

Do You Know Why I as a Christian Believe in Christ?

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Of the Seventy

Jesus Christ had to suffer, die, and rise again to redeem all humanity from physical death and to give eternal life with God.

One evening after work, years ago, I boarded my usual bus home to New Jersey from New York City. The woman I happened to sit next to noticed what I was writing on my computer and asked, “You believe in ... Christ?” I said, “Yes, I do!” As we talked, I learned she had just moved to the area from her beautiful Asian country to work in New York’s highly competitive information technology sector.

Naturally, I asked her, “Do you know why I as a Christian believe in Jesus Christ?” She too responded normally and invited me to tell her. But as I went to speak, I had one of those moments where many thoughts flood your mind. This was the first time I would explain the “why” of Christianity to someone very unfamiliar with it and highly intelligent. I couldn’t simply say, “I follow Jesus Christ because He willingly suffered and died for my sins.” She might wonder, “Did Jesus have to die? Couldn’t God simply forgive and cleanse us of our sins if we asked Him to?”

How would you have responded in a few minutes? How would you explain this to a friend? Children and youth: would you please ask your parents or a leader later on, “Why did Jesus have to die?” And, brothers and sisters, I have a confession to make: despite all I thought I knew about Church doctrine, history, policy, and so on, the answer to this central question to our faith did not come so easily. That day I decided to focus more on what matters most to eternal life.

Well, I informed my new friend¹ that we have a spirit in addition to a body and that God is the Father of our spirits.² I told her we lived with our Heavenly Father before our births into this mortal world.³ Because He loves her and all His children, He made a plan for us to receive a body in the image of His glorified body,⁴ be part of a family,⁵ and return to His loving presence to enjoy eternal life with our families⁶ like He does with His.⁷ But, I said, we would face two main obstacles in this necessarily fallen world:⁸ (1) physical death—the separation of our bodies from our spirits. Of course, she knew we would all die. And

(2) spiritual death—our separation from God because our sins, mistakes, and flaws as mortals distance us from His holy presence.⁹ She related to this too.

I informed her that this was an effect of the law of justice. This *eternal law* demands that an *eternal penalty* be paid for every one of our sins, or violations of God’s laws or truth, or we could *never* return to live in His holy presence.¹⁰ It would be unjust, and God “cannot deny justice.”¹¹ She understood this but easily grasped that God is also merciful, loving, and eager to bring to pass our eternal life.¹² I informed my friend that we would also have a cunning, powerful adversary—the source of evil and lies—opposing us.¹³ Therefore, someone with *infinite* godly power to overcome all such opposition and obstacles would need to save us.¹⁴

I then shared with her the good news—the “good tidings of great joy ... to all people”¹⁵—that “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”¹⁶ I testified to my friend, and I witness to you, that Jesus Christ is that Savior, that He *had* to suffer, die, and rise again—His *infinite* Atonement—to redeem all humanity from physical death¹⁷ and to give eternal life with God and our families¹⁸ to *all* who would follow Him. The Book of Mormon declares, “Thus God ... gained the victory over death; giving the Son power to make intercession for the children of men ... ; being filled with [mercy and] compassion ... ; having broken the bands of death, taken upon himself their iniquity and their transgressions, having redeemed them, and satisfied the demands of justice.”¹⁹

The steps God revealed we must take to follow Jesus and receive eternal life are called the doctrine of Christ. They include “faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement, repentance, baptism [into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints], receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end.”²⁰ I shared these steps with my friend, but here are some ways in which prophets and apostles have recently taught how the doctrine of Christ can bless all God’s children.

President Russell M. Nelson instructed: “The pure doctrine of Christ is powerful. It changes the life of *everyone* who understands it and seeks to implement it in his or her life.”²¹

Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf taught, “[The] *For the Strength of Youth* [guide] is bold in declaring the doctrine of ... Christ [and] inviting you [*youth*] to make choices based on [it].”²²

Elder Dale G. Renlund taught, “We invite *missionaries* to do what they ask those they teach to do: ... apply the doctrine of Christ in their lives [and] get on and stay on the covenant path.”²³

The doctrine of Christ empowers those who are *struggling or feel they don’t belong in the Church* because it helps them, as Elder D. Todd

Christofferson stated, “affirm: Jesus Christ died for me ... [and] loves me.”²⁴

Parents, if your child struggles with a gospel principle or prophetic teaching, *please* resist any type of evil speaking²⁵ or activism toward the Church or its leaders. These lesser, secular approaches are beneath you and can be lethal to the long-term faithfulness of your child.²⁶ It speaks so well of you that you would protect or advocate for your precious child or show signs of solidarity with him or her. But my wife, Jayne, and I know from personal experience that teaching your beloved child why we all desperately need Jesus Christ and how to apply His joyful doctrine is what will *strengthen and heal him or her*. Let us turn them to Jesus, who is their true advocate *with the Father*. The Apostle John taught, “Whosoever ... abideth in the doctrine of Christ ... hath both the Father and the Son.” He then warns us to beware “if there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine.”²⁷

Jayne and I recently visited the wilderness where Moses held up a serpent of brass before the wandering children of Israel. The Lord had promised to heal all who were bitten by poisonous snakes if they would simply look upon it.²⁸ In holding up the doctrine of Christ before us, the Lord’s prophet is doing the same, “that he should heal the nations.”²⁹ Whatever the bites or poison or struggles we experience in this mortal wilderness, let us not be as those who, anciently and presently, could have been healed but, sadly, “would not look ... because they did not believe that it would heal them.”³⁰ The Book of Mormon affirms: “Behold, ... this is the way; and there is none other way nor name given under heaven whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God. And now, behold, this is the doctrine of Christ.”³¹

That evening in New Jersey, sharing why we need Jesus Christ and His doctrine gave me a new sister and her a new brother. We felt the peaceful, confirming witness of the Holy Ghost. Naturally, I invited her to share her contact information and continue the conversation with our missionaries. She was happy to do so.

“Wherefore, how great the importance to make these things known unto the inhabitants of the earth,” the Book of Mormon declares—to love, share, and invite³² as we gather Israel in all our communities *and families*—“that they may know that there is no flesh that can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the merits, and mercy, and grace [and doctrine] of the Holy Messiah.”³³ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. I have chosen not to publicize my friend’s name or to use a fictitious name.

2. See Romans 8:15–17; Hebrews 12:9; Doctrine and Covenants 88:15.
3. See Jeremiah 1:4–5; Doctrine and Covenants 138:55–56; Abraham 3:22–23, 26; Guide to the Scriptures, “Premortal Life,” scriptures.ChurchofJesusChrist.org; “Lesson 2: The Plan of Salvation,” *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2019), 48.
4. See “Lesson 2: The Plan of Salvation,” *Preach My Gospel*, 48.
5. The Father’s perfect plan—called the great plan of happiness, the plan of salvation, and the plan of redemption, among other references—is organized such that everyone who comes into mortality necessarily does so into a family, and everyone is part of a family. Of course, not all family circumstances are ideal or accord with our Father’s loving vision for all His children, and some circumstances are tragic. However, as we live the doctrine of Christ, Jesus Christ helps us receive all the blessings the Father has for His children through His merciful and comprehensive plan. See also endnote 6.

6. One of the greatest promises God has made to His children is also the greatest of all His gifts to us: exaltation, or eternal life, which is to live eternally “in God’s presence and to continue as families” (Gospel Topics, “Eternal Life,” topics.ChurchofJesusChrist.org; see also Doctrine and Covenants 14:7). “Families” include husband, wife, and children, as well as our living and deceased relatives who accept and live the doctrine of Christ. Already-deceased family members in the spirit world who were not able to embrace the doctrine of Christ in this life can do so in the spirit world as ordinances like baptism, receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, and others that help us endure to the end are lovingly performed vicariously by living relatives in temples of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Additionally, the promise of eternal life is not just to those who are married in this life. President M. Russell Ballard taught, “Scriptures and latter-day prophets confirm that *everyone* who is faithful in keeping gospel covenants will have the opportunity for exaltation” (“Hope in Christ,” *Liahona*, May 2021, 55; emphasis added). Citing President Russell M. Nelson and President Dallin H. Oaks, President Ballard continued, “The precise time and manner in which the blessings of exaltation are bestowed have not all been revealed, but they are nonetheless *assured*” (“Hope in Christ,” 55; emphasis added). President Nelson taught: “In the Lord’s own way and time, no [blessing] will be withheld from His faithful Saints. The Lord will judge and reward each individual according to heartfelt desire as well as deed” (“Celestial Marriage,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 94). And President Oaks explained, “Many of the most important deprivations of mortality will be set right in the Millennium, which is the time for fulfilling all that is incomplete in the great plan of happiness for all of our Father’s worthy children” (“The Great Plan of Happiness,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 75). See also endnote 5.
7. See Guide to the Scriptures, “Plan of Redemption,” scriptures.ChurchofJesusChrist.org; see also Gospel Topics, “Plan of Salvation,” topics.ChurchofJesusChrist.org; “Lesson 2: The Plan of Salvation,” *Preach My Gospel*, 48–50, 53.
8. See “Lesson 2: The Plan of Salvation,” *Preach My Gospel*, 49.
9. See “Lesson 2: The Plan of Salvation,” *Preach My Gospel*, 47–50.

10. See “Lesson 2: The Plan of Salvation,” *Preach My Gospel*, 47–50.
11. Mosiah 15:27. References to eternal justice or God’s justice abound in the scriptures, but see particularly Alma 41:2–8 and Alma 42.
12. See Alma 42:14–24; Moses 1:39.
13. See “Lesson 2: The Plan of Salvation,” *Preach My Gospel*, 47–50.
14. See Alma 34:9–13; see also Mosiah 13:28, 34–35; 15:1–9; Alma 42:15.
15. Luke 2:10.
16. John 3:16.
17. See Helaman 14:15–17; Mormon 9:12–14.
18. See endnotes 5 and 6.
19. Mosiah 15:8–9.
20. “What Is My Purpose as a Missionary?,” *Preach My Gospel*, 1; see also “Lesson 3: The Gospel of Jesus Christ,” *Preach My Gospel*, 63.
21. Russell M. Nelson, “Pure Truth, Pure Doctrine, and Pure Revelation,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2021, 6; emphasis added.
22. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Jesus Christ Is the Strength of Youth,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2022, 11; see also *For the Strength of Youth: A Guide for Making Choices* (2022), 4.
23. Dale G. Renlund, “Lifelong Conversion of Missionaries” (address given at the mission leadership seminar, June 25, 2021), 1, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.
24. D. Todd Christofferson, “The Doctrine of Belonging,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2022, 56; see also D. Todd Christofferson, “The Joy of the Saints,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2019, 15–18.
25. See James 4:11; Doctrine and Covenants 20:54; Guide to the Scriptures, “Evil Speaking,” scriptures.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

26. See Ahmad S. Corbitt, “Activism vs. Discipleship: Protecting the Valiant” (address given at the chaplains’ seminar, Oct. 2022), cdn.vox-cdn.com/uploads/chorus_asset/file/24159863/Brother_Corbitt_Chaplain_seminar.pdf
video: media2.ldscdn.org/assets/general-authority-features/2022-chaplain-training-seminar/2022-10-1000-activism-vs-discipleship-1080p-eng.mp4.
27. 2 John 1:9–10.
28. See Numbers 21:5–9.
29. 2 Nephi 25:20.
30. Alma 33:20.
31. 2 Nephi 31:21.
32. See “2021 Broadcast: Principles of Love, Share, and Invite,” broadcasts.ChurchofJesusChrist.org; see also Gary E. Stevenson, “Love, Share, Invite,” *Liahona*, May 2022, 84–87.
33. 2 Nephi 2:8.