

We Can Do Better and Be Better

President Russell M. Nelson CR April 2019

My dear brethren, it is inspiring to look out over this vast congregation of the Lord's battalion of priesthood bearers. What a mighty force for good you are! We love you. We pray for you. And we are most grateful for you.

Recently I have found myself drawn to the Lord's instruction given through the Prophet Joseph Smith: "Say nothing but repentance unto this generation."¹ This declaration is often repeated throughout scripture.² It prompts an obvious question: "Does *everyone* need to repent?" The answer is yes.

Too many people consider repentance as punishment—something to be avoided except in the most serious circumstances. But this feeling of being penalized is engendered by Satan. He tries to block us from looking to Jesus Christ,³ who stands with open arms,⁴ hoping and willing to heal, forgive, cleanse, strengthen, purify, and sanctify us.

The word for *repentance* in the Greek New Testament is *metanoeo*. The prefix *meta-* means "change." The suffix *-noeo* is related to Greek words that mean "mind," "knowledge," "spirit," and "breath."⁵

Thus, when Jesus asks you and me to "repent,"⁶ He is inviting us to change our mind, our knowledge, our spirit—even the way we breathe. He is asking us to change the way we love, think, serve, spend our time, treat our wives, teach our children, and even care for our bodies.

Nothing is more liberating, more ennobling, or more crucial to our individual progression than is a regular, daily focus on repentance. Repentance is not an event; it is a process. It is the key to happiness and peace of mind. When coupled with faith, repentance opens our access to the power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.⁷

Whether you are diligently moving along the covenant path, have slipped or stepped from the covenant path, or can't even see the path from where you are now, I plead with you to repent. Experience the strengthening power of daily repentance—of doing and being a little better each day.

When we choose to repent, we choose to change! We allow the Savior to transform us into the best version of ourselves. We choose to grow spiritually

and receive joy—the joy of redemption in Him.⁸ When we choose to repent, we choose to become more like Jesus Christ!⁹

Brethren, we need to *do* better and *be* better because we are in a battle. The battle with sin is real. The adversary is quadrupling his efforts to disrupt testimonies and impede the work of the Lord. He is arming his minions with potent weapons to keep us from partaking of the joy and love of the Lord.¹⁰

Repentance is the key to avoiding misery inflicted by traps of the adversary. The Lord does not expect perfection from us at this point in our eternal progression. But He does expect us to become increasingly pure. Daily repentance is the pathway to purity, and purity brings power. Personal purity can make us powerful tools in the hands of God. Our repentance—our purity—will empower us to help in the gathering of Israel.

The Lord taught the Prophet Joseph Smith "that the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness."¹¹

We know what will give us greater access to the powers of heaven. We also know what will hinder our progress—what we need to stop doing to increase our access to the powers of heaven. Brethren, prayerfully seek to understand what stands in the way of your repentance. Identify what *stops* you from repenting. And then, change! Repent! All of us can do better and be better than ever before.¹²

There are specific ways in which we can likely improve. One is in the way we treat our bodies. I stand in awe of the miracle of the human body. It is a magnificent creation, essential to our gradual ascent toward our ultimate divine potential. We cannot progress without it. In giving us the gift of a body, God has allowed us to take a vital step toward becoming more like Him.

Satan understands this. He chafes at the fact that his premortal apostasy permanently disqualifies him from this privilege, leaving him in a constant state of jealousy and resentment. Thus many, if not most, of the temptations he puts in our path cause us to abuse our bodies or the bodies of others. Because Satan is miserable *without* a body, he wants us to be miserable *because* of ours.¹³

Your body is your personal temple, created to house your eternal spirit.¹⁴ Your care of that temple is important. Now, I ask you, brethren, are you more interested in dressing and grooming your body to appeal to the world than to please God? Your answer to this question sends a direct message to Him about your feelings regarding His transcendent gift to you. In this reverence for our bodies, brethren, I think we can do better and be better.

Another way we can also do better and be better is how we honor the women in our lives, beginning with our wives and daughters, our mothers and sisters.¹⁵

Months ago, I received a heartbreaking letter from a dear sister. She wrote: “[My daughters and I] feel we are in fierce competition for our husbands’ and sons’ undivided attention, with 24/7 sports updates, video games, stock market updates, [and] endless analyzing and watching of games of every [conceivable] sport. It feels like we’re losing our front-row seats with our husbands and sons because of their permanent front-row seats with [sports and games].”¹⁶

Brethren, your first and foremost duty as a bearer of the priesthood is to love and care for your wife. Become one with her. Be her partner. Make it easy for her to want to be yours. No other interest in life should take priority over building an eternal relationship with her. Nothing on TV, a mobile device, or a computer is more important than her well-being. Take an inventory of how you spend your time and where you devote your energy. That will tell you where your heart is. Pray to have your heart attuned to your wife’s heart. Seek to bring her joy. Seek her counsel, and listen. Her input will improve your output.

If you have a need to repent because of the way you have treated the women closest to you, begin now. And remember that it is *your* responsibility to help the women in your life receive the blessings that derive from living the Lord’s law of chastity. Never be the reason that a woman is unable to receive her temple blessings.

Brethren, we all need to repent. We need to get up off the couch, put down the remote, and wake up from our spiritual slumber. It is time to put on the full armor of God so we can engage in the most important work on earth. It is time to “thrust in [our] sickles, and reap with all [our] might, mind, and strength.”¹⁷ The forces of evil have never raged

more forcefully than they do today. As servants of the Lord, we cannot be asleep while this battle rages.

Your family needs your leadership and love. Your quorum and those in your ward or branch need your strength. And all who meet you need to know what a true disciple of the Lord looks like and acts like.

My dear brethren, you were chosen by our Father to come to earth at this crucial time because of your premortal spiritual valor. You are among the finest, most valiant men who have ever come to the earth. Satan knows who you are and who you were premortally, and he understands the work that must be done before the Savior returns. And after millennia of practicing his cunning arts, the adversary is experienced and incorrigible.

Gratefully, the priesthood we hold is far stronger than are the wiles of the adversary. I plead with you to be the men and young men the Lord needs you to be. Make your focus on *daily* repentance so integral to your life that you can exercise the priesthood with greater power than ever before. This is the only way you will keep yourself and your family spiritually safe in the challenging days ahead.

The Lord needs selfless men who put the welfare of others ahead of their own. He needs men who intentionally work to hear the voice of the Spirit with clarity. He needs men of the covenant who keep their covenants with integrity. He needs men who are determined to keep themselves sexually pure—worthy men who can be called upon at a moment’s notice to give blessings with pure hearts, clean minds, and willing hands. The Lord needs men eager to repent—men with a zeal to serve and be part of the Lord’s battalion of worthy priesthood bearers.

I bless you to become those men. I bless you with the courage to repent daily and learn how to exercise full priesthood power. I bless you to communicate the love of the Savior to your wife and children and to all who know you. I bless you to *do* better and *be* better. And I bless you that as you make these efforts, you will experience miracles in your life.

We are engaged in the work of Almighty God. Jesus is the Christ. We are Their servants. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.