in reporting criteria, but the accelerating pattern of natural disasters in the last few decades is ominous.

**II.**

Another sign of the times is the gathering of the faithful (see D&C 133:4). In the early years of this last dispensation, a gathering to Zion involved various locations in the United States: to Kirtland, to Missouri, to Nauvoo, and to the tops of the mountains. Always these were gatherings to prospective temples. With the creation of stakes and the construction of temples in most nations with sizeable populations of the faithful, the current commandment is not to gather to one place but to gather in stakes in our own homelands. There the faithful can enjoy the full blessings of eternity in a house of the Lord. There, in their own homelands, they can obey the Lord’s command to enlarge the borders of His people and strengthen her stakes (see D&C 101:21; D&C 133:9, 14). In this way, the stakes of Zion are “for a defense, and for a refuge from the storm, and from wrath when it shall be poured out without mixture upon the whole earth” (D&C 115:6).

**III.**

While we are powerless to alter the fact of the Second Coming and unable to know its exact time, we can accelerate our own preparation and try to influence the preparation of those around us.

A parable that contains an important and challenging teaching on this subject is the parable of the ten virgins. Of this parable, the Lord said, “And at that day, when I shall come in my glory, shall the parable be fulfilled which I spake concerning the ten virgins” (D&C 45:56).

Given in the 25th chapter of Matthew, this parable contrasts the circumstances of the five foolish and the five wise virgins. All ten were invited to the wedding feast, but only half of them were prepared with oil in their lamps when the bridegroom came. The five who were prepared went into the marriage feast, and the door was shut. The five who had delayed their preparations came late. The door had been closed, and the Lord denied them entrance, saying, “I know you not” (Matt. 25:12). “Watch therefore,” the Savior concluded, “for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh” (Matt. 25:13).

The arithmetic of this parable is chilling. The ten virgins obviously represent members of Christ’s Church, for all were invited to the wedding feast and all knew what was required to be admitted when the bridegroom came. But only half were ready when he came.

Modern revelation contains this teaching, spoken by the Lord to the early leaders of the Church:

“And after your testimony cometh wrath and indignation upon the people.

“For after your testimony cometh the testimony of earthquakes. …

“And … the testimony of the voice of thunderings, and the voice of lightnings, and the voice of tempests, and the voice of the waves of the sea heaving themselves beyond their bounds.

“And all things shall be in commotion; and surely, men’s hearts shall fail them; for fear shall come upon all people.

“And angels shall fly through the midst of heaven, crying with a loud voice, sounding the trump of God, saying: Prepare ye, prepare ye, O inhabitants of the earth; for the judgment of our God is come. Behold, and lo, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him” (D&C 88:88–92).

**IV.**

Brothers and sisters, as the Book of Mormon teaches, “this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; … the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors” (Alma 34:32). Are we preparing?

In His preface to our compilation of modern revelation the Lord declares, “Prepare ye, prepare ye for that which is to come, for the Lord is nigh” (D&C 1:12).

The Lord also warned: “Yea, let the cry go forth among all people: Awake and arise and go forth to meet the Bridegroom; behold and lo, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Prepare yourselves for the great day of the Lord” (D&C 133:10; see also D&C 34:6).

Always we are cautioned that we cannot know the day or the hour of His coming. In the 24th chapter of Matthew Jesus taught:

“Watch therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

“But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up” (Matt. 24:42–43). “But would have been ready” (JS—M 1:47).

“Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh” (Matt. 24:44; see also D&C 51:20).

What if the day of His coming were tomorrow? If we knew that we would meet the Lord tomorrow—through our premature death or through His unexpected coming—what would we do today? What confessions would we make? What practices would we discontinue? What accounts would we settle? What forgivenesses would we extend? What testimonies would we bear?

If we would do those things then, why not now? Why not seek peace while peace can be obtained? If our lamps of preparation are drawn down, let us start immediately to replenish them.

We need to make both temporal and spiritual preparation for the events prophesied at the time of the Second Coming. And the preparation most likely to be neglected is the one less visible and more difficult—the spiritual. A 72-hour kit of temporal supplies may prove valuable for earthly challenges, but, as the foolish virgins learned to their sorrow, a 24-hour kit of spiritual preparation is of greater and more enduring value.

**V.**

We are living in the prophesied time “when peace shall be taken from the earth” (D&C 1:35), when “all things shall be in commotion” and “men’s hearts shall fail them” (D&C 88:91). There are many temporal causes of commotion, including wars and natural disasters, but an even greater cause of current “commotion” is spiritual.

Viewing our surroundings through the lens of faith and with an eternal perspective, we see all around us a fulfillment of the prophecy that “the devil shall have power over his own dominion” (D&C 1:35). Our hymn describes “the foe in countless numbers, / Marshaled in the ranks of sin” (“Hope of Israel,” Hymns, no. 259), and so it is.

Evil that used to be localized and covered like a boil is now legalized and paraded like a banner. The most fundamental roots and bulwarks of civilization are questioned or attacked. Nations disavow their religious heritage. Marriage and family responsibilities are discarded as impediments to personal indulgence. The movies and magazines and television that shape our attitudes are filled with stories or images that portray the children of God as predatory beasts or, at best, as trivial creations pursuing little more than personal pleasure. And too many of us accept this as entertainment.

The men and women who made epic sacrifices to combat evil regimes in the past were shaped by values that are disappearing from our public teaching. The good, the true, and the beautiful are being replaced by the no-good, the “whatever,” and the valueless fodder of personal whim. Not surprisingly, many of our youth and adults are caught up in pornography, pagan piercing of body parts, self-serving pleasure pursuits, dishonest behavior, revealing attire, foul language, and degrading sexual indulgence.

An increasing number of opinion leaders and followers deny the existence of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and revere only the gods of secularism. Many in positions of power and influence deny the right and wrong defined by divine decree. Even among those who profess to believe in right and wrong, there are “them that call evil good, and good evil” (Isa. 5:20; 2 Ne. 15:20). Many also deny individual responsibility and practice dependence on others, seeking, like the foolish virgins, to live on borrowed substance and borrowed light.

All of this is grievous in the sight of our Heavenly Father, who loves all of His children and forbids every practice that keeps any from returning to His presence.

What is the state of our personal preparation for eternal life? The people of God have always been people of covenant. What is the measure of our compliance with covenants, including the sacred promises we made in the waters of baptism, in receiving the holy priesthood, and in the temples of God? Are we promisers who do not fulfill and believers who do not perform?

Are we following the Lord’s command, “Stand ye in holy places, and be not moved, until the day of the Lord come; for behold, it cometh quickly”? (D&C 87:8). What are those “holy places”? Surely they include the temple and its covenants faithfully kept. Surely they include a home where children are treasured and parents are respected. Surely the holy places include our posts of duty assigned by priesthood authority, including missions and callings faithfully fulfilled in branches, wards, and stakes.

As the Savior taught in His prophecy of the Second Coming, blessed is the “faithful and wise servant” who is attending to his duty when the Lord comes (see Matt. 24:45–46). As the prophet Nephi taught of that day, “The righteous need not fear” (1 Ne. 22:17; see also 1 Ne. 14:14; D&C 133:44). And modern revelation promises that “the Lord shall have power over his saints” (D&C 1:36).

We are surrounded by challenges on all sides (see 2 Cor. 4:8–9). But with faith in God, we trust the blessings He has promised those who keep His commandments. We have faith in the future, and we are preparing for that future. To borrow a metaphor from the familiar world of athletic competitions, we do not know when this game will end, and we do not know the final score, but we do know that when the game finally ends, our team wins. We will continue to go forward “till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done” (History of the Church, 4:540).

“Wherefore,” the Savior tells us, “be faithful, praying always, having your lamps trimmed and burning, and oil with you, that you may be ready at the coming of the Bridegroom—For behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, that I come quickly” (D&C 33:17–18).

I testify of Jesus Christ. I testify that He shall come, as He has promised. And I pray that we will be prepared to meet Him, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings, Thoughts or Insights From Your Readings or From the Lesson**

**Lesson #22**

**Even as I Am**

**John 17:9-11, 20-23**

9 I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.

10 And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.

11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

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.

**3 Nephi 12: 1-16, 43-45**

1 And it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words unto Nephi, and to those who had been called, (now the number of them who had been called, and received power and authority to baptize, was twelve) and behold, he stretched forth his hand unto the multitude, and cried unto them, saying: Blessed are ye if ye shall give heed unto the words of these twelve whom I have chosen from among you to minister unto you, and to be your servants; and unto them I have given power that they may baptize you with water; and after that ye are baptized with water, behold, I will baptize you with fire and with the Holy Ghost; therefore blessed are ye if ye shall believe in me and be baptized, after that ye have seen me and know that I am.

2 And again, more blessed are they who shall believe in your words because that ye shall testify that ye have seen me, and that ye know that I am. Yea, blessed are they who shall believe in your words, and come down into the depths of humility and be baptized, for they shall be visited with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and shall receive a remission of their sins.

3 Yea, blessed are the poor in spirit who come unto me, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 And again, blessed are all they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.

5 And blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

6 And blessed are all they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled with the Holy Ghost.

7 And blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

8 And blessed are all the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

9 And blessed are all the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.

10 And blessed are all they who are persecuted for my name’s sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 And blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake;

12 For ye shall have great joy and be exceedingly glad, for great shall be your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets who were before you.

13 Verily, verily, I say unto you, I give unto you to be the salt of the earth; but if the salt shall lose its savor wherewith shall the earth be salted? The salt shall be thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men.

14 Verily, verily, I say unto you, I give unto you to be the light of this people. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.

15 Behold, do men light a candle and put it under a bushel? Nay, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light to all that are in the house;

16 Therefore let your light so shine before this people, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

43 And behold it is written also, that thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy;

44 But behold I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you;

45 That ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good.

**3 Nephi 13:1, 5-7, 16-18, 22-24, 33**

1 Verily, verily, I say that I would that ye should do alms unto the poor; but take heed that ye do not your alms before men to be seen of them; otherwise ye have no reward of your Father who is in heaven.

5 And when thou prayest thou shalt not do as the hypocrites, for they love to pray, standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.

6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret; and thy Father, who seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen, for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

16 Moreover, when ye fast be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance, for they disfigure their faces that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.

17 But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face;

18 That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father, who is in secret; and thy Father, who seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

22 The light of the body is the eye; if, therefore, thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

23 But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

24 No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.

33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.

**3 Nephi 14:1-5, 21-27**

1 And now it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words he turned again to the multitude, and did open his mouth unto them again, saying: Verily, verily, I say unto you, Judge not, that ye be not judged.

2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

3 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

4 Or how wilt thou say to thy brother: Let me pull the mote out of thine eye—and behold, a beam is in thine own eye?

5 Thou hypocrite, first cast the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast the mote out of thy brother’s eye.

21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven.

22 Many will say to me in that day: Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works?

23 And then will I profess unto them: I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

24 Therefore, whoso heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, who built his house upon a rock—

25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.

26 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand—

27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell, and great was the fall of it.

**3 Nephi 19:19-23, 28-29**

19 And it came to pass that Jesus departed out of the midst of them, and went a little way off from them and bowed himself to the earth, and he said:

20 Father, I thank thee that thou hast given the Holy Ghost unto these whom I have chosen; and it is because of their belief in me that I have chosen them out of the world.

21 Father, I pray thee that thou wilt give the Holy Ghost unto all them that shall believe in their words.

22 Father, thou hast given them the Holy Ghost because they believe in me; and thou seest that they believe in me because thou hearest them, and they pray unto me; and they pray unto me because I am with them.

23 And now Father, I pray unto thee for them, and also for all those who shall believe on their words, that they may believe in me, that I may be in them as thou, Father, art in me, that we may be one.

28 Father, I thank thee that thou hast purified those whom I have chosen, because of their faith, and I pray for them, and also for them who shall believe on their words, that they may be purified in me, through faith on their words, even as they are purified in me.

29 Father, I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me out of the world, because of their faith, that they may be purified in me, that I may be in them as thou, Father, art in me, that we may be one, that I may be glorified in them.

**3 Nephi 27:21-22, 27**

21 Verily, verily, I say unto you, this is my gospel; and ye know the things that ye must do in my church; for the works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do; for that which ye have seen me do even that shall ye do;

22 Therefore, if ye do these things blessed are ye, for ye shall be lifted up at the last day.

27 And know ye that ye shall be judges of this people, according to the judgment which I shall give unto you, which shall be just. Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am.

**Our Perfect Example**

**Henry B. Eyring, *Ensign*, Nov. 2009**

I feel blessed to have the opportunity to speak with you on this Sabbath day. Different as we are in circumstances and experiences, we share a desire to become better than we are. There may be a few who mistakenly feel they are good enough and a few who have given up trying to be better. But, for all, the message of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is that we can and must expect to become better as long as we live.

Part of that expectation is set for us in a revelation given by God to the Prophet Joseph Smith. It describes the day when we will meet the Savior, as we all will. It tells us what to do to prepare and what to expect.

It is in the book of Moroni: “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.” 1

That ought to help you understand why any believing Latter-day Saint is an optimist about what lies ahead for him or her, however difficult the present may be. We believe that through living the gospel of Jesus Christ we can become like the Savior, who is perfect. Considering the attributes of Jesus Christ should quash the pride of the self-satisfied person who thinks he or she has no need to improve. And even the most humble person can take hope in the invitation to become like the Savior.

How that wonderful transformation will happen is captured for me in a song written for children. I remember watching the faces of a room full of children singing it on a Sunday. Each of the children was leaning forward, almost to the front of the chair. I could see light in their eyes and determination in their faces as they sang with gusto. You may have heard the song too. I hope it will sound forever in our memories. I only hope I can give it the feeling those children had.

*I’m trying to be like Jesus; I’m following in his ways.*

*I’m trying to love as he did, in all that I do and say.*

*At times I am tempted to make a wrong choice,*

*But I try to listen as the still small voice whispers,*

*“Love one another as Jesus loves you.*

*Try to show kindness in all that you do.*

*Be gentle and loving in deed and in thought,*

*For these are the things Jesus taught.”* 2

It seemed to me that they were not just singing; they were declaring their determination. Jesus Christ was their example. To be like Him was their fixed goal. And their eager looks and their shining eyes convinced me that they had no doubts. They expected to succeed. They believed that the instruction of the Savior to be perfect was not a hope but a command. And they were sure He had prepared the way.

That determination and confidence can and must be in the heart of every Latter-day Saint. The Savior has prepared the way through His Atonement and His example. And even the children who sang that song knew how.

Love is the motivating principle by which the Lord leads us along the way towards becoming like Him, our perfect example. Our way of life, hour by hour, must be filled with the love of God and love for others. There is no surprise in that, since the Lord proclaimed those as the first and great commandments. It is love of God that will lead us to keep His commandments. And love of others is at the heart of our capacity to obey Him.

Just as Jesus used a child in His mortal ministry as an example for the people of the pure love they must and could have to be like Him, He has offered us the family as an example of an ideal setting in which we can learn how to love as He loves.

That is because the greatest joys and the greatest sorrows we experience are in family relationships. The joys come from putting the welfare of others above our own. That is what love is. And the sorrow comes primarily from selfishness, which is the absence of love. The ideal God holds for us is to form families in the way most likely to lead to happiness and away from sorrow. A man and a woman are to make sacred covenants that they will put the welfare and happiness of the other at the center of their lives. Children are to be born into a family where the parents hold the needs of children equal to their own in importance. And children are to love parents and each other.

That is the ideal of a loving family. In many of our homes, there are the words “Our Family Can Be Together Forever.” There is a gravestone near my home of a mother and grandmother. She and her husband were sealed in the temple of God to each other and to their posterity for time and all eternity. The inscription on the gravestone reads, “Please, no empty chairs.” She asked for that inscription because she knew that whether the family will be together depends on the choices each family member makes. The word “please” is there because neither God nor she can compel another to choose happiness. And there is Satan, who wants misery, not happiness, in families in this life and in the next.

My hope today is to suggest some choices which may seem difficult but that would assure you that you have qualified for there to be no empty chairs in your family in the world to come.

First, I give counsel to husbands and wives. Pray for the love which allows you to see the good in your companion. Pray for the love that makes weaknesses and mistakes seem small. Pray for the love to make your companion’s joy your own. Pray for the love to want to lessen the load and soften the sorrows of your companion.

I saw this in my parents’ marriage. In my mother’s final illness, the more uncomfortable she became, the more giving her comfort became the dominant intent of my father’s life. He asked that the hospital set up a bed in her room. He was determined to be there to be sure that she wanted for nothing. He walked the miles to work each morning and back to her side at night through those difficult times for her. I believe it was a gift from God to him that his power to love grew when it mattered so much to her. I think he was doing what Jesus would have done out of love.

Now I give counsel to the parents of a wandering child. The Savior is the perfect example of persisting in love. You remember His words of comfort to the people among the Nephites who had rejected His earlier invitation to come to Him. He spoke to the survivors of the destruction which came after His Crucifixion: “O ye house of Israel whom I have spared, how oft will I gather you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, if ye will repent and return unto me with full purpose of heart.” 3

The story of the prodigal son gives us all hope. The prodigal remembered home, as will your children. They will feel your love drawing them back to you. Elder Orson F. Whitney, in a general conference of 1929, gave a remarkable promise, which I know is true, to the faithful parents who honor the temple sealing to their children: “Though some of the sheep may wander, the eye of the Shepherd is upon them, and sooner or later they will feel the tentacles of Divine Providence reaching out after them and drawing them back to the fold.”

Then he goes on to say: “Pray for your careless and disobedient children; hold on to them with your faith. Hope on, trust on, till you see the salvation of God.” 4 You can pray for your children, love them, and reach out to them with confidence that Jesus reaches for them with you. When you keep trying, you are doing what Jesus does.

Now, here is my counsel to children. The Lord gave you a commandment with a promise: “Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.” 5 It is the only one of the Ten Commandments with a promise. You may not have parents that are living. In some cases, you may not feel that your parents are worthy of the honor and respect of their children. You may not even have ever known them. But you owe them life. And in every case, even if your life is not lengthened, its quality will be improved simply by remembering your parents with honor.

Now to those who have adopted other people’s families as if they were their own: I have friends who remember my children’s birthdays better than I do. My wife and I have had friends who seldom failed to visit or to remember a holiday with us. I often am touched when someone begins a conversation, “How is your family?” and then waits to hear the answer with love showing in their face. They seem attentive when I go through a description of the life of each of my children. Their love helps me to feel more keenly the love of the Savior for our children. In their question, I can sense that they are feeling what Jesus feels and asking what He would ask.

For all of us it may be hard to see in our lives an increasing power to love and to see ourselves becoming more like the Savior, our perfect example. I wish to encourage you. You have had evidences that you are moving along the road to becoming more like Jesus. It will help to remember how you have felt, at times, like a little child, even in the midst of cares and trials. Think of those children singing the song. Think of the times you felt, perhaps recently, as those little children did singing, “I’m trying to be like Jesus; I’m following in his ways.” You will remember that Jesus asked His disciples to bring the children to Him and said, “Suffer the little children to come unto me, … for of such is the kingdom of God.” 6 You have felt the peace of a pure little child at times when you have tried to be like Jesus.

It may have come when you were baptized. He did not need baptism, because He was pure. But when you were baptized, you had the feeling of being washed clean, like a little child. When He was baptized, the heavens were opened, and He heard the voice of His Heavenly Father: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” 7 You heard no voice, but you felt the approval of Heavenly Father for having done what Jesus did.

You have felt it in your family when you asked the pardon of your spouse or forgave a child for some mistake or disobedience. These moments will come more often as you try to do the things you know Jesus would do. Because of His Atonement for you, your childlike obedience will bring a feeling of love of the Savior for you and your love for Him. That is one of the gifts that is promised to His faithful disciples. And this gift can come not only to you alone but also to the loving members of your family. The promise was given in 3 Nephi: “And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children.” 8

I hope you will go out today looking for opportunities to do as He did and to love as He loves. I can promise you the peace that you felt as a child will come to you often and it will linger with you. The promise is true that He made to His disciples: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you.” 9

None of us is perfect yet. But we can have frequent assurance that we are following along the way. He leads us, and He beckons for us to follow Him.

I testify that the way lies in faith in Jesus Christ, in baptism, in receiving the Holy Ghost, and in enduring in love to keep His commandments. I testify that the Father lives and loves us. He loves His Beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our perfect example. Joseph Smith was the prophet of the Restoration. He saw the Father and the Son. I know that is true. There is in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints the priesthood power to offer the ordinances that allow us to become better and better and more like the Savior and our Heavenly Father. I leave you my blessing that you may feel the assurance and the approval you felt as a little child. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings, Thoughts or Insights From Your Readings or From the Lesson:**

**Lesson # 23**

**The Scattering and Gathering of Israel**

**1 Nephi 15:12-16**

12 Behold, I say unto you, that the house of Israel was compared unto an olive tree, by the Spirit of the Lord which was in our father; and behold are we not broken off from the house of Israel, and are we not a branch of the house of Israel?

13 And now, the thing which our father meaneth concerning the grafting in of the natural branches through the fulness of the Gentiles, is, that in the latter days, when our seed shall have dwindled in unbelief, yea, for the space of many years, and many generations after the Messiah shall be manifested in body unto the children of men, then shall the fulness of the gospel of the Messiah come unto the Gentiles, and from the Gentiles unto the remnant of our seed—

14 And at that day shall the remnant of our seed know that they are of the house of Israel, and that they are the covenant people of the Lord; and then shall they know and come to the knowledge of their forefathers, and also to the knowledge of the gospel of their Redeemer, which was ministered unto their fathers by him; wherefore, they shall come to the knowledge of their Redeemer and the very points of his doctrine, that they may know how to come unto him and be saved.

15 And then at that day will they not rejoice and give praise unto their everlasting God, their rock and their salvation? Yea, at that day, will they not receive the strength and nourishment from the true vine? Yea, will they not come unto the true fold of God?

16 Behold, I say unto you, Yea; they shall be remembered again among the house of Israel; they shall be grafted in, being a natural branch of the olive tree, into the true olive tree.

**1 Nephi 22:3-5, 8-12**

3 Wherefore, the things of which I have read are things pertaining to things both temporal and spiritual; for it appears that the house of Israel, sooner or later, will be scattered upon all the face of the earth, and also among all nations.

4 And behold, there are many who are already lost from the knowledge of those who are at Jerusalem. Yea, the more part of all the tribes have been led away; and they are scattered to and fro upon the isles of the sea; and whither they are none of us knoweth, save that we know that they have been led away.

5 And since they have been led away, these things have been prophesied concerning them, and also concerning all those who shall hereafter be scattered and be confounded, because of the Holy One of Israel; for against him will they harden their hearts; wherefore, they shall be scattered among all nations and shall be hated of all men.

8 And after our seed is scattered the Lord God will proceed to do a marvelous work among the Gentiles, which shall be of great worth unto our seed; wherefore, it is likened unto their being nourished by the Gentiles and being carried in their arms and upon their shoulders.

9 And it shall also be of worth unto the Gentiles; and not only unto the Gentiles but unto all the house of Israel, unto the making known of the covenants of the Father of heaven unto Abraham, saying: In thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.

10 And I would, my brethren, that ye should know that all the kindreds of the earth cannot be blessed unless he shall make bare his arm in the eyes of the nations.

11 Wherefore, the Lord God will proceed to make bare his arm in the eyes of all the nations, in bringing about his covenants and his gospel unto those who are of the house of Israel.

12 Wherefore, he will bring them again out of captivity, and they shall be gathered together to the lands of their inheritance; and they shall be brought out of obscurity and out of darkness; and they shall know that the Lord is their Savior and their Redeemer, the Mighty One of Israel.

**2 Nephi 25:15-17**

15 Wherefore, the Jews shall be scattered among all nations; yea, and also Babylon shall be destroyed; wherefore, the Jews shall be scattered by other nations.

16 And after they have been scattered, and the Lord God hath scourged them by other nations for the space of many generations, yea, even down from generation to generation until they shall be persuaded to believe in Christ, the Son of God, and the atonement, which is infinite for all mankind—and when that day shall come that they shall believe in Christ, and worship the Father in his name, with pure hearts and clean hands, and look not forward any more for another Messiah, then, at that time, the day will come that it must needs be expedient that they should believe these things.

17 And the Lord will set his hand again the second time to restore his people from their lost and fallen state. Wherefore, he will proceed to do a marvelous work and a wonder among the children of men.

**3 Nephi 5:24-26**

24 And as surely as the Lord liveth, will he gather in from the four quarters of the earth all the remnant of the seed of Jacob, who are scattered abroad upon all the face of the earth.

25 And as he hath covenanted with all the house of Jacob, even so shall the covenant wherewith he hath covenanted with the house of Jacob be fulfilled in his own due time, unto the restoring all the house of Jacob unto the knowledge of the covenant that he hath covenanted with them.

26 And then shall they know their Redeemer, who is Jesus Christ, the Son of God; and then shall they be gathered in from the four quarters of the earth unto their own lands, from whence they have been dispersed; yea, as the Lord liveth so shall it be. Amen.

**3 Nephi 16:4-5**

4 And I command you that ye shall write these sayings after I am gone, that if it so be that my people at Jerusalem, they who have seen me and been with me in my ministry, do not ask the Father in my name, that they may receive a knowledge of you by the Holy Ghost, and also of the other tribes whom they know not of, that these sayings which ye shall write shall be kept and shall be manifested unto the Gentiles, that through the fulness of the Gentiles, the remnant of their seed, who shall be scattered forth upon the face of the earth because of their unbelief, may be brought in, or may be brought to a knowledge of me, their Redeemer.

5 And then will I gather them in from the four quarters of the earth; and then will I fulfil the covenant which the Father hath made unto all the people of the house of Israel.

**3 Nephi 20:13, 29-31**

13 And then shall the remnants, which shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the earth, be gathered in from the east and from the west, and from the south and from the north; and they shall be brought to the knowledge of the Lord their God, who hath redeemed them.

29 And I will remember the covenant which I have made with my people; and I have covenanted with them that I would gather them together in mine own due time, that I would give unto them again the land of their fathers for their inheritance, which is the land of Jerusalem, which is the promised land unto them forever, saith the Father.

30 And it shall come to pass that the time cometh, when the fulness of my gospel shall be preached unto them;

31 And they shall believe in me, that I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and shall pray unto the Father in my name.

**3 Nephi 21:1-7**

1 And verily I say unto you, I give unto you a sign, that ye may know the time when these things shall be about to take place—that I shall gather in, from their long dispersion, my people, O house of Israel, and shall establish again among them my Zion;

2 And behold, this is the thing which I will give unto you for a sign—for verily I say unto you that when these things which I declare unto you, and which I shall declare unto you hereafter of myself, and by the power of the Holy Ghost which shall be given unto you of the Father, shall be made known unto the Gentiles that they may know concerning this people who are a remnant of the house of Jacob, and concerning this my people who shall be scattered by them;

3 Verily, verily, I say unto you, when these things shall be made known unto them of the Father, and shall come forth of the Father, from them unto you;

4 For it is wisdom in the Father that they should be established in this land, and be set up as a free people by the power of the Father, that these things might come forth from them unto a remnant of your seed, that the covenant of the Father may be fulfilled which he hath covenanted with his people, O house of Israel;

5 Therefore, when these works and the works which shall be wrought among you hereafter shall come forth from the Gentiles, unto your seed which shall dwindle in unbelief because of iniquity;

6 For thus it behooveth the Father that it should come forth from the Gentiles, that he may show forth his power unto the Gentiles, for this cause that the Gentiles, if they will not harden their hearts, that they may repent and come unto me and be baptized in my name and know of the true points of my doctrine, that they may be numbered among my people, O house of Israel;

7 And when these things come to pass that thy seed shall begin to know these things—it shall be a sign unto them, that they may know that the work of the Father hath already commenced unto the fulfilling of the covenant which he hath made unto the people who are of the house of Israel.

**3 Nephi 30:2**

2 Turn, all ye Gentiles, from your wicked ways; and repent of your evil doings, of your lyings and deceivings, and of your whoredoms, and of your secret abominations, and your idolatries, and of your murders, and your priestcrafts, and your envyings, and your strifes, and from all your wickedness and abominations, and come unto me, and be baptized in my name, that ye may receive a remission of your sins, and be filled with the Holy Ghost, that ye may be numbered with my people who are of the house of Israel.

**The Gathering of Scattered Israel**

**Russell M. Nelson, Ensign, Nov. 2006**

My beloved brothers and sisters, thank you for your faith, your devotion, and your love. We share an enormous responsibility to be who the Lord wants us to be and to do what He wants us to do. We are part of a great movement—the gathering of scattered Israel. I speak of this doctrine today because of its unique importance in God’s eternal plan.

**Abrahamic Covenant**

Anciently, the Lord blessed Father Abraham with a promise to make his posterity a chosen people. 1 References to this covenant occur throughout the scriptures. Included were promises that the Son of God would come through Abraham’s lineage, that certain lands would be inherited, that nations and kindreds of the earth would be blessed through his seed, and more. 2 While some aspects of that covenant have already been fulfilled, the Book of Mormon teaches that this Abrahamic covenant will be fulfilled only in these latter days! 3 It also emphasizes that we are among the covenant people of the Lord. 4 Ours is the privilege to participate personally in the fulfillment of these promises. What an exciting time to live!

**Israel Became Scattered**

As descendants of Abraham, the tribes of ancient Israel had access to priesthood authority and blessings of the gospel, but eventually the people rebelled. They killed the prophets and were punished by the Lord. Ten tribes were carried captive into Assyria. From there they became lost to the records of mankind. (Obviously, the ten tribes are not lost to the Lord.) Two remaining tribes continued a short time and then, because of their rebellion, were taken captive into Babylon. 5 When they returned, they were favored of the Lord, but again they honored Him not. They rejected and vilified Him. A loving but grieving Father vowed, “I will scatter you among the heathen,” 6 and that He did—into all nations.

**Israel to Be Gathered**

God’s promise for the gathering of scattered Israel was equally emphatic. 7 Isaiah, for example, foresaw that in the latter days the Lord would send “swift messengers” to these people who were so “scattered and peeled.” 8

This promise of the gathering, woven all through the fabric of the scriptures, will be fulfilled just as surely as were the prophecies of the scattering of Israel. 9

**The Church of Jesus Christ in the Meridian of Time and the Apostasy**

Prior to His Crucifixion, the Lord Jesus Christ had established His Church. It included apostles, prophets, seventies, teachers, and so forth. 10 And the Master sent His disciples into the world to preach His gospel. 11

After a time the Church as established by the Lord fell into spiritual decay. His teachings were altered; His ordinances were changed. The Great Apostasy came as had been foretold by Paul, who knew that the Lord would not come again “except there come a falling away first.” 12

This Great Apostasy followed the pattern that had ended each previous dispensation. The very first was in the time of Adam. Then came dispensations of Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and others. Each prophet had a divine commission to teach of the divinity and the doctrine of the Lord Jesus Christ. In each age these teachings were meant to help the people. But their disobedience resulted in apostasy. Thus, all previous dispensations were limited in time and location. They were limited in time because each ended in apostasy. They were limited in location to a relatively small segment of planet earth.

**The Restoration of All Things**

Thus a complete restoration was required. God the Father and Jesus Christ called upon the Prophet Joseph Smith to be the prophet of this dispensation. All divine powers of previous dispensations were to be restored through him. 13 This dispensation of the fulness of times would not be limited in time or in location. It would not end in apostasy, and it would fill the world. 14

**The Gathering of Israel—an Integral Part of the Restoration of All Things**

As prophesied by Peter and Paul, all things were to be restored in this dispensation. Therefore, there must come, as part of that restoration, the long-awaited gathering of scattered Israel. 15 It is a necessary prelude to the Second Coming of the Lord. 16

This doctrine of the gathering is one of the important teachings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Lord has declared: “I give unto you a sign … that I shall gather in, from their long dispersion, my people, O house of Israel, and shall establish again among them my Zion.” 17 The coming forth of the Book of Mormon is a sign to the entire world that the Lord has commenced to gather Israel and fulfill covenants He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. 18 We not only teach this doctrine, but we participate in it. We do so as we help to gather the elect of the Lord on both sides of the veil.

The Book of Mormon is central to this work. It declares the doctrine of the gathering. 19 It causes people to learn about Jesus Christ, to believe His gospel, and to join His Church. In fact, if there were no Book of Mormon, the promised gathering of Israel would not occur. 20

To us the honored name of Abraham is important. It is mentioned in more verses of scriptures of the Restoration than in all verses of the Bible. 21 Abraham is linked to all members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. 22 The Lord reaffirmed the Abrahamic covenant in our day through the Prophet Joseph Smith. 23 In the temple we receive our ultimate blessings, as the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. 24

**The Dispensation of the Fulness of Times**

This dispensation of the fulness of times was foreseen by God as the time to gather, both in heaven and on earth. Peter knew that after a period of apostasy, a restoration would come. He, who had been with the Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration, declared:

“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; …

“Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.” 25

In modern times the Apostles Peter, James, and John were sent by the Lord with “the keys of [His] kingdom, and a dispensation of the gospel for the last times; and for the fulness of times,” in which He would “gather together in one all things, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth.” 26

In the year 1830 the Prophet Joseph Smith learned of a heavenly messenger named Elias, who possessed keys to bring to pass “the restoration of all things.” 27

Six years later the Kirtland Temple was dedicated. After the Lord accepted that holy house, heavenly messengers came with priesthood keys. Moses appeared 28 “and committed … the keys of the gathering of Israel from the four parts of the earth, and the leading of the ten tribes from the land of the north.

“After this, Elias appeared, and committed the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham, saying that in us and our seed all generations after us should be blessed.” 29

Then Elijah the prophet came and proclaimed, “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—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.” 30

These events occurred on April 3, 1836, 31 and thus fulfilled Malachi’s prophecy. 32 Sacred keys of this dispensation were restored. 33

**Gathering of Souls on the Other Side of the Veil**

Mercifully, the invitation to “come unto Christ” 34 can also be extended to those who died without a knowledge of the gospel. 35 Part of their preparation requires earthly efforts of others. We gather pedigree charts, create family group sheets, and do temple work vicariously to gather individuals unto the Lord and into their families. 36

**To Participate in the Gathering: A Commitment by Covenant**

Here on earth, missionary work is crucial to the gathering of Israel. The gospel was to be taken first to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel.” 37 Consequently, servants of the Lord have gone forth proclaiming the Restoration. In many nations our missionaries have searched for those of scattered Israel; they have hunted for them “out of the holes of the rocks”; and they have fished for them as in ancient days. 38

The choice to come unto Christ is not a matter of physical location; it is a matter of individual commitment. People can be “brought to the knowledge of the Lord” 39 without leaving their homelands. True, in the early days of the Church, conversion often meant emigration as well. But now the gathering takes place in each nation. The Lord has decreed the establishment of Zion 40 in each realm where He has given His Saints their birth and nationality. Scripture foretells that the people “shall be gathered home to the lands of their inheritance, and shall be established in all their lands of promise.” 41 “Every nation is the gathering place for its own people.” 42 The place of gathering for Brazilian Saints is in Brazil; the place of gathering for Nigerian Saints is in Nigeria; the place of gathering for Korean Saints is in Korea; and so forth. Zion is “the pure in heart.” 43 Zion is wherever righteous Saints are. Publications, communications, and congregations are now such that nearly all members have access to the doctrines, keys, ordinances, and blessings of the gospel, regardless of their location.

Spiritual security will always depend upon how one lives, not where one lives. Saints in every land have equal claim upon the blessings of the Lord.

This work of Almighty God is true. He lives. Jesus is the Christ. This is His Church, restored to accomplish its divine destiny, including the promised gathering of Israel. President Gordon B. Hinckley is God’s prophet today. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings, Thoughts or Insights From Your Readings or From the Lesson:**

**Lesson #24**

**All Are Alike unto God**

**2 Nephi 26:23-28, 33**

23 For behold, my beloved brethren, I say unto you that the Lord God worketh not in darkness.

24 He doeth not anything save it be for the benefit of the world; for he loveth the world, even that he layeth down his own life that he may draw all men unto him. Wherefore, he commandeth none that they shall not partake of his salvation.

25 Behold, doth he cry unto any, saying: Depart from me? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; but he saith: Come unto me all ye ends of the earth, buy milk and honey, without money and without price.

26 Behold, hath he commanded any that they should depart out of the synagogues, or out of the houses of worship? Behold, I say unto you, Nay.

27 Hath he commanded any that they should not partake of his salvation? Behold I say unto you, Nay; but he hath given it free for all men; and he hath commanded his people that they should persuade all men to repentance.

28 Behold, hath the Lord commanded any that they should not partake of his goodness? Behold I say unto you, Nay; but all men are privileged the one like unto the other, and none are forbidden.

33 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.

**Jacob 7:24**

24 And it came to pass that many means were devised to reclaim and restore the Lamanites to the knowledge of the truth; but it all was vain, for they delighted in wars and bloodshed, and they had an eternal hatred against us, their brethren. And they sought by the power of their arms to destroy us continually.

**Enos 1:11, 20**

11 And after I, Enos, had heard these words, my faith began to be unshaken in the Lord; and I prayed unto him with many long strugglings for my brethren, the Lamanites.

20 And I bear record that the people of Nephi did seek diligently to restore the Lamanites unto the true faith in God. But our labors were vain; their hatred was fixed, and they were led by their evil nature that they became wild, and ferocious, and a blood-thirsty people, full of idolatry and filthiness; feeding upon beasts of prey; dwelling in tents, and wandering about in the wilderness with a short skin girdle about their loins and their heads shaven; and their skill was in the bow, and in the cimeter, and the ax. And many of them did eat nothing save it was raw meat; and they were continually seeking to destroy us.

**Mosiah 28:1-3**

1 Now it came to pass that after the sons of Mosiah had done all these things, they took a small number with them and returned to their father, the king, and desired of him that he would grant unto them that they might, with these whom they had selected, go up to the land of Nephi that they might preach the things which they had heard, and that they might impart the word of God to their brethren, the Lamanites—

2 That perhaps they might bring them to the knowledge of the Lord their God, and convince them of the iniquity of their fathers; and that perhaps they might cure them of their hatred towards the Nephites, that they might also be brought to rejoice in the Lord their God, that they might become friendly to one another, and that there should be no more contentions in all the land which the Lord their God had given them.

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 27:1-2, 20-24**

1 Now it came to pass that when those Lamanites who had gone to war against the Nephites had found, after their many struggles to destroy them, that it was in vain to seek their destruction, they returned again to the land of Nephi.

2 And it came to pass that the Amalekites, because of their loss, were exceedingly angry. And when they saw that they could not seek revenge from the Nephites, they began to stir up the people in anger against their brethren, the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi; therefore they began again to destroy them.

20 And now it came to pass that Alma conducted his brethren back to the land of Zarahemla; even to his own house. And they went and told the chief judge all the things that had happened unto them in the land of Nephi, among their brethren, the Lamanites.

21 And it came to pass that the chief judge sent a proclamation throughout all the land, desiring the voice of the people concerning the admitting their brethren, who were the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi.

22 And it came to pass that the voice of the people came, saying: Behold, we will give up the land of Jershon, which is on the east by the sea, which joins the land Bountiful, which is on the south of the land Bountiful; and this land Jershon is the land which we will give unto our brethren for an inheritance.

23 And behold, we will set our armies between the land Jershon and the land Nephi, that we may protect our brethren in the land Jershon; and this we do for our brethren, on account of their fear to take up arms against their brethren lest they should commit sin; and this their great fear came because of their sore repentance which they had, on account of their many murders and their awful wickedness.

24 And now behold, this will we do unto our brethren, that they may inherit the land Jershon; and we will guard them from their enemies with our armies, on condition that they will give us a portion of their substance to assist us that we may maintain our armies.

**Alma 53:10-11, 13-17**

10 And now behold, I have somewhat to say concerning the people of Ammon, who, in the beginning, were Lamanites; but by Ammon and his brethren, or rather by the power and word of God, they had been converted unto the Lord; and they had been brought down into the land of Zarahemla, and had ever since been protected by the Nephites.

11 And because of their oath they had been kept from taking up arms against their brethren; for they had taken an oath that they never would shed blood more; and according to their oath they would have perished; yea, they would have suffered themselves to have fallen into the hands of their brethren, had it not been for the pity and the exceeding love which Ammon and his brethren had had for them.

13 But it came to pass that when they saw the danger, and the many afflictions and tribulations which the Nephites bore for them, they were moved with compassion and were desirous to take up arms in the defence of their country.

14 But behold, as they were about to take their weapons of war, they were overpowered by the persuasions of Helaman and his brethren, for they were about to break the oath which they had made.

15 And Helaman feared lest by so doing they should lose their souls; therefore all those who had entered into this covenant were compelled to behold their brethren wade through their afflictions, in their dangerous circumstances at this time.

16 But behold, it came to pass they had many sons, who had not entered into a covenant that they would not take their weapons of war to defend themselves against their enemies; therefore they did assemble themselves together at this time, as many as were able to take up arms, and they called themselves Nephites.

17 And they entered into a covenant to fight for the liberty of the Nephites, yea, to protect the land unto the laying down of their lives; yea, even they covenanted that they never would give up their liberty, but they would fight in all cases to protect the Nephites and themselves from bondage.

**Helaman 6:1-8**

1 And it came to pass that when the sixty and second year of the reign of the judges had ended, all these things had happened and the Lamanites had become, the more part of them, a righteous people, insomuch that their righteousness did exceed that of the Nephites, because of their firmness and their steadiness in the faith.

2 For behold, there were many of the Nephites who had become hardened and impenitent and grossly wicked, insomuch that they did reject the word of God and all the preaching and prophesying which did come among them.

3 Nevertheless, the people of the church did have great joy because of the conversion of the Lamanites, yea, because of the church of God, which had been established among them. And they did fellowship one with another, and did rejoice one with another, and did have great joy.

4 And it came to pass that many of the Lamanites did come down into the land of Zarahemla, and did declare unto the people of the Nephites the manner of their conversion, and did exhort them to faith and repentance.

5 Yea, and many did preach with exceedingly great power and authority, unto the bringing down many of them into the depths of humility, to be the humble followers of God and the Lamb.

6 And it came to pass that many of the Lamanites did go into the land northward; and also Nephi and Lehi went into the land northward, to preach unto the people. And thus ended the sixty and third year.

7 And behold, there was peace in all the land, insomuch that the Nephites did go into whatsoever part of the land they would, whether among the Nephites or the Lamanites.

8 And it came to pass that the Lamanites did also go whithersoever they would, whether it were among the Lamanites or among the Nephites; and thus they did have free intercourse one with another, to buy and to sell, and to get gain, according to their desire.

**4 Nephi 1:1-3, 11-13, 15-18**

1 And it came to pass that the thirty and fourth year passed away, and also the thirty and fifth, and behold the disciples of Jesus had formed a church of Christ in all the lands round about. And as many as did come unto them, and did truly repent of their sins, were baptized in the name of Jesus; and they did also receive the Holy Ghost.

2 And it came to pass in the thirty and sixth year, the people were all converted unto the Lord, upon all the face of the land, both Nephites and Lamanites, and there were no contentions and disputations among them, and every man did deal justly one with another.

3 And they had all things common among them; therefore there were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free, and partakers of the heavenly gift.

11 And they were married, and given in marriage, and were blessed according to the multitude of the promises which the Lord had made unto them.

12 And they did not walk any more after the performances and ordinances of the law of Moses; but they did walk after the commandments which they had received from their Lord and their God, continuing in fasting and prayer, and in meeting together oft both to pray and to hear the word of the Lord.

13 And it came to pass that there was no contention among all the people, in all the land; but there were mighty miracles wrought among the disciples of Jesus.

15 And it came to pass that there was no contention in the land, because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people.

16 And there were no envyings, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders, nor any manner of lasciviousness; and surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God.

17 There were no robbers, nor murderers, neither were there Lamanites, nor any manner of -ites; but they were in one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God.

18 And how blessed were they! For the Lord did bless them in all their doings; yea, even they were blessed and prospered until an hundred and ten years had passed away; and the first generation from Christ had passed away, and there was no contention in all the land.

**All Men Everywhere**

**Dallin H. Oaks, *Ensign*, May 2006**

Last year, at the invitation of a prophet, millions read the Book of Mormon. Millions benefited. For each of us there were blessings of obedience, and most of us also grew in knowledge and testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom this book is a witness.

Many other things were learned, but what was learned depended on the reader. What we get from a book—especially a sacred text—is mostly dependent on what we take to its reading—in desire and readiness to learn, and in attunement to the light communicated by the Spirit of the Lord.

**I.**

One of the things I learned in this most recent reading of the Book of Mormon was how much God loves all of His children in every nation. In the first chapter Father Lehi praises the Lord, whose “power, and goodness, and mercy are over all the inhabitants of the earth” (1 Ne. 1:14). Again and again the Book of Mormon teaches that the gospel of Jesus Christ is universal in its promise and effect, reaching out to all who ever live on the earth. Here are some examples, quoted directly from that book:

•“The atonement … was prepared from the foundation of the world for all mankind, which ever were since the fall of Adam, … or who ever shall be” (Mosiah 4:7).

•“And because of the redemption of man, which came by Jesus Christ, … all men are redeemed” (Morm. 9:13).

•“He suffereth the pains of all … , both men, women, and children. … And he suffereth this that the resurrection might pass upon all men” (2 Ne. 9:21–22).

•“Hath he commanded any that they should not partake of his salvation? … Nay; but he hath given it free for all men; and … all men are privileged the one like unto the other, and none are forbidden” (2 Ne. 26:27–28).

We also read that “his blood atoneth for the sins of those … who have died not knowing the will of God concerning them, or who have ignorantly sinned” (Mosiah 3:11). Similarly, “the blood of Christ atoneth for [little children]” (Mosiah 3:16). These teachings that the resurrecting and cleansing power of the Atonement is for all contradict the assertion that the grace of God saves only a chosen few. His grace is for all. These teachings of the Book of Mormon expand our vision and enlarge our understanding of the all-encompassing love of God and the universal effect of His Atonement for all men everywhere.

**II.**

The Book of Mormon teaches that our Savior “inviteth [all the children of men] 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” (2 Ne. 26:33; see also Alma 5:49).

“He inviteth them all.” We understand “male and female.” We also understand “black and white,” which means all races. But what about “bond and free”? Bond—the opposite of free—means more than slavery. It means being bound (in bondage) to anything from which it is difficult to escape. Bond includes those whose freedom is restricted by physical or emotional afflictions. Bond includes those who are addicted to some substance or practice. Bond surely refers to those who are imprisoned by sin—“encircled about” by what another teaching of the Book of Mormon calls “the chains of hell” (Alma 5:7). Bond includes those who are held down by traditions or customs contrary to the commandments of God (see Matt. 15:3–6; Mark 7:7–9; D&C 74:4–7; D&C 93:39). Finally, bond also includes those who are confined within the boundaries of other erroneous ideas. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that we preach to “liberate the captives.” 1 Our Savior “inviteth … all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; … he denieth none that come unto him … ; and all are alike unto God.”

**III.**

The children of God in all nations have His promise that He will manifest Himself to them. The Book of Mormon tells us:

“He manifesteth himself unto all those who believe in him, by the power of the Holy Ghost; yea, unto every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, working mighty miracles, signs, and wonders, among the children of men according to their faith” (2 Ne. 26:13).

Note that these promised manifestations of the Lord are to “every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.” Today we are seeing the fulfillment of that promise in every nation where our missionaries are permitted to labor, even among peoples we have not previously associated with Christianity.

For example, we know of many cases where the Lord has been manifesting Himself to men and women in the nation of Russia, so recently released from the long grip of godless communism. While reading critical or mocking articles about Mormons, two different Russian men felt a strong impression to search out our meeting places. Both met missionaries and joined the Church. 2

A medical doctor in a village in Nigeria had a dream in which he saw his good friend speaking to a congregation. Intrigued, he traveled to his friend’s village on a Sunday and was astonished to find exactly what he had seen in his dream—a congregation called a ward being taught by his friend, who was their bishop. Impressed with what he heard in repeated visits, he and his wife were taught and baptized. Two months later over 30 others in their village had also joined the Church, and their clinic had become the meeting place.

A man I met from northern India had never even heard the name of Jesus Christ until he saw it on a calendar in the shop of a shoemaker. The Spirit led him to conversion in a Protestant church. Later, during a visit to a distant college town, he saw an advertisement for an American group called “The BYU Young Ambassadors.” During their performance, an inner voice told him to go into the lobby after the program and a man in a blue blazer would tell him what to do. In this way he obtained a Book of Mormon, read it, and was converted to the restored gospel. He has since served as a missionary and as a bishop.

A little girl in Thailand felt a memory of a loving Father in Heaven. As she grew older, she would often pray and counsel with Him in her heart. In her early 20s she met our missionaries. Their teachings confirmed the loving personal feelings for God she remembered from her childhood. She was baptized and served a full-time mission in Thailand.

Only 5 percent of the people in Cambodia are Christians. A family in that country was searching for the truth. While their 11-year-old son was riding his bicycle he saw some men in white shirts and ties showing someone a picture and asking who it was. He felt he should stop. As he watched, he was prompted to say, “That is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and He came to save man.” Then he rode away. It took the missionaries a month to find him and his family. Today, the father is a counselor in the mission presidency.

Last June, a family of five visited the open house for a new chapel in Mongolia. As the father walked through the door a powerful force went through his body, a feeling of peace he had never experienced before. Tears flowed. He asked the missionaries what that amazing feeling was and how he could feel it again. Soon, the entire family was baptized. 3

These are only a few examples. There are thousands more.

**IV.**

The Book of Mormon also teaches that the great Creator died “for all men, that all men might become subject unto him” (2 Ne. 9:5). Being subject to our Savior means that if our sins are to be forgiven through His Atonement, we must comply with the conditions He has prescribed, including faith, repentance, and baptism. The fulfillment of these conditions depends on our desires, our choices, and our actions. “He cometh into the world that he may save all men if they will hearken unto his voice” (2 Ne. 9:21).

The Lord provides a way for all His children, and He desires that each of us come unto Him. In the closing chapter of the Book of Mormon, Moroni pleads:

“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” (Moro. 10:32).

**V.**

The Bible tells us how God made a covenant with Abraham and promised him that through him all “families” or “nations” of the earth would be blessed (see Gen. 12:3; Gen. 22:18). What we call the Abrahamic covenant opens the door for God’s choicest blessings to all of His children everywhere. The Bible teaches that “if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:29; see also Abr. 2:10). The Book of Mormon promises that all who receive and act upon the Lord’s invitation to “repent and believe in his Son” become “the covenant people of the Lord” (2 Ne. 30:2). This is a potent reminder that neither riches nor lineage nor any other privileges of birth should cause us to believe that we are “better one than another” (Alma 5:54; see also Jacob 3:9). Indeed, the Book of Mormon commands, “Ye shall not esteem one flesh above another, or one man shall not think himself above another” (Mosiah 23:7).

The Bible teaches that some of Abraham’s descendants would be scattered “into all the kingdoms of the earth,” “among all nations,” and from “one end of the earth even unto the other” (Deut. 28:25, 37, 64). The Book of Mormon affirms this teaching, declaring that the descendants of Abraham would be “scattered upon all the face of the earth, and … among all nations” (1 Ne. 22:3).

The Book of Mormon adds to our knowledge of how our Savior’s earthly ministry reached out to all of His scattered flock. In addition to His ministry in what we now call the Middle East, the Book of Mormon records His appearance and teachings to the Nephites on the American continent (see 3 Ne. 11–28). There He repeated that the Father had commanded him to visit the other sheep which were not of the land of Jerusalem (see 3 Ne. 16:1; John 10:16). He also said that he would visit others “who [had] not as yet heard [His] voice” (see 3 Ne. 16:2–3). As prophesied centuries earlier (see 2 Ne. 29:12), the Savior told His followers in the Americas that he was going “to show [Himself]” to these “lost tribes of Israel, for they are not lost unto the Father, for he knoweth whither he hath taken them” (3 Ne. 17:4).

The Book of Mormon is a great witness that the Lord loves all people everywhere. It declares that “he shall manifest himself unto all nations” (1 Ne. 13:42). “Know ye not that there are more nations than one?” the Lord said through the prophet Nephi.

“Know ye not that I, the Lord your God, have created all men, and that I remember those who are upon the isles of the sea; and that I rule in the heavens above and in the earth beneath; and I bring forth my word unto the children of men, yea, even upon all the nations of the earth?” (2 Ne. 29:7).

Similarly, the prophet Alma taught that “the Lord doth grant unto all nations, of their own nation and tongue, to teach his word, yea, in wisdom, all that he seeth fit that they should have” (Alma 29:8).

**VI.**

The Lord not only manifests Himself to all nations; He also commands that they write His words:

“Know ye not that the testimony of two nations is a witness unto you that I am God, that I remember one nation like unto another? Wherefore, I speak the same words unto one nation like unto another. …

“… For I command all men … that they shall write the words which I speak unto them. …

“For behold, I shall speak unto the Jews and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto the Nephites and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto the other tribes of the house of Israel, which I have led away, and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto all nations of the earth and they shall write it” (2 Ne. 29:8, 11–12; see also 1 Ne. 13:38–39).

Furthermore, the Book of Mormon teaches that all of these groups will have the writings of the others (see 2 Ne. 29:13).

We conclude from this that the Lord will eventually cause the inspired teachings He has given to His children in various nations to be brought forth for the benefit of all people. This will include accounts of the visit of the resurrected Lord to what we call the lost tribes of Israel and His revelations to all the seed of Abraham. The finding of the Dead Sea Scrolls shows one way this can occur.

When new writings come forth—and according to prophecy they will—we hope they will not be treated with the rejection some applied to the Book of Mormon because they already had a Bible (see 2 Ne. 29:3–10). As the Lord said through a prophet in that book, “And because that I have spoken one word ye need not suppose that I cannot speak another; for my work is not yet finished; neither shall it be until the end of man” (2 Ne. 29:9).

Truly, the gospel is for all men everywhere—every nation, every people. All are invited.

We live in the day foretold when righteousness is sent down out of heaven and truth out of the earth “to sweep the earth as with a flood,” and to gather out the elect “from the four quarters of the earth” (Moses 7:62). The Book of Mormon has come forth to remind us of the covenants of the Lord, to the convincing of all “that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations” (Book of Mormon title page). I add this, my testimony of Him and His mission, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings, Thoughts or Insights From Your Readings or From the Lesson:**

**Lesson #25**

**Living Righteously in a Day of Wickedness**

**Alma 37:21-22, 25-27**

21 And now, I will speak unto you concerning those twenty-four plates, that ye keep them, that the mysteries and the works of darkness, and their secret works, or the secret works of those people who have been destroyed, may be made manifest unto this people; yea, all their murders, and robbings, and their plunderings, and all their wickedness and abominations, may be made manifest unto this people; yea, and that ye preserve these interpreters.

22 For behold, the Lord saw that his people began to work in darkness, yea, work secret murders and abominations; therefore the Lord said, if they did not repent they should be destroyed from off the face of the earth.

25 I will bring forth out of darkness unto light all their secret works and their abominations; and except they repent I will destroy them from off the face of the earth; and I will bring to light all their secrets and abominations, unto every nation that shall hereafter possess the land.

26 And now, my son, we see that they did not repent; therefore they have been destroyed, and thus far the word of God has been fulfilled; yea, their secret abominations have been brought out of darkness and made known unto us.

27 And now, my son, I command you that ye retain all their oaths, and their covenants, and their agreements in their secret abominations; yea, and all their signs and their wonders ye shall keep from this people, that they know them not, lest peradventure they should fall into darkness also and be destroyed.

**Alma 62:41**

41 But behold, because of the exceedingly great length of the war between the Nephites and the Lamanites many had become hardened, because of the exceedingly great length of the war; and many were softened because of their afflictions, insomuch that they did humble themselves before God, even in the depth of humility.

**Helaman 6:20-26, 37-40**

20 And now it came to pass that when the Lamanites found that there were robbers among them they were exceedingly sorrowful; and they did use every means in their power to destroy them off the face of the earth.

21 But behold, Satan did stir up the hearts of the more part of the Nephites, insomuch that they did unite with those bands of robbers, and did enter into their covenants and their oaths, that they would protect and preserve one another in whatsoever difficult circumstances they should be placed, that they should not suffer for their murders, and their plunderings, and their stealings.

22 And it came to pass that they did have their signs, yea, their secret signs, and their secret words; and this that they might distinguish a brother who had entered into the covenant, that whatsoever wickedness his brother should do he should not be injured by his brother, nor by those who did belong to his band, who had taken this covenant.

23 And thus they might murder, and plunder, and steal, and commit whoredoms and all manner of wickedness, contrary to the laws of their country and also the laws of their God.

24 And whosoever of those who belonged to their band should reveal unto the world of their wickedness and their abominations, should be tried, not according to the laws of their country, but according to the laws of their wickedness, which had been given by Gadianton and Kishkumen.

25 Now behold, it is these secret oaths and covenants which Alma commanded his son should not go forth unto the world, lest they should be a means of bringing down the people unto destruction.

26 Now behold, those secret oaths and covenants did not come forth unto Gadianton from the records which were delivered unto Helaman; but behold, they were put into the heart of Gadianton by that same being who did entice our first parents to partake of the forbidden fruit—

37 And it came to pass that the Lamanites did hunt the band of robbers of Gadianton; and they did preach the word of God among the more wicked part of them, insomuch that this band of robbers was utterly destroyed from among the Lamanites.

38 And it came to pass on the other hand, that the Nephites did build them up and support them, beginning at the more wicked part of them, until they had overspread all the land of the Nephites, and had seduced the more part of the righteous until they had come down to believe in their works and partake of their spoils, and to join with them in their secret murders and combinations.

39 And thus they did obtain the sole management of the government, insomuch that they did trample under their feet and smite and rend and turn their backs upon the poor and the meek, and the humble followers of God.

40 And thus we see that they were in an awful state, and ripening for an everlasting destruction.

**4 Nephi 1:42**

42 And it came to pass that the wicked part of the people began again to build up the secret oaths and combinations of Gadianton.

**Mormon 1:13-17, 19**

13 But wickedness did prevail upon the face of the whole land, insomuch that the Lord did take away his beloved disciples, and the work of miracles and of healing did cease because of the iniquity of the people.

14 And there were no gifts from the Lord, and the Holy Ghost did not come upon any, because of their wickedness and unbelief.

15 And I, being fifteen years of age and being somewhat of a sober mind, therefore I was visited of the Lord, and tasted and knew of the goodness of Jesus.

16 And I did endeavor to preach unto this people, but my mouth was shut, and I was forbidden that I should preach unto them; for behold they had wilfully rebelled against their God; and the beloved disciples were taken away out of the land, because of their iniquity.

17 But I did remain among them, but I was forbidden to preach unto them, because of the hardness of their hearts; and because of the hardness of their hearts the land was cursed for their sake.

19 And it came to pass that there were sorceries, and witchcrafts, and magics; and the power of the evil one was wrought upon all the face of the land, even unto the fulfilling of all the words of Abinadi, and also Samuel the Lamanite.

**Mormon 2:8, 14-15, 18-19**

8 But behold, the land was filled with robbers and with Lamanites; and notwithstanding the great destruction which hung over my people, they did not repent of their evil doings; therefore there was blood and carnage spread throughout all the face of the land, both on the part of the Nephites and also on the part of the Lamanites; and it was one complete revolution throughout all the face of the land.

14 And they did not come unto Jesus with broken hearts and contrite spirits, but they did curse God, and wish to die. Nevertheless they would struggle with the sword for their lives.

15 And it came to pass that my sorrow did return unto me again, and I saw that the day of grace was passed with them, both temporally and spiritually; for I saw thousands of them hewn down in open rebellion against their God, and heaped up as dung upon the face of the land. And thus three hundred and forty and four years had passed away.

18 And upon the plates of Nephi I did make a full account of all the wickedness and abominations; but upon these plates I did forbear to make a full account of their wickedness and abominations, for behold, a continual scene of wickedness and abominations has been before mine eyes ever since I have been sufficient to behold the ways of man.

19 And wo is me because of their wickedness; for my heart has been filled with sorrow because of their wickedness, all my days; nevertheless, I know that I shall be lifted up at the last day.

**Mormon 3:2-3, 12, 22**

2 And it came to pass that the Lord did say unto me: Cry unto this people—Repent ye, and come unto me, and be ye baptized, and build up again my church, and ye shall be spared.

3 And I did cry unto this people, but it was in vain; and they did not realize that it was the Lord that had spared them, and granted unto them a chance for repentance. And behold they did harden their hearts against the Lord their God.

12 Behold, I had led them, notwithstanding their wickedness I had led them many times to battle, and had loved them, according to the love of God which was in me, with all my heart; and my soul had been poured out in prayer unto my God all the day long for them; nevertheless, it was without faith, because of the hardness of their hearts.

22 And I would that I could persuade all ye ends of the earth to repent and prepare to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.

**Ether 8:18-26**

18 And it came to pass that they formed a secret combination, even as they of old; which combination is most abominable and wicked above all, in the sight of God;

19 For the Lord worketh not in secret combinations, neither doth he will that man should shed blood, but in all things hath forbidden it, from the beginning of man.

20 And now I, Moroni, do not write the manner of their oaths and combinations, for it hath been made known unto me that they are had among all people, and they are had among the Lamanites.

21 And they have caused the destruction of this people of whom I am now speaking, and also the destruction of the people of Nephi.

22 And whatsoever nation shall uphold such secret combinations, to get power and gain, until they shall spread over the nation, behold, they shall be destroyed; for the Lord will not suffer that the blood of his saints, which shall be shed by them, shall always cry unto him from the ground for vengeance upon them and yet he avenge them not.

23 Wherefore, O ye Gentiles, it is wisdom in God that these things should be shown unto you, that thereby ye may repent of your sins, and suffer not that these murderous combinations shall get above you, which are built up to get power and gain—and the work, yea, even the work of destruction come upon you, yea, even the sword of the justice of the Eternal God shall fall upon you, to your overthrow and destruction if ye shall suffer these things to be.

24 Wherefore, the Lord commandeth you, when ye shall see these things come among you that ye shall awake to a sense of your awful situation, because of this secret combination which shall be among you; or wo be unto it, because of the blood of them who have been slain; for they cry from the dust for vengeance upon it, and also upon those who built it up.

25 For it cometh to pass that whoso buildeth it up seeketh to overthrow the freedom of all lands, nations, and countries; and it bringeth to pass the destruction of all people, for it is built up by the devil, who is the father of all lies; even that same liar who beguiled our first parents, yea, even that same liar who hath caused man to commit murder from the beginning; who hath hardened the hearts of men that they have murdered the prophets, and stoned them, and cast them out from the beginning.

26 Wherefore, I, Moroni, am commanded to write these things that evil may be done away, and that the time may come that Satan may have no power upon the hearts of the children of men, but that they may be persuaded to do good continually, that they may come unto the fountain of all righteousness and be saved.

**Moroni 9:6, 22, 25-26**

6 And now, my beloved son, notwithstanding their hardness, 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.

22 But behold, my son, I recommend thee unto God, and I trust in Christ that thou wilt be saved; and I pray unto God that he will spare thy life, to witness the return of his people unto him, or their utter destruction; for I know that they must perish except they repent and return unto him.

25 My son, be faithful in Christ; and may not the things which I have written grieve thee, to weigh thee down unto death; but may Christ lift thee up, and may his sufferings and death, and the showing his body unto our fathers, and his mercy and long-suffering, and the hope of his glory and of eternal life, rest in your mind forever.

26 And may the grace of God the Father, whose throne is high in the heavens, and our Lord Jesus Christ, who sitteth on the right hand of his power, until all things shall become subject unto him, be, and abide with you forever. Amen.

**Reaping the Rewards of Righteousness**

**Quentin L. Cook, *Ensign*, July 2015**

The world is literally in commotion (see D&C 45:26). Many of our challenges are in the spiritual realm. They are societal issues we as individuals cannot necessarily resolve. Nevertheless, there are practical rewards we can achieve as individuals, even at a time when righteousness across the world is in decline.

The very idea of “rewards of righteousness” is a concept that is under siege in today’s world. Convincing people to choose righteousness is an age-old challenge. “The natural man is an enemy to God” (Mosiah 3:19). There has always been “opposition in all things” (2 Nephi 2:11).

The difference today is that the “great and spacious building” (1 Nephi 8:31) skeptics are louder, more contentious, and less tolerant than at any time during my life. They evidence their diminished faith when, on many issues, they are more concerned with being on the wrong side of history than on the wrong side of God. There was a time when the vast majority of people understood that they would be judged by God’s commandments, not by the prevailing views or dominant philosophies of the day. Some are more concerned about being mocked by others than they are about being judged by God.

The battle between good and evil is not new. But today a much higher percentage of people mistakenly concludes that there is not a moral, righteous standard to which all people should adhere.

Nevertheless, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has never had more faithful members. Members of the Church, together with others who have similar moral values, represent an island of faith in a sea of doubt and disbelief. We know, as the prophet Alma declared, that “wickedness never was happiness” (Alma 41:10) and that the Father’s plan for His children is a “plan of happiness” (Alma 42:8, 16).

My desire is to offer some suggestions that may help you individually and your families collectively to better understand and achieve the rewards of righteousness.

**The Reward of Spirituality**

“*How do I put material concerns in proper perspective as I attempt to achieve spiritual progress?”*

We are so much a part of this world. The material aspects of day-to-day living are a specific challenge. Society tends to look at everything through the lens of worldly rewards.

The preface to the Doctrine and Covenants highlights this very problem to warn us of dangers, give us guidance to prepare and protect ourselves now and in the future, and provide significant insight on this subject: “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” (see D&C 1:16).

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) taught that idols can include credentials, degrees, property, homes, furnishings, and other material objects. He said that when we elevate these otherwise worthy objectives in a way that diminishes our worship of the Lord and weakens our efforts to establish His righteousness and perform the work of salvation among Father in Heaven’s children, we have created idols.1

Sometimes the lens of the world causes us to focus on issues not quite as dramatic as aspiring to great wealth but that nonetheless take us away from deep spiritual commitment.

Many years ago I was made aware of an interesting display that had several unique scenes. The different scenes appeared underneath a large banner that read, “If Christ came tonight, to whom would He come?” If I remember the depictions correctly, they contained the following scenes:

•An ill, elderly woman in bed being attended by a nurse.

•A joyful young mother with a newborn baby.

•A family with hungry, crying children.

•A wealthy family.

•A sweet but humble family with many children joyously singing together.

We know that when the Savior comes again, we will not know the day or the hour. We also know that as Christians, we care for the poor and the needy and for the widow and the orphan. Nevertheless, the banner would have been more accurate had it read, “If Christ came tonight, who would be prepared to greet Him?”

My second thought was that the scenes told us everything about the physical condition of the people but nothing about their spiritual condition and commitment to Christ.

The starting point for reviewing our life and commitment to the Savior and His gospel is baptism. Except for new converts and the very young, our baptisms occurred years ago.

The great prophet Alma speaks eloquently to us when he states: “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 5:26).

Alma then continues with his profound message, which is relevant to our day. He essentially asks the Saints, were they to die, if they would be prepared to meet God. Alma then emphasizes four qualities we need in order to be blameless before God:

First, “have [we] been sufficiently humble?” In a sense, this is a return to the requirement for baptism—humbling ourselves and having broken hearts and contrite spirits.

Second, “are [we] stripped of pride?” Alma warns against trampling the Holy One under our feet and being puffed up in pride—setting our hearts upon the vain things of the world and supposing we are better than others.

Third, are we “stripped of envy?” For those who have great blessings but do not feel gratitude because they focus only on what others have, envy can be most pernicious. “Lifestyle envy”2 has increased as fame and fortune have replaced faith and family as core aspirations for much of society.

Fourth, do we mock or persecute our brothers and sisters? In today’s world we would probably call this bullying (see Alma 5:27–30, 53–54).

Could anything be more relevant to the issues of our own day than this message about humility, pride, envy, and persecution? The great debate across much of the world is about temporal day-to-day economic issues. Yet there is little discussion about returning to Christlike principles focused on preparation to meet God and on the condition of our spirits. We need to focus our lives and increase our emphasis on spiritual matters.

**The Reward of Righteous Families**

“Should we be raising our families in areas where there are few members of the Church and we are surrounded by much evil, contention, and opposition to righteousness?”

My wife, Mary, and I had these concerns as we were beginning to raise our children in the San Francisco Bay Area in California, USA, in the late 1960s. The Latter-day Saint population was relatively small. But while the vast majority of people were wonderful, the Bay Area had become a magnet for drug usage and all manner of promiscuous and sinful conduct.

The change in society was significant enough that a concerned stake president asked the leadership of the Church if he should encourage Church members to remain in the Bay Area. Elder Harold B. Lee (1899–1973), then a senior member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, was assigned to address the issue. He explained that the Lord had not inspired the construction of a temple in our area only to have the members leave. His counsel to us was simple but profound:

1. Create Zion in our hearts and homes.

2. Be a light to those among whom we live.

3. Focus on the ordinances of the temple and the principles taught there.

We cherished Elder Lee’s counsel and tried to follow it in our family.

In building Zion in our hearts and homes, we need to emphasize religious observance in the home by having daily family prayer and scripture study and by holding weekly family home evening. In this context we can teach and train our children. We do this with love and kindness, avoiding undue criticism of our children and our spouse.

Regardless of where we live and even if we do everything right, some children may make unwise choices that lead to forbidden paths. Accordingly, it is important to help our young people determine in advance what they will say or do when others propose improper or immoral conduct.

Our children attended schools where there were only two or three LDS children. At the beginning of each school year and before school activities, we discussed in family home evening appropriate responses if they found themselves in compromising situations. We asked them what they would say to friends who might tell them, “Don’t be silly; everyone does it,” “Your parents won’t know,” or “Just once won’t matter.”

We talked about our accountability to the Lord.

We pointed out that we follow Christ’s example when we dress modestly, use clean and appropriate language, and avoid pornography, which now needs to be taught to Primary-age children so that they can have pure lives.

We talked about Joseph of Egypt, who fled when confronted with inappropriate attention from Potiphar’s wife (see Genesis 39:7–12).

Each of our children had at least one experience in which this preparation was essential, but most of the time their friends protected them because they knew their standards and beliefs.

When our daughter, Kathryn, called her mother after going away to college, Mary would tell her things she loved about the Savior. Mary constantly used His example and character to help with the problem Kathryn had called to discuss.

I believe we can raise righteous children in almost any part of the world if they have a firm foundation in Jesus Christ and His gospel. Nephi described teaching his family and people, saying, “We talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins” (2 Nephi 25:26).

If we do this, when our children make unwise choices, they will know that all is not lost and that they can find their way home. I want to assure you that you and your family will be blessed as you strive to strengthen each member of your family through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

If we follow Elder Lee’s counsel to be a light to those among whom we live, we cannot be in camouflage as to who we are. Our conduct should reflect our values and beliefs. Where appropriate, we should participate in the public square.

Living worthy of a temple recommend, receiving temple ordinances, and being true to our covenants gives us the focus and vision to stay on the covenant path. When our youth live worthy to perform baptisms for the dead, their lives will be in order.

We need to focus our energy on strengthening our families by talking, rejoicing, preaching, and prophesying of Christ so that we may enjoy the reward of righteous families and become eternal families.

For those who are single but living righteous lives, our doctrine is reassuring: “Faithful members whose circumstances do not allow them to receive the blessings of eternal marriage and parenthood in this life will receive all promised blessings in the eternities, provided they keep the covenants they have made with God.”3

**The Reward of Happiness**

*“What advantages should I provide for my children to be happy and successful in life?”*

Lucifer has created a counterfeit or illusion of happiness that is inconsistent with righteousness and will mislead us if we are not vigilant. Many of our problems today occur because the secular world has been pursuing an incorrect definition of happiness. We know from the Book of Mormon that this problem has existed throughout all generations. We also know the blessings that come from living the commandments.

King Benjamin states, “I would desire that ye should consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. For behold, they are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual; and if they hold out faithful to the end they are received into heaven, that thereby they may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness. O remember, remember that these things are true; for the Lord God hath spoken it” (Mosiah 2:41).

Over many years I have followed a research project that commenced in the 1930s. Initially, the study involved 268 men at a premier university who were periodically studied over their entire lives. Later, women became part of the study. The study covered approximately 70 years. The goal of the original study was to find out as much as possible about success and happiness.

The study showed that college entrance scores and grade averages did not predict either success or happiness in later life. But one area where there was a high correlation was childhood family happiness. Happy, successful adults usually reported that their mother in particular verbally expressed love and affection and did not use severe discipline. Both of their parents were demonstratively affectionate with each other and available and accessible to their children, with whom they had warm and emotionally expressive relationships. The parents created a stable family environment and were believed to have respected the autonomy of their children.

A concluding book on the study published in 2012 reports: “Many measures of success throughout life are predicted less reliably by early financial and social advantage than by a loved and loving childhood.” A warm childhood correlates with achievement more than intelligence, social class, or athleticism. The study also found that “what goes right in childhood predicts the future far better than what goes wrong.”4

The study as a whole indicates that even when there are significant challenges and some things go very wrong, most children are resilient, and the trust that is built by loving relationships with parents, especially the mother, can result in lasting, lifetime happiness. What was interesting to me, but not surprising, was that the study was completely in line with what the scriptures and the Church teach about the family. The Church emphasizes family home evening, family prayer, expressions of love, family togetherness, and family traditions, which are the very kinds of activities that the study indicated would produce happy, successful adults.

Nephi begins the Book of Mormon expressing gratitude for “goodly parents” (1 Nephi 1:1), but the real lesson is that we each determine what kind of parent we will be so that our posterity can happily report that they too were born of goodly parents.

The most important thing you can do is to make sure your children and those you nurture know that you love them. Love is the key ingredient to happiness.

**The Reward of Prospering in the Land**

*“Our family is not achieving significant material success. Is that because we are not righteous enough?”*

The scriptures are clear that living the commandments allows us to prosper in the land. But let me assure you that prospering in the land is not defined by the size of your bank account. It has a much fuller meaning than that.

Speaking to his son Helaman, the prophet Alma teaches, “Inasmuch as ye shall keep the commandments of God ye shall prosper in the land; and ye ought to know also, that inasmuch as ye will not keep the commandments of God ye shall be cut off from his presence” (Alma 36:30).

Accordingly, having the Spirit in our lives is the primary ingredient in prospering in the land. If we keep the commandments, we also have certain specific promises (see Ephesians 6:1–3). Doctrine and Covenants section 89, for example, promises that by living the Word of Wisdom, we will enjoy health blessings and great treasures of knowledge.

Isolating one element of the Word of Wisdom, avoiding alcohol, is instructional. The longitudinal study I mentioned earlier found that alcohol abuse touches one American family in three, is involved in a quarter of all admissions to general hospitals, and plays a major role in death, divorce, bad health, and diminished accomplishment.

A long-term study of active Church members in California found that women live on average 5.6 years and men 9.8 years longer than comparable U.S. females and males. The physicians conducting the study indicated at least one reason was adherence to the Word of Wisdom. Living the Word of Wisdom allows us to prosper in the land.5

In a conversation I had with President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) on a flight to a temple dedication, he joyfully reported that the Church had funds to increase the number of temples because Latter-day Saints had prospered in the land. As faithful tithe payers, they had provided the resources to build temples.

Prospering and being wealthy are not necessarily synonymous. A much better gospel definition of prospering in the land is having sufficient for our needs while having the abundant blessing of the Spirit in our lives. When we provide for our families and love and serve the Savior, we will enjoy the reward of having the Spirit and prospering in the land.

**The Reward of Peace**

The ultimate promised reward of righteousness is set forth clearly in Doctrine and Covenants 59:23: “But learn that he [or she] who doeth the works of righteousness shall receive his [or her] reward, even peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come.”

More than 35 years ago, President Kimball taught that major growth would occur in the Church because many “good women … will be drawn to the Church in large numbers.” He declared, “This will happen to the degree that the women of the Church reflect righteousness and articulateness in their lives and … are seen as distinct and different—in happy ways—from the women of the world.”6

This has truly happened and will continue to do so in the future.

The Lord God is indeed a sun and shield and will give grace and glory. No good thing will be withheld from them that walk uprightly (see Psalm 84:11). My prayer is that you may reap the rewards of righteousness as you faithfully follow our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings, Thoughts or Insights From Your Readings or From the Lesson:**

**Lesson #26**

**After the Trial of Faith**

**2 Nephi 27:23**

23 For behold, I am God; and I am a God of miracles; and I will show unto the world that I am the same yesterday, today, and forever; and I work not among the children of men save it be according to their faith.

**3 Nephi 17:5-9, 20-24**

5 And it came to pass that when Jesus had thus spoken, he cast his eyes round about again on the multitude, and beheld they were in tears, and did look steadfastly upon him as if they would ask him to tarry a little longer with them.

6 And he said unto them: Behold, my bowels are filled with compassion towards you.

7 Have ye any that are sick among you? Bring them hither. Have ye any that are lame, or blind, or halt, or maimed, or leprous, or that are withered, or that are deaf, or that are afflicted in any manner? Bring them hither and I will heal them, for I have compassion upon you; my bowels are filled with mercy.

8 For I perceive that ye desire that I should show unto you what I have done unto your brethren at Jerusalem, for I see that your faith is sufficient that I should heal you.

9 And it came to pass that when he had thus spoken, all the multitude, with one accord, did go forth with their sick and their afflicted, and their lame, and with their blind, and with their dumb, and with all them that were afflicted in any manner; and he did heal them every one as they were brought forth unto him.

20 And they arose from the earth, and he said unto them: Blessed are ye because of your faith. And now behold, my joy is full.

21 And when he had said these words, he wept, and the multitude bare record of it, and he took their little children, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them.

22 And when he had done this he wept again;

23 And he spake unto the multitude, and said unto them: Behold your little ones.

24 And as they looked to behold they cast their eyes towards heaven, and they saw the heavens open, and they saw angels descending out of heaven as it were in the midst of fire; and they came down and encircled those little ones about, and they were encircled about with fire; and the angels did minister unto them.

**Mormon 9:9, 18-20**

9 For do we not read that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and in him there is no variableness neither shadow of changing?

18 And who shall say that Jesus Christ did not do many mighty miracles? And there were many mighty miracles wrought by the hands of the apostles.

19 And if there were miracles wrought then, why has God ceased to be a God of miracles and yet be an unchangeable Being? And behold, I say unto you he changeth not; if so he would cease to be God; and he ceaseth not to be God, and is a God of miracles.

20 And the reason why he ceaseth to do miracles among the children of men is because that they dwindle in unbelief, and depart from the right way, and know not the God in whom they should trust.

**Ether 3:6-13, 17-20**

6 And it came to pass that when the brother of Jared had said these words, behold, the Lord stretched forth his hand and touched the stones one by one with his finger. And the veil was taken from off the eyes of the brother of Jared, and he saw the finger of the Lord; and it was as the finger of a man, like unto flesh and blood; and the brother of Jared fell down before the Lord, for he was struck with fear.

7 And the Lord saw that the brother of Jared had fallen to the earth; and the Lord said unto him: Arise, why hast thou fallen?

8 And he saith unto the Lord: I saw the finger of the Lord, and I feared lest he should smite me; for I knew not that the Lord had flesh and blood.

9 And the Lord said unto him: Because of thy faith thou hast seen that I shall take upon me flesh and blood; and never has man come before me with such exceeding faith as thou hast; for were it not so ye could not have seen my finger. Sawest thou more than this?

10 And he answered: Nay; Lord, show thyself unto me.

11 And the Lord said unto him: Believest thou the words which I shall speak?

12 And he answered: Yea, Lord, I know that thou speakest the truth, for thou art a God of truth, and canst not lie.

13 And when he had said these words, behold, the Lord showed himself unto him, and said: Because thou knowest these things ye are redeemed from the fall; therefore ye are brought back into my presence; therefore I show myself unto you.

17 And now, as I, Moroni, said I could not make a full account of these things which are written, therefore it sufficeth me to say that Jesus showed himself unto this man in the spirit, even after the manner and in the likeness of the same body even as he showed himself unto the Nephites.

18 And he ministered unto him even as he ministered unto the Nephites; and all this, that this man might know that he was God, because of the many great works which the Lord had showed unto him.

19 And because of the knowledge of this man he could not be kept from beholding within the veil; and he saw the finger of Jesus, which, when he saw, he fell with fear; for he knew that it was the finger of the Lord; and he had faith no longer, for he knew, nothing doubting.

20 Wherefore, having this perfect knowledge of God, he could not be kept from within the veil; therefore he saw Jesus; and he did minister unto him.

**Ether 4:13-15**

13 Come unto me, O ye Gentiles, and I will show unto you the greater things, the knowledge which is hid up because of unbelief.

14 Come unto me, O ye house of Israel, and it shall be made manifest unto you how great things the Father hath laid up for you, from the foundation of the world; and it hath not come unto you, because of unbelief.

15 Behold, when ye shall rend that veil of unbelief which doth cause you to remain in your awful state of wickedness, and hardness of heart, and blindness of mind, then shall the great and marvelous things which have been hid up from the foundation of the world from you—yea, when ye shall call upon the Father in my name, with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, then shall ye know that the Father hath remembered the covenant which he made unto your fathers, O house of Israel.

**Ether 12:6-7, 12, 19, 31**

6 And now, I, Moroni, would speak somewhat concerning these things; I would show unto the world that faith is things which are hoped for and not seen; wherefore, dispute not because ye see not, for ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith.

7 For it was by faith that Christ showed himself unto our fathers, after he had risen from the dead; and he showed not himself unto them until after they had faith in him; wherefore, it must needs be that some had faith in him, for he showed himself not unto the world.

12 For if there be no faith among the children of men God can do no miracle among them; wherefore, he showed not himself until after their faith.

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.

31 For thus didst thou manifest thyself unto thy disciples; for after they had faith, and did speak in thy name, thou didst show thyself unto them in great power.

**Ask in Faith**

**David A. Bednar, *Ensign,* May 2008**

I invite the Holy Ghost to assist us as we consider a principle that can help our prayers become more meaningful—the gospel principle of asking in faith.

I want to review three examples of asking in faith in meaningful prayer and discuss the lessons we can learn from each one of them. As we speak of prayer, I emphasize the word meaningful. Simply saying prayers is quite a different thing from engaging in meaningful prayer. I expect that all of us already know that prayer is essential for our spiritual development and protection. But what we know is not always reflected in what we do. And even though we recognize the importance of prayer, all of us can improve the consistency and efficacy of our personal and family prayers.

**Ask in Faith and Act**

The classic example of asking in faith is Joseph Smith and the First Vision. As young Joseph was seeking to know the truth about religion, he read the following verses in the first chapter of James:

“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

“But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering” (James 1:5–6).

Please notice the requirement to ask in faith, which I understand to mean the necessity to not only express but to do, the dual obligation to both plead and to perform, the requirement to communicate and to act.

Pondering this biblical text led Joseph to retire to a grove of trees near his home to pray and to seek spiritual knowledge. Note the questions that guided Joseph’s thinking and supplicating.

“In the midst of this war of words and tumult of opinions, I often said to myself: What is to be done? Who of all these parties are right; or, are they all wrong together? If any one of them be right, which is it, and how shall I know it? …

“My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right, that I might know which to join” (Joseph Smith—History 1:10, 18).

Joseph’s questions focused not just on what he needed to know but also on what was to be done! His prayer was not simply, “Which church is right?” His question was, “Which church should I join?” Joseph went to the grove to ask in faith, and he was determined to act.

True faith is focused in and on the Lord Jesus Christ and always leads to righteous action. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that “faith [is] the first principle in revealed religion, and the foundation of all righteousness” and that it is also “the principle of action in all intelligent beings” (Lectures on Faith [1985], 1). Action alone is not faith in the Savior, but acting in accordance with correct principles is a central component of faith. Thus, “faith without works is dead” (James 2:20).

The Prophet Joseph further explained that “faith is not only the principle of action, but of power also, in all intelligent beings, whether in heaven or on earth” (Lectures on Faith, 3). Thus, faith in Christ leads to righteous action, which increases our spiritual capacity and power. Understanding that faith is a principle of action and of power inspires us to exercise our moral agency in compliance with gospel truth, invites the redeeming and strengthening powers of the Savior’s Atonement into our lives, and enlarges the power within us whereby we are agents unto ourselves (see D&C 58:28).

I long have been impressed with the truth that meaningful prayer requires both holy communication and consecrated work. Blessings require some effort on our part before we can obtain them, and prayer, as “a form of work, … is an appointed means for obtaining the highest of all blessings” (Bible Dictionary, “Prayer,” 753). We press forward and persevere in the consecrated work of prayer, after we say “amen,” by acting upon the things we have expressed to Heavenly Father.

Asking in faith requires honesty, effort, commitment, and persistence. Let me provide an illustration of what I mean and extend to you an invitation.

We properly pray for the safety and success of the full-time missionaries throughout the world. And a common element in many of our prayers is a request that the missionaries will be led to individuals and families who are prepared to receive the message of the Restoration. But ultimately it is my responsibility and your responsibility to find people for the missionaries to teach. Missionaries are full-time teachers; you and I are full-time finders. And you and I as lifelong missionaries should not be praying for the full-time missionaries to do our work!

If you and I would truly pray and ask in faith, as did Joseph Smith—if we would pray with the expectation to act and not just to express—then the work of proclaiming the gospel would move forward in a remarkable way. Such a prayer of faith might include some of the following elements:

•Thanking Heavenly Father for the doctrines and ordinances of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, which bring hope and happiness into our lives.

•Asking for courage and boldness to open our mouths and share the gospel with our family and friends.

•Entreating Heavenly Father to help us identify individuals and families who will be receptive to our invitation to be taught by the missionaries in our homes.

•Pledging to do our part this day and this week and petitioning for help to overcome anxiety, fear, and hesitation.

•Seeking for the gift of discernment— for eyes to see and ears to hear missionary opportunities as they occur.

•Praying fervently for the strength to act as we know we should.

Gratitude would be expressed, and other blessings might be requested in such a prayer, which would be closed in the name of the Savior. And then the consecrated work of that prayer would continue and increase.

This same pattern of holy communication and consecrated work can be applied in our prayers for the poor and the needy, for the sick and the afflicted, for family members and friends who are struggling, and for those who are not attending Church meetings.

I testify that prayer becomes meaningful as we ask in faith and act. I invite all of us to pray in faith about our divinely given mandate to proclaim the gospel. As we do so, I promise doors will open and we will be blessed to recognize and act upon the opportunities that will be provided.

**After the Trial of Our Faith**

My second example emphasizes the importance of persevering through the trial of our faith. A few years ago a family traveled to Europe from the United States. Shortly after arriving at their destination, a 13-year-old son became quite ill. The mother and father initially thought his upset stomach was caused by fatigue from the long flight, and the family routinely continued on its journey.

As the day continued, the son’s condition became worse. Dehydration was increasing. The father gave his son a priesthood blessing, but no improvement was immediately evident.

Several hours passed by, and the mother knelt by her son’s side, pleading in prayer to Heavenly Father for the boy’s well-being. They were far from home in an unfamiliar country and did not know how to obtain medical assistance.

The mother asked her son if he would like to pray with her. She knew that merely waiting for the anticipated blessing would not be enough; they needed to continue to act. Explaining that the blessing he had received was still in effect, she suggested again petitioning in prayer, as did the ancient Apostles, “Lord, Increase our faith” (Luke 17:5). The prayer included a profession of trust in priesthood power and a commitment to persevere in doing whatever might be required for the blessing to be honored—if that blessing at that time was in accordance with God’s will. Shortly after they offered this simple prayer, the son’s condition improved.

The faithful action of the mother and her son helped to invite the promised priesthood power and in part satisfied the requirement that we “dispute not because [we] see not, for [we] receive no witness until after the trial of [our] faith” (Ether 12:6). Just as the prison holding Alma and Amulek did not tumble to the earth “until after their faith,” and just as Ammon and his missionary brethren did not witness mighty miracles in their ministries “until after their faith” (see Ether 12:12–15), so the healing of this 13-year-old boy did not occur until after their faith and was accomplished “according to their faith in their prayers” (D&C 10:47).

**Not My Will, but Thine, Be Done**

My third example highlights the importance of recognizing and accepting the will of God in our lives. Several years ago there was a young father who had been active in the Church as a boy but had chosen a different path during his teenage years. After serving in the military, he married a lovely girl, and soon children blessed their home.

One day without warning their little four-year-old daughter became critically ill and was hospitalized. In desperation and for the first time in many years, the father was found on his knees in prayer, asking that the life of his daughter be spared. Yet her condition worsened. Gradually, this father sensed that his little girl would not live, and slowly his prayers changed; he no longer prayed for healing but rather for understanding. “Let Thy will be done” was now the manner of his pleadings.

Soon his daughter was in a coma, and the father knew her hours on earth were few. Fortified with understanding, trust, and power beyond their own, the young parents prayed again, asking for the opportunity to hold her close once more while she was awake. The daughter’s eyes opened, and her frail arms reached out to her parents for one final embrace. And then she was gone. This father knew their prayers had been answered—a kind, compassionate Father in Heaven had comforted their hearts. God’s will had been done, and they had gained understanding. (Adapted from H. Burke Peterson, “Adversity and Prayer,” Ensign, Jan. 1974, 18.)

Discerning and accepting the will of God in our lives are fundamental elements of asking in faith in meaningful prayer. However, simply saying the words “Thy will be done” is not enough. Each of us needs God’s help in surrendering our will to Him.

“Prayer is the act by which the will of the Father and the will of the child are brought into correspondence with each other” (Bible Dictionary, “Prayer,” 752–53). Humble, earnest, and persistent prayer enables us to recognize and align ourselves with the will of our Heavenly Father. And in this the Savior provided the perfect example as He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, “saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. … And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly” (Luke 22:42, 44).

The object of our prayers should not be to present a wish list or a series of requests but to secure for ourselves and for others blessings that God is eager to bestow, according to His will and timing. Every sincere prayer is heard and answered by our Heavenly Father, but the answers we receive may not be what we expect or come to us when we want or in the way we anticipate. This truth is evident in the three examples I have presented today.

Prayer is a privilege and the soul’s sincere desire. We can move beyond routine and “checklist” prayers and engage in meaningful prayer as we appropriately ask in faith and act, as we patiently persevere through the trial of our faith, and as we humbly acknowledge and accept “not my will, but Thine, be done.”

I witness the reality and divinity of our Eternal Father, of His Only Begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Ghost. I testify that our Father hears and answers our prayers. May each of us strive with greater resolve to ask in faith and thereby make our prayers truly meaningful. I so pray in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings, Thoughts or Insights From Your Readings or From the Lesson:**

**Lesson #27**

**Faith, Hope, and Charity**

**Alma 32:26-29, 37-41**

26 Now, as I said concerning faith—that it was not a perfect knowledge—even so it is with my words. Ye cannot know of their surety at first, unto perfection, any more than faith is a perfect knowledge.

27 But 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, even until ye believe in a manner that ye can give place for a portion of my words.

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

29 Now behold, would not this increase your faith? I say unto you, Yea; nevertheless it hath not grown up to a perfect knowledge.

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

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

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

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

41 But if ye will nourish the word, yea, nourish the tree as it beginneth to grow, by your faith with great diligence, and with patience, looking forward to the fruit thereof, it shall take root; and behold it shall be a tree springing up unto everlasting life.

**Ether 12:4, 8-9, 28, 33-34**

4 Wherefore, whoso believeth in God might with surety hope for a better world, yea, even a place at the right hand of God, which hope cometh of faith, maketh an anchor to the souls of men, which would make them sure and steadfast, always abounding in good works, being led to glorify God.

8 But because of the faith of men he has shown himself unto the world, and glorified the name of the Father, and prepared a way that thereby others might be partakers of the heavenly gift, that they might hope for those things which they have not seen.

9 Wherefore, ye may also have hope, and be partakers of the gift, if ye will but have faith.

28 Behold, I will show unto the Gentiles their weakness, and I will show unto them that faith, hope and charity bringeth unto me—the fountain of all righteousness.

33 And again, I remember that thou hast said that thou hast loved the world, even unto the laying down of thy life for the world, that thou mightest take it again to prepare a place for the children of men.

34 And now I know that this love which thou hast had for the children of men is charity; wherefore, except men shall have charity they cannot inherit that place which thou hast prepared in the mansions of thy Father.

**Moroni 7:21, 25-28, 33, 40-48**

21 And now I come to that faith, of which I said I would speak; and I will tell you the way whereby ye may lay hold on every good thing.

25 Wherefore, by the ministering of angels, and by every word which proceeded forth out of the mouth of God, men began to exercise faith in Christ; and thus by faith, they did lay hold upon every good thing; and thus it was until the coming of Christ.

26 And after that he came men also were saved by faith in his name; and by faith, they become the sons of God. And as surely as Christ liveth he spake these words unto our fathers, saying: Whatsoever thing ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is good, in faith believing that ye shall receive, behold, it shall be done unto you.

27 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, have miracles ceased because Christ hath ascended into heaven, and hath sat down on the right hand of God, to claim of the Father his rights of mercy which he hath upon the children of men?

28 For he hath answered the ends of the law, and he claimeth all those who have faith in him; and they who have faith in him will cleave unto every good thing; wherefore he advocateth the cause of the children of men; and he dwelleth eternally in the heavens.

33 And Christ hath said: If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me.

40 And again, my beloved brethren, I would speak unto you concerning hope. How is it that ye can attain unto faith, save ye shall have hope?

41 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.

42 Wherefore, if a man have faith he must needs have hope; for without faith there cannot be any hope.

43 And again, behold I say unto you that he cannot have faith and hope, save he shall be meek, and lowly of heart.

44 If so, his faith and hope is vain, for none is acceptable before God, save the meek and lowly in heart; and if a man be meek and lowly in heart, and confesses by the power of the Holy Ghost that Jesus is the Christ, he must needs have charity; for if he have not charity he is nothing; wherefore he must needs have charity.

45 And charity suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is 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.

46 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, if ye have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth. Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail—

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 10:18-21**

18 And I would exhort you, my beloved brethren, that ye remember that every good gift cometh of Christ.

19 And I would exhort you, my beloved brethren, that ye remember that he is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and that all these gifts of which I have spoken, which are spiritual, never will be done away, even as long as the world shall stand, only according to the unbelief of the children of men.

20 Wherefore, there must be faith; and if there must be faith there must also be hope; and if there must be hope there must also be charity.

21 And except ye have charity ye can in nowise be saved in the kingdom of God; neither can ye be saved in the kingdom of God if ye have not faith; neither can ye if ye have no hope.

**The Infinite Power of Hope**

**Dieter F. Uchtdorf, *Ensign*, Nov. 2008**

My dear brothers and sisters and friends, what a glorious day for us to witness the announcement of five new temples by our beloved prophet. What a beautiful day for all of us.

Toward the end of World War II, my father was drafted into the German army and sent to the western front, leaving my mother alone to care for our family. Though I was only three years old, I can still remember this time of fear and hunger. We lived in Czechoslovakia, and with every passing day, the war came nearer and the danger grew greater.

Finally, during the cold winter of 1944, my mother decided to flee to Germany, where her parents were living. She bundled us up and somehow managed to get us on one of the last refugee trains heading west. Traveling during that time was dangerous. Everywhere we went, the sound of explosions, the stressed faces, and ever-present hunger reminded us that we were in a war zone.

Along the way the train stopped occasionally to get supplies. One night during one of these stops, my mother hurried out of the train to search for some food for her four children. When she returned, to her great horror, the train and her children were gone!

She was weighed down with worry; desperate prayers filled her heart. She frantically searched the large and dark train station, urgently crisscrossing the numerous tracks while hoping against hope that the train had not already departed.

Perhaps I will never know all that went through my mother’s heart and mind on that black night as she searched through a grim railroad station for her lost children. That she was terrified, I have no doubt. I am certain it crossed her mind that if she did not find this train, she might never see her children again. I know with certainty: her faith overcame her fear, and her hope overcame her despair. She was not a woman who would sit and bemoan tragedy. She moved. She put her faith and hope into action.

And so she ran from track to track and from train to train until she finally found our train. It had been moved to a remote area of the station. There, at last, she found her children again.

I have often thought about that night and what my mother must have endured. If I could go back in time and sit by her side, I would ask her how she managed to go on in the face of her fears. I would ask about faith and hope and how she overcame despair.

While that is impossible, perhaps today I could sit by your side and by the side of any who might feel discouraged, worried, or lonely. Today I would like to speak with you about the infinite power of hope.

**The Importance of Hope**

Hope is one leg of a three-legged stool, together with faith and charity. These three stabilize our lives regardless of the rough or uneven surfaces we might encounter at the time. The scriptures are clear and certain about the importance of hope. The Apostle Paul taught that the scriptures were written to the end that we “might have hope.” 1

Hope has the power to fill our lives with happiness. 2 Its absence—when this desire of our heart is delayed—can make “the heart sick.” 3

Hope is a gift of the Spirit. 4 It is a hope that through the Atonement of Jesus Christ and the power of His Resurrection, we shall be raised unto life eternal and this because of our faith in the Savior. 5 This kind of hope is both a principle of promise as well as a commandment, 6 and, as with all commandments, we have the responsibility to make it an active part of our lives and overcome the temptation to lose hope. Hope in our Heavenly Father’s merciful plan of happiness leads to peace, 7 mercy, 8 rejoicing, 9 and gladness. 10 The hope of salvation is like a protective helmet; 11 it is the foundation of our faith 12 and an anchor to our souls. 13

Moroni in his solitude—even after having witnessed the complete destruction of his people—believed in hope. In the twilight of the Nephite nation, Moroni wrote that without hope we cannot receive an inheritance in the kingdom of God. 14

**But Why Then Is There Despair?**

The scriptures say that there must be “an opposition in all things.” 15 So it is with faith, hope, and charity. Doubt, despair, and failure to care for our fellowmen lead us into temptation, which can cause us to forfeit choice and precious blessings.

The adversary uses despair to bind hearts and minds in suffocating darkness. Despair drains from us all that is vibrant and joyful and leaves behind the empty remnants of what life was meant to be. Despair kills ambition, advances sickness, pollutes the soul, and deadens the heart. Despair can seem like a staircase that leads only and forever downward.

Hope, on the other hand, is like the beam of sunlight rising up and above the horizon of our present circumstances. It pierces the darkness with a brilliant dawn. It encourages and inspires us to place our trust in the loving care of an eternal Heavenly Father, who has prepared a way for those who seek for eternal truth in a world of relativism, confusion, and of fear.

**What, Then, Is Hope?**

The complexities of language offer several variations and intensities of the word hope. For example, a toddler may hope for a toy phone; an adolescent may hope for a phone call from a special friend; and an adult may simply hope that the phone will stop ringing altogether.

I wish to speak today of the hope that transcends the trivial and centers on the Hope of Israel, 16 the great hope of mankind, even our Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

Hope is not knowledge, 17 but rather the abiding trust that the Lord will fulfill His promise to us. It is confidence that if we live according to God’s laws and the words of His prophets now, we will receive desired blessings in the future. 18 It is believing and expecting that our prayers will be answered. It is manifest in confidence, optimism, enthusiasm, and patient perseverance.

In the language of the gospel, this hope is sure, unwavering, and active. The prophets of old speak of a “firm hope” 19 and a “lively hope.” 20 It is a hope glorifying God through good works. With hope comes joy and happiness. 21 With hope, we can “have patience, and bear … [our] afflictions.” 22

**Things We Hope For, Things We Hope In**

The things we hope for are often future events. If only we could look beyond the horizon of mortality into what awaits us beyond this life. Is it possible to imagine a more glorious future than the one prepared for us by our Heavenly Father? Because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we need not fear, for we will live forever, never to taste of death again. 23 Because of His infinite Atonement, we can be cleansed of sin and stand pure and holy before the judgment bar. 24 The Savior is the Author of our Salvation. 25

And what kind of existence can we hope for? Those who come unto Christ, repent of their sins, and live in faith will reside forever in peace. Think of the worth of this eternal gift. Surrounded by those we love, we will know the meaning of ultimate joy as we progress in knowledge and in happiness. No matter how bleak the chapter of our lives may look today, because of the life and sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we may hope and be assured that the ending of the book of our lives will exceed our grandest expectations. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” 26

The things we hope in sustain us during our daily walk. They uphold us through trials, temptations, and sorrow. Everyone has experienced discouragement and difficulty. Indeed, there are times when the darkness may seem unbearable. It is in these times that the divine principles of the restored gospel we hope in can uphold us and carry us until, once again, we walk in the light.

We hope in Jesus the Christ, in the goodness of God, in the manifestations of the Holy Spirit, in the knowledge that prayers are heard and answered. Because God has been faithful and kept His promises in the past, we can hope with confidence that God will keep His promises to us in the present and in the future. In times of distress, we can hold tightly to the hope that things will “work together for [our] good” 27 as we follow the counsel of God’s prophets. This type of hope in God, His goodness, and His power refreshes us with courage during difficult challenges and gives strength to those who feel threatened by enclosing walls of fear, doubt, and despair.

**Hope Leads to Good Works**

We learn to cultivate hope the same way we learn to walk, one step at a time. As we study the scriptures, speak with our Heavenly Father daily, commit to keep the commandments of God, like the Word of Wisdom, and to pay a full tithing, we attain hope. 28 We grow in our ability to “abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost,” 29 as we more perfectly live the gospel.

There may be times when we must make a courageous decision to hope even when everything around us contradicts this hope. Like Father Abraham, we will “against hope [believe] in hope.” 30 Or, as one writer expressed, “in the depth of winter, [we find] within [us] an invincible summer.” 31

Faith, hope, and charity complement each other, and as one increases, the others grow as well. Hope comes of faith, 32 for without faith, there is no hope. 33 In like manner faith comes of hope, for faith is “the substance of things hoped for.” 34

Hope is critical to both faith and charity. When disobedience, disappointment, and procrastination erode faith, hope is there to uphold our faith. When frustration and impatience challenge charity, hope braces our resolve and urges us to care for our fellowmen even without expectation of reward. The brighter our hope, the greater our faith. The stronger our hope, the purer our charity.

The things we hope for lead us to faith, while the things we hope in lead us to charity. The three qualities—faith, hope, and charity 35 —working together, grounded on the truth and light of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, lead us to abound in good works. 36

**Hope from Personal Experience**

Each time a hope is fulfilled, it creates confidence and leads to greater hope. I can think of many instances in my life where I learned firsthand the power of hope. I well remember the days in my childhood encompassed by the horrors and despair of a world war, the lack of educational opportunities, life-threatening health issues during youth, and the challenging and discouraging economic experiences as a refugee. The example of our mother, even in the worst of times, to move forward and put faith and hope into action, not just worrying or wishful thinking, sustained our family and me and gave confidence that present circumstances would give way to future blessings.

I know from these experiences that it is the gospel of Jesus Christ and our membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that strengthen faith, offer a bright hope, and lead us to charity.

Hope sustains us through despair. Hope teaches that there is reason to rejoice even when all seems dark around us.

With Jeremiah I proclaim, “Blessed is the man … whose hope the Lord is.” 37

With Joel I testify, “The Lord [is] the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel.” 38

With Nephi I declare: “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.” 39

This is the quality of hope we must cherish and develop. Such a mature hope comes in and through our Savior Jesus Christ, for “every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as [the Savior] is pure.” 40

The Lord has given us a reassuring message of hope: “Fear not, little flock.” 41 God will wait with “open arms to receive” 42 those who give away their sins and continue in faith, hope, and charity.

And to all who suffer—to all who feel discouraged, worried, or lonely—I say with love and deep concern for you, never give in.

Never surrender.

Never allow despair to overcome your spirit.

Embrace and rely upon the Hope of Israel, for the love of the Son of God pierces all darkness, softens all sorrow, and gladdens every heart.

Of this I testify and leave you my blessing in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings, Thoughts or Insights From Your Readings or From the Lesson:**

**Lesson #28**

**Come unto Christ**

**1 Nephi 6:4**

4 For the fulness of mine intent is that I may persuade men to come unto the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, and be saved.

**Jacob 1:7**

7 Wherefore we labored diligently among our people, that we might persuade them to come unto Christ, and partake of the goodness of God, that they might enter into his rest, lest by any means he should swear in his wrath they should not enter in, as in the provocation in the days of temptation while the children of Israel were in the wilderness.

**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. 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.

**3 Nephi 9:13-14**

13 O all ye that are spared because ye were more righteous than they, will ye not now return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you?

14 Yea, verily I say unto you, if ye will come unto me ye shall have eternal life. Behold, mine arm of mercy is extended towards you, and whosoever will come, him will I receive; and blessed are those who come unto me.

**Moroni 7:18-26**

18 And now, my brethren, 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.

19 Wherefore, I beseech of you, brethren, that ye should search diligently in the light 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.

20 And now, my brethren, how is it possible that ye can lay hold upon every good thing?

21 And now I come to that faith, of which I said I would speak; and I will tell you the way whereby ye may lay hold on every good thing.

22 For behold, God knowing all things, being from everlasting to everlasting, behold, he sent angels to minister unto the children of men, to make manifest concerning the coming of Christ; and in Christ there should come every good thing.

23 And God also declared unto prophets, by his own mouth, that Christ should come.

24 And behold, there were divers ways that he did manifest things unto the children of men, which were good; and all things which are good cometh of Christ; otherwise men were fallen, and there could no good thing come unto them.

25 Wherefore, by the ministering of angels, and by every word which proceeded forth out of the mouth of God, men began to exercise faith in Christ; and thus by faith, they did lay hold upon every good thing; and thus it was until the coming of Christ.

26 And after that he came men also were saved by faith in his name; and by faith, they become the sons of God. And as surely as Christ liveth he spake these words unto our fathers, saying: Whatsoever thing ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is good, in faith believing that ye shall receive, behold, it shall be done unto you.

**Moroni 10:3-5, 30, 32-33**

3 Behold, I would exhort you that when ye shall read these things, if it be wisdom in God that ye should read them, that ye would remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam even down until the time that ye shall receive these things, and ponder it in your hearts.

4 And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

5 And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.

30 And again I would exhort you that ye would come unto Christ, and lay hold upon every good gift, and touch not the evil gift, nor the unclean thing.

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.

**A Christ-Centered Life, Chapter 24 in Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson (2014)**

President Ezra Taft Benson frequently quoted the Savior’s counsel to the twelve Nephite disciples: “What manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am” (3 Nephi 27:27).1 This principle—the need to be more Christlike—was a recurring theme in President Benson’s ministry, especially during his service as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and as President of the Church.

Having dedicated his life to serving the Lord, President Benson spoke with power and conviction when he shared the following words of testimony:

“I testify to you that there is no greater, more thrilling, and more soul-ennobling challenge than to try to learn of Christ and walk in His steps. Our model, Jesus Christ, walked this earth as ‘the Exemplar.’ He is our Advocate with the Father. He worked out the great atoning sacrifice so we could have a fullness of joy and be exalted in accordance with His grace and our repentance and righteousness. He did all things perfectly and commands that we be perfect even as He and His Father are perfect. (See 3 Ne. 12:48.)

“‘What would Jesus do?’ or ‘What would He have me do?’ are the paramount personal questions of this life. Walking in His way is the greatest achievement of life. That man or woman is most truly successful whose life most closely parallels that of the Master.”2

As President Benson exhorted the Saints to follow the Savior’s perfect example, he reminded them that they could do so only with the Savior’s help. He declared:

“I know the Lord lives. I know that He loves us. I know that apart from Him no one can succeed, but as a partner with Him no one can fail.

“I know that God can make a lot more out of our lives than we can.

“May we all have the moral courage from this moment forward to more fully strive each day to think on Christ, learn of Him, walk in His steps, and do what He would have us do.”3

“Jesus saith … , I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).

**Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson**

***1***

*The example and teachings of Jesus Christ provide the great standard for all mankind.*

Two thousand years ago a perfect man walked the earth: Jesus the Christ. He was the son of a heavenly father and an earthly mother. He is the God of this world, under the Father. He taught men truth, that they might be free. His example and precepts provide the great standard, the only sure way, for all mankind.4

No other single influence has had so great an impact on this earth as the life of Jesus the Christ. We cannot conceive of our lives without his teachings. Without him we would be lost in a mirage of beliefs and worships, born in fear and darkness where the sensual and materialistic hold sway. We are far short of the goal he set for us, but we must never lose sight of it; nor must we forget that our great climb toward the light, toward perfection, would not be possible except for his teachings, his life, his death, and his resurrection.

… We must learn and learn again that only through accepting and living the gospel of love as taught by the Master and only through doing his will can we break the bonds of ignorance and doubt that bind us. We must learn this simple, glorious truth so that we can experience the sweet joys of the spirit now and eternally. We must lose ourselves in doing his will. We must place him first in our lives.5

In the 14th chapter of John, Jesus is tenderly saying his farewell to his disciples after the last supper. He tells them that he goes to prepare a place for them in his Father’s house; that where he is, they also may be. And Thomas says to him:

“Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?

“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” (John 14:5–6.) The road lies before us. It is clearly marked.6

**2**

*We come unto Christ as we look unto Him in every thought and emulate His attributes.*

In Book of Mormon language, we need to “believe in Christ and deny him not.” (2 Ne. 25:28.) We need to trust in Christ and not in the arm of flesh. (See 2 Ne. 4:34.) We need to “come unto Christ, and be perfected in him.” (Moro. 10:32.) We need to come “with a broken heart and a contrite spirit” (3 Ne. 12:19), hungering and thirsting after righteousness (see 3 Ne. 12:6). We need to come “feasting upon the word of Christ” (2 Ne. 31:20), as we receive it through His scriptures, His anointed, and His Holy Spirit.

In short, we need to follow “the example of the Son of the living God” (2 Ne. 31:16).7

The Lord said, “Look unto me in every thought.” (D&C 6:36.) Looking unto the Lord in every thought is the only possible way we can be the manner of men and women we ought to be.

The Lord asked the question of His disciples, “What manner of men ought ye to be?” He then answered His own question by saying, “Even as I am.” (3 Ne. 27:27.) To become as He is, we must have Him on our mind—constantly in our thoughts. Every time we partake of the sacrament, we commit to “always remember him.” (Moro. 4:3; 5:2; D&C 20:77, 79.)

If thoughts make us what we are, and we are to be like Christ, then we must think Christlike thoughts. Let me repeat that: If thoughts make us what we are, and we are to be like Christ, we must think Christlike thoughts.

… Our thoughts should be on the Lord. We should think on Christ.8

Let our personal lives, our homes, and our work performance reflect our Christlike character. So live that others will say about you, “There is a true Christian!”

Yes, we believe in Jesus Christ, but more—we look to Him, we trust Him and strive to emulate His attributes.9

Christ is our ideal. He is our exemplar. … The best measure of true greatness is how Christlike we are.10

To be like the Savior—what a challenge for any person! He is a member of the Godhead. He is the Savior and Redeemer. He was perfect in every aspect of His life. There was no flaw nor failing in Him. Is it possible for us … to be even as He is? The answer is yes. Not only can we, but that is our charge, our responsibility. He would not give us that commandment if He did not mean for us to do it [see Matthew 5:48; 3 Nephi 12:48].

The Apostle Peter spoke of the process by which a person can be made a partaker “of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4). This is important, for if we truly become partakers of the divine nature, we shall become like Him. Let us examine closely what Peter teaches us about this process. Here is what he said:

“And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;

“And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;

“And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity” (2 Peter 1:5–7).

The virtues outlined by Peter are part of the divine nature, or the Savior’s character. These are the virtues we are to emulate if we would be more like Him. Let us discuss a few of these important traits.

The first characteristic, to which all the others are added, is faith. Faith is the foundation upon which a godlike character is built. …

Peter goes on to say that we must add to our faith virtue. … Virtuous behavior implies that [a person] has pure thoughts and clean actions. He will not lust in his heart, for to do so is to “deny the faith” and to lose the Spirit (D&C 42:23)—and there is nothing more important in this work than the Spirit. …

Virtue is akin to holiness, an attribute of godliness. [We] should actively seek for that which is virtuous and lovely and not that which is debasing or sordid. Virtue will garnish [our] thoughts unceasingly (see D&C 121:45). How can any man indulge himself in the evils of pornography, profanity, or vulgarity and consider himself totally virtuous? …

The next step Peter describes in the growth process is to add knowledge to our faith and virtue. The Lord has told us that “it is impossible for a man to be saved in ignorance” (D&C 131:6). In another place God commanded, “Seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith” (D&C 88:118). … While any study of truth is of value, the truths of salvation are the most important truths any person can learn. The Lord’s question, “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Matthew 16:26) can be applied to educational pursuits as well as the pursuit of worldly goods. The Lord might also have asked, “For what is a man profited, if he shall learn everything in the world and not learn how to be saved?” …

Joining our spiritual education to our secular learning will help us keep focused on the things that matter most in this life. …

Another attribute described by Peter as being part of the divine nature is temperance. [A temperate person] is restrained in his emotions and verbal expressions. He does things in moderation and is not given to overindulgence. In a word, he has self-control. He is the master of his emotions, not the other way around. …

To our temperance we are to add patience. … Patience is another form of self-control. It is the ability to postpone gratification and to bridle one’s passions. In his relationships with loved ones, a patient man does not engage in impetuous behavior that he will later regret. Patience is composure under stress. A patient man is understanding of others’ faults.

A patient man also waits on the Lord. We sometimes read or hear of people who seek a blessing from the Lord, then grow impatient when it does not come swiftly. Part of the divine nature is to trust in the Lord enough to “be still and know that [he is] God” (D&C 101:16).

A [person] who is patient will be tolerant of the mistakes and failings of his loved ones. Because he loves them, he will not find fault nor criticize nor blame.

Another attribute mentioned by Peter is kindness. … One who is kind is sympathetic and gentle with others. He is considerate of others’ feelings and courteous in his behavior. He has a helpful nature. Kindness pardons others’ weaknesses and faults. Kindness is extended to all—to the aged and the young, to animals, to those low of station as well as the high.

These are the true attributes of the divine nature. Can you see how we become more Christlike as we are more virtuous, more kind, more patient, and more in control of our emotional feelings?

The Apostle Paul used some vivid expressions to illustrate that a member of the Church must be different from the world. He commended us to “put on Christ” (Galatians 3:27), “put off … the old man,” and “put on the new man” (Ephesians 4:22, 24).

The final and crowning virtue of the divine character is charity, or the pure love of Christ (see Moroni 7:47). If we would truly seek to be more like our Savior and Master, then learning to love as He loves should be our highest goal. Mormon called charity “the greatest of all” (Moroni 7:46).

The world today speaks a great deal about love, and it is sought for by many. But the pure love of Christ differs greatly from what the world thinks of love. Charity never seeks selfish gratification. The pure love of Christ seeks only the eternal growth and joy of others. …

The Savior declared that life eternal is to know the only true God and His Son Jesus Christ (see John 17:3). If this is true, and I bear you my solemn witness that it is true, then we must ask how we come to know God. The process of adding one godly attribute to another, as described by Peter, becomes the key to gaining this knowledge that leads to eternal life. Note Peter’s promise, which immediately follows the process described:

“For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:8; italics added).

… I pray that these qualities and attributes of the Savior may abound in us so that when we stand at the Judgment and He asks each one of us, “What manner of man are you?” we can raise our heads in gratitude and joy and answer, “Even as thou art.”11

**3**

**The Savior will comfort us and lift us up in our efforts to stay on the path He has marked for us.**

To the extent that we stray from the path marked out for us by the Man of Galilee, to that extent we are failing in our individual battles. … But we are not without his help. Again and again he told his disciples, and all of us, “Let not your heart be troubled. …”

“If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.”

“I will not leave you comfortless. …”

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you. …” (John 14:1, 14, 18, 27.)12

Let us turn again to the Book of Mormon … to learn some principles about coming unto Christ, being committed to Him, centered in Him, and consumed in Him. We will quote but a few of the numerous passages on the matter.

First, we need to know that Christ invites us to come unto Him. “Behold, he sendeth an invitation unto all men, for the arms of mercy are extended towards them, … Yea, he saith: Come unto me and ye shall partake of the fruit of the tree of life” (Alma 5:33–34).

Come, for he stands “with open arms to receive you” (Mormon 6:17).

Come, for “he will console you in your afflictions, and he will plead your cause” (Jacob 3:1).

“Come unto him, and offer your whole souls as an offering unto him” (Omni 1:26).

As Moroni closed the record of the Jaredite civilization, he wrote, “I would commend you to seek this Jesus of whom the prophets and apostles have written” (Ether 12:41).

In Moroni’s closing words written toward the end of the Nephite civilization, he said, “Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, … and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you” (Moroni 10:32).

Those who are committed to Christ “stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places” that they may be in “even until death” (Mosiah 18:9). They “retain the name” of Christ “written always” in their hearts (Mosiah 5:12). They take upon themselves “the name of Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end” (Moroni 6:3).

When we live a Christ-centered life, “we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ” (2 Nephi 25:26). We “receive the pleasing word of God, and feast upon his love” (Jacob 3:2). Even when Nephi’s soul was grieved because of his iniquities, he said, “I know in whom I have trusted. My God hath been my support” (2 Nephi 4:19–20).

We remember Alma’s counsel: “Let all thy doings be unto the Lord, and whithersoever thou goest let it be in the Lord; yea, let all thy thoughts be directed unto the Lord; yea, let the affections of thy heart be placed upon the Lord forever. Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings” (Alma 37:36–37).

“Remember, remember,” said Helaman, “that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, … that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, … [they] shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery” (Helaman 5:12).

Nephi said, the Lord “hath filled me with his love, even unto the consuming of my flesh” (2 Nephi 4:21). Those who are consumed in Christ “are made alive in Christ” (2 Nephi 25:25). They “suffer no manner of afflictions, save it were swallowed up in the joy of Christ” (Alma 31:38). They are “clasped in the arms of Jesus” (Mormon 5:11). Nephi said, “I glory in my Jesus, for he hath redeemed my soul” (2 Nephi 33:6). Lehi said, “I am encircled about eternally in the arms of his love” (2 Nephi 1:15). …

… That great soul Mormon [wrote a] letter to his beloved son, Moroni, with these words:

“My son, be faithful in Christ; and may not the things which I have written grieve thee, to weigh thee down unto death; but may Christ lift thee up, and may his sufferings and death, and the showing his body unto our fathers, and his mercy and long-suffering, and the hope of his glory and of eternal life, rest in your mind forever.

“And may the grace of God the Father, whose throne is high in the heavens, and our Lord Jesus Christ, who sitteth on the right hand of his power, until all things shall become subject unto him, be, and abide with you forever” (Moroni 9:25–26).

My prayer for each of us is that we too will follow that inspired counsel: “Be faithful in Christ.” Then He will lift us up and His grace will be and abide with us forever.13

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings, Thoughts or Insights From Your Readings or From the Lesson:**