

Foreordained to Serve

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Of the Seventy

Our Heavenly Father desires to reveal to you your personal foreordination, and He will do so as you seek to learn and follow His will.

This evening, I speak to the youth of the Church, the rising generation of young men and young women who are the standard bearers for the next generation.

In October 2013, our beloved prophet, President Russell M. Nelson, declared: “Your Heavenly Father has known you for a very long time. You, as His son or daughter, were chosen by Him to come to earth at this precise time, to be a leader in His great work on earth.”¹

Two years ago, President Nelson continued:

“Today I reaffirm strongly that the Lord has asked *every* worthy, able young man to prepare for and serve a mission. For Latter-day Saint young men, missionary service is a priesthood responsibility. You young men have been reserved for this time when the promised gathering of Israel is taking place. ...

“For you young and able sisters, a mission is also a powerful, but *optional*, opportunity. ... Pray to know if the Lord would have you serve a mission, and the Holy Ghost will respond to your heart and mind.”²

Our prophet’s references to the Lord holding the youth of our day in reserve for this time in the gathering of Israel and his invitation to pray to know what the Lord would have you do are, in part, references to the life you lived and blessings you received from God before you were born on this earth.³ All of us who are born on this earth first lived with our Heavenly Father as His spirit children.⁴ The Lord declared to Moses, “I, the Lord God, created all things ... spiritually, before they were naturally upon the face of the earth.”⁵

When He created you spiritually, He loved you as His spirit sons and daughters and embedded within each of you a divine nature and eternal destiny.⁶

During your premortal life, you “developed [your] identity and increased [your] spiritual capabilities.”⁷ You were blessed with the gift of agency, the ability to make choices for yourself, and you did make important decisions, such as the decision to follow Heavenly Father’s plan of happiness, which is to “obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress ... and ultimately realize [your] divine destiny as heirs of eternal life.”⁸ This decision affected your life then, in your premortal life, and it continues to affect your life now.⁹ As a child of God living in your premortal life, you “grew in intelligence and learned to love the truth.”¹⁰

Before you were born, God appointed each of you to fulfill specific missions during your mortal life upon the earth.¹¹ If you remain worthy, the blessings of that premortal decree will enable you to have all kinds of opportunities in this life, including opportunities to serve in the Church and to participate in the most important work happening on the earth today: the gathering of Israel.¹² Those premortal promises and blessings are called your foreordination. “The doctrine of foreordination applies to all members of the Church.”¹³ Foreordination does not guarantee that you will receive certain callings or responsibilities. These blessings and opportunities come in this life as a result of your righteous exercise of agency, just as your foreordination in your premortal life came as a result of righteousness.¹⁴ As you prove yourself worthy and progress along the covenant path, you will receive opportunities to serve in your Young Women class or priesthood quorum. You will be blessed to serve in the temple, to become a ministering brother or sister, and to serve a mission as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Why does it matter to seek to know and understand your foreordination? In a day when questions abound, when so many seek to know their true identity, the fact that God knows and has blessed each one of us individually before we were ever born on this earth with “essential characteristic[s] of ... premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose” brings sweet peace and assurance to our mind and heart.¹⁵ Knowing who you are begins with understanding God’s foreordained blessings bestowed upon you before you were ever born on this earth. Our Heavenly Father desires to reveal to you your personal foreordination, and He will do so as you seek to learn and follow His will.¹⁶

I love to read President Nelson’s Instagram posts. One of my favorites was on July 20, 2022. He wrote:

“I believe that if the Lord were speaking to you directly, the first thing He would make sure you understand is your true identity. My dear friends, you are literally spirit children of God. ...

“... Make no mistake about it: Your potential is divine. With your diligent seeking, God will give you glimpses of who you may become.”¹⁷

May I share with you how my earthly father taught me to discover my identity and God’s plan in my life?

One Saturday morning when I was 13 years old, I was mowing the grass as part of my weekly chores. When I finished, I heard the door close at the back of our house and looked to see my father calling me to join him. I walked to the back porch, and he invited me to sit with him on the steps. It was a beautiful morning. I still recall him sitting so close to me that our shoulders were touching. He began by telling me he loved me. He asked me what my goals were in life. I thought, “Well, that’s easy.” I knew two things for sure: I wanted to be taller, and I wanted to go camping more often. I was a simple soul. He smiled, paused for a moment, and said: “Steve, I’d like to share something with you that’s very important to me. I’ve prayed that our Heavenly Father will cause what I say now to be indelibly imprinted in your mind and on your soul so that you’ll never forget.”

My father had my full attention in that moment. He turned and looked at me in the eyes and said, “Son, protect the private times of your life.” There was a long pause as he let the meaning sink deep into my heart.

He then continued, “You know, those times when you’re the only one around and no one else knows what you’re doing? Those times when you think, ‘Whatever I do now doesn’t affect anyone else, only me’?”

Then he said, “More than any other time in your life, what you do during the private times of your life will have the greatest impact on how you confront challenges and heartache you will face; and what you do during the private times of your life will also have a greater impact on how you confront the successes and joy you will experience than any other time in your life.”

My father received the wish of his heart. The sound and cadence of his voice, and the love I felt in his words, were indelibly imprinted in my mind and on my soul that day.

I have learned over the years that the greatest miracle of that day on the steps of my childhood home was that, in the private times of my life, I could go to God in prayer to receive revelation. My father was teaching me how I could learn of God’s foreordained blessings. In those private moments, I learned the Book of Mormon is the word of God. I learned God had foreordained me to serve a mission. I learned that God knows me and hears and answers my prayers. I learned that Jesus is the Christ, our Savior and Redeemer.

Though I have made many mistakes since that memorable day with my father, striving to protect the private times of my life has remained an anchor amid the storms of life and has enabled me to seek safe haven and the healing, strengthening blessings of our Savior’s love and atoning sacrifice.

My young brothers and sisters, as you protect the private times of your life with wholesome recreation; listening to uplifting music; reading the scriptures; having regular, meaningful prayer; and making efforts to receive and ponder your patriarchal blessing, you will receive revelation. In President Nelson’s words, your eyes will become “wide open to the truth that this life really *is* the time when you get to decide what kind of life *you* want to live forever.”¹⁸

Our Father in Heaven will answer your prayers, especially your prayers offered during the private times of your life. He will reveal to you your foreordained gifts and talents, and you will feel His love envelop you, if you will sincerely ask and genuinely desire to know. As you protect the private times of your life, your participation in the ordinances and covenants of the gospel will be more meaningful. You will more fully bind yourself to God in the covenants you make with Him, and you will be lifted to have greater hope, faith, and assurance in the promises He has made to you. Do you want to know God’s plan for you? I bear witness He wants you to know, and He inspired His prophet to the world to invite each of us to pray and receive this eye-opening experience for ourselves.¹⁹ I bear witness to the reality and power of our Savior’s atoning sacrifice that makes it possible to live up to and enjoy all of God’s foreordained blessings, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. Russell M. Nelson, “Decisions for Eternity,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 107.
2. Russell M. Nelson, “Preaching the Gospel of Peace,” *Liahona*, May 2022, 6.

3. See Russell M. Nelson, “Hope of Israel” (worldwide youth devotional, June 3, 2018), Gospel Library: “Our Heavenly Father has reserved many of His most noble spirits—perhaps, I might say, His finest team—for this final phase. Those noble spirits—those finest players, those heroes—are *you!*”
4. See Jeremiah 1:5.
5. Moses 3:5.
6. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” Gospel Library; “Young Women Theme,” Gospel Library; “Aaronic Priesthood Quorum Theme,” Gospel Library.
7. Topics and Questions, “Premortal Life: Overview,” Gospel Library.
8. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” Gospel Library.
9. See Alma 13:1–4.
10. Topics and Questions, “Premortal Life: Overview,” Gospel Library; see also Doctrine and Covenants 138:55–56.
11. See Topics and Questions, “Foreordination,” Gospel Library.
12. See Russell M. Nelson, “Hope of Israel.”
13. Topics and Questions, “Foreordination,” Gospel Library; see also Jeremiah 1:5; “What Is the Relationship between Foreordination and Agency?,” *Liahona*, Oct. 2023, 47; Guide to the Scriptures, “Foreordination,” Gospel Library.
14. See Alma 13:1–4; Doctrine and Covenants 130:20–21.
15. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” Gospel Library.
16. See Jeremiah 1:5.
17. Russell M. Nelson, Instagram, July 20, 2022, [Instagram.com/russellmnelson](https://www.instagram.com/russellmnelson).
18. Russell M. Nelson, “Choices for Eternity” (worldwide devotional for young adults, May 15, 2022), Gospel Library.
19. See Russell M. Nelson, “Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2018, 93–96.