

It Works Wonderfully!

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I pray that we will focus on “the simplicity that is in Christ” and allow His grace to lift and carry us.

My beloved brothers and sisters, my dear friends, it is a joy to be with you today. We are saddened by the sight of three empty places here on the stand. We miss President Packer, Elder Perry, and Elder Scott. We love them, and we pray for the well-being of their families.

During this conference weekend, we will be privileged to sustain three who have been called by the Lord to take their place among the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Our prayers on their behalf will strengthen them as they bear the sacred mantle of apostleship.

Is the Gospel Working for You?

Not long ago I saw a quote that made me stop and think. It went like this: “Tell a man there are trillions of stars in the universe, and he’ll believe you. Tell him there’s wet paint on the wall, and he’ll touch it just to be sure.”

Aren’t we all a little bit like this? After a recent medical procedure, my very capable doctors explained what I needed to do to heal properly. But first I had to relearn something about myself I should have known for a long time: as a patient, I’m not very patient.

Consequently I decided to expedite the healing process by undertaking my own Internet search. I suppose I expected to discover truth of which my doctors were unaware or had tried to keep from me.

It took me a little while before I realized the irony of what I was doing. Of course, researching things for ourselves is not a bad idea. But I was disregarding truth I could rely on and instead found myself being drawn to the often-outlandish claims of Internet lore.

Sometimes, the truth may just seem too straightforward, too plain, and too simple for us to fully appreciate its great value. So we set aside what we have experienced and know to be true in pursuit of more mysterious or complicated information. Hopefully we will learn that

when we chase after shadows, we are pursuing matters that have little substance and value.

When it comes to spiritual truth, how can we know that we are on the right path?

One way is by asking the right questions—the kind that help us ponder our progress and evaluate how things are working for us. Questions like:

“Does my life have meaning?”

“Do I believe in God?”

“Do I believe that God knows and loves me?”

“Do I believe that God hears and answers my prayers?”

“Am I truly happy?”

“Are my efforts leading me to the highest spiritual goals and values in life?”

Profound questions regarding the purpose of life have led many individuals and families throughout the world to search for truth. Often that search has led them to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and to the restored gospel.

I wonder if we as Church members might also benefit from asking ourselves from time to time: “Is my experience in the Church working for me? Is it bringing me closer to Christ? Is it blessing me and my family with peace and joy as promised in the gospel?”

Alma posed similar questions to Church members in Zarahemla when he asked: “Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts? ... [And] can [you] feel [it] now?”¹ Such contemplation may help us to refocus or realign our daily efforts with the divine plan of salvation.

Many members will answer with great warmth that their experience as a member of the Church is working exceptionally well for them. They will testify that whether during times of poverty or prosperity, whether things are pleasant or painful, they find great meaning, peace, and joy because of their commitment to the Lord and their dedicated service in the Church. Every day I meet Church members who are filled with a radiant joy and who demonstrate in word and deed that their lives are immeasurably enriched by the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

But I also recognize that there are some who have a less-than-fulfilling experience—who feel that their membership in the Church sometimes isn’t quite what they had hoped for.

This saddens me because I know firsthand how the gospel can invigorate and renew one’s spirit—how it can fill our hearts with hope and our minds with light. I know for myself how the fruits of the gospel of Jesus Christ can transform lives from the ordinary and dreary to the extraordinary and sublime.

But why does it seem to work better for some than for others? What is the difference between

those whose experience in the Church fills their souls with songs of redeeming love² and those who feel that something is lacking?

As I have pondered these questions, a flood of thoughts came to mind. Today, I'd like to share two.

Simplify

First: are we making our discipleship too complicated?

This beautiful gospel is so simple a child can grasp it, yet so profound and complex that it will take a lifetime—even an eternity—of study and discovery to fully understand it.

But sometimes we take the beautiful lily of God's truth and gild it with layer upon layer of man-made good ideas, programs, and expectations. Each one, by itself, might be helpful and appropriate for a certain time and circumstance, but when they are laid on top of each other, they can create a mountain of sediment that becomes so thick and heavy that we risk losing sight of that precious flower we once loved so dearly.

Therefore, as leaders we must strictly protect the Church and the gospel in its purity and plainness and avoid putting unnecessary burdens on our members.

And all of us, as members of the Church, *we* need to make a conscientious effort to devote our energy and time to the things that truly matter, while uplifting our fellowmen and building the kingdom of God.

One sister, a Relief Society instructor, was known for preparing flawless lessons. One time she decided to create a beautiful quilt that would serve as the perfect backdrop to the theme of her lesson. But life intervened—there were children to pick up from school, a neighbor who needed help moving, a husband who had a fever, and a friend who felt lonely. The day of the lesson approached, and the quilt was not completed. Finally, the night before her lesson, she did not sleep much as she worked all night on the quilt.

The next day she was exhausted and barely able to organize her thoughts, but she bravely stood and delivered her lesson.

And the quilt was stunning—the stitches were perfect, the colors vibrant, and the design intricate. And at the center of it all was a single word that triumphantly echoed the theme of her lesson: "Simplify."

Brothers and sisters, living the gospel doesn't need to be complicated.

It is really straightforward. It could be described like this:

- • Hearing the word of God with earnest intent leads us to believe in God and to trust His promises.³
- • The more we trust God, the more our hearts are filled with love for Him and for each other.

- • Because of our love for God, we desire to follow Him and bring our actions in alignment with His word.
- • Because we love God, we want to serve Him; we want to bless the lives of others and help the poor and the needy.
- • The more we walk in this path of discipleship, the more we desire to learn the word of God.

And so it goes, each step leading to the next and filling us with ever-increasing faith, hope, and charity.

It is beautifully simple, and it works beautifully.

Brothers and sisters, if you ever think that the gospel isn't working so well for you, I invite you to step back, look at your life from a higher plane, and simplify your approach to discipleship. Focus on the basic doctrines, principles, and applications of the gospel. I promise that God will guide and bless you on your path to a fulfilling life, and the gospel will definitely work better for you.

Start Where You Are

My second suggestion is: start where you are.

Sometimes we feel discouraged because we are not “more” of something—more spiritual, respected, intelligent, healthy, rich, friendly, or capable. Naturally, there is nothing wrong with wanting to improve. God created us to grow and progress. But remember, our weaknesses can help us to be humble and turn us to Christ, who will “make weak things become strong.”⁴ Satan, on the other hand, uses our weaknesses to the point that we are discouraged from even trying.

I learned in my life that we don't need to be “more” of anything to start to become the person God intended us to become.

God will take you as you are at this very moment and begin to work with you. All you need is a willing heart, a desire to believe, and trust in the Lord.

Gideon saw himself as a poor farmer, the least of his father's house. But God saw him as a mighty man of valor.⁵

When Samuel chose Saul to be king, Saul tried to talk him out of it. Saul was from one of the smallest tribes of the house of Israel. How could he be king?⁶ But God saw him as “a choice young man.”⁷

Even the great prophet Moses felt so overwhelmed and discouraged at one point that he wanted to give up and die.⁸ But God did not give up on Moses.

My dear brothers and sisters, if we look at ourselves only through our mortal eyes, we may not see ourselves as good enough. But our Heavenly Father sees us as who we truly are and

who we can become. He sees us as His sons and daughters, as beings of eternal light with everlasting potential and with a divine destiny.⁹

The Savior's sacrifice opened the door of salvation for all to return to God. His "grace is sufficient for all [who] humble themselves before [God]."¹⁰ His grace is the enabling power that allows access into God's kingdoms of salvation. Because of His grace, we will all be resurrected and saved in a kingdom of glory.

Even the lowest kingdom of glory, the telestial kingdom, "surpasses all understanding,"¹¹ and numberless people will inherit this salvation.¹²

But the Savior's grace can do much more for us. As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we aspire to something unimaginably greater. It is exaltation in the celestial kingdom. It is life eternal in the presence of our Father in Heaven. It is the greatest gift of God.¹³ In the celestial kingdom, we receive "of his fulness, and of his glory."¹⁴ Indeed, all that the Father hath shall be given unto us.¹⁵

Exaltation is our goal; discipleship is our journey.

As you exercise a little faith and begin your walk as a peaceable follower of our Lord Jesus Christ, your heart will change.¹⁶ Your whole being will be filled with light.¹⁷

God will help you become something greater than you ever thought possible. And you will discover that the gospel of Jesus Christ is indeed working in your life. It works.

It Works!

Brothers and sisters, dear friends, I pray that we will focus on "the simplicity that is in Christ"¹⁸ and allow His grace to lift and carry us during our journey from where we are now to our glorious destiny in our Father's presence.

As we do so and someone asks us, "How is being a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints working for you?" we will be able to say with pride, in all humility, and with great joy, "It works wonderfully! Thank you for asking! Would you like to know more?"

This is my hope, my prayer, my testimony, and my blessing in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. Alma 5:14, 26.

2. See Alma 5:26.

3. See Romans 10:17.

4. Ether 12:27.

5. See Judges 6:12–16.

6. See 1 Samuel 9:21.

7. 1 Samuel 9:2.

8. See Numbers 11:14–15.

9. See 1 John 3:1–3.

10. Ether 12:27.

11. Doctrine and Covenants 76:89.

12. See Doctrine and Covenants 76:109.

13. See Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.

14. Doctrine and Covenants 76:56.

15. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:38.

16. See 1 Samuel 10:9.

17. See Matthew 6:22.

18. 2 Corinthians 11:3.

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