

“My Mind Caught Hold upon This Thought”

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As you continue to attentively catch hold of the thought of Jesus Christ, I promise you not only heavenly guidance but heavenly power.

In this beautiful Easter season, I echo the prayer of this powerful hymn, “Guide us, O thou great Jehovah.”¹

A remarkable story in the Book of Mormon tells of a young man, from a prominent family, named Alma, whom the scriptures describe as an idolatrous unbeliever.² He was articulate and convincing, using flattery to persuade others to follow him. Astonishingly, an angel appeared to Alma and his friends. Alma fell to the earth and was so weak that he was carried helplessly to his father’s home. He remained in a seemingly comatose state for three days.³ Later, he explained that while he appeared unconscious to those around him, his mind was very active as his soul grieved, thinking about his life of disregarding the commandments of God. He described his mind as being “harrowed up by the memory of [his] many sins”⁴ and “racked with eternal torment.”⁵

In his deep despair, he remembered being taught in his youth about “the coming of one Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone for the sins of the world.”⁶ Next he made this very compelling statement: “As my mind caught hold upon this thought, I cried within my heart: O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me.”⁷ As he appealed for the divine power of the Savior, something miraculous happened: “When I thought this,” he said, “I could remember my pains no more.”⁸ Suddenly he felt peace and light. “Nothing [was] so exquisite and sweet as was my joy,”⁹ he declared.

Alma “caught hold upon” the truth of Jesus Christ. If we were using the words “caught hold upon” in a physical sense, we might say, “He caught hold upon the guardrail just as he was falling,” meaning he reached out suddenly and tightly seized something solidly cemented to a secure foundation.

In Alma’s case, it was his mind that reached out and secured this powerful truth of Jesus Christ’s atoning sacrifice. Acting in faith on that

truth, and by the power and grace of God, he was rescued from despair and filled with hope.

While our experiences may not be as dramatic as Alma's, they are nonetheless as eternally significant. Our minds have also "caught hold upon this thought" of Jesus Christ and His merciful sacrifice, and our souls have felt the light and joy that follow.

Securing the Thought of Jesus Christ

My prayer at this Easter season is that we will more consciously shape, strengthen, and secure this preeminent thought of Jesus Christ in the chambers of our soul,¹⁰ allowing it to eagerly flow into our mind, guide us in what we think and do, and continually bring the sweet joy of the Savior's love.¹¹

Filling our mind with the power of Jesus Christ does not mean that He is the only thought we have. But it does mean that all our thoughts are circumscribed in His love, His life and teachings, and His atoning sacrifice and glorious Resurrection. Jesus is never in a forgotten corner, because our thoughts of Him are always present and "all that is in [us adores] him!"¹² We pray and rehearse in our mind experiences that have brought us closer to Him. We welcome into our mind divine images, holy scriptures, and inspired hymns to gently cushion the countless daily thoughts rushing through our busy lives. Our love for Him does not shield us from the sadness and sorrow in this mortal life, but it allows us to walk through the challenges with a strength far beyond our own.

Jesus, the very thought of thee
With sweetness fills my breast;
But sweeter far thy face to see
And in thy presence rest.¹³

Remember, you are a spirit child of Heavenly Father. As the Apostle Paul explains, we are "the offspring of God."¹⁴ You have lived with your own individual identity long before coming to earth. Our Father created a perfect plan for us to come to earth, learn, and return to Him. He sent His Beloved Son that through the power of His infinite Atonement and Resurrection, we live beyond the grave; and as we are willing to exercise faith in Him and repent of our sins,¹⁵ we are forgiven and receive the hope of eternal life.¹⁶

Giving Our Mind and Spirit Exceptional Attention

In this mortal life, our mind and spirit need exceptional attention.¹⁷ Our mind allows us to live, to choose, and to discern good and evil.¹⁸ Our spirit receives the confirming witness that God is our Father, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that Their teachings are our guide to happiness here and eternal life beyond the grave.

The mind of Alma caught hold upon this thought of Jesus Christ. It changed his life. General conference is a time to understand what the Lord would have us do and become. It is also a time to reflect on our progress. As my assignments have taken me throughout the world, I have observed an increasing spiritual strength in the righteous, devoted members of the Church.

Five years ago, we were asked to place the Savior more prominently in all we do by using the true name of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.¹⁹ We are speaking His name more earnestly.

Four years ago, by reducing the time of our sacrament meeting, we increased our focus on partaking of the Lord's sacrament. We are thinking more of Jesus Christ and are more serious in our promise to always remember Him.²⁰

With the isolation of the worldwide pandemic and the help of *Come, Follow Me*, the teachings of the Savior are becoming more prominent in our homes, helping our worship of the Savior during the week.

By following President Russell M. Nelson's counsel to "hear Him,"²¹ we are refining our ability to recognize the whisperings of the Holy Ghost and to see the hand of the Lord in our lives.

With the announcement and completion of dozens of temples, we are more frequently entering the house of the Lord and receiving His promised blessings. We are feeling more powerfully the transcendent beauty of our Savior and Redeemer.

President Nelson said: "There is nothing easy or automatic about becoming [a] powerful [disciple]. Our focus must be riveted on the Savior and His gospel. It is mentally rigorous to strive to look unto Him in *every* thought."²²

By focusing our attention on Jesus Christ, all else around us—while still present—is viewed through our love for Him. Less important distractions fade, and we remove those things that are not in keeping with His light and character. As you continue to attentively catch hold of this thought of Jesus Christ, trust in Him, and keep His commandments, I promise you not only heavenly guidance but

heavenly power—power that brings strength to your covenants, peace to your difficulties, and joy to your blessings.

Remembering Jesus Christ

A few weeks ago, Kathy and I visited the home of Matt and Sarah Johnson. On the wall was a picture of their precious family, a beautiful image of the Savior, and an illustration of the temple.

Their four daughters, Maddy, Ruby, Claire, and June, spoke happily about how much they loved their mother.

For over a year Sarah had regularly scheduled Saturday appointments for the family to attend the temple together so that the girls could participate in baptisms for family members who lived previously.

In November of last year, Sarah scheduled a family temple appointment for the last week in December on Thursday instead of Saturday. “I hope you’re OK with that,” she said to Matt.

Sarah had been diagnosed with cancer, but the doctors anticipated she would live two or three more years. During a sacrament meeting, Sarah had shared her powerful testimony, saying that whatever the outcome for her, she loved the Savior with all her heart and that “the victory had already been won” by Him. As December progressed, unexpectedly Sarah’s health rapidly declined, and she was admitted to the hospital. In the early morning of Thursday, December 29, she quietly completed her mortality. Matt had been by Sarah’s side all through the night.

With his heart breaking, and completely exhausted physically and emotionally, he arrived home, sorrowing with his daughters. As Matt glanced at his phone, he noticed the reminder of the unusual Thursday temple appointment Sarah had scheduled for later that day. Matt said, “When I first saw it, I thought, This just isn’t going to work.”

But then Matt’s mind caught hold upon this thought: “The Savior lives. There is no place we would rather be as a family than in His holy house.”

Matt, Maddy, Ruby, Claire, and June arrived at the temple for the appointment Sarah had scheduled for them. With tears streaming down his cheeks, Matt performed the baptisms with his daughters. They deeply felt their love and eternal bond with Sarah, and they felt the immense love and comforting peace of the Savior. Matt tenderly shared, “While I feel deep sorrow and grief, I am shouting for joy, knowing my Father’s wonderful plan of salvation.”

In this Easter season, I witness the complete and absolute truth of the Savior's incomparable atoning sacrifice and of His glorious Resurrection. As your mind remains firmly and forever upon the thought of Jesus Christ, and as you continue to focus your life more fully on the Savior, I promise you that you will feel His hope, His peace, and His love. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah," *Hymns*, no. 83.
2. See Mosiah 27:8.
3. See Alma 36:10.
4. Alma 36:17.
5. Alma 36:12.
6. Alma 36:17.
7. Alma 36:18. The other time "caught hold" is used in the Book of Mormon is speaking of those who "caught hold of the end of the rod of iron" (1 Nephi 8:24, 30).
8. Alma 36:19.
9. Alma 36:21.
10. "The greatest battle of life is fought within the silent chambers of your own soul" (David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Apr. 1967, 84).
11. "[Thoughts] sponsor all action. Our thoughts are the switchboard, the control panel governing our actions" (Boyd K. Packer, *That All May Be Edified* [1982], 33).

President Dallin H. Oaks taught: "We can suppress evil desires and substitute righteous ones. This involves education and practice. President Joseph F. Smith taught that the 'education ... of our desires is one of far-reaching importance'" (*Pure in Heart* [1988], 149).
12. "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty," *Hymns*, no. 72.
13. "Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee," *Hymns*, no. 141.
14. Acts 17:29.
15. See Doctrine and Covenants 58:42-43.
16. See Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.

17. “There is none else save God that knowest thy thoughts and the intents of thy heart” (Doctrine and Covenants 6:16).
18. “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh” (Luke 6:45).
19. See Russell M. Nelson, “The Correct Name of the Church,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 87–89.
20. Our covenant each week in the sacrament prayer is that we will “always remember him” (Moroni 4:3; Doctrine and Covenants 20:77). The Book of Mormon encourages us by using the word twice, one after another: “remember, remember” (Mosiah 2:41; Alma 37:13; Helaman 5:9). Spiritually remembering comes through the power of the Holy Ghost: “He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance” (John 14:26).
21. Russell M. Nelson, “Hear Him,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2020, 90.
22. Russell M. Nelson, “Drawing the Power of Jesus Christ into Our Lives,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2017, 41. President Nelson also said, “The joy [Latter-day Saints] feel has little to do with the circumstances of our lives and everything to do with the focus of our lives” (“Joy and Spiritual Survival,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 82).