



# Keep the Change

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Through Jesus Christ, we are given the strength to make lasting changes. As we humbly turn to Him, He will increase our capacity to change.

Sisters, it is such a joy to be with you.

Imagine someone going to a market to purchase an item. If she pays the cashier more than the item is worth, the cashier will give her change.

King Benjamin taught his people in ancient America of the tremendous blessings we receive from our Savior, Jesus Christ. He created the heavens, the earth, and all the beauty we enjoy.<sup>1</sup> Through His loving Atonement, He provides a way for us to be redeemed from sin and death.<sup>2</sup> As we show our gratitude to Him by diligently living His commandments, He immediately blesses us, leaving us always in His debt.

He gives us much, much more than the value of what we can ever return to Him. So, what can we give to Him, who paid the incalculable price for our sins? We can give Him *change*. We can give Him our *change*. It may be a change of thought, a change in habit, or a change in the direction we are headed. In return for His

priceless payment for each of us, the Lord asks us for a change of heart. The change He requests from us is not for His benefit but for ours. So, unlike the purchaser at the market who would take back the change we offer, our gracious Savior beckons us to *keep the change*.

After hearing the words spoken by King Benjamin, his people cried out, declaring that their hearts had changed, saying, “Because of the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, which has wrought a mighty change in us, ... we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually.”<sup>3</sup> The scriptures do not say that they immediately became perfect; rather, their desire to change compelled them to action. Their change of heart meant putting off the natural man or woman and yielding to the Spirit as they strove to become more like Jesus Christ.

President Henry B. Eyring teaches: “True conversion depends on seeking freely in faith, with great effort and some pain. Then it is the Lord who can grant ... the miracle of cleansing and change.”<sup>4</sup> Combining our effort with the Savior’s ability to change us, we become new creatures.

When I was younger, I visualized myself walking along an upward, vertical path toward my goal of eternal life. Each time I did or said something wrong, I felt myself sliding down the path, only to start my journey all over again. It was like landing on that one square in the children’s game Chutes and Ladders that slides you down from the top of the board back to the beginning of the game! It was discouraging! But as I began to understand the doctrine of Christ<sup>5</sup> and how to apply it daily in my life, I found hope.

Jesus Christ has given us a continuous pattern for change. He invites us to exercise faith in Him, which inspires us to repent—“which faith and repentance bringeth a change of heart.”<sup>6</sup> As we repent and turn our hearts to Him, we gain a greater desire to make and live sacred covenants. We endure to the end by continuing to apply these principles throughout our lives and inviting the Lord to change us. Enduring to the end means *changing* to the end. I now understand that I am not starting over with each failed attempt, but that with each try, I am continuing my process of change.

There is an inspired phrase in the Young Women theme that states, “I cherish the gift of repentance and seek to improve each day.”<sup>7</sup> I pray that we do cherish this beautiful gift and that we are intentional in seeking change. Sometimes the changes we need to make are associated with serious sin. But most often, we strive to refine our character to align ourselves with the attributes of Jesus Christ. Our daily choices will either help or hinder our progress. Small but steady, deliberate changes will help us improve. Do not become discouraged. Change is a lifelong process. I am grateful that in our struggles to change, the Lord is patient with us.

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In addition to the transforming power of our Savior’s Atonement, the Holy Ghost will support and guide us as we put forth our effort. He can even help us know

what changes we need to make. We can also find help and encouragement through priesthood blessings, prayer, fasting, and attending the temple.

Likewise, trusted family members, leaders, and friends can be helpful in our efforts to change. When I was eight years old, my older brother, Lee, and I would spend time with our friends playing in the branches of a neighborhood tree. We loved being together in the fellowship of our friends in the shade of that tree. One day, Lee fell out of the tree and broke his arm. Having a broken arm made it hard for him to climb the tree by himself. But life in the tree just wasn't the same without him there. So some of us steadied him from behind while others pulled on his good arm, and without too much effort, Lee was back in the tree. His arm was still broken, but he was with us again enjoying our friendship as he healed.

I have often thought about my experience of playing in the tree as being a type of our activity in the gospel of Jesus Christ. In the shade of gospel branches, we enjoy many blessings associated with our covenants. Some may have fallen from the safety of their covenants and need our help climbing back into the security of gospel branches. It can be difficult for them to come back on their own. Can we gently tug a little here and hoist up a little there to help them heal while they enjoy our friendship?

If you are suffering an injury from a fall, please allow others to help you return to your covenants and the blessings they offer. The Savior can help you heal and change while surrounded by those who love you.

I occasionally run into friends whom I haven't seen for many years. Sometimes they say, "You haven't changed at all!" Each time I hear that, I cringe a little, because I hope *I have changed* over the years. I hope I have changed since yesterday! I hope I am a little kinder, less judgmental, and more compassionate. I hope I am quicker to respond to the needs of others, and I hope I am just a little bit more patient.

I love hiking in the mountains near my home. Often, I get a little rock in my shoe as I walk along the trail. Eventually, I stop and shake out my shoe. But it astounds me how long I allow myself to hike in pain before I stop and rid myself of the irritant.

As we travel the covenant path, sometimes we pick up stones in our shoes in the form of poor habits, sins, or bad attitudes. The quicker we shake them from our lives, the more joyful our mortal journey will be.

Maintaining change takes effort. I cannot imagine stopping along the trail only to put back in my shoe the annoying and painful pebble I just removed. I would not want to do that any more than a beautiful butterfly would choose to return to her cocoon.

I testify that because of Jesus Christ, we *can* change. We can adjust our habits, alter our thoughts, and refine our character to become more like Him. And with His help, we can *keep the change*. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

