

The Things of My Soul

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What things do you ponder? What things really matter to you? What are the things of your soul?

My brothers and sisters, as I stand in our beloved Conference Center once again, I am reminded of the words of the Apostle Peter: “Lord, it is good for us to be here.”¹

My thoughts today are centered on the words of the prophet Nephi, who kept the record of his people following Father Lehi’s death. Nephi wrote, “And upon these I write the things of my soul.”²

I used to pass over this verse, thinking the word *things* was not very elegant or spiritual, not grand enough to pair with “my soul.” Yet I have learned that the word *things* is used in the scriptures 2,354 times.³ For example, in Moses: “I am the Beginning and the End, the Almighty God; by mine Only Begotten I created these *things*.”⁴ And Nephi’s words: “Behold, my soul delighteth in the *things* of the Lord; and my heart pondereth continually upon the *things* which I have seen and heard.”⁵

Nephi’s words raise the questions “What things do you ponder?” “What things really matter to you?” “What are the things of your soul?”

The things of our souls are often clarified and deepened by asking questions.

During the pandemic I have met with youth from all over the world in many devotionals, large and small, through broadcasts and social media, and we have discussed their questions.

Fourteen-year-old Joseph Smith had a question deep in his soul, and he took it to the Lord. President Russell M. Nelson has emphasized: “Take your questions to the Lord and to other faithful sources. Study with the desire to *believe* rather than with the hope that you can find a flaw in the fabric of a prophet’s life or a discrepancy in the scriptures. Stop increasing your doubts by rehearsing them with ... doubters. Allow the Lord to lead you on your journey of spiritual discovery.”⁶

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I answered with the things of my soul, the things that prepare me to hear promptings, that lift my sights beyond the ways of the world, that give purpose to my work in the gospel and to my very life.

May I share with you some of the things of my soul? These things apply to all who seek to be true disciples of Jesus Christ. Ten would be a good, round number. Today I am giving you seven with the hope that you will complete eight, nine, and ten from your own experiences.

First, love God the Father and Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Jesus decreed the first great commandment: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.”⁷

President Nelson declared his devotion to God, our Eternal Father, and to His Son, Jesus Christ, when he was called to lead the Lord’s Church, saying, “I know Them, love Them, and pledge to serve Them—and you—with every remaining breath of my life.”⁸

So first, love the Father and the Son.

Second, “Love thy neighbour.”⁹

That is not just a good idea; it’s the second great commandment. Your neighbors are your spouse and family, ward members, work colleagues, roommates, those not of our faith, those needing a helping hand, and, frankly, everyone. The essence of “love thy neighbour” is voiced in the hymn “Love One Another.”¹⁰

President Nelson reminds us, “When we love *God* with all our hearts, He turns our hearts to the well-being of *others*.”¹¹

Third, love yourself.

This is where many struggle. Isn’t it curious that loving ourselves seems to come less easily than loving others? Yet the Lord has said, “Love thy neighbour as thyself.”¹² He values the divinity within us, and so must we. When we are heavy laden with mistakes, heartaches, feelings of inadequacy, disappointment, anger, or sin, the power of the Savior’s Atonement is, by divine design, one of the things that lifts the soul.

Fourth, keep the commandments.

The Lord has made it clear: “If ye love me, keep my commandments.”¹³ Strive each day to be and do a little better and to press forward in righteousness.

Fifth, always be worthy to attend the temple.

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“Be of good cheer, and do not fear,”¹⁴ the Lord has said. Why? How, when challenges face us at every turn? Because of the promise made by Jesus Christ: “I the Lord am with you, and will stand by you.”¹⁵

President Nelson describes the restored gospel as “a message of *joy!*”¹⁶ And he explains, “The joy we feel has little to do with the circumstances of our lives and everything to do with the focus of our lives.”¹⁷

Seventh, follow God’s living prophet.

This may be seventh on my list of things, but it is at the top of my mind in terms of its importance today.

We have a prophet of God on the earth today! Never discount what that means for you. Remember the young woman I mentioned at the beginning. She wanted to know what things matter most. “Follow the living prophet,” I said then and I emphasize again today.

We are distinguished as a Church to be led by prophets, seers, and revelators called of God for this time. I promise that as you listen and follow their counsel, you will never be led astray. Never!

We live in a time when we are “tossed to and fro,”¹⁸ when spirituality, decency, integrity, and respect are under attack. We have to make choices. We have the voice of the Lord through His prophet to calm our fears and lift our sights, for when President Nelson speaks, he speaks for the Lord.

We are blessed with scriptures and teachings that remind us, “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.”¹⁹

So it was with Naaman, a great military leader in Syria, yet a leper, who was told that the prophet Elisha could heal him. Elisha sent his messenger to tell Naaman to wash in the River Jordan seven times and he would be clean. Naaman scoffed. Certainly there was a mightier river than the Jordan, and why send a servant when he expected Elisha, the prophet, to personally heal him? Naaman walked away but eventually was persuaded by his servants: “If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it?”²⁰ Naaman finally dipped seven times in the Jordan and was healed.

The account of Naaman reminds us of the risk of picking and choosing the parts of prophetic counsel that fit our thinking, our expectations, or today’s norms. Our prophet continually points us to our own River Jordans to be healed.

The most important words we can hear, ponder, and follow are those revealed through our living prophet. I bear witness that I have sat in counsel with President

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in forums,²¹ social media,²² devotionals,²³ and even press briefings.²⁴ I have observed him preparing and presenting profound revelatory messages that have encouraged more gratitude, promoted greater inclusion of all our brothers and sisters on earth, and increased peace, hope, joy, health, and healing in our individual lives.

President Nelson is a gifted communicator, but more important, he is a prophet of God. That is staggering when you think about it, but it is critical to realize that his clear direction will shield us all from the deceit, craftiness, and secular ways gaining momentum in the world today.²⁵

The prophetic mantle is all about revelation. “The Restoration of the Fulness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ: A Bicentennial Proclamation to the World,” given in the April 2020 general conference, emphasizes that the Lord is directing this work. In this proclamation, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles state: “We gladly declare that the promised Restoration goes forward through continuing revelation. The earth will never again be the same, as God will ‘gather together in one all things in Christ’ (Ephesians 1:10).”²⁶

“All things in Christ”²⁷ and “the things of my soul”²⁸ are what this Church, this gospel, and this people are all about.

I close with an invitation for each of you to consider the seven “things of my soul” I have shared today: love God the Father and Jesus Christ, our Savior; love your neighbor; love yourself; keep the commandments; always be worthy of a temple recommend; be joyful and cheerful; and follow God’s living prophet. I invite you to identify your own eight, nine, and ten. Consider ways you might share your heartfelt “things” with others and encourage them to pray, ponder, and seek the Lord’s guidance.

The things of my soul are as precious to me as yours are to you. These things strengthen our service in the Church and in all areas of life. They commit us to Jesus Christ, they remind us of our covenants, and they help us feel secure in the arms of the Lord. I testify that He desires that our souls “shall never hunger nor thirst, but shall be filled”²⁹ with His love as we seek to become His true disciples, to be one with Him as He is with the Father. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. Matthew 17:4.
2. 2 Nephi 4:15.
3. See Scripture Citation Index, scriptures.byu.edu.

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7. 7. Matthew 22:37.
8. 8. Russell M. Nelson, “As We Go Forward Together,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Apr. 2018, 7.
9. 9. Matthew 22:39.
10. 10. “Love One Another,” *Hymns*, no. 308.
11. 11. Russell M. Nelson, “The Second Great Commandment,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2019, 97.
12. 12. Matthew 22:39.
13. 13. John 14:15.
14. 14. Doctrine and Covenants 68:6.
15. 15. Doctrine and Covenants 68:6.
16. 16. Russell M. Nelson, “Welcome Message,” *Liahona*, May 2021, 7.
17. 17. Russell M. Nelson, “Joy and Spiritual Survival,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 82.
18. 18. Ephesians 4:14.
19. 19. Isaiah 55:8.
20. 20. 2 Kings 5:13.
21. 21. For example, see Friend to Friend Broadcast for Children: 2021 (Feb. 20, 2021), broadcasts.ChurchofJesusChrist.org, part 3, from time code 9:57 to 13:16.
22. 22. For examples, see Russell M. Nelson, Facebook, July 23, 2021, facebook.com/russell.m.nelson; “President Russell M. Nelson on the Healing Power of Gratitude” (video), ChurchofJesusChrist.org; Russell M. Nelson, Twitter, May 6, 2021, twitter.com/NelsonRussellM.
23. 23. For example, see Russell M. Nelson, “The Love and Laws of God” (Brigham Young University devotional, Sept. 17, 2019), speeches.byu.edu.
24. 24. For example, see “First Presidency and NAACP Leaders Announce a Shared Vision to ‘Learn from and Serve One Another’” (news release, June 14, 2021), newsroom.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

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28. 28. 2 Nephi 4:15.

29. 29. 3 Nephi 20:8.

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