

God Knows and Loves You

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Of the Seventy

God's plan of happiness is all about you. You are His precious child and of great worth.

Six years ago our family was traveling at night just outside the city of Oxford. As is often the case with young children, we needed to stop, so we found a service station with an array of shops and restaurants. With precision, we filed out of the car, visited the services, and filed back in, resuming our journey.

Fifteen minutes later our eldest son asked a significant question: "Where is Jasper?" Jasper sits on his own at the back of the car. We assumed he had fallen asleep or was hiding or playing a trick on us.

As his brother inspected the back of the car more closely, we discovered our five-year-old son was not there. Our hearts filled with dread. As we made our way back to the service station, we pleaded with Heavenly Father that Jasper would be kept safe. We called the police and informed them of the situation.

When we anxiously arrived, more than 40 minutes later, we found two police vehicles in the car park, lights flashing. Inside one of them was Jasper, playing with the buttons. I will never forget the joy we felt in being reunited with him.

Many of the Savior's parabolic teachings focus on gathering, restoring, or striving to find that which has been scattered or lost. Among these are the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son.¹

As this incident with Jasper has played in my mind over the years, I have reflected on the divine identity and importance of God's children, the redemptive power of Jesus Christ, and the perfect love of a Father in Heaven, who knows you and me. I hope to bear witness of these truths today.

I. Children of God

Life is challenging. Many people feel overwhelmed, alone, isolated, or exhausted. When things are difficult, we may feel that we have wandered or fallen behind. Knowing that we are all children of God and members of His eternal family will restore a sense of belonging and purpose.²

President M. Russell Ballard shared: "There is one important identity we all share now and forever. ... That is that you are and have always been a son or daughter of God. ...

Understanding this truth—really understanding it and embracing it—is life-changing.”³

Do not misunderstand or devalue how important you are to your Father in Heaven. You are not an accidental by-product of nature, a cosmic orphan, or the result of matter plus time plus chance. Where there is design, there is a designer.

Your life has meaning and purpose. The ongoing Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ brings light and understanding regarding your divine identity. You are a beloved child of Heavenly Father. You are the subject matter of all those parables and teachings. God loves you so much that He sent His Son to heal, rescue, and redeem you.⁴

Jesus Christ recognized the divine nature and eternal worth of each person.⁵ He explained how the two great commandments to love God and love our neighbor are the foundation of all of God’s commandments.⁶ One of our divine responsibilities is to care for those in need.⁷ This is why as disciples of Jesus Christ we “bear one another’s burdens, ... mourn with those that mourn ... , and comfort those that stand in need of comfort.”⁸

Religion is not only about our relationship with God; it is also about our relationship with each other. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland explained that the English word *religion* comes from the Latin *religare*, meaning “to tie” or, more literally, “to re-tie.” Thus, “true religion [is] the tie that binds us to God and to each other.”⁹

How we treat one another truly matters. President Russell M. Nelson teaches, “The Savior’s message is clear: His *true* disciples build, lift, encourage, persuade, and inspire.”¹⁰ This is even more important when our fellow travelers feel lost, alone, forgotten, or removed.

We do not have to look far to find people who are struggling. We can start by helping someone in our own family, congregation, or local community. We can also seek to relieve the suffering of the 700 million people living in extreme poverty¹¹ or the 100 million people who are forcibly displaced due to persecution, conflict, and identity-based violence.¹² Jesus Christ is the perfect example of caring for those in need—the hungry, the stranger, the sick, the poor, the imprisoned. His work is our work.

Elder Gerrit W. Gong teaches that “our journey to God is often found together.”¹³ As such, our wards should be a refuge for all of God’s children. Are we passively attending church or actively creating communities whose purpose is to worship, remember Christ, and minister to one another?¹⁴ We can heed President Nelson’s counsel to judge less, love more, and extend the pure love of Jesus Christ through our words and actions.¹⁵

II. The Redemptive Power of Jesus Christ

The Atonement of Jesus Christ is the supreme expression of our Heavenly Father’s love for His children.¹⁶ The word *atonement* describes the setting “at one” of those who have been estranged or separated.

Our Savior’s mission was to provide both a way to return to Heavenly Father and relief in the journey. The Savior knows through His experience how to support us through life’s challenges.¹⁷ Make no mistake: Christ is our rescuer and the healer of our souls.

As we exercise faith, He helps us press forward through hardships. He continues to extend His loving and merciful invitation:

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; ... and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”¹⁸

The metaphor of the yoke is powerful. As President Howard W. Hunter explained: “The yoke was a device ... that allowed the strength of a second animal to be linked and coupled with the effort of a single animal, sharing and reducing the heavy labor of the [task in hand]. A burden that was overwhelming or perhaps impossible for one to bear could be equitably and comfortably borne by two bound together with a common yoke.”¹⁹

President Nelson taught: “You come unto Christ to be yoked with Him and with His power, so that you’re not pulling life’s load alone. You’re pulling life’s load yoked with the Savior and Redeemer of the world.”²⁰

How do we yoke or bind ourselves to the Savior? Elder David A. Bednar explains:

“Making and keeping sacred covenants yokes us to and with the Lord Jesus Christ. In essence, the Savior is beckoning us to rely upon and pull together with Him. ...

“We are not and never need be alone.”²¹

To anyone burdened, lost, confused: You do not have to do this alone.²² Through the Atonement of Christ and His ordinances, you can be yoked or bound to Him. He will lovingly provide the strength and healing you need to face the journey ahead. He is the refuge from our storms still.²³

III. Heavenly Father’s Love

For the record, Jasper is witty, affectionate, intelligent, and rambunctious. But the key to this story is he is mine. He is my son, and I love him more than he will ever know. If an imperfect, earthly father feels this way about his child, can you imagine how a perfect, glorified, loving Heavenly Father feels about you?

To my dear friends of the rising generation, Gen Z and Gen Alpha: Please know faith requires work.²⁴ We live in a time when, for many, only “seeing is believing.” Faith can be challenging and requires choices. But prayers are answered.²⁵ And answers can be felt.²⁶ Some of the most real things in life are not seen; they are felt, known, and experienced. They too are real.

Jesus Christ wants you to know and have a relationship with your Father in Heaven.²⁷ He taught, “What man among you, having a son, and he shall be standing out, and shall say, Father, open thy house that I may come in and sup with thee, will not say, Come in, my son; for mine is thine, and thine is mine?”²⁸ Can you think of a more personal, loving image of God the Eternal Father?

You are His child. If you are feeling lost, if you have questions or lack wisdom, if you are struggling with your circumstances or wrestling with spiritual dissonance, turn to Him. Pray to Him for comfort, love, answers, and direction. Whatever the need and wherever you are, pour

out your heart to your Heavenly Father. For some, you may want to follow President Nelson's invitation and ask "if He is really there—if He knows you. Ask Him how He feels about you. And then listen."²⁹

Dear brothers and sisters:

- Know your Father in Heaven. He is perfect and loving.
- Know who Jesus Christ is.³⁰ He is our Savior and Redeemer. Bind yourself and those you love to Him.
- And know who you are. Know your true divine identity. God's plan of happiness is all about you. You are His precious child and of great worth. He knows and loves you.

Of these simple but foundational truths I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. See Luke 15:4–32.
2. See *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ* (2023), 1.
3. M. Russell Ballard, "Children of Heavenly Father" (Brigham Young University devotional, Mar. 3, 2020), speeches.byu.edu.
4. See John 3:16; Mosiah 15:1; 3 Nephi 17:6–10.
5. See *Preach My Gospel*, chapter 3.
6. See Matthew 22:36–40.
7. See *General Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 1.2, Gospel Library.
8. Mosiah 18:8, 9.
9. Jeffrey R. Holland, "Religion: Bound by Loving Ties" (Brigham Young University devotional, Aug. 16, 2016), speeches.byu.edu.
10. See Russell M. Nelson, "Peacemakers Needed," *Liahona*, May 2023, 99.
11. "The number of people in extreme poverty rose by 70 million to more than 700 million people" ("Poverty," Nov. 30, 2022, World Bank, [worldbank.org](https://www.worldbank.org)).
12. "More than 100 million people are forcibly displaced" ("Refugee Data Finder," May 23, 2022, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, [unhcr.org](https://www.unhcr.org)).
13. Gerrit W. Gong, "Room in the Inn," *Liahona*, May 2021, 25.
14. See *General Handbook*, 1.3.7, Gospel Library.
15. See Russell M. Nelson, "Peacemakers Needed," 98–101.
16. See John 3:16.
17. See Alma 7:11–12; Doctrine and Covenants 122:8.

18. Matthew 11:28–29.
19. Howard W. Hunter, “Come unto Me,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 18.
20. “The Mission and Ministry of the Savior: A Discussion with Elder Russell M. Nelson,” *Ensign*, June 2005, 18.
21. David A. Bednar, “Bear Up Their Burdens with Ease,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2014, 88.
22. President Camille N. Johnson said: “Brothers and sisters, I can’t go at it alone, and I don’t need to, and I won’t. Choosing to be bound to my Savior, Jesus Christ, through the covenants I have made with God, ‘I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me’ [Philippians 4:13]” (“Jesus Christ Is Relief,” *Liahona*, May 2023, 82).
23. See Psalm 62:6–8.
24. See James 2:17.
25. See Matthew 7:7–8; James 1:5.
26. “He [the Holy Ghost] is the Comforter (John 14:26). As the soothing voice of a loving parent can quiet a crying child, the whisperings of the Spirit can calm our fears, hush the nagging worries of our life, and comfort us when we grieve. The Holy Ghost can fill us ‘with hope and perfect love’ and ‘teach [us] the peaceable things of the kingdom’ (Moroni 8:26; Doctrine and Covenants 36:2)” (Topics and Questions, “Holy Ghost,” Gospel Library).

 “He [the Holy Ghost] ‘witnesses of the Father and the Son’ (2 Nephi 31:18). It is only through the power of the Holy Ghost that we can receive a sure testimony of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

 “The Holy Ghost testifies of truth, and it is through His power that we ‘may know the truth of all things’ (Moroni 10:5)” (“The Holy Ghost Testifies of Truth,” *Liahona*, Mar. 2010, 14, 15).

 “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me” (John 15:26).
27. See John 14:6–7; 17:3.
28. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 7:17 (in the Bible appendix).
29. Russell M. Nelson, “Come, Follow Me,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2019, 90.
30. See Mark 8:27–29.