

want spontaneously to be loved. And, if we are to have friends, we want them to be genuine and sincere, not “assigned.”

Be a friend

Brothers and sisters, my message today is very simple: if we truly want to be tools in the hands of our Heavenly Father in bringing to pass His eternal purposes, we need only to be a friend. Consider the power of each one of us, 10 million strong, of our own free will and choice reaching out to those not yet of our faith in unconditional friendship. We would no longer be accused of offering warm bread and a cold shoulder. Imagine the consequences for good if each active family in the Church offered consistent concern and genuine friendship to a less-active family or a new-member family. The power is in each one of us to be a friend. Old and young, rich and poor, educated and humble, in every language and country, we all have the capacity to be a friend.

Our Savior, shortly before His Crucifixion, said to His disciples: “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends.”⁶ Having been so richly blessed by Christ’s friendship, I pray that we will now be to others what He is to us: a true friend. At no time will we be more Christ-like than when we are a friend. I testify of the inestimable value of friends in my own

life and express my gratitude to all of them this morning. I know that when we offer ourselves in friendship, we make a most significant contribution to God’s work and to the happiness and progress of His children. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 316.
2. 1 Corinthians 13:4–5, 8.
3. John Gottman, as cited in Karen S. Peterson, “Friendship Makes Marriages a Success,” *USA Today*, 1 Apr. 1999, p. 1D.
4. Quoted in Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 5 vols. (1992), 3:1345.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 88:133.
6. John 15:13–14.

President Hinckley

Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Presidency of the Seventy has just spoken to us.

The choir and congregation will now sing “Jesus, Once of Humble Birth.” Following the singing, Sister Sheri L. Dew, second counselor in the Relief Society general presidency, will address us. She will be followed by Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

The choir and congregation sang “Jesus, Once of Humble Birth.”

Sister Sheri L. Dew

Christ offers salvation to all

In His last discourse to His disciples prior to Gethsemane and Calvary, the Savior declared that He was “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). On this beautiful Easter morning, I testify with the prophet Alma that “there is no other

way . . . whereby man can be saved, only in and through Christ” (Alma 38:9).

The Savior’s Atonement is stunningly inclusive! “For as in Adam *all* die, even so in Christ shall *all* be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22; italics added). Come one, come all, the Lord has invited. The gospel of Jesus Christ is for every man and

woman, boy and girl. He doesn't change the rules for the rich or the poor, the married or unmarried, the Portuguese or the Chinese. The gospel is for *every one* of us, and the spiritual requirements and rewards are universal. In matters pertaining to salvation, "*all are alike unto God*" (2 Nephi 26:33; italics added). The Lord's motives stand in stark contrast to those of Lucifer, who is obsessed with attempting to make us feel less than who we are as sons and daughters of God. He despises a consecrated people and delights at obscuring our vision and enticing us away from the path that leads back to our heavenly home.

Example of losing the way

As a young BYU student I learned a little something about staying on course when heading home. One Christmas Eve my brother and I left to drive home to Kansas. But early in our journey we learned that a huge snowstorm was heading our way, so we pulled out a map, identified a detour that would skirt the edge of the storm, and headed into parts unknown. Our creative navigating proved dangerous. Our new route was unfamiliar, and we still ran right into the blizzard. To make matters worse, late that night as we were creeping along in blinding snow on an obscure highway, our old Ford quit. We were stranded. And we had absolutely no idea where we were.

Eventually we caught a ride to the nearest town, where we found that we were still hours from home and marooned in Last Chance, Colorado. At that point there was only one thing to do. We called home for help. In the middle of the night our father left to come and rescue us. By the next afternoon we were all safely home.

I'll never forget Christmas Eve in Last Chance, where we were immobilized by a problem largely of our own making and one we were unequipped to solve. That day our father did for us what we could not do for ourselves. Now, each one of us is

on the path towards our eternal home. And for various reasons we all need rescue—rescue from loneliness and heartache, from despair and disillusionment, from the consequences of innocent mistakes and blatant sin.

The Savior is the only chance

Where do we turn for help? "In the gift of his Son hath God prepared a more excellent way" (Ether 12:11). The Savior isn't our last chance; He is our only chance. Our only chance to overcome self-doubt and catch a vision of who we may become. Our only chance to repent and have our sins washed clean. Our only chance to purify our hearts, subdue our weaknesses, and avoid the adversary. Our only chance to obtain redemption and exaltation. Our only chance to find peace and happiness in this life and eternal life in the world to come.

Left to his own devices, the natural man inevitably succumbs to Satan (see Mosiah 3:19), who abandons his prey once he lures them from the straight and narrow path. But the Savior will guide those who follow Him *all* the way home. Lehi's family endured an intense wilderness experience designed to teach, test, and sanctify them. Likewise, the path from our former home to eternal life runs right through this earthly wilderness, where we may expect similar challenges and difficulties. But in our journey we are not alone, for the Lord's promise to Nephi is the same to us: "I will prepare the way before you, [and] inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments ye shall be led towards the promised land. . . . After ye have arrived . . . ye shall know that . . . the Lord, did deliver you" (1 Nephi 17:13-14).

The Lord knows the way, is the way

The Lord knows the way because He *is* the way and is our only chance for successfully negotiating mortality. His Atonement makes available all of the

power, peace, light, and strength that we need to deal with life's challenges—those ranging from our own mistakes and sins to trials over which we have no control but we still feel pain.

The Lord has promised to heal our broken hearts and “to set at liberty them that are bruised” (Luke 4:18); to give power to the faint, to heal the wounded soul, and to turn our weakness into strength (see Isaiah 40:29; Jacob 2:8; Ether 12:27); to take upon Him our pains and sicknesses, to blot out our transgressions if we repent, and loose the bands of death (see Alma 7:11–13). He promised that if we will build our lives upon His rock, the devil will have no power over us (see Helaman 5:12). And He has vowed that He will never leave us or forsake us (see Hebrews 13:5). There is simply no mortal equivalent. Not in terms of commitment, power, or love. He is our only chance.

Activate the power of the Atonement

Our responsibility is to learn to draw upon the power of the Atonement. Otherwise we walk through mortality relying solely on our own strength. And to do that is to invite the frustration of failure and to refuse the most resplendent gift in time or eternity. “For what doth it profit a man if a gift is bestowed . . . and he receive not the gift?” (D&C 88:33). My brother and I would have been foolish to not seek or accept our father's help when we were stranded. Likewise, the Lord is our advocate, and He “knoweth the weakness of man and how to succor them who are tempted” (D&C 62:1). In other words, He knows how to succor *all* of us. But we activate the power of the Atonement in our lives. We do this by first believing in Him, by repenting, by obeying His commandments, by partaking of sacred ordinances and keeping covenants, and by seeking after Him in fasting and prayer, in the scriptures, and in the temple.

All of which requires our faith in the Lord. President Gordon B. Hinckley has said that “if there is any one thing you and I need . . . , it is faith.”¹ To have faith in Christ is to believe in Him, follow Him, and rely on Him. And it is to be blessed with the peace of conscience and mind that the Apostle Paul spoke of when he said, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13).

Being happy when life is hard

Not long ago the Relief Society general presidency was asked to meet with two journalists from eastern Europe who were intrigued about service performed by our sisters in their country. We explained that from its earliest days this grand organization of righteous women has sought to not only “relieve the poor but to save souls.”² When they asked if we help women with their “emotional problems,” explaining that many in their country were discouraged, we responded that in Relief Society we study the doctrines of the gospel, and the gospel teaches us how to be happy even when life is hard. One of the reporters was incredulous: “Is it possible?” she asked. “Is it possible to be happy when life is hard?” Her question tugged at me, for I knew that she did not know where to turn for peace.

Is it possible to be happy when life is hard? To feel peace amid uncertainty and hope in the midst of cynicism? Is it possible to change, to shake off old habits and become new again? Is it possible to live with integrity and purity in a world that no longer values the virtues that distinguish the followers of Christ?

Yes. The answer is yes because of Jesus Christ, whose Atonement ensures that we need not bear the burdens of mortality alone. There is nothing this confused world needs more, nothing that inspires a greater sense of well-being, nothing that has greater power to

strengthen families than the gospel of Jesus Christ. President Howard W. Hunter said, "Whatever Jesus lays his hands upon lives. If Jesus lays his hands upon a marriage, it lives. If he is allowed to lay his hands on the family, it lives."³ The Savior will do for *each* of us what He has promised to do—if we will have faith in Him and receive His gift.

Jesus Christ is the only answer

Through the years I, like you, have experienced pressures and disappointments that would have crushed me had I not been able to draw upon a source of wisdom and strength far greater than my own. He has never forgotten or forsaken me, and I have come to know for myself that Jesus is the Christ and that this is His Church. With Ammon I say: "[For] who can glory too much in the Lord? Yea, who can say too much of his great power, and of his mercy . . . ? Behold, . . . I cannot say the smallest part which I feel" (Alma 26:16). I testify that in this, the twilight of the dispensation of the fulness of times, when Lucifer is working

overtime to jeopardize our journey home and to separate us from the Savior's atoning power, the only answer for *any* of us is Jesus Christ.

May we recommit to seek after this Jesus of whom the prophets have testified. May we yoke ourselves to Him, draw liberally upon the matchless power of His Atonement, and rise up as sons and daughters of God and shake off the world. To "those who will have him to be their God" (1 Nephi 17:40), the Lord has extended a magnificent promise: "I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up" (D&C 84:88). Jesus Christ is our only chance. He will show us the way because He *is* the way, to which I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 186.
2. *Relief Society Minutebook*, 9 June 1842, 3.
3. In Conference Report, Oct. 1979, 93; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, 65.

Elder David B. Haight

My dear brethren and sisters, what a beautiful day. What a wonderful day this is, what a wonderful time to be alive, and what a wonderful time to be a member of the Church.

Even though my eyesight isn't as good as it used to be, as I get older I find that my vision improves, that I see the larger picture more clearly as time goes on. I look at Ruby sitting over here, bless her heart; this year we will celebrate our 69th wedding anniversary. And so on this day, my heart is filled with gratitude for the blessings that I have received and for the influence that the Church has had upon me and my life, with Ruby by my side,

and for the sons that we have raised, Bruce and Robert, and our daughter, Karen, and their families. I can also see in my mind's eye at this time, not only here in Utah but in California and in Texas and in North Carolina and in Boston, great-grandchildren in front of the television. And they're probably saying, "That old guy up there is Grandpa. He's kind of looking old, isn't he? But he's our grandpa." And to all of them I express my love and gratitude.

Love and service bring rewards

As I get older and as I look back upon the world and upon the life that I have