

Oh, how we pray that every young woman will grow up to be all the wonderful things she is meant to be. We pray that her mother and father will show her the right way. May daughters of God honor the priesthood and sustain worthy priesthood holders. May they understand their own great capacity for strength in the timeless virtues that some would scoff at in a modern, liberated world for women.

Understand and nourish potential

May mothers and fathers understand the great potential for good their daughters inherited from their heavenly home. We must nourish their gentleness, their nurturing nature, their innate spirituality and sensitivity, and their bright minds. Celebrate the fact that girls are different from boys. Be thankful for the position they have in God's grand plan. And always remember what President Hinckley said: "Only after the earth had been formed, after the day had been separated from the night, after the waters had been divided from the land, after vegetation and animal life had been cre-

ated, and after man had been placed on the earth, was woman created; and only then was the work pronounced complete and good."⁵

Fathers, husbands, young men, may you catch a vision of all that women are and can be. Please be worthy of God's holy priesthood, which you bear, and honor that priesthood, for it blesses all of us.

Sisters, regardless of your age, please understand all that you are and must be, all that you were prepared to be in royal courts on high by God Himself. May we use with gratitude the priceless gifts we have been given for the lifting of mankind to higher thinking and nobler aspirations. I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
2. "Womanhood: The Highest Place of Honor," *Ensign*, May 2000, 96.
3. See Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (1966), 35.
4. In Conference Report, Apr. 1978, 14; or *Ensign*, May 1978, 10–11.
5. "Our Responsibility to Our Young Women," *Ensign*, Sept. 1988, 11.

Elder Russell M. Nelson

Guidance for our mortal journey

Recently Sister Nelson and I were in Denmark during the commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the Church in Scandinavia. Between meetings, we took a few hours to search for villages where two of my father's grandparents were born. They were among the early converts to the Church in Denmark. Father's paternal grandmother's family lived in the western part of the country.¹ His paternal grandfather's family lived in northern Denmark.² Thanks to a good driver and a superb map, we found each town on our list and obtained treasured information. During the entire journey, my

hands were riveted to that valuable map so essential to achieve our goals.

In contrast, many people travel through life without good guidance, lacking knowledge of a desired destination or how to get there. But if rapt attention is paid to a road map for a day's journey, isn't it also wise to pay attention to authoritative guidance on our journey through life? To this end I would like to speak—on *why* we need guidance, *where* we obtain it, and *how* we can achieve it.

Why we need guidance

The question *why* focuses on the purpose of life. The ultimate objective in our

mortal journey has been revealed by our Creator, who said, "If you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God."³

His gift of eternal life is subject to conditions established by Him.⁴ Those conditions constitute a plan or, to use my analogy, a spiritual road map. And when trouble comes, guidance is needed most. In our journey in Denmark, we met an unexpected detour that led us astray. In order to get back on course, we stopped the car. We studied the map with great care. Then we made the necessary course correction.

What if you are lost and have no map? Suppose you are alone. You do not know where you are. What can you do? You call for help! You call home! Call the Church! Pray! When connected with your help line, you learn that you need to make a climb here or a turn there to get back on course. Or you may have to go back to the beginning in order to be certain that you can get where you want to go.

Where we obtain guidance

That brings us to the question of *where* do we obtain the guidance we need. We turn to Him who knows us best—our Creator. He allowed us to come to earth with freedom to choose our own course. In His great love, He did not leave us alone. He provided a guide—a spiritual road map—to help us achieve success in our journey. We call that guide the standard works, so named because they—the Holy Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price—constitute the *standard* by which we should live. They serve as a standard of reference, as are standards of time, weights, and measures that are kept in national bureaus of standards.

To reach our objective of eternal life, we need to follow teachings in the standard works and other revelations received

from prophets of God.⁵ Our loving Lord foresaw our need for guidance: "For strait is the gate," He said, "and narrow the way that leadeth unto the exaltation and continuation of the lives, and few there be that find it."⁶

Few find the way, because they ignore the divine road map provided by the Lord. An even more serious mistake is to ignore the Maker of the map. God declared in the first of His Ten Commandments, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."⁷ Yet carnal man tends to let his loyalty drift toward idols.

For example, we marvel at computers and the Internet, which enable transmission of data with remarkable speed. We are truly grateful for these electronic servants. But if we let them take over our time, pervert our potential, or poison our minds with pornography, they cease being servants and become instead false gods.

The Master warned of those who "seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god, whose image is in the likeness of the world, and whose substance is that of an idol."⁸

False gods can only lead to dead ends. If our journey through life is to be successful, we need to follow divine direction. The Lord said, "Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not."⁹ And the Psalmist wrote, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."¹⁰

Following such counsel demands not only conviction but conversion and often repentance. That would please the Lord, who said, "Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn . . . from all your abominations."¹¹

In your journey through life, you meet many obstacles and make some mistakes. Scriptural guidance helps you to recognize error and make the necessary correction. You stop going in the wrong

direction. You carefully study the scriptural road map. Then you proceed with repentance and restitution required to get on the "strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life."¹²

Brothers and sisters, our busy lives force us to focus on things we *do* from day to day. But the development of character comes only as we focus on who we really *are*. To establish and accomplish those greater goals, we do need heavenly help.

How we can achieve scriptural guidance

Once we understand *why* we need guidance and *where* we obtain it, we then ask, *how* can we achieve it? How can we truly live, not "by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God?"¹³

Make the scriptures part of our nature

We begin with a determination to "liken all scriptures unto us . . . for our profit and learning."¹⁴ If we "press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, . . . [we] shall have eternal life."¹⁵

To feast means more than to taste. To feast means to savor. We savor the scriptures by studying them in a spirit of delightful discovery and faithful obedience.¹⁶ When we feast upon the words of Christ, they are embedded "in fleshy tables of the heart."¹⁷ They become an integral part of our nature.

Many years ago a medical colleague chastised me for failing to separate my professional knowledge from my religious convictions. That startled me because I did not feel that truth should be fractionalized. Truth is indivisible.

Danger lurks when we divide ourselves with expressions such as "my private life," "my professional life," or even "my best behavior." Living life in separate compartments can lead to internal conflict and exhausting tension. To es-

cape that tension, many people unwisely resort to addicting substances, pleasure seeking, or self-indulgence, which in turn produces more tension, thus creating a vicious cycle.

Inner peace comes only as we maintain the integrity of truth in all aspects of our lives. When we covenant to follow the Lord and obey His commandments, we accept His standards in *every* thought, action, and deed.

Cultivate the gift of the Holy Ghost

Living the Lord's standards requires that we cultivate the gift of the Holy Ghost. That gift helps us understand doctrine and apply it personally. Because truth that is given by revelation can be understood only by revelation,¹⁸ our studies need to be prayerful. Scriptures attest to the efficacy of prayer in daily life. One is in Proverbs: "In all thy ways acknowledge [God], and he shall direct thy paths."¹⁹ Another comes from the Book of Mormon: "Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good."²⁰

As you ponder and pray about doctrinal principles, the Holy Ghost will speak to your mind and your heart.²¹ From events portrayed in the scriptures, new insights will come and principles relevant to your situation will distill upon your heart.

You cultivate such revelatory experiences by living according to the light already given you and by searching the scriptures with pure motives—with real intent to "come unto Christ."²² As you do so, your confidence will "wax strong in the presence of God," and the Holy Ghost will be your constant companion.²³

Ask pertinent questions

Achieving scriptural guidance is aided by posing pertinent questions.²⁴ You might ask, "What principle can be learned from these teachings of the Lord?" For

example, scriptures teach that the Creation was accomplished in six periods of time.²⁵ Principles learned from that study show that any great attainment requires proper planning, timing, patience, labor, and no shortcuts.

Choose a style of study

Next, I suggest that you shape the style of your study to fit you.²⁶ One way is to read a book of scripture from the first page to the last. This method gives good overall perspective. But other approaches also have merit. Attention to a particular topic or a specific theme, supplemented by use of cross-referencing footnotes and study guides, can help to switch on the light of doctrinal understanding.

Guidance can come when grappling with a serious challenge in life. Years ago, in the days of my early scientific research in a field that was then new to medical practice, a scriptural standard of truth gave me the courage needed to persevere. I leaned heavily upon these verses in the Doctrine and Covenants:

“All kingdoms have a law given;

“And there are many kingdoms; for there is no space in the which there is no kingdom; and there is no kingdom in which there is no space. . . .

“And unto every kingdom is given a law; and unto every law there are certain bounds also and conditions.”²⁷

We learned laws that pertained to the “kingdom” of our concern and mastered control that had previously been relegated by ignorance to chance alone.

Motivation for scriptural guidance comes when important choices must be made—even between options that are equally right. The Brethren are often faced with these kinds of decisions. On such an occasion we turn to the scriptures. We may read all of the standard works afresh, looking for insights relative to a specific issue.

Establish a time for study

Time for scripture study requires a schedule that will be honored. Otherwise, blessings that matter most will be at the mercy of things that matter least. Time for *family* scripture study may be difficult to establish. Years ago when our children were at home, they attended different grades in several schools. Their daddy had to be at the hospital no later than 7:00 in the morning. In family council we determined that our best time for scripture study was 6:00 A.M. At that hour our little ones were very sleepy but supportive. Occasionally we had to awaken one when a turn came to read. I would be less than honest with you if I conveyed the impression that our family scripture time was a howling success. Occasionally it was more howling than successful. But we did not give up.

Now, a generation later, our children are all married with families of their own. Sister Nelson and I have watched them enjoy family scripture study in their own homes. Their efforts are much more successful than were ours. We shudder to think what might have happened if we had quit trying.²⁸

We all *need* guidance through life. We *obtain* it best from the standard works and teachings of the prophets of God. With diligent effort, we can *achieve* that guidance and thus qualify for all of the blessings that God has in store for His faithful children. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Gørding, Vejrup, and Vester Nebel, in Ribe County.
2. Mølholm, Støre Brøndum, in Ålborg County.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 130:21.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 1:38.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 132:22.
7. Exodus 20:3.

8. Doctrine and Covenants 1:16.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 6:36.
10. Psalm 119:105.
11. Ezekiel 14:6.
12. 2 Nephi 31:18; see also Matthew 7:14; Jacob 6:11; 3 Nephi 14:14; 27:33; Doctrine and Covenants 132:22.
13. Matthew 4:4.
14. 1 Nephi 19:23.
15. 2 Nephi 31:20.
16. Scriptures give encouragement to live in accord with the will of our Maker, who said, "If thou turn away . . . from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, . . . and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, . . . then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord" (Isaiah 58:13-14). Self-esteem is also earned by obedience to God's commandments regarding chastity (see Exodus 20:14; Leviticus 18:22; Matthew 5:28; 1 Corinthians 6:9; 3 Nephi 12:28; Doctrine and Covenants 42:24; 59:6).
17. 2 Corinthians 3:3.
18. See 1 Corinthians 2:11-14.
19. Proverbs 3:6.
20. Alma 37:37.
21. See Doctrine and Covenants 8:2.
22. Jacob 1:7; Omni 1:26; Moroni 10:30, 32.
23. Doctrine and Covenants 121:45; see also verse 46.
24. As any good thing can be misused, a word of warning may be appropriate. The scriptures don't have the answers to every question. Many important truths have yet to be revealed. Preoccupation with the so-called "mysteries" should be avoided. Beware also of private interpretation. Look to the living prophets and official policies for interpretation. Don't judge others whose circumstances are not yours to judge. We are reassured, however, that they who "diligently [seek] shall find; and the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto them, by the power of the Holy Ghost" (1 Nephi 10:19). Keep in mind too that many revelations have

been given in response to prophetic inquiry.

- It is interesting to note that the first and last books of the Old Testament pose important questions: "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4:9) and "Will a man rob God?" (Malachi 3:8).
25. See Exodus 20:11; 31:17; Mosiah 13:19; Doctrine and Covenants 77:12; Abraham 4:31.
 26. In your personal scripture study, you may wish to correlate your reading with a Church-outlined course of study, such as the Gospel Doctrine curriculum. Some like to prepare memorization cards that they can use while waiting for appointments or meetings.
 27. Doctrine and Covenants 88:36-38.
 28. Personal and family scripture study can employ books, recordings, or other material. Those who will establish a time for scripture study and endure in that endeavor will maintain a positive spirit throughout their days.

The choir sang "Oh, What Songs of the Heart."

President Hinckley

Sister Margaret D. Nadauld, Young Women general president, has just spoken to us and I think has reminded all of us of the tremendous strength we have in the great women of this Church. She was followed by Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The choir then sang "Oh, What Songs of the Heart."

Now, brothers and sisters, there are very many of us here this morning, more than 20,000 in this great hall. Please, when you leave, be careful. Obey traffic rules. Be cautious. Be courteous in your driving. We don't wish any sad event to mar the spirit of this beautiful gathering.

We express our appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they have provided.