

beauty, hope, cheer, courage, faith, and happiness that enable us to stay young at heart through faithful service in whatever calling we may have.

Happiness: the object of our existence

President Thomas S. Monson's First Presidency message entitled "Happiness, the Universal Quest" in the October 1993 issue of the *Ensign* magazine, shares five important ways to obtain lasting happiness in this life and the life to come, based on the words of the Prophet Joseph Smith:

"Happiness is the object and design of our existence; and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it" (p. 2).

Therefore, let us all walk in these clearly defined paths to increase our happiness.

In closing, I bear solemn witness that God, our Eternal Father, lives; that Jesus is the Christ, the Only Begotten Son of the Father born in the flesh, the Savior and Redeemer of all mankind; that Joseph Smith was a prophet of the living God; and that every man who has succeeded him as President of

the Church has been a living prophet, including President Ezra Taft Benson in our day and time. This is my personal, eternal testimony in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just heard from Elders Adney Y. Komatsu and Jacob de Jager, emeritus members of the Seventy.

I must take a moment and say how happy I am that the de Jager family became members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at the time I had the opportunity to preside over the Canadian Mission, headquartered in Toronto, and that my beloved Frances was the person in Toronto who took the telephone call from a nonmember at that time, Jacob de Jager, who then became our beloved Jack, now an emeritus member of the Quorums of the Seventy. God speed the blessings and the lives of Adney Komatsu, Jacob de Jager, and, of course, Burke Peterson, who are now emeritus.

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker for this session.

Elder Russell M. Nelson

I echo President Monson's compliments to Brother Peterson, Brother Komatsu, and Brother de Jager. They have earned our greatest commendation. And I too join with others who feel a debt of gratitude to this wonderful chorus of youth from Brigham Young University.

Constancy amid change

Our youth are wonderful and especially able to ask thoughtful questions. Recently I had a conversation with "Ruth" and "John." Ruth opened the discussion. With a sigh, she lamented,

"Our world is constantly changing, isn't it?"

"Yes," I replied, "ever since its creation—geologically and geographically. And its populations are changing—politically and spiritually. You might ask your grandparents about life when they were your age and discover their thoughts."

"Oh, I already have," Ruth continued. "My grandpa summarized his opinion with a clever quip: 'Give me the good old days—plus penicillin.'"

Then John expressed deep concern. "Continually changing conditions make the future shaky for us," he said.

"It's kind of scary. We seem to be standing on shifting sand."

Together they asked, "What can we trust? Is anything constant that will not change as we grow older?"

To that question I responded with an emphatic, "Yes! Many things!" Because Ruth and John are typical of many today who seek for unchanging constants in a changing world, I would like to address that subject, titling my remarks "Constancy amid Change." Through the years, prophets and Apostles have spoken of many unchanging constants.¹ To facilitate this discussion, I will group some of these constants into three categories: heavenly personages, plans, and principles.

I. Personages

Our Heavenly Father has a glorified body of flesh and bone, inseparably connected with His spirit.² Scriptures state that He is "infinite and eternal, from everlasting to everlasting the same unchangeable God" (D&C 20:17).³

His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, is our Savior and the chief cornerstone of our religion.⁴ "He is the life and the light of the world" (Alma 38:9).⁵ "There shall be no other name . . . nor any other way . . . whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent" (Mosiah 3:17).⁶

Another personage is the Holy Ghost, whose enduring influence transcends time. Scripture assures that "the Holy Ghost shall be thy *constant* companion, and thy scepter an *unchanging* scepter of righteousness and truth; and thy dominion shall be an *everlasting* dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee *forever* and ever" (D&C 121:46; italics added).

Brothers and sisters, these Heavenly Beings love you. Their love is as constant as is the greatest love of earthly parents.

But there is another personage about whom you should be reminded.

Satan also exists and seeks "that all men might be miserable like unto himself" (2 Nephi 2:27).⁷

II. Plans

I speak now of category two—unchanging plans. A great council in heaven was once convened, in which it seems that all of us participated.⁸ There our Heavenly Father announced His plan. Scriptures refer to this plan of God⁹ by many names. Perhaps out of deference to the sacred name of Deity, or to depict its broad scope, it is also called the plan of happiness,¹⁰ the plan of salvation,¹¹ the plan of redemption,¹² the plan of restoration,¹³ the plan of mercy,¹⁴ the plan of deliverance,¹⁵ and the everlasting gospel.¹⁶ Prophets have used these terms interchangeably.

Regardless of designation, the enabling essence of the plan is the atonement of Jesus Christ. As it is central to the plan,¹⁷ we should try to comprehend the meaning of the Atonement. Before we can comprehend it, though, we must understand the fall of Adam. And before we can fully appreciate the Fall, we must first comprehend the Creation. These three events—the Creation, the Fall, and the Atonement—are three preeminent pillars of God's plan, and they are doctrinally interrelated.

The Creation. The creation of the earth was a preparatory part of our Father's plan. Then "the Gods went down to organize man in their own image, . . . male and female to form they them.

"And the Gods said: We will bless them" (Abraham 4:27–28). And bless us they did, with a plan that would give us physical bodies of our very own.

Adam and Eve were the first people to live upon the earth.¹⁸ They were different from the plant and animal life that had been created previously. Adam and Eve were children of God. Their bodies of flesh and bone

were made in the express image of God's. In that state of innocence, they were not yet mortal. They could have had no children,¹⁹ were not subject to death, and could have lived in Eden's garden forever.²⁰ Thus, we might speak of the Creation in terms of a *paradisial* creation.

If that state had persisted, you and I would still be stranded among the heavenly host as unborn sons and daughters of God.²¹ "The great plan of [happiness] would have been frustrated" (Alma 42:5).²²

The Fall. That leads us to the fall of Adam. To bring the plan of happiness to fruition, God issued to Adam and Eve the first commandment ever given to mankind. It was a commandment to beget children.²³ A law was explained to them. Should they eat from "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Genesis 2:17), their bodies would change; mortality and eventual death would come upon them.²⁴ But partaking of that fruit was prerequisite to their parenthood.²⁵

While I do not fully understand all the biochemistry involved, I do know that their physical bodies did change; blood began to circulate in their bodies. Adam and Eve thereby became mortal. Happily for us, they could also beget children and fulfill the purposes for which the world was created. Happily for them, "the Lord said unto Adam [and Eve²⁶]: Behold I have forgiven thee thy transgression in the Garden of Eden" (Moses 6:53). We and all mankind are forever blessed because of Eve's great courage and wisdom. By partaking of the fruit first, she did what needed to be done. Adam was wise enough to do likewise. Accordingly, we could speak of the fall of Adam in terms of a *mortal* creation, because "Adam fell that men might be" (2 Nephi 2:25).²⁷

Other blessings came to us through the Fall. It activated two closely coupled additional gifts from God, nearly as precious as life itself—agency and account-

ability. We became "free to choose liberty and eternal life . . . or to choose captivity and death" (2 Nephi 2:27). Freedom of choice cannot be exercised without accountability for choices made.²⁸

The Atonement. Now we come to the third pillar of God's plan—the Atonement. Just as Adam and Eve were not to live forever in the Garden of Eden, so our final destination was not to be planet earth. We were to return to our heavenly home.

Given that reality, still another change was necessary. An infinite atonement was required to redeem Adam, Eve, and all of their posterity. That atonement must enable our physical bodies to be resurrected and changed²⁹ to a bloodless form, no longer liable to disease, deterioration, or death.

According to eternal law, that atonement required a personal sacrifice by an immortal being not subject to death. Yet He must die and take up His own body again. The Savior was the only one who could accomplish this. From His mother He inherited power to die. From His Father He obtained power over death. The Redeemer so explained:

"I lay down my life, that I might take it again.

"No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (John 10:17–18).

The Lord declared that "this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39). He who had created the earth came into mortality to fulfill the will of His Father³⁰ and all prophecies of His atonement.³¹ And His atonement redeems every soul from penalties of personal transgression, on the condition of repentance.³²

Thus, we might speak of the Atonement in terms of the *immortal* creation. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22).

I have recounted the importance of the Creation, the Fall, and the Atonement, knowing that parents are accountable to teach these precepts of God's plan to their children.³³

Before leaving our discussion of unchanging plans, however, we need to remember that the adversary sponsors a cunning plan of his own.³⁴ It invariably attacks God's first commandment for husband and wife to beget children. It tempts with tactics that include infidelity, unchastity, and other abuses of procreative power. Satan's band would trumpet choice but mute accountability. Nevertheless, his capacity has long been limited, "for he knew not the mind of God" (Moses 4:6).

III. Principles

I speak now of category three—unchanging principles.

Unchanging principles are so because they come from our unchanging Heavenly Father. Try as they might, no parliament or congress could ever repeal the law of earth's gravity or amend the Ten Commandments. Those laws are constant. All laws of nature and of God are part of the everlasting gospel. Thus, there are many unchanging principles. Time will permit consideration of only a few.

Priesthood. One of them is that of the priesthood. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that "the Priesthood is an everlasting principle, and existed with God from eternity, and will to eternity, without beginning of days or end of years" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 157).³⁵

We know that "the Priesthood was first given to Adam; he obtained the First Presidency, and held the keys of it from generation to generation. He obtained it in the Creation, before the world was formed" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 157).

Scriptures certify that the priesthood has continued and will continue "through the lineage of [the] fathers" (D&C 86:8).³⁶ Ordination to its offices has timeless implication as well. Tenure in priesthood office may extend into postmortal realms. For example, scriptures declare that one ordained as a high priest may be a high priest forever.³⁷ Promised *blessings* of the priesthood extend to men, women, and children throughout the world and may endure forever.³⁸

The use of the priesthood is carefully controlled according to conditions established by the Lord, who said:

"No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned" (D&C 121:41).

"That [the rights of the priesthood] may be conferred upon [men], it is true; but when [they] undertake to cover [their] sins, or to gratify [their] pride, [their] vain ambition, or to exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, . . . the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man" (D&C 121:37).

While the priesthood is an everlasting principle, those privileged to exercise its authority must maintain themselves daily as worthy vessels.

Moral law. Another unchanging principle is that of divine or moral law. Transgression of moral law brings retribution; obedience to it brings blessings "immutable and unchangeable" (D&C 104:2). Blessings are always predicated on obedience to law.³⁹ So the Church teaches us to embrace the right and to renounce the wrong—that we might have joy.⁴⁰

The Savior and His servants⁴¹ do not speak words of complacency but teach what people need to know. Through the ages, history attests that

contemporary critics have pressed Church leaders to modify a decree of the Lord.⁴² But such is eternal law, and it cannot be altered. Not even for His Beloved Son could God change the law that required the Atonement. Divine doctrines cannot be squeezed into compact molds to make them fit fashionable patterns of the day. Nor can they be fully expressed on a bumper sticker.

Judgment. Another unchanging principle, brothers and sisters, is that of your eventual judgment. Each of you will be judged according to your individual works and the desires of your hearts.⁴³ You will not be required to pay the debt of any other. Your eventual placement in the celestial, terrestrial, or telestial kingdom will not be determined by chance. The Lord has prescribed unchanging requirements for each. You can know what the scriptures teach and pattern your lives accordingly.⁴⁴

Divine commandments. Other unchanging principles include divine commandments—even those that seem to be temporal. Tithing, for example, is not temporal (or temporary); it is an everlasting principle. The Lord said:

“Those who have thus been tithed shall pay one-tenth of all their interest annually; and this shall be a standing law unto them *forever*” (D&C 119:4; italics added).

We know that tithe payers shall not be burned at the Second Coming.⁴⁵

Truth. Another unchanging principle is that of truth. Scripture reminds us that “the truth abideth forever and ever” (D&C 1:39).⁴⁶ Even though one’s understanding of the truth may be fragmentary, truth itself does not change. Everlasting truth and wisdom come from the Lord. The first truth ever taught to man came directly from Deity. From generation to generation, God has given additional light. Whether truth comes from a laboratory of science or directly by revelation, truth is embraced by the gospel.

Family. May I mention one more everlasting principle—the family. A family can be together forever. Though each of us will pass through the doors of death, the timing of that departure is less important than is the preparation for eternal life. Part of that preparation includes service in the Church. It is not to be a burden but a blessing to a family. The Lord said, “Thy duty is unto the church forever, and this because of thy family” (D&C 23:3).⁴⁷

Ruth, John, and each of you will more fully understand that concept in light of this scriptural promise:

“If a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, and it is sealed unto them . . . [they] shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, . . . exaltation and glory in all things, . . . which glory shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever” (D&C 132:19).

A promise like that is worth your personal effort and endurance.

Constancy amid change is assured by heavenly personages, plans, and principles. Our trust can be safely anchored to them. They provide peace, eternal progression, hope, freedom, love, and joy to all who will be guided by them. They are true—now and forever—I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. For example, see Albert E. Bowen, *Constancy amid Change* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1944); N. Eldon Tanner, in Conference Report, Oct. 1979, pp. 117–21; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, pp. 80–82.
2. See D&C 93:33; 130:22.
3. See also Psalm 100:5; Mormon 9:19; Moroni 8:18; D&C 84:102.
4. See Ephesians 2:20.
5. See also Mosiah 16:9; 3 Nephi 9:18; 11:11; Ether 4:12; D&C 10:70; 11:28; 12:9; 34:2; 39:2; 45:7.
6. See also Acts 4:12; 2 Nephi 25:20; Mosiah 5:8; Alma 38:9; Helaman 5:9; D&C 18:23.

7. See also 2 Nephi 2:18; Alma 41:4.
8. See *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938), pp. 348–49, 365.
9. See 2 Nephi 9:13; Alma 34:9.
10. See Alma 42:8, 16.
11. See Jarom 1:2; Alma 24:14; 42:5; Moses 6:62.
12. See Jacob 6:8; Alma 12:25–33; 17:16; 18:39; 22:13; 29:2; 34:16, 31; 39:18; 42:11–13.
13. See Alma 41:2.
14. See Alma 42:15, 31; 2 Nephi 9:6.
15. See 2 Nephi 11:5.
16. See Revelation 14:6; D&C 27:5; 36:5; 68:1; 77:8, 9, 11; 79:1; 84:103; 88:103; 99:1; 101:22, 39; 106:2; 109:29, 65; 124:88; 128:17; 133:36; 135:3, 7; 138:19, 25; Joseph Smith—History 1:34.
17. See *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 121.
18. See Genesis 3:20; 1 Nephi 5:11; Moses 4:26.
19. See 2 Nephi 2:23; Moses 5:11.
20. See 2 Nephi 2:22.
21. See D&C 38:1; Abraham 3:22–23.
22. See also D&C 138:56.
23. See Genesis 1:28; Moses 2:28; Abraham 4:28.
24. See Moses 3:17; Abraham 5:13.
25. See Moses 5:11.
26. The Lord “called *their name Adam*” (Genesis 5:2; Moses 6:9; italics added).
27. See also Moses 6:48.
28. See D&C 101:78; 134:1.
29. See 1 Corinthians 15:51–53; 3 Nephi 28:8.
30. See 3 Nephi 27:13.
31. See Romans 5:11; 2 Nephi 25:16; Jacob 4:11, 12; Mosiah 3:5–11, 16, 18–19; 4:2; Alma 21:9; 22:14; 34:8; 36:17; Helaman 5:9; Moroni 7:41; Moses 7:45.
32. See D&C 138:19.
33. See Moses 6:57–62.
34. See 2 Nephi 9:28.
35. See also Exodus 40:15; Numbers 25:13; Alma 13:7.
36. See also D&C 84:6–17; 107:40; Abraham 1:2–4.
37. See Alma 13:9, 14.
38. See Genesis 17:1–7; 22:16–18; 26:3–4; 28:13–14; Isaiah 2:2–3; 1 Nephi 15:18; Alma 29:8; D&C 124:58; 132:47; Abraham 2:11.
39. See D&C 130:20–21.
40. See 2 Nephi 2:25.
41. See D&C 1:38.
42. For examples, see 1 Samuel 8:4–7; Matthew 7:21; Luke 6:46; 3 Nephi 14:21.
43. See D&C 137:9.
44. See John 14:2; 1 Corinthians 15:40–41; D&C 76:50–119; 98:18.
45. See D&C 64:23; 85:3.
46. See also Psalm 100:5; 117:2.
47. See also D&C 126:3.

President Monson

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting which will convene in the Tabernacle this evening at 6:00 P.M. mountain daylight time.

The nationwide CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. Those desiring to attend this broadcast and the Sunday morning session, which immediately follows, must be in their seats no later than 9:15 A.M.

We express gratitude to this wonderful choir—the Brigham Young University combined choirs—for the beautiful music we have heard this afternoon. The choir will now sing in closing “Awake, Ye Saints of God, Awake!” I think that’s appropriate for an afternoon session.

Following the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder Hans B. Ringger of the Seventy.

The chorus sang “Awake, Ye Saints of God, Awake!”

Elder Hans B. Ringger offered the benediction.
