

A Yearning for Home

October 2017 General Conference

By President Dieter F. Uchtdorf
Second Counselor in the First Presidency

Turn your soul toward the light. Begin your own wonderful journey home. As you do so, your life will be better, happier, and more purposeful.

Recently, as we met with President Thomas S. Monson, he expressed, with great solemnity and a countenance of happiness, how much he loves the Lord and that he knows that the Lord loves him. My dear brothers and sisters, I know that President Monson is very grateful for your love, your prayers, and your dedication to the Lord and His great gospel.

Bobbie the Wonder Dog

Nearly a century ago, a family from Oregon was vacationing in Indiana—over 2,000 miles (3,200 km) away—when they lost their beloved dog, Bobbie. The frantic family searched for the dog everywhere but to no avail. Bobbie could not be found.

Heartbroken, they made the trip home, each mile taking them farther away from their cherished pet.

Six months later, the family was stunned to find Bobbie on their doorstep in Oregon. “Mangy, scrawny, feet worn to the bone—[he] appeared to have walked the entire distance ... by himself.”¹ Bobbie’s story captured the imagination of people across the United States, and he became known as Bobbie the Wonder Dog.

Bobbie is not the only animal who has baffled scientists with an amazing sense of direction and instinct for home. Some monarch butterfly populations migrate 3,000 miles (4,800 km) each year to climes better suited for their survival. Leatherback turtles travel across the Pacific Ocean from Indonesia to the coasts of California. Humpback whales swim from the cold waters of the North and South Poles toward the equator and back. Perhaps even more incredibly, the arctic tern flies from the Arctic Circle to Antarctica and back every year, some 60,000 miles (97,000 km).

When scientists study this fascinating behavior, they ask questions such as “How do they know where to go?” and “How does each successive generation learn this behavior?”

When I read of this powerful instinct in animals, I can't help but wonder, "Is it possible that human beings have a similar yearning—an inner guidance system, if you will—that draws them to their *heavenly home*?"

I believe that every man, woman, and child has felt the call of heaven at some point in his or her life. Deep within us is a longing to somehow reach past the veil and embrace Heavenly Parents we once knew and cherished.

Some might suppress this yearning and deaden their souls to its call. But those who do not quench this light within themselves can embark on an incredible journey—a wondrous migration toward heavenly climes.

God Calls to You

The sublime message of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is that God is our Father, that He cares about us, and that there is a way to return to Him.

God calls to you.

God knows your every thought, your sorrows, and your greatest hopes. God knows the many times you have sought Him. The many times you have felt limitless joy. The many times you have wept in loneliness. The many times you have felt helpless, confused, or angry.

Yet, no matter your history—if you have faltered, failed, feel broken, bitter, betrayed, or beaten—know that you are not alone. God still calls to you.

The Savior extends His hand to you. And, as He did to those fishermen who stood long ago on the banks of the Sea of Galilee, with infinite love He speaks to you: "Come, follow me."²

If you will hear Him, He will speak to you this very day.

When you walk the path of discipleship—when you move toward Heavenly Father—there is something within you that will confirm that you have heard the call of the Savior and set your heart toward the light. It will tell you that you are on the right path and that you are returning home.

Since the beginning of time, God's prophets have urged the people of their day to "hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, ... keep his commandments and his statutes ... , [and] turn unto [Him] with all thine heart, and with all thy soul."³

The scriptures teach us a thousand reasons why we should do this.

Today, let me offer two reasons why we should turn to the Lord.

First, your life will be better.

Second, God will use you to make the lives of others better.

Your Life Will Be Better

I testify that when we embark upon or continue the incredible journey that leads to God, our lives will be better.

This does not mean that our lives will be free from sorrow. We all know of faithful followers of Christ who suffer tragedy and injustice—Jesus Christ Himself suffered more than anyone. Just as God makes the “sun to rise on the evil and on the good,” He also allows adversity to test the just and the unjust.⁴ In fact, sometimes it seems that our lives are more difficult *because* we are trying to live our faith.

No, following the Savior will not remove all of your trials. However, it will remove the barriers between you and the help your Heavenly Father wants to give you. God will be with you. He will direct your steps. He will walk beside you and even carry you when your need is greatest.

You will experience the sublime fruit of the Spirit: “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, [and] faith.”⁵

These spiritual fruits are not a product of temporal prosperity, success, or good fortune. They come from following the Savior, and they can be our faithful attendants even in the midst of the darkest storms.

The fires and tumults of mortal life may threaten and frighten, but those who incline their hearts to God will be encircled by His peace. Their joy will not be diminished. They will not be abandoned or forgotten.

“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart,” the scriptures teach, “and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”⁶

Those who heed the inner call and seek God, those who pray, believe, and walk the path the Savior has prepared—even if they stumble along the path at times—receive the consoling assurance that “all things shall work together for [their] good.”⁷

For God “gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.”⁸

“For though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again.”⁹

And the Lord in His goodness asks:

Do you want to experience abiding joy?

Do you yearn to feel within your heart the peace that passes understanding?¹⁰

Then turn your soul toward the light.

Begin your own wonderful journey home.

As you do so, your life will be better, happier, and more purposeful.

God Will Use You

On your journey back to Heavenly Father you will soon realize that this journey isn't just about focusing on your own life. No, this path inevitably leads you to become a blessing in the lives of God's other children—your brothers and sisters. And the interesting thing about the journey is that as you serve God, and as you care for and help your fellowmen, you will see great progress in your own life, in ways you could never imagine.

Perhaps you don't consider yourself all that useful; perhaps you don't consider yourself a blessing in somebody's life. Often, when we look at ourselves, we see only our limitations and deficiencies. We might think we have to be "more" of something for God to use us—more intelligent, more wealthy, more charismatic, more talented, more spiritual. Blessings will come not so much because of your abilities but because of your choices. And the God of the universe will work within and through you, magnifying your humble efforts for His purposes.

His work has always advanced on this important principle: "Out of small things proceedeth that which is great."¹¹

When writing to the Saints in Corinth, the Apostle Paul observed that not many of them would be considered wise by worldly standards. But that didn't matter, because "God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty."¹²

The history of God's work is filled with people who considered themselves inadequate. But they humbly served, relying on the grace of God and His promise: "Their arm shall be my arm, and I will be their shield ... , and they shall fight manfully for me; and ... I [will] preserve them."¹³

This past summer our family had a wonderful opportunity to visit some early Church history sites in the eastern United States. In a special way, we relived the history of that time. People I had read so much about—people like Martin Harris, Oliver Cowdery, and Thomas B. Marsh—became more real to me as we walked where they walked and pondered the sacrifices they made to build the kingdom of God.

They had many great traits that allowed them to make significant contributions to the Restoration of the Church of Jesus Christ. But they were also human, weak, and fallible—just as you and I are. Some found themselves at variance with the Prophet Joseph Smith and fell away from the Church. Later, many of the same people had a change of heart, humbled themselves, and once again sought and found fellowship with the Saints.

We might have a tendency to judge these brethren and other members like them. We might say, "I would never have abandoned the Prophet Joseph."

While that may be true, we don't really know what it was like to live in that time, in those circumstances. No, they were not perfect, but how encouraging it is to know that God was able to use them anyway. He knew their strengths and weaknesses, and He gave them the extraordinary opportunity to contribute a verse or a melody to the glorious anthem of the Restoration.

How encouraging it is to know, though we are imperfect, if our hearts are turned to God, He will be generous and kind and use us for His purposes.

Those who love and serve God and fellowmen and humbly and actively participate in His work will see wondrous things happen in their lives and in the lives of those they love.

Doors that seemed shut will open.

Angels will go before them and prepare the way.

No matter your position in your community or in the Church, God will use you, if you are willing. He will magnify your righteous desires and turn the compassionate actions you sow into a bountiful harvest of goodness.

We Can't Get There on Autopilot

We are, each one of us, "strangers and pilgrims"¹⁴ in this world. In many ways, we are far from home. But that doesn't mean we need to feel lost or alone.

Our beloved Father in Heaven has given us the Light of Christ. And deep within each one of us, a heavenly stirring urges us to turn our eyes and hearts to Him as we make the pilgrimage back to our celestial home.

This requires effort. You cannot get there without striving to learn of Him, understanding His instructions, earnestly applying them, and putting one foot in front of the other.

No, life is not a self-driving car. It is not an airplane on autopilot.

You cannot just float in the waters of life and trust that the current will take you wherever you hope to be one day. Discipleship requires our willingness to swim upstream when needed.

No one else is responsible for your personal journey. The Savior will help you and prepare the way before you, but the commitment to follow Him and keep His commandments must come from you. That is your sole burden, your sole privilege.

This is your great adventure.

Please heed the call of your Savior.

Follow Him.

The Lord has established The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to help you in this commitment to serve God and fellowmen. Its purpose is to encourage, teach, lift, and inspire. This wonderful Church provides opportunities for you to exercise compassion, reach out to others, and renew and keep sacred covenants. It is designed to bless your life and improve your home, community, and nation.

Come, join with us and trust the Lord. Lend your talents to His wonderful work. Reach out, encourage, heal, and support all who desire to feel and heed the yearning for our supernal home. Let us join together in this glorious pilgrimage to heavenly climes.

The gospel is a transcendent message of hope, happiness, and joy. It is the pathway that leads us home.

As we embrace the gospel in faith and deed, each day and every hour, we will draw a little closer to our God. Our lives will be better, and the Lord will use us in remarkable ways to bless those around us and bring about His eternal purposes. Of this I testify and leave you my blessing in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

© 2017 by Intellectual Reserve, Inc. All rights reserved.