

# Sir, We Would Like to See Jesus

By Elder Robert M. Daines  
*Of the Seventy*

We want to see Jesus for who He is and to feel His love.

## Face Blindness

One day in the spring of 1945, a young man awoke in a military hospital. He was fortunate to be alive—he'd been shot just behind the ear, but doctors had operated, and he could now walk and talk normally.

Tragically, the bullet had damaged the part of his brain that recognized faces. He now looked at his wife without a spark of recognition; he couldn't recognize his own mother. Even the face in the mirror was foreign to him—he couldn't tell if it was a man or a woman.<sup>1</sup>

He'd become face-blind—a condition that affects millions of people.<sup>2</sup>

People who are severely face-blind try to identify others by memorizing rules—a rule for recognizing a daughter by the pattern of her freckles or a friend by her shuffling gait.

## Growing Up

Here's a second story, closer to home: As a young boy, I often saw my mom as the rule maker. She decided when I could play and when I had to go to bed or, worse, pull weeds in the yard.

She obviously loved me. But too often and to my shame, I saw her only as “She Who Must Be Obeyed.”

Only years later did I come to see her as a real person. I am embarrassed that I never really noticed her sacrifice or wondered why for years she only ever wore the same two old skirts (while I got new school clothes) or why, at the end of the day, she was so tired and eager for me to go to bed early.

## We May Be Face-Blind

Perhaps you've noticed that these two stories are really one story—for too many years, I was, in effect, face-blind. I failed to see my mom as a real person. I saw her rules but didn't see in them her love.

I tell you these two stories to make one point: I suspect you know someone (perhaps you *are* someone) who suffers from a kind of spiritual face blindness.

You may struggle to see God as a loving Father. You may look heavenward and see not the face of love and mercy but a thicket of rules through which you must wend your way. Perhaps you believe God rules in His heavens, speaks through His prophets, and loves your sister, but you secretly wonder whether He loves you.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps you have felt the iron rod in your hand but not yet felt your Savior's love to which it leads.<sup>4</sup>

I suspect you know people like this because for a long time, I *was* someone like this—I was spiritually face-blind.

I thought my life was about following rules and measuring up to abstract standards. I knew God loved *you* perfectly but didn't feel it myself. I'm afraid I thought more about getting into heaven than being with my Heavenly Father.

If you, like me, can sometimes only lip-synch but not “sing the song of redeeming love,”<sup>5</sup> what can we do?

The answer, as President Russell M. Nelson reminds us, is always Jesus.<sup>6</sup> And that is very good news.

## Sir, We Would Like to See Jesus

There's a short verse in John that I love. It tells of a group of outsiders who make their way to a disciple with an important request. “Sir,” they say, “we would [like to] see Jesus.”<sup>7</sup>

That is what we all want—we want to see Jesus for who He is and to feel His love. This should be the reason for most of what we do in the Church—and certainly of every sacrament meeting. If you're ever wondering what kind of lesson to teach, what kind of meeting to plan, and whether to just give up on the deacons and play dodgeball, you might take this verse as your guide: will this help people see and love Jesus Christ? If not, maybe try something else.

When I realized that I was spiritually face-blind, that I saw rules but not the face of the Father's mercy, I knew it wasn't the Church's fault. It wasn't God's, and it didn't mean everything was lost; it's something we *all* have to learn. Even the early witnesses to the Resurrection often came face-to-face with the resurrected Lord but did not recognize Him; from the Garden Tomb to the shores of Galilee, His first followers “saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.”<sup>8</sup> They had to learn to recognize Him, and so do we.<sup>9</sup>

## Charity

When I realized I was spiritually face-blind, I started to follow Mormon's counsel to pray “with all the energy of heart” to be filled with the love promised His disciples—my love for Him and His love for me—and to “see him as he is ... and have this hope.”<sup>10</sup> I prayed for years to be able to follow the first great commandment to love God and to feel that “first great *truth* ... that God loves *us* with all of *His* heart, might, mind, and strength.”<sup>11</sup>

## The Gospels

I also read and reread and reread the four Gospels—this time reading not to extract rules but to see who He is and what He loves. And, in time, I was swept away by the river of love that flowed from Him.

Jesus announced at the outset that He had come “to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind.”<sup>12</sup>

This wasn’t just a to-do list or good PR; it is the shape of His love.

Open the Gospels at random; on almost every page we see Him caring for people who suffer—socially, spiritually, and physically. He touches people considered polluted and unclean<sup>13</sup> and feeds the hungry.<sup>14</sup>

What is your favorite story of Jesus? I suspect it shows the Son of God reaching out to embrace or offer hope to someone on the margins—the leper,<sup>15</sup> the hated Samaritan,<sup>16</sup> the accused and scandalous sinner,<sup>17</sup> or the national enemy.<sup>18</sup> That kind of grace is amazing.

Try writing down every time He praises or heals or eats with an outsider, and you will run low on ink before you leave Luke.

As I saw this, my heart leapt in loving recognition, and I began to feel that He might love me. As President Nelson taught, “The more you learn about the Savior, the easier it will be to trust in His mercy, His infinite love.”<sup>19</sup> And the more you will trust and love your Heavenly Father.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland has taught us that Jesus came to show “us who and what God our Eternal Father is like, how completely devoted He is to His children in every age and nation.”<sup>20</sup>

Paul says God is “the Father of [all] mercies, and the God of all comfort.”<sup>21</sup>

If you see Him differently, please keep trying.

## Covenants and God’s Embrace

Prophets invite us to seek His face.<sup>22</sup> I take this as a reminder that we worship our Father, not a formula, and that we’re not finished until we see Jesus as the face of our Father’s love<sup>23</sup> and follow Him, not just His rules.<sup>24</sup>

When prophets and apostles talk of covenants, they aren’t like coaches yelling out from (red velvet) bleachers, telling us to “try harder!” They want us to see our covenants are fundamentally about relationships<sup>25</sup> and can be a cure for spiritual face blindness.<sup>26</sup> They are not rules to earn His love; He already loves you perfectly. Our challenge is to understand and shape our life to that love.<sup>27</sup>

We try to see through our covenants, as if through a window, to the face of the Father’s mercy behind.

Covenants are the shape of God’s embrace.

## The River of God's Love

Finally, we can learn to see Him by serving Him. “For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served?”<sup>28</sup>

A few years ago, I got a calling I didn't feel up to. I awoke early, nervous—but with a phrase in mind I had not heard before: that to serve in this Church is to stand in the river of God's love for His children. This Church is a work party of people with picks and shovels trying to help clear the channel for the river of God's love to reach His children at the end of the row.

Whoever you are, whatever your past, there is room for you in this Church.<sup>29</sup>

Grab a pick and shovel and join the team. Help carry His love to His children, and some of it will splash on you.<sup>30</sup>

Let us seek His loving face, His covenant embrace, and then join arm in arm with His children, and together we will sing “Redeemer of Israel”:

Restore, my dear Savior,  
The light of thy face;  
Thy soul-cheering comfort impart;  
And let the sweet longing  
For thy holy place  
Bring hope to my desolate heart.<sup>31</sup>

May we seek His loving face and then be vessels of His mercy to His children.<sup>32</sup> In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### Notes

1. See Hadyn D. Ellis and Melanie Florence, “Bodamer's (1947) Paper on Prosopagnosia,” *Cognitive Neuropsychology*, vol. 7, no. 2 (1990), 84–91; Joshua Davis, “Face Blind,” *Wired*, Nov. 1, 2006, wired.com.
2. See Dennis Nealon, “How Common Is Face Blindness?,” *Harvard Medical School*, Feb. 24, 2023, hms.harvard.edu; Oliver Sacks, “Face-Blind,” *New Yorker*, Aug. 23, 2010, newyorker.com.
3. “Some Church members accept as true the doctrine, principles, and testimonies proclaimed repeatedly from this pulpit in the Conference Center and in local congregations around the world—and yet may struggle to believe these eternal truths apply specifically in their lives and to their circumstances” (David A. Bednar, “Abide in Me, and I in You; Therefore Walk with Me,” *Liahona*, May 2023, 125).
4. See 1 Nephi 8:19; 15:23. “It is hard to keep the Lord's commandments without faith and trust in Him” (Henry B. Eyring, “The Faith to Ask and Then to Act,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2021, 75).
5. Alma 5:26.
6. See Russell M. Nelson, “The Answer Is Always Jesus Christ,” *Liahona*, May 2023, 127–28.

7. John 12:21.
8. John 20:14. They saw but did not know Him on the road to Emmaus (see Luke 24:16), in a locked room (see Luke 24:37), on the shores of Galilee (see John 21:4), and at the Garden Tomb (see John 20:14).
9. If we seek Him with all our heart and keep going with faith, He will be found.  
 “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil. ...  
 “And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:11, 13).  
 “The day shall come when you shall comprehend even God, being quickened in him and by him.  
 “Then shall ye know that ye have seen me, that I am” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:49–50).  
 “Every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am” (Doctrine and Covenants 93:1).
10. Moroni 7:48. Paul also connects charity with our ability to see clearly. At the conclusion of his great sermon on charity, he writes that though “now we see through a glass, darkly,” we will later see “face to face: ... then shall I know even as also I am known” (1 Corinthians 13:12).
11. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Tomorrow the Lord Will Do Wonders among You,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2016, 127. “The greater definition of ‘the pure love of Christ’ ... is not what we as Christians try but largely fail to demonstrate toward others but rather what Christ totally succeeded in demonstrating toward us. *True* charity has been known only once. It is shown perfectly and purely in Christ’s unflinching, ultimate, and atoning love for us” (Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant: The Messianic Message of the Book of Mormon* [1997], 336).
12. Luke 4:18, New King James Version.
13. See Matthew 8:3; 9:25.
14. See Matthew 14:13–21.
15. See Matthew 8:1–3.
16. See John 4:7–10; He praised the Samaritan (see Luke 10:25–37).
17. See Matthew 21:31; Luke 7:27–50; 15:1–10; John 8:2–12.
18. See Matthew 8:5–13.
19. Russell M. Nelson, “Christ Is Risen; Faith in Him Will Move Mountains,” *Liahona*, May 2021, 103.

20. Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Grandeur of God,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2003, 70. “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9).
21. 2 Corinthians 1:3.
22. See Psalm 27:8; Doctrine and Covenants 88:68.
23. See 2 Corinthians 4:6; Pope Francis, “Misericordiae Vultus: Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy,” *Apostolic Letters*, vatican.va.
24. This is an important theme. It’s not just *the* work of salvation and exaltation but *His* work of salvation and exaltation (see *General Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 1.2, Gospel Library). I don’t just go to a temple but to the house of the Lord; it’s not the Mormon Church but the Church of Jesus Christ (see Russell M. Nelson, “The Correct Name of the Church,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 87–89). Our leaders point us to Him and even remind us that there “is no amorphous entity called ‘the Atonement’ upon which we may call for succor, healing, forgiveness, or power. Jesus Christ is the source” (Russell M. Nelson, “Drawing the Power of Jesus Christ into Our Lives,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2017, 40).
25. “The covenant path is all about our relationship with God”; it is the “path of love— ... compassionate caring for and reaching out to each other” (Russell M. Nelson, “The Everlasting Covenant,” *Liahona*, Oct. 2022, 11).
- See David A. Bednar, “The Blessed and Happy State” (address given at the seminar for new mission leaders, June 24, 2022); Scott Taylor, “Elder Bednar Shares 7 Lessons on ‘the Blessed and Happy State’ of Obedience,” *Church News*, June 27, 2022, [thechurchnews.com](https://www.thechurchnews.com).
- “Entering into sacred covenants and worthily receiving priesthood ordinances yoke us with and bind us to the Lord Jesus Christ and Heavenly Father. This simply means that we trust in the Savior as our Advocate and Mediator and rely on His merits, mercy, and grace during the journey of life. ...
- “Living and loving covenant commitments creates a connection with the Lord that is deeply personal and spiritually powerful. ... Jesus then becomes much more than the central character in scripture stories; His example and teachings influence our every desire, thought, and action” (David A. Bednar, “But We Heeded Them Not,” *Liahona*, May 2022, 15).
- See also D. Todd Christofferson, “Our Relationship with God,” *Liahona*, May 2022, 78–80.
26. “And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh;
- “For without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live” (Doctrine and Covenants 84:21–22).

27. Patricia Holland, “A Future Filled with Hope” (worldwide devotional for young adults, Jan. 8, 2023), Gospel Library:
- “You don’t have to run around chasing after [the hope that He will help you]; you don’t and you can’t manufacture it. Like so much in the realm of grace, you won’t acquire it by leaning on your own strength or on that of another person. There are no secret formulas or any magical mantras involved. ...
- “In fact, the part we play is important but actually very small; God has the larger portion of the task. Our part is to come unto Him in lowliness and simplicity, then we should worry not and fear not.”
28. Mosiah 5:13; see also John 17:3.
29. President Nelson has repeatedly called on us to “expand our circle of love to embrace the whole human family” (“Blessed Are the Peacemakers,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2002, 41). In May 2022 he told young adults that “labels can lead to judging and animosity. Any *abuse* or *prejudice* toward another because of nationality, race, sexual orientation, gender, educational degrees, culture, or other significant identifiers is offensive to our Maker” (“Choices for Eternity” [worldwide devotional for young adults, May 15, 2022], Gospel Library). And importantly, he said: “I grieve that our Black brothers and sisters the world over are enduring the pains of racism and prejudice. Today I call upon our members everywhere to lead out in abandoning attitudes and actions of prejudice. I plead with you to promote respect for all of God’s children” (“Let God Prevail,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2020, 94).
- “Prejudice is not consistent with the revealed word of God. Favor or disfavor with God depends on devotion to Him and His commandments, not on the color of a person’s skin or other attributes.
- “... This includes prejudice based on race, ethnicity, nationality, tribe, gender, age, disability, socioeconomic status, religious belief or nonbelief, and sexual orientation” (*General Handbook*, 38.6.14, Gospel Library).
30. See 1 Nephi 11:25.
31. “Redeemer of Israel,” *Hymns*, no. 6.
32. See Romans 9:23.