

Whatsoever He Saith unto You, Do It

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When we decide to do “whatsoever [God] saith unto” us, we earnestly commit to align our everyday behavior with God’s will.

The Savior performed His first recorded miracle at a wedding feast in Cana of Galilee. Mary, His mother, and His disciples were there as well. Mary apparently felt some responsibility for the success of the feast. During the celebration, a problem arose—the wedding hosts ran out of wine. Mary was concerned and went to Jesus. They spoke briefly; then Mary turned to the servants and said:

“Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.

“And there were set there six waterpots of stone. ... [These waterpots weren’t used to store drinking water but were used for ceremonial washings under the law of Moses.]

“Jesus saith unto [the servants], Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim.

“And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it.

“[Then] the ruler of the feast ... tasted the water that was made wine” and expressed surprise that the best wine was served so late in the feast.¹

We usually remember this event because transforming water to wine was a demonstration of the power of God—it was a miracle. That is an important message, but there is another important message in John’s account. Mary was “a precious and chosen vessel,”² called by God to give birth to, nurture, and raise the very Son of God. She knew more about Him than anyone else on earth. She knew the truth of His miraculous birth. She knew that He was sinless and that He “spake not as other men, neither could he be taught; for he needed not that any man should teach him.”³ Mary knew of His extraordinary capacity to solve problems, including one as personal as providing wine for a wedding feast. She had unshakable confidence in Him and in His divine power. Her simple, straightforward instruction to the servants had no caveats, no qualifications, no limitations: “Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.”

Mary had been a young woman when the angel Gabriel appeared unto her. At first she had been “troubled” by being called “highly favoured” and “blessed ... among

women ... and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be." Gabriel reassured her that she had nothing to fear—the news he brought was good. She would "conceive in [her] womb ... the Son of the Highest" and "bring forth a son ... [who] shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever."

Mary wondered aloud, "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?"

The angel explained but only briefly, affirming to her that "with God nothing [is] impossible."

Mary humbly responded that she would do what God asked, without demanding to know specifics and undoubtedly in spite of having countless questions about the implications for her life. She committed herself without exactly understanding why He was asking that of her or how things would work out. She accepted God's word unconditionally and in advance,⁴ with little knowledge of what lay ahead. With simple trust in God, Mary said, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word."⁵

When we decide to do "whatever [God] saith unto" us, we earnestly commit to align our everyday behavior with God's will. Such simple acts of faith as studying the scriptures daily, fasting regularly, and praying with real intent deepen our well of spiritual capacity to meet the demands of mortality. Over time, simple habits of belief lead to miraculous results. They transform our faith from a seedling into a dynamic power for good in our lives. Then, when challenges come our way, our rootedness in Christ provides steadfastness for our souls. God shores up our weaknesses, increases our joys, and causes "all things [to] work together for [our] good."⁶

A few years ago, I spoke with a young bishop who was spending hours each week counseling with members of his ward. He made a striking observation. The problems that members of his ward faced, he said, were those faced by Church members everywhere—issues such as how to establish a happy marriage; struggles with balancing work, family, and Church duties; challenges with the Word of Wisdom, with employment, or with pornography; or trouble gaining peace about a Church policy or historical question they didn't understand.

His counsel to ward members very often included getting back to simple practices of faith, such as studying the Book of Mormon—as we were counseled by President Thomas S. Monson to do—paying tithing, and serving in the Church with devotion. Frequently, however, their response to him was one of skepticism: "I don't agree with you, Bishop. We *all* know those are good things to do. We talk about those things *all the time* in the Church. But I'm not sure you're understanding me. What does doing any of *those* things have to do with the issues *I'm* facing?"

It's a fair question. Over time, that young bishop and I have observed that those who are deliberate about doing the "small and simple things"⁷—obeying in seemingly little ways—are blessed with faith and strength that go far beyond the actual acts of

obedience themselves and, in fact, may seem totally unrelated to them. It may seem hard to draw a connection between the basic daily acts of obedience and solutions to the big, complicated problems we face. But they *are* related. In my experience, getting the little daily habits of faith right is the single best way to fortify ourselves against the troubles of life, whatever they may be. Small acts of faith, even when they seem insignificant or entirely disconnected from the specific problems that vex us, bless us in *all* we do.

Consider Naaman, a “captain of the host of ... Syria, ... a mighty man in valour,” and a leper. A servant girl told of a prophet in Israel who could heal Naaman, and so he traveled with an escort of servants, soldiers, and gifts to Israel, eventually arriving at Elisha’s house. Elisha’s servant, not Elisha himself, informed Naaman that the Lord’s command was to “go and wash in [the river] Jordan seven times.” A simple thing. Perhaps this simple prescription struck the mighty warrior as so illogical, simplistic, or beneath his dignity that he found the mere suggestion offensive. At the very least, Elisha’s instruction didn’t make sense to Naaman, “so he turned and went away in a rage.”

But Naaman’s servants gently approached him and observed that he would have done “some great thing” if Elisha had asked it of him. They noted that since he was asked to do only a small task, shouldn’t he do it, even if he didn’t understand why? Naaman reconsidered his reaction and perhaps skeptically, but obediently, “went ... down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan” and was miraculously healed.⁸

Some rewards of obedience do come quickly; others come only after we are tested. In the Pearl of Great Price, we read about Adam’s tireless diligence in keeping the commandment to offer sacrifices, apparently for years. When the angel asked Adam why he was offering sacrifices, he answered, “I know not, save the Lord commanded me.” The angel explained that his sacrifices were “a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father.” But that explanation came only after Adam had demonstrated his commitment to obeying the Lord for “many days” without knowing *why* he was supposed to offer those sacrifices.⁹

God will always bless us for our steadfast obedience to His gospel and loyalty to His Church, but He rarely shows us His timetable for doing so in advance. He doesn’t show us the whole picture from the outset. That is where faith, hope, and trusting in the Lord come in.

God asks us to bear with Him—to trust Him and to follow Him. He pleads with us to “dispute not because ye see not.” He cautions us that we shouldn’t expect easy answers or quick fixes from heaven. Things work out when we stand firm during the “trial of [our] faith,” however hard that test may be to endure or slow the answer may be in coming.¹⁰ I am not speaking of “blind obedience”¹¹ but of thoughtful confidence in the perfect love and the perfect timing of the Lord.

The trial of our faith will *always* involve staying true to simple, daily practices of faith. Then, and only then, does He promise that we will receive the divine response for which we long. Only once we have proven our willingness to do what He asks without demanding to know the whens, the whys, and the hows do we “reap the rewards of [our] faith, and [our] diligence, and patience, and long-suffering.”¹² Real obedience accepts God’s commandments unconditionally and in advance.¹³

Every day, consciously or otherwise, we all choose “whom [we] will serve.”¹⁴ We demonstrate our determination to serve the Lord by faithfully engaging in daily acts of devotion. The Lord promises to direct our paths,¹⁵ but for Him to do that, we have to walk, trusting that He knows the way because He *is* “the way.”¹⁶ We must fill our own waterpots up to the brim. When we trust and follow Him, our lives, like water to wine, are transformed. We become something more and better than we ever otherwise could be. Trust in the Lord, and “whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.” In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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