

with others. As we come to understand the love of the Father and the Son for us, our spirits will soar, and we will “come to Zion, singing with songs of everlasting joy” (D&C 45:71).

Let us reach out in friendship and love to our neighbors, including those of other faiths, thus helping to build better family-to-family relationships and greater harmony in our neighborhoods. Remember, too often our behavior is a bigger deterrent to others than is our doctrine. In the spirit of love for all men, women, and children, help them to understand and to feel accepted and appreciated.

Be faithful in the gospel

Let us remember that it is our duty to be faithful to the restored truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It takes faith—real faith, total and unreserved—to accept and strive to live prophetic counsel. Lucifer, the adversary of truth, does not want us to feel or exhibit that kind of faith. He encourages disobedience, planting defiance in the hearts of the unwary. If he is successful, they will turn away from the light into the darkness of the world. Our safety, our peace lies in working as hard as we can to live as the Father and Son would have us live,

in fleeing from false prophets and false teachers, and in being anxiously engaged in good causes.

I know that God lives. Jesus is the Christ. The restored gospel is true, and there is great joy in being anxiously engaged in this true and holy work. Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang “Thanks for the Sabbath School.”

President Hinckley

That hymn takes me back to my boyhood.

Elder M. Russell Ballard has spoken to us, followed by the choir singing “Thanks for the Sabbath School.”

The choir and congregation will now join together in singing “Redeemer of Israel.” Following the singing, Elder L. Aldin Porter of the Presidency of the Seventy will speak to us. He will be followed by Sister Patricia P. Pinegar, who was released yesterday afternoon as general president of the Primary.

The choir and congregation sang “Redeemer of Israel.”

Elder L. Aldin Porter

God has a plan for us

Some months ago, following a session of stake conference, a lovely young lady in her late teens spoke with me, expressing concern over some aspects of the proclamation on the family. Her attitude was not one of rejection but of

a sincere desire to understand. I have given her concern a great deal of thought.

The God of creation spoke to Moses in an effort to help him understand the destiny of this world: “And worlds without number have I created; and I also created them for mine own purpose; and

by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten" (Moses 1:33).

Note the Lord's words: "I . . . created them for mine own purpose." The Lord had a purpose in establishing worlds, and in just a few verses He explained what it was: "For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39).

It is clear that the Lord had a plan laid out for the accomplishment of His purposes. In the scriptures we read of the many names of the plan: "the great plan of happiness," "the plan of redemption," "the merciful plan of the great Creator," "the plan of salvation," "the plan of justice," and "the great plan of the Eternal God."

Each name emphasizes one aspect or another of the plan. But in reality there is only one plan, called by many names, through which God means to "bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man."

God has given us a "flight plan"

Think of an airplane leaving the airport with the complete journey mapped out. The pilots and crew know where they are going, and they won't get off course and fail to reach their destination once in 50,000 times, unless weather or mechanical troubles interfere. Now, imagine another airplane with a captain and crew but no flight plan. The engines are started, and the plane moves down the runway. Yet as it begins to climb, the crew doesn't know whether to turn east or to turn west. If you are on that airplane, you will have almost no chance of arriving at your destination. It is clear to each of us that an airplane crew needs a flight plan.

So it is with our lives. One cannot make wise long-range decisions unless one understands that there is purpose here and recognizes that he must understand at least some aspects of the merciful plan of the great Creator.

Commandments and the Atonement

The Lord has given us instructions and commandments to help us fulfill the destiny which He envisions for us. Commandments are best understood after one knows something of the plan. Alma taught this principle when he said:

"God gave unto them commandments, *after having made known unto them the plan of redemption*, that they should not do evil, the penalty thereof being a second death, which was an everlasting death as to things pertaining unto righteousness; for on such the plan of redemption could have no power, for the works of justice could not be destroyed, according to the supreme goodness of God" (Alma 12:32; italics added).

A very important part of the plan is the right of personal choice. The Lord calls it moral agency. We may choose as we desire, but we may not avoid the consequences of our choices. Think on that. We are permitted to make our choices in life, but we ought not then call the plan unfair because we must accept the results of our choices.

The center of the plan is the Lord Jesus Christ. Reject or ignore Him, and the great plan of happiness cannot function in your behalf. His life was dedicated in His premortal existence, through mortality, and even on into the eternal worlds to establishing the Father's plan to our blessing and benefit. The cost to the Master was monumental. Think of the pain of Gethsemane and of His suffering on Calvary. This should give us some concept of the enormous importance of the plan of redemption.

Pride, pursuing the vain things of the world, unchastity, misunderstanding gender roles, greed, and a disregard for the sacredness of human life are just a few of the obstacles in mortality. They can hinder us or prevent us from reaching our destination. The plan allows for repentance, but it does not allow for acceptance of self-destructive behavior.

“For I the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance;

“Nevertheless, he that repents and does the commandments of the Lord shall be forgiven” (D&C 1:31–32).

God’s plan consoles us, brings joy

Understanding the plan can give us great consolation in the severe tests that come to humankind. Further, that understanding will strengthen our faith. One of the most difficult tests is separation from loved ones through death. The plan is a great comfort if we understand the following words of scripture:

“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” (2 Nephi 9:6).

We are literally sons and daughters of God. That reality should permeate every fiber of our beings. Knowing this one truth will greatly influence the decisions of life that can bring us either great joy or bitter regret.

Secular philosophies lack eternal depth

Many who design the philosophies of men know little or nothing of the purposes of God. Their secular concepts are often woefully inadequate for eternal purposes. If, for instance, one believes that man’s existence on earth is an accident of nature, one’s judgment will be flawed. These modern-day philosophers do not know of the premortal life of mankind, nor are they aware of the eternal destiny of man. How could they possibly build principles that will endure the tests of centuries?

President Gordon B. Hinckley announced the proclamation on the family, saying: “With so much of sophistry that

is passed off as truth, with so much of deception concerning standards and values, with so much of allurements and enticement to take on the slow stain of the world, we have felt to warn and forewarn. In furtherance of this we of the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles now issue a proclamation to the Church and to the world as a declaration and reaffirmation of standards, doctrines, and practices relative to the family which the prophets, seers, and revelators of this church have repeatedly stated throughout its history” (“Stand Strong against the Wiles of the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 100).

Choose to follow the prophets

Some complain that when the prophets speak with clarity and firmness, they are taking our agency away. We are still free to choose. But we must accept the consequences of those decisions. The prophets do not take away our agency. They simply warn us of what the consequences of our choices will be. How foolish it is to fault the prophets for their warnings.

Develop faith in the prophets and their admonitions. Seek the confirmation of the Spirit that they are inspired. Then when they speak and you respond positively to their counsel, you will find comfort, peace, and even joy.

The proclamation on the family

Alma, an ancient prophet, felt very strong feelings of concern for his fellowmen when he said, “Yea, I would declare unto every soul, as with the voice of thunder, repentance and the plan of redemption, that they should repent and come unto our God, that there might not be more sorrow upon all the face of the earth” (Alma 29:2).

When we understand the great plan of the Eternal God, the proclamation on the family brings peace and certainty.

The very work bears witness of itself, for the Spirit of God attends it.

The message of the proclamation will comfort parents who may be questioning their roles in the home. It will bring security to children as they are raised by parents who love them and un-

derstand their divine destiny. And it will bring lasting happiness to the young woman who spoke to me as she understands and fulfills the role designed for her by an all-wise and loving Father in Heaven. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Sister Patricia P. Pinegar

Trusting in the Lord after a son's death

"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" (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Brothers and sisters, I love the Lord and trust in Him with all of my heart. I know He lives and loves each of us. I know our Father in Heaven has a perfect plan for us. As we follow this plan and the example of our Savior, we can find peace in this troubled world, our hearts can be filled with hope, and we will receive the direction we need.

While we were serving a mission in England, our 17-year-old son, Cory, was killed in a car accident. We were able to come home to Utah for his funeral, and then we immediately returned to England to finish our mission. It was a very tender time for our entire family.

One day, shortly after returning to England, I was walking down the street and an acquaintance who had heard of the death of our son said to me: "Well, what do you think of your God now? You are serving a full-time mission for Him, and He has taken your son." I was both shocked and hurt. I felt so sorry for this person who did not understand Heavenly Father's plan.

The difficult experience of my son's death helped me identify and rejoice in the blessings of peace, hope, and direction—blessings that all who truly accept and live the gospel of Jesus Christ may enjoy. I can bear witness to the words of Elder Richard G. Scott: "Please learn that as you wrestle with a challenge and feel sadness because of it, you can simultaneously have peace and rejoicing" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 20; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 17).

What are some specific things we can do to have these blessings of peace, hope, and direction in our lives? May I share with you three things that have helped me.

Trust in God's plan

First, we must have complete trust in our Father's plan of happiness and our Savior's part in that plan. Trusting in His plan gave me peace during the time following our son's death. I knew where our son was, and I knew Heavenly Father loved him. I had a perfect hope that because of the Savior's Atonement Cory lived and we would be together again as an eternal family. I also had direction. I knew what I needed to do and what our family needed to do to be together forever.