

And This Is Life Eternal

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God knows you and invites you to know Him.

I speak to you, the rising generation—youth and young adults, single or married—you who are the future leaders of this, the Lord's Church. With all the wickedness, chaos, fear, and confusion in the world today, I speak to you with clarity about the majesty and blessing of coming to know God.

Jesus Christ taught many truths that explain Heavenly Father's plan of happiness and your place in it. I'll focus on two of these to help you understand your *identity* as a child of God and know your *purpose* in life.

First: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."¹

Second: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."²

Please keep these truths in mind—they teach *why*—as I seek to describe *how* you and all of us can come to know God.

Know Him through Prayer

My young friends, we can begin to know God through prayer.

On April 7, 1829, 22-year-old Oliver Cowdery began his labors as scribe for 23-year-old Joseph Smith. They were young—just like you. Oliver asked for a confirmation from God regarding the Restoration and his work in it. In response, he received the following revelation:

"Behold, thou knowest that thou hast inquired of me and I did enlighten thy mind. ...

"Yea, I tell thee, that thou mayest know that there is none else save God that knowest thy thoughts and the intents of thy heart. ...

"... If you desire a further witness, cast your mind upon the night that you cried unto me in your heart. ...

"Did I not speak peace to your mind ... ? What greater witness can you have than from God?"³

When *you* pray with faith, you will feel God's love as His Spirit speaks to *your* soul. No matter how alone or uncertain you may feel at times, you are not alone in this world. God knows *you*, personally. As you pray, you will come to know *Him*.

Know Him through Scripture Study

As you study the scriptures, you not only learn *about* the Savior, but you can actually come to *know* the Savior.

In April 1985, Elder Bruce R. McConkie spoke in general conference—just 13 days before he died. He concluded with this testimony:

"I am one of his witnesses, and in a coming day I shall feel the nail marks in his hands and in his feet and shall wet his feet with my tears.

"But I shall not *know* any better than than I *know* now that he is God's Almighty Son, that he is our Savior and Redeemer, and that salvation comes in and through his atoning blood and in no other way."⁴

Those of us who heard Elder McConkie speak that day have never forgotten how we felt. As he began his talk, he revealed *why* his witness was so powerful. He said:

"In speaking of these wondrous things I shall use my own words, though you may think they are the words of scripture. ...

"True it is they were first proclaimed by others, but *they are now mine*, for the Holy Spirit of God has borne witness to me that they are true, and it is now as though the Lord had revealed them to me in the first instance. I have thereby *heard* his voice and *know* his word."⁵

As you study and ponder the scriptures, you too will hear God's voice, know His words, and come to know Him. God will reveal His eternal truths to you, personally. These doctrines and principles will become part of who you are and will emanate from your very soul.

In addition to individual study, studying the scriptures as a family is important.

In our home we wanted our children to learn to recognize the voice of the Spirit. We believe that happened as we studied the Book of Mormon each day as a family. Our testimonies were strengthened as we talked about sacred truths.

Scripture study becomes the channel for the Spirit to give each of us a customized tutorial. As you study the scriptures each day, alone, and with your family, *you* will learn to recognize the voice of the Spirit and will come to know God.

Know Him by Doing His Will

In addition to our praying and studying the scriptures, we need to do God's will.

The Savior is our perfect example. He said, "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me."⁶

When the resurrected Savior appeared to the Nephites, He said, "Behold, I am the light and the life of the world; and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered *the will* of the Father *in all things* from the beginning."⁷

You and I do the will of the Father by honoring our covenants, keeping the commandments, and serving God and our fellowmen.

My wife, Rhonda, and I have parents who are just regular people—probably a lot like your parents. But one thing I love about our parents is that they dedicated their lives to serving God, and they taught us to do the same.

When Rhonda's parents had been married for just a couple of years, her 23-year-old dad was called to serve a full-time mission. He left behind his young wife and their 2-year-old daughter. Then his wife was called to serve with him during the last seven months of his mission—leaving their daughter in the care of relatives.

A few years later, now with *four* children, they moved to Missoula, Montana, so her dad could attend the university. However, they had been there only a few months when President Spencer W. Kimball and Elder Mark E. Petersen extended a call to my father-in-law to be the first president of the newly created Missoula stake. He was only 34. Thoughts of the university were left behind as he sought to do the *Lord's* will—not his own.

My parents have served in the temple for more than 30 years—Dad as a sealer, Mom as an ordinance worker. They also served five full-time missions together—in Riverside, California; Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia; Nairobi, Kenya; the Nauvoo Illinois Temple; and the Monterrey Mexico Temple. In Mexico they worked hard to learn a new language, which wasn't easy at 80 years of age. But they sought to do the will of the Lord rather than to pursue their own desires in life.

To them, and to all such dedicated Latter-day Saints throughout the world, I echo the words spoken by the Lord to the prophet Nephi, the son of Helaman: "Blessed art thou, ... for those things which thou hast done ... with unwearyingness ... , [for thou] hast not sought thine own life, but hast sought my will, and to keep my commandments."⁸

As *we* seek to do God's will by faithfully serving Him and our fellowmen, we feel His approval and truly come to know Him.

Know Him by Becoming like Him

The Savior tells us that the very best way to know God is to become *like* Him. He taught: "Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am."⁹

Worthiness is essential to becoming like Him. He commanded, "Sanctify yourselves; yea, purify your hearts, and cleanse your hands ... that I may make you clean."¹⁰ Starting on the road to becoming like Him, we repent and receive His forgiveness, and He cleanses our souls.

To help us as we progress toward the Father, the Lord gave us this promise: "Every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and *know* that I am."¹¹

Through our faith in His atoning sacrifice, the Savior cleanses us, heals us, and enables us to *know* Him by helping us become *like* Him. Mormon taught, "Pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, ... that ye may become the sons [and daughters] of God; that when he shall appear we shall be *like* him."¹² As we strive to become like God, He can make of us more than we could ever make of ourselves.

Know Him by Following Mentors

To help us in our striving, God has given us role models and mentors. I want to share my feelings about one of mine, Elder Neal A. Maxwell. He constantly sought to submit his will to the will of the Father in his effort to become like God.

More than 20 years ago, he shared his feelings with me after he had just been diagnosed with cancer. He told me, "I want to be on the team, on this side [of the veil] or that side. I don't want to sit on the sidelines. I want to play in the game."¹³

Over the next few weeks, he was reluctant to ask God to heal him; he just wanted to do God's will. His wife, Colleen, pointed out that Jesus's first cry in the Garden of Gethsemane was "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Only then did the Savior say, "Nevertheless not as I will, but as *thou wilt*."¹⁴ She encouraged Elder Maxwell to follow the Savior's example, to ask for relief and *then* submit his will to God's will, which he did.¹⁵

After suffering through extensive, debilitating treatments for nearly a year, he was totally and completely back "in the game." He served for seven more years.

I had several assignments with him during those subsequent years. I felt his kindness, compassion, and love. I witnessed his increased spiritual refinement through his ongoing suffering and his continued service as he strove to become like the Savior.

The *ultimate* role model and mentor, available to all of us, is our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."¹⁶ "Come and follow me."¹⁷

My young brothers and sisters, knowing God is the quest of a lifetime. "And this *is* life eternal, that [we] might know ... the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom [the Father] hast sent."¹⁸

"Shall we not go on in so great a cause? ... Courage, [my young friends]; and on, on to the victory!"¹⁹

God knows *you* and invites *you* to know *Him*. Pray to the Father, study the scriptures, seek to do God's will, strive to become like the Savior, and follow righteous mentors. As you do, *you* will come to *know* God and Jesus Christ, and you will inherit eternal life. This is my invitation to you as an ordained special witness of Them. They live. They love you. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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