

as it is great, because obedience to these principles gives life, eternal life. . . .

“Order, reverence, attention to divine promises—the promise to enter into the fold of Christ, to cherish virtues mentioned in the gospel of Christ, to keep them ever in mind, to love the Lord wholeheartedly, and to labor, even at the sacrifice of self, for the brotherhood of man—these and all kindred virtues are associated with the partaking of the sacrament. It is good to meet together and especially to renew our covenants with God in that holy sacrament” (*Gospel Ideals* [1953], 146–47).

Attend sacrament meeting faithfully

That old green footlocker will always have a special place in my heart because even in one of the most trying periods of my life, I was able to receive spiritual renewal for the days ahead as I would partake of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper.

Over the many, many years as I have had the privilege of attending sacrament meetings, whether in times of peace or conflict, periods of joy or sorrow, periods of stress or relative ease, partaking of the sacrament has been a time of thoughtful reflection on the blessings the Lord has given to me and a time to covenant with Him to live closer to His law and His gospel.

I encourage each of you to be faithful in your attendance at sacrament meeting. The Lord has promised that if you will partake of the sacrament worthily, He will bless you with the peace of mind that can only come from knowing that you are participating in His divine plan. I also promise each of you that you will receive the special blessings He has promised you here on earth and in the eternities to come, according to your faithfulness. This is my witness to you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang “That Easter Morn.”

President Hinckley

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve has just addressed us. The Tabernacle Choir then sang “That Easter Morn.”

The choir and congregation will now join in singing “Joseph Smith’s First Prayer.” We shall then hear from Elder Carlos E. Asay of the Presidency of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation sang “Joseph Smith’s First Prayer.”

Elder Carlos E. Asay

We of the Seventy extend a warm welcome to the nine men who joined our ranks yesterday. We also extend to them hands of fellowship and the promise of support in the months and years ahead.

Stay on the true course

On this beautiful and sacred Easter morning, one’s thoughts center in Christ. And one’s inclination is to speak of His

Atonement and the “hope for a better world” (Ether 12:4). However, “the [full] merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah” are not claimed by thoughts or words alone; they are the reward of those who are sure, steadfast, and always abounding in good works (2 Nephi 2:8).

I do, therefore, choose to speak with you concerning the imperative need to stay on the true course leading to eternal

life. Such steadiness of direction requires three continuing actions: (1) the reaffirmation of the desired goal, (2) an assessment of current position, and (3) the initiation of needed course corrections. These actions harmonize with the renewal of life associated with Christ's Resurrection and the fresh beginnings linked to this season of the year when the woes of wintertime are melted by the sunshine of spring.

These actions are also in harmony with the Apostle Paul's admonition, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith" (2 Corinthians 13:5). Many of us receive an annual physical checkup and see our dentists twice a year. Some of us try to watch our diet, get the proper amount of rest, and exercise daily. All of this is done so that we might lengthen our days in mortality and enjoy a fulness of life.

I wonder, however, if we are paying sufficient attention to the spiritual aspects of our lives. Are we conducting frequent "spiritual checkups" to assess our standing before God and to determine whether we are on the path leading to eternal life? Alma asked: "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?" (Alma 5:27). These and other questions might be used to obtain readings of our spiritual temperature and pulse rate.

Reaffirm and focus on eternal goals

The ultimate goal of every clear-thinking person is to live after the manner of happiness in this world and, following death and resurrection, "dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness" (Mosiah 2:41). "Happiness," said the Prophet Joseph Smith, "is the object and design of our existence; and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it; and this path is virtue,

uprightness, faithfulness, holiness, and keeping all the commandments of God" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 255-56).

It must be remembered that "wickedness never was happiness" and never will be. Those who seek happiness in doing iniquity are seeking something "contrary to the nature of God" and "contrary to the nature of happiness" (Alma 41:10-11).

The need to remain focused on eternal goals is illustrated in the biblical account of Jesus walking on the sea and Peter's desire to do the same. Peter progressed over the water so long as he looked to Christ. But when he diverted his gaze away from the Master and allowed fear and doubt to enter in, he began to sink.

If we, like Peter, keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and our eternal destination, we too may "walk triumphantly over the swelling waves of disbelief, and unterrified amid the rising winds of doubt" (Frederic W. Farrar, *The Life of Christ* [1994], 313; see also Matthew 14:24-31).

We must not allow the things of the world to blinker our vision of the eternal destination. Nor must we permit the "voices in the world" to lead us off course (1 Corinthians 14:10). Rather, we must allow the hope of Christ's glory and of eternal life to rest in our minds forever (see Moroni 9:25). We must reaffirm the goal that matters most and press toward it, "looking forward with an eye of faith" (Alma 32:40).

Assess current position

Once we have reaffirmed our goal and focused our eyes and hearts upon it, we must make an assessment of our current position. At a critical time in United States history, when a famed debate raged in Congress, Daniel Webster said:

"Mr. President, when the mariner has been tossed about for many days in

thick weather on an unknown sea, he naturally avails himself of the first pause in the storm, the earliest glance of the sun to take his latitude and ascertain how far the elements have driven him from his true course. Let us imitate this prudence and before we float on the waves of this debate refer to the point from which we departed, that we may at least be able to conjecture where we now are” (quoted in Harold B. Lee, Conference Report, Oct. 1961, 78).

Mariners obtained their bearings by using a sextant. This instrument enabled men to measure the angular distance of the sun or the stars from the horizon in finding the position of a ship. Those who failed to look up and make needed course corrections often perished in deep waters, whereas the wise seaman who used the sextant in fixing position according to the light from celestial sources usually reached safe harbors.

The storms of life beat consistently against our “hulls.” Therefore, from time to time we too must take our latitude and ascertain how far the elements have driven us off the true course.

In 1916, Elder Joseph Fielding Smith declared: “The world is drifting. . . . Many things are tolerated today that would not have been tolerated for a moment twenty years ago. New problems have arisen with which we must now contend that we never dreamed of even in the days of my youth” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1916, 71).

Eighty years later the slippage from traditional Christian moorings continues. Today we speak of the moral drift from gospel standards. We hear of some who belittle marriage, call divorce good, and promote relationships without natural affections. We observe some who are “tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine” (Ephesians 4:14). Has any of this caused us to relax rules or compromise the commandments? If so, what is it doing to us, our children, and the people around us?

Said one insightful man, “If the temperature of the bath water rises one degree every fifteen minutes, how will the bather know when to scream?” (Marshall McLuhan). Failure on our part to fix position and take a firm stand in terms of rules, covenants, and expectations will result in a gradual float into dangerous waters and a conditioning to the rising heat of wickedness around us, and eventually all of us, especially our children, will get burned.

We need not and must not flounder on the sea of popular opinions or drift with the waves of immorality. God is among us, and He has provided us with precious sextants to assess our spiritual latitude.

One sextant was described by Elder Boyd K. Packer in these words: “Each of us has a sextant in our mind infinitely more refined and precise than that of any mariner. It functions on the principle of light from celestial sources as well. If we will set that sextant in our mind to the words *ordinance* and *covenant*, and then look up, light will come through. Then you will know how to fix your position and plot your course” (Regional Representatives’ seminar, 3 Apr. 1987; italics added).

Alma spoke of another sextant. He suggested the need to focus our minds and hearts on the word of Christ and then look to God. By so doing we will not only find the right latitude but also set our course toward “a far better land of promise”—even eternal life. (See Alma 37:44–47.)

A third sextant provided us by a loving Father in Heaven comes in the form of living prophets. A prophet issues warnings, proclaims the truth, boldly calls people to repentance, and invites all to live more fully the gospel of Christ.

There is the warning, “They who will not hear the voice of the Lord, neither the voice of his servants, neither *give heed to the words of the prophets and apostles*,

shall be cut off from among the people" (D&C 1:14; italics added).

An assessment of one's current position, in relationship to the ultimate goal of eternal life, can and must be obtained by looking toward the light which comes from God through personal revelation, the scriptures, and the words of living prophets.

The Psalmist said, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet" (Psalm 119:59). Of the prodigal son it is written, "He came to himself" (Luke 15:17). We too must think on our ways, come to ourselves, and turn our feet toward God, who is our goal.

Initiate course corrections

If the assessment of current position reveals the slightest deviation from the right course leading to eternal life or the slightest drift from the mainstream of our faith, we must make immediate course corrections.

One tormented soul cried out:

I wish that there were some wonderful place

Called the Land of Beginning Again,
Where all our mistakes and all our heartaches

And all of our poor selfish grief
Could be dropped like a shabby old coat at the door,

And never be put on again.

[Louisa Fletcher, "The Land of Beginning Again," in Hazel Felleman, sel., *Best Loved Poems of the American People* (1936), 102]

There is a land of beginning again. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Course correction, along with a forgiveness of sins, is made possible to the repentant soul who comes unto Christ. But it requires faith, courage, and high resolve.

Stay on the true course

Mortality is not a pleasure cruise on some luxury liner. It is a voyage fraught

with challenges and constant buffetings of winds and waves. As James A. Michener wrote: "A ship, like a human being, moves best when it is slightly athwart the wind, when it has to keep its sails tight and attend its course. Ships, like men, do poorly when the wind is directly behind, pushing them sloppily on their way so that no care is required in steering or in the management of sails; the wind seems favorable, for it blows in the direction one is heading, but actually it is destructive because it induces a relaxation in tension and skill. What is needed is a wind slightly opposed to the ship, for then tension can be maintained, and juices can flow and ideas can germinate, for ships, like men, respond to challenge" (*Chesapeake* [1978], 445; see also D&C 123:16).

Whoever you are, wherever you live, and whatever you are doing, there will be challenges, for this is a time of testing. However, you must stay on the true course if you want to obtain happiness here and reach the safe harbor hereafter. There is no slight or insignificant deviation from the right way. One degree off latitude in the beginning becomes many degrees off course in the end.

If a "large ship is benefited . . . by a very small helm in the time of a storm, by being kept workways with the wind and the waves," so are we benefited by keeping our hands on the wheels, resisting ill winds, and steering our course toward the desired port of eternal life (D&C 123:16). Such is done by reaffirming our goal, assessing our current position, and making needed course corrections.

"Be up and doing"

This is the season of renewal and fresh beginnings. It is a time when our tears for the crucified Christ are wiped away by the sure knowledge of the resurrected Savior of all mankind. It is a time when "we talk of Christ, . . . rejoice in

Christ," and remind ourselves that "it is by grace that we are saved, *after all we can do*" (2 Nephi 25:23, 26; italics added).

Therefore, we must "be up and doing" (Alma 60:24) and make an honest appraisal of ourselves as members of family units, members of the Church, and professed Christians. The living Christ invites us to come unto Him and to become more like Him. Is this not the object and essence of the holy Atonement?

Let us worship Him in spirit and in truth and celebrate His triumph over sin

and death by looking to God and following the straight course to eternal happiness with even greater resolve and steadfastness.

For this I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Carlos E. Asay of the Seventy has just spoken to us.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve.

Elder Henry B. Eyring

Create and convey a legacy of testimony

Hearts were touched by the proclamation on the family read by President Hinckley last fall (see *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102) because we want for our families what God wants for them: that they will live in love and righteousness. But in our thoughtful moments we know that we will need help. We will need to invite the powers of heaven to guide our families in days when we are not there and to face spiritual dangers we may not foresee.

Our families can be given a gift to know what God would have them do and to learn it in a way that will encourage them to do it. God has provided such a guide. It is the Holy Ghost. We cannot give that to our family members as a companion, but they can earn it. The Holy Ghost can be their constant companion only after they have been faithful and after they have received the ordinances of baptism and the laying on of hands by those with proper authority. But even before baptism, a child or an adult can have the Holy Ghost testify to their hearts of sacred truth. They must

act on that testimony to retain it, but it will guide them toward goodness, and it can lead them to accept and keep the covenants which will in time bring them the companionship of the Holy Ghost. We would, if we could, leave our families a legacy of testimony that it might reach through the generations.

What we can do to create and transmit that legacy comes from an understanding of how testimony is instilled in our hearts. Since it is the Holy Ghost who testifies of sacred truth, we can do at least three things to make that experience more likely for our families. First, we can teach some sacred truth. Then we can testify that we know what we have taught is true. And then we must act so that those who hear our testimony see that our actions conform with what we said was true. The Holy Ghost will then confirm to them the truth of what we said and that we knew it to be true.

Testimony of John Bennion

That is how a legacy of testimony is created, preserved, and transmitted in a family. It isn't easy, but ordinary people