

Come, Follow Me—the Lord’s Counterstrategy and Proactive Plan

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The Lord prepares His people against the attacks of the adversary. *Come, Follow Me* is the Lord’s counterstrategy and proactive plan.

We rejoice in meeting together in this great general conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It is a blessing to receive the mind and will of the Lord through the teachings of His prophets and apostles. President Russell M. Nelson is the Lord’s living prophet. How grateful we are for his inspired counsel and direction received today.

I add my witness to those shared previously. I bear testimony of God, our Eternal Father. He lives and loves us and watches over us. His plan of happiness provides the blessing of this mortal life and our eventual return to His presence.

I also bear testimony of Jesus Christ. He is God’s Only Begotten Son. He *saved us* from death, and He redeems us from sin as we exercise faith in Him and repent. His infinite atoning sacrifice in our behalf brings the blessings of immortality and eternal life. Indeed, “God be thanked for the matchless gift of His divine son” (“The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2017, inside front cover).

Latter-day Saints around the world are blessed to worship Jesus Christ in His temples. One of those temples is currently under construction in Winnipeg, Canada. My wife, Anne Marie, and I had the opportunity to visit the construction site in August of this year. The temple is beautifully designed and will certainly be magnificent when completed. However, you can’t have a magnificent temple in Winnipeg, or anywhere else, without a solid and firm foundation.

The freeze-thaw cycle and expansive soil conditions in Winnipeg made it challenging to prepare the temple foundation. Therefore, it was determined that the foundation for this temple would consist of 70 steel piles encased in concrete. These piles are 60 feet (18 m) in length and 12 to 20 inches (30 to 50 cm) in diameter. They were driven into the ground until they hit bedrock, approximately 50 feet (15 m) below the surface. In this way, the 70 piles provide a solid, firm foundation for what will be the beautiful Winnipeg temple.

As Latter-day Saints, we seek a similar firm and sure foundation in our lives—a spiritual foundation needed for our journey through mortality and back to our heavenly home. That foundation is established on the bedrock of our conversion to the Lord Jesus Christ.

We recall the teachings of Helaman from the Book of Mormon: “And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, ... it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall” (Helaman 5:12).

Gratefully, we live in a time when prophets and apostles teach us of the Savior Jesus Christ. Following their counsel helps us establish a firm foundation in Christ.

A year ago, in his opening remarks of the October 2018 general conference, President Russell M. Nelson provided this declaration and warning: “The long-standing objective of the Church is to assist all members to increase their faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and in His Atonement, to assist them in making and keeping their covenants with God, and to strengthen and seal their families. In this complex world today, this is not easy. *The adversary is increasing his attacks on faith and upon us and our families at an exponential rate.* To survive spiritually, we need *counterstrategies and proactive plans*” (“Opening Remarks,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 7; emphasis added).

Following President Nelson’s message, Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles introduced the *Come, Follow Me* resource for individuals and families. His remarks included the following statements:

- “The new home-study *Come, Follow Me* resource ... is designed to help members learn the gospel in the home.”
- ““This resource is for every individual and family in the Church’ [*Come, Follow Me—For Individuals and Families* (2019), vi].”
- “Our purpose is to balance the Church and the home experiences in a way that will greatly increase faith and spirituality and deepen conversion to Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (“Deep and Lasting Conversion to Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 9–10.)

Starting in January of this year, Latter-day Saints worldwide began studying the New Testament, with the *Come, Follow Me* resource as our guide. With a weekly schedule, *Come, Follow Me* helps us study the scriptures, the doctrine of the gospel, and the teachings of the prophets and apostles. It is a marvelous resource for us all.

After nine months of this worldwide scripture study effort, what do we see? We see Latter-day Saints everywhere growing in faith and devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. We see individuals and families setting aside time throughout the week to study the words of our Savior. We see improving gospel instruction in our Sunday classes as we study the scriptures at home and share our insights at church. We see greater family joy and unity as we have moved from simply reading the scriptures to studying the scriptures in a profound way.

It has been my privilege to visit with many Latter-day Saints and hear firsthand of their experiences with *Come, Follow Me*. Their expressions of faith fill my heart with joy. Here are just a few of the comments I have heard from various members of the Church in different parts of the world:

- A father shared: “I enjoy *Come, Follow Me*, as it provides an opportunity to testify of the Savior to my children.”
- In another home, a child said: “This is a chance to hear my parents bear their testimonies.”
- A mother shared: “We have been inspired as to how to put God first. The time we [thought we] ‘didn’t have’ has been [filled] with hope, joy, peace, and success in ways we didn’t know were possible.”
- A couple observed: “We are reading the scriptures entirely differently than we have ever read them before. We are learning so much more than we have ever learned before. The Lord is wanting us to see things differently. The Lord is preparing us.”
- A mother remarked: “I love that we are learning the same things together. Before, we were reading it. Today, we are learning it.”
- A sister shared this insightful perspective: “Before, you had the lesson and the scriptures supplemented it. Now, you have the scriptures and the lesson supplements it.”
- Another sister commented: “I feel a difference when I do it [compared to] when I don’t. I find it is easier to talk to others about Jesus Christ and our beliefs.”
- A grandmother remarked: “I call my children and grandchildren on Sundays, and we share insights from *Come, Follow Me* together.”
- A sister observed: “*Come, Follow Me* feels like the Savior is personally ministering to me. It is heaven inspired.”
- A father commented: “When we use *Come, Follow Me*, we are like the children of Israel, marking the side posts of our doors, protecting our families from the influence of the destroyer.”

Brothers and sisters, it is a joy to visit with you and hear how your efforts with *Come, Follow Me* are blessing your lives. Thank you for your devotion.

Studying the scriptures with *Come, Follow Me* as a guide is strengthening our conversion to Jesus Christ and His gospel. We are not simply trading one hour less in church on Sunday for one hour more of scripture study at home. Learning the gospel is a consistent effort throughout the week. As one sister insightfully shared, “The goal is not to make church one hour shorter; it is to make church six days longer!”

Now, consider again the warning our prophet, President Nelson, gave as he opened the October 2018 general conference:

“The adversary is increasing his attacks on faith and upon us and our families at an exponential rate. To survive spiritually, we need counterstrategies and proactive plans” (Opening Remarks,” 7).

Then (approximately 29 hours later) on Sunday afternoon, he closed the conference with this promise: “As you diligently work to remodel your home into a center of gospel learning, ... the influence of the adversary in your life and in your home will decrease” (“Becoming Exemplary Latter-day Saints,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 113).

How can the attacks of the adversary be increasing exponentially while at the same time the influence of the adversary is actually decreasing? It can happen, and it is happening throughout the Church, because the Lord prepares His people against the attacks of the adversary. *Come, Follow Me* is the Lord’s counterstrategy and proactive plan. As President Nelson taught, “The new home-centered, Church-supported integrated curriculum has the potential to unleash the power of families.” However, it does and will require our best efforts; we need to “[follow] through conscientiously and carefully to transform [our] home into a sanctuary of faith” (“Becoming Exemplary Latter-day Saints,” 113).

After all, as President Nelson also said, “We are each responsible for our individual spiritual growth” (“Opening Remarks,” 8).

With the *Come, Follow Me* resource, the Lord is preparing us “for the perilous times that we now face” (Quentin L. Cook, “Deep and Lasting Conversion,” 10). He is helping us establish that “sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall” (Helaman 5:12)—the foundation of a testimony anchored firmly in the bedrock of our conversion to the Lord Jesus Christ.

May our daily efforts in studying the scriptures fortify us and prove us worthy of these promised blessings. I so pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.