

Think Celestial!

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Your choices will determine where you will live throughout eternity, the kind of body with which you will be resurrected, and those with whom you will live forever.

My dear brothers and sisters, I am deeply grateful to speak with you today. At my age, each new day brings wonderful as well as challenging surprises. Three weeks ago, I injured the muscles of my back. So, while I have delivered more than 100 general conference addresses standing, today I thought I would do so sitting. I pray that the Spirit will carry my message into your hearts today.

I recently celebrated my 99th birthday and thus commenced my 100th year of living. I am often asked the secret to living so long. A better question would be “What have I learned in nearly a century of living?”

Time today does not allow me to answer that question fully, but may I share one of the most crucial lessons I have learned.

I have learned that Heavenly Father’s plan for us is *fabulous*, that what we do in this life really matters, and that the Savior’s Atonement is what makes our Father’s plan possible.¹

As I have wrestled with the intense pain caused by my recent injury, I have felt even deeper appreciation for Jesus Christ and the incomprehensible gift of His Atonement. Think of it! The Savior suffered “pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind”² so that He can comfort us, heal us, rescue us in times of need.³ Jesus Christ described His experience in Gethsemane and on Calvary: “Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore.”⁴ My injury has caused me to reflect again and again on “the greatness of the Holy One of Israel.”⁵ During my healing, the Lord has manifested His divine power in peaceful and unmistakable ways.

Because of Jesus Christ’s infinite Atonement, our Heavenly Father’s plan is a perfect plan! An understanding of God’s fabulous plan takes the mystery out of life and the uncertainty out of our future. It allows each of *us* to choose *how* we will live here on earth and *where* we will live forever. The baseless notion that we should “eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die; and it shall be well with us”⁶ is one of the most absurd lies in the universe.

Here is the great news of God’s plan: the very things that will make your *mortal* life the best *it* can be are exactly the *same* things that will make your life throughout all *eternity* the best *it* can be! Today, to assist you to qualify for the rich blessings Heavenly Father has for you, I invite you to adopt the practice of “thinking celestial”!⁷ Thinking celestial means being spiritually minded.

We learn from the Book of Mormon prophet Jacob that “to be spiritually-minded is life eternal.”⁸

Mortality is a master class in learning to choose the things of greatest eternal import. Far too many people live as though this life is all there is. However, your choices today will determine three things: where you will live throughout all eternity, the kind of body with which you will be resurrected, and those with whom you will live forever. So, think celestial.

In my first message as President of the Church, I encouraged you to begin with the end in mind. This means making the celestial kingdom your eternal goal and then carefully considering where each of your decisions while here on earth will place you in the next world.⁹

The Lord has clearly taught that only men and women who are sealed as husband and wife in the temple, and who keep their covenants, will be together throughout the eternities. He said, “All covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations, that are *not* made and entered into and sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise ... have an end when men are dead.”¹⁰

Thus, if we *unwisely* choose to live *telestial* laws now, we are choosing to be resurrected with a *telestial* body. We are choosing *not* to live with our families forever.

So, my dear brothers and sisters, *how* and *where* and with *whom* do you want to live forever? You get to choose.¹¹

When you make choices, I invite you to take the long view—an eternal view. Put Jesus Christ first because your eternal life is dependent upon your faith in Him and in His Atonement.¹² It is also dependent upon your obedience to His laws. Obedience paves the way for a joyful life for you today and a grand, eternal reward tomorrow.

When you are confronted with a dilemma, think celestial! When tested by temptation, think celestial! When life or loved ones let you down, think celestial! When someone dies prematurely, think celestial. When someone lingers with a devastating illness, think celestial. When the pressures of life crowd in upon you, think celestial! As you recover from an accident or injury, as I am doing now, think celestial!

As you focus on thinking celestial, expect to encounter opposition.¹³ Decades ago, a professional colleague criticized me for having “too much temple” in me, and more than one supervisor penalized me because of my faith. I am convinced, however, that thinking celestial enhanced my career.

As you think celestial, your heart will gradually change. You will want to pray more often and more sincerely. Please don’t let your prayers sound like a shopping list. The Lord’s perspective transcends your mortal wisdom. His response to your prayers may surprise you and will help you to think celestial.

Consider the Lord’s response to Joseph Smith when he pleaded for relief in Liberty Jail. The Lord taught the Prophet that his inhumane treatment would give him experience and be for his good.¹⁴ “If thou endure it well,” the Lord promised, “God shall exalt thee on high.”¹⁵ The Lord was teaching Joseph to think celestial and to envision an eternal reward rather than focus on the

excruciating difficulties of the day. Our prayers can be—and should be—living discussions with our Heavenly Father.

As you think celestial, you will find yourself avoiding *anything* that robs you of your agency. *Any* addiction—be it gaming, gambling, debt, drugs, alcohol, anger, pornography, sex, or even food—offends God. Why? Because your obsession becomes your god. You look to *it* rather than to *Him* for solace. If you struggle with an addiction, seek the spiritual and professional help you need. Please do not let an obsession rob you of your freedom to follow God’s fabulous plan.

Thinking celestial will also help you obey the law of chastity. Few things will complicate your life more quickly than violating this divine law. For those who have made covenants with God, immorality is one of the quickest ways to lose your testimony.

Many of the adversary’s most relentless temptations involve violations of moral purity. The power to create life is the *one privilege* of godhood that Heavenly Father allows His mortal children to exercise. Thus, God set clear guidelines for the use of this living, divine power. Physical intimacy is *only* for a man and a woman who are married to each other.

Much of the world does not believe this, but public opinion is not the arbiter of truth. The Lord has declared that no unchaste person will attain the celestial kingdom. So when you make decisions regarding morality, please think celestial. And if you have been unchaste, I plead with you to repent. Come unto Christ and receive His promise of *complete* forgiveness as you fully repent of your sins.¹⁶

As you think celestial, you will view trials and opposition in a new light. When someone you love attacks truth, think celestial, and don’t question *your* testimony. The Apostle Paul prophesied that “in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.”¹⁷

There is no end to the adversary’s deceptions. Please be prepared. Never take counsel from those who do not believe. Seek guidance from voices you can trust—from prophets, seers, and revelators and from the whisperings of the Holy Ghost, who “will show unto you *all* things what ye should do.”¹⁸ Please do the spiritual work to increase your capacity to receive personal revelation.¹⁹

As you think celestial, your faith will increase. When I was a young intern, my income was \$15 a month. One night, my wife Dantzel asked if I was paying tithing on that meager stipend. I was not. I quickly repented and began paying the additional \$1.50 in monthly tithing.

Was the Church any different because we increased our tithing? Of course not. However, becoming a full-tithe payer changed *me*. That is when I learned that paying tithing is all about faith, not money. As I became a full-tithe payer, the windows of heaven began to open for me. I attribute several subsequent professional opportunities to our faithful payment of tithes.²⁰

Paying tithing requires faith, and it also *builds* faith in God and His Beloved Son.

Choosing to live a virtuous life in a sexualized, politicized world builds faith.

Spending more time in the temple builds faith. And your service and worship in the temple will help you to think celestial. The temple is a place of revelation. There you are shown how to

progress toward a celestial life. There you are drawn closer to the Savior and given greater access to His power. There you are guided in solving the problems in your life, even your most perplexing problems.

The ordinances and covenants of the temple are of eternal significance. We continue to build more temples to make these sacred possibilities become a reality in each of your lives. We are grateful to announce our plans to build a temple in each of the following 20 locations:

- Savai'i, Samoa
- Cancún, Mexico
- Piura, Peru
- Huancayo, Peru
- Viña del Mar, Chile
- Goiânia, Brazil
- João Pessoa, Brazil
- Calabar, Nigeria
- Cape Coast, Ghana
- Luanda, Angola
- Mbuji-Mayi, Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Laoag, Philippines
- Osaka, Japan
- Kahului, Maui, Hawaii
- Fairbanks, Alaska
- Vancouver, Washington
- Colorado Springs, Colorado
- Tulsa, Oklahoma
- Roanoke, Virginia
- Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

The Lord is directing us to build these temples to help us think celestial. God lives. Jesus is the Christ. His Church has been restored to bless all of God's children. I so testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. See John 6:38.
2. Alma 7:11.

3. See Alma 7:12.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 19:18.
5. 2 Nephi 9:40.
6. 2 Nephi 28:7.
7. It may prove to be easier to repent and progress spiritually here, while our spirit is united with our body, than in the next world between the time we die and are resurrected. As Amulek taught the apostate Zoramites, “This life is the time ... to prepare to meet God” (see Alma 34:32–35).
8. 2 Nephi 9:39.
9. See Mosiah 4:30, where King Benjamin admonishes his people, “If ye do not watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds, and observe the commandments of God, and continue in the faith ... , ye must perish.”
10. Doctrine and Covenants 132:7; emphasis added.
11. Of course, your agency cannot override another’s agency and the attendant consequences. I was desperate to be sealed to my parents. However, I had to wait until *they* chose to be endowed, when they were more than 80 years of age. Then they were sealed as husband and wife, and we children were sealed to them.
12. The scriptures repeatedly testify that the gift of eternal life is only possible through the merits, mercy, and grace of the Savior Jesus Christ (see, for example, Moroni 7:41; see also 2 Nephi 2:6–8, 27).
13. See 2 Nephi 2:11.
14. See Doctrine and Covenants 122:7.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 121:8.
16. See Isaiah 1:16–18; Doctrine and Covenants 58:42–43.
17. 1 Timothy 4:1. The next verse continues, “Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron” (verse 2). Paul also declared that all who “live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12).
18. 2 Nephi 32:5; emphasis added. If we will ask, we may “receive revelation upon revelation, knowledge upon knowledge” (Doctrine and Covenants 42:61).
19. See Russell M. Nelson, “Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2018, 96.
20. This is not to imply a cause-and-effect relationship. Some who never pay tithing attain professional opportunities, while some who pay tithing do not. The promise is that the windows of heaven *will be* opened to the tithe payer. The nature of the blessings will vary.