

Simply Beautiful—Beautifully Simple

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May we keep the gospel simple as we take upon us our divinely appointed responsibilities.

Introduction

I offer a warm welcome to each of you participating in this conference.

Today I hope to describe two elements of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, followed by four stirring accounts from Latter-day Saints around the world demonstrating the application of these principles. The first element of the restored gospel—God’s work of salvation and exaltation—focuses on divinely appointed responsibilities. The second element reminds us that the gospel is plain, precious, and simple.

Divinely Appointed Responsibilities

To receive eternal life, we must “come unto Christ, and be perfected in him.”¹ As we come unto Christ and help others do the same, we participate in God’s work of salvation and exaltation, which focuses on divinely appointed responsibilities.² These divine responsibilities align themselves with priesthood keys restored by Moses, Elias, and Elijah, as recorded in the 110th section of the Doctrine and Covenants,³ and the second great commandment given to us by Jesus Christ to love our neighbor as ourselves.⁴ They are found on the first two pages of the updated *General Handbook*, available to all members.

If hearing the words “General Handbook” or “divinely appointed responsibilities” causes you to shudder in fear of complexity, please don’t. These responsibilities are simple, inspirational, motivating, and doable. Here they are:

1. Living the gospel of Jesus Christ
2. Caring for those in need
3. Inviting all to receive the gospel
4. Uniting families for eternity

You might view them as I do: as a road map to return back to our loving Heavenly Father.

The Gospel Is Plain, Precious, and Simple

It has been said that the gospel of Jesus Christ is “simply beautiful and beautifully simple.”⁵ The world is not. It is complicated, complex, and filled with turmoil and strife. We are blessed as we exercise care not to allow complexity, so common in the world, to enter into the way we receive and practice the gospel.

President Dallin H. Oaks observed: “We are taught many small and simple things in the gospel of Jesus Christ. We need to be reminded that in total and over a significant period of time, those seemingly small things bring to pass great things.”⁶ Jesus Christ Himself describes that His yoke is easy and His burden is light.⁷ We should all strive to keep the gospel simple—in our lives, in our families, in our classes and quorums, and in our wards and stakes.

As you listen to the following stories I will share with you, recognize that they have been carefully chosen to inspire on the one hand and to inform on the other. The actions of each of these Latter-day Saints becomes a model for each of us in applying the gospel in plain, precious, simple ways while fulfilling one of the divinely appointed responsibilities just introduced.

Living the Gospel of Jesus Christ

First, living the gospel of Jesus Christ. Jens of Denmark prays daily to live the gospel and notice promptings from the Holy Ghost. He has learned to act quickly when he feels directed by the Spirit.

Jens shared the following:

“We live in an idyllic, small, half-timbered house with a thatched roof, in the center of a cozy little village, close to the village pond.

“On this night with the most beautiful Danish summer weather imaginable, doors and windows were open, and everything breathed peace and quiet. Due to our gloriously bright and long summer nights, I had not been in a hurry to replace a burned-out light bulb in our utility room.

“Suddenly, I got a strong feeling that I had to replace it immediately! At the same time, I heard my wife, Mariann, call for me and the children to wash our hands because dinner was ready!

“I had been married long enough to know that this was not the time to start doing anything else than washing my hands, but I heard myself calling out to Mariann that I would just pop over to the store to buy a new light bulb. I felt a strong urge to leave immediately.

“The grocery store was only on the other side of the pond. We usually walked, but today I grabbed my bike. While riding past the pond, out of the corner of my eye I noticed a small boy, about two years old, walking alone near the edge of the pond,

very close to the water—suddenly he fell in! One minute he was there—and the next he was gone!

“No one had seen this happen but me. I threw my bike on the ground, ran, and jumped into the waist-high pond. The surface of the water immediately closed with duckweed, making it impossible to see through the water. Then I sensed a movement to one side. I put my arm in the water, got hold of a T-shirt, and pulled the little boy up. He started gasping, coughing, and crying. Soon afterward the boy was reunited with his parents.”

As Brother Jens prays each morning for help to recognize promptings from the Holy Ghost, even something as unusual as to immediately change a light bulb, he also prays that he can be used as a tool to bless God’s children. Jens lives the gospel by seeking divine direction each day, striving to be worthy, then doing his best to follow that direction when it comes.

Caring for Those in Need

Here is an example of caring for those in need. One day a stake president in the Cúcuta stake in Colombia accompanied the stake Young Women president to visit two young women—and their older teenage brother—who were going through some terrible struggles. Recently their father had passed away, and their mother had passed away a year before. The three siblings were now left all alone in their small, humble shelter. The walls were made of crude wood lined with plastic bags, and the corrugated tin roof covered only the area where they slept.

Following their visit, these leaders knew they needed to help. Through the ward council, a plan to help them began to emerge. Ward and stake leaders—Relief Society, elders quorum, Young Men, Young Women—and many families all set themselves to the task of blessing this family.

The ward organizations contacted several ward members who work in construction. Some helped with design, others donated time and labor, others made meals, and still others donated needed materials.

When the little house was finished, it was a joyful day for those who helped and for the three young ward members. These orphaned children felt warm and reassuring bonds of their ward family to know that they are not alone and that God is always there for them. Those who reached out felt the love of the Savior for this family and acted as His hands in serving them.

Inviting All to Receive the Gospel

I think you will enjoy this example of inviting all to receive the gospel. Seventeen-year-old Cleiton of Cape Verde had no idea what would happen as a result of

walking into his ward's seminary class one day. But his life and the lives of others would be forever changed because he did.

Cleiton, along with his mother and older brother, had been baptized into the Church some time earlier, and yet the family stopped attending. His single act of attending seminary would prove to be a hinge point for the family.

The other youth in the seminary class were warm and welcoming. They made Cleiton feel at home and encouraged him to attend another activity. He did so and soon began attending his other Church meetings. A wise bishop saw spiritual potential in Cleiton and invited him to be his assistant. "From that moment on," says Bishop Cruz, "Cleiton became an example and an influence to other young people."

The first person Cleiton invited back to church was his mother, then his older brother. He then widened his circle to friends. One of those friends was a young man his own age, Wilson. Upon his very first meeting with the missionaries, Wilson expressed his desire to be baptized. The missionaries were impressed and amazed at how much Cleiton had already shared with Wilson.

Cleiton's efforts didn't stop there. He helped other less-active members return, in addition to sharing the gospel with friends of other faiths. Today the ward has 35 active youth, with a thriving seminary program, thanks in large part to Cleiton's efforts to love, share, and invite. Cleiton and his older brother, Cléber, are both preparing to serve full-time missions.

Uniting Families for Eternity

Finally, let me share a beautiful example of uniting families for eternity. Lydia from Kharkiv, Ukraine, first learned about the temple from the missionaries. Immediately, Lydia felt a fervent desire to attend the temple, and after her baptism, she began preparation to receive a temple recommend.

Lydia attended the Freiberg Germany Temple to receive her endowment and then spent several days doing proxy work there. Following the dedication of the Kyiv Ukraine Temple, Lydia attended the temple more frequently. She and her husband, Anatoly, were eternally sealed there and later called to serve as temple missionaries. Together they have found more than 15,000 names of ancestors and have worked to provide temple ordinances for them.

When asked about her feelings regarding temple work, Lydia says, "What did I receive in the temple? I have made new covenants with God. My testimony has been strengthened. I have learned to receive personal revelation. I am able to perform saving ordinances for my deceased ancestors. And I can love and serve other people." She concluded with this very true statement: "The Lord wants to see us in the temple often."

Conclusion

I am inspired by the goodness of these Latter-day Saints, each with diverse and varied backgrounds, centered in these four stories. Much can be learned from miraculous outcomes brought through the simple application of simple gospel principles. All they did is within our grasp as well.

May we keep the gospel simple as we take upon us our divinely appointed responsibilities: To *live the gospel of Jesus Christ* so as to be sensitive to promptings, as did Jens in Denmark. To *care for those in need*, as demonstrated by the members of the Cúcuta stake in Colombia in providing shelter to orphaned ward members. To *invite all to receive the gospel*, in the way that Cleiton from the African island country of Cape Verde did with his friends and family. Finally, to *unite families for eternity*, as exemplified by Sister Lydia from Ukraine through her own temple ordinances, family history efforts, and service in the temple.

Doing so will surely bring joy and peace. Of this I promise and testify—and of Jesus Christ as our Savior and our Redeemer—in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. 1. Moroni 10:32.
2. 2. See *General Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 1.2, ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
3. 3. See Doctrine and Covenants 110:11–16. See also Dallin H. Oaks, “The Melchizedek Priesthood and the Keys,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2020, 70: “Following the dedication of the first temple of this dispensation in Kirtland, Ohio, three prophets—Moses, Elias, and Elijah—restored ‘the keys of this dispensation,’ including keys pertaining to the gathering of Israel and the work of the temples of the Lord.” See also Quentin L. Cook, “Prepare to Meet God,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2018, 114: “Ancient prophets restored priesthood keys for the eternal saving ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ. ... These keys provide the ‘power from on high’ [Doctrine and Covenants 38:38] for divinely appointed responsibilities that constitute the primary purpose of the Church.”
4. 4. See Matthew 22:36–40.
5. 5. In *Matthew Cowley Speaks: Discourses of Elder Matthew Cowley of the Quorum of the Twelve of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (1954), xii.
6. 6. Dallin H. Oaks, “Small and Simple Things,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2018, 89.
7. 7. See Matthew 11:30.