

Agency in Progression

PART V:

Up to this point in time we have described hinge points (what are they and how important they are), what are the major hinge points in life, when the major hinge points in life are reached, and the synonymous nature of the hinge points and having ones calling election made sure or reaching the point of no return. In this section I hope to bring it all together with a “how-to”. Do I have to create a how-to out of nothing? No. The how-to for everything in parts 1-4 was given to us by the Lord in Doctrine and Covenants 88:119. The Lord says, “Organize yourselves; prepare **every needful thing**; and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God.” Meaning, these houses described by the Lord contain in them everything needful thing. Do these “houses” match up?

1. A house of faith promotes: faith
2. A house of prayer promotes: virtue (repentance)
3. A house of learning promotes: knowledge
4. A house of fasting promotes: temperance and patience
5. A house of glory promotes: godliness
6. A house of order promotes: brotherly kindness
7. A house of God (ie. A temple) promotes: charity (Christ himself)

They match up perfectly.

So what we need to identify is what makes each of these houses. Once we know what makes each of them we can create simple to-dos. The other key of insight here is progression, where it becomes impossible to truly build these houses out of order.

1. Why is building this house at this time important
2. What makes it that house
3. What are the to-dos to build the house

A House of Faith

Why is a house of faith first? Because the first principle of the gospel is “faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.” Jesus Christ is the foundation from which we are to build our house of our lives on. If we were to build any of the other house first, we would be building on sandy foundations.

What makes a house of faith? The Lord in the first four of the ten commandments described what a house of faith is, and also by doing so, showed the importance of this house (40% of the ten commandments deal with this house). What are these 4 commandments? Have no other gods, do not worship the works of your hands, don’t take the name of the Lord in vain and keep the sabbath day holy. Ie. Idolatry.

How do we create a house of faith: partake of the sacrament weekly, keep sabbath day holy, eliminate false gods/idols from our home while putting Christ predominately in our home (eg. Pictures of Christ).

Sit down and make a list of all the things you do in the day and the time you put into each of them. You will know who your God/gods are.

A House of Prayer

Why is a house of prayer second? Prayer has to come after faith because whom are you praying to? Even if you are just “experimenting upon the word” (Alma 32:27) you are still exercising “a particle of faith”- faith precedes the prayer. We also learn that the “first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance...” (Articles of Faith 1:4). Prayer, virtue, repentance and accountability are all synonymous.

What makes a house of prayer? We are commanded to pray always, repent daily, to be accountable before men and God. A house of prayer is all of these things; one that prays often, is accountable to God, repents often and frequently and thus is full of virtue.

How do we create a house of prayer? You are commanded to do all these things (always), yet you must schedule if you are to glean any value from them. As the old saying goes, if you fail to plan, you plan to fail. If your prayers or repentance etc aren't scheduled, you will be rushed and they won't get the due attention that they require. Schedule individual and family prayers daily, where you can be accountable and repent of past deeds and plan for future deeds. Likewise with the Lord, the family unit needs to have such meetings- plan meetings daily where the family can get together where they can have an accounting and repent with each other and plan for the future. This family event makes the most sense at the end of the day. Members have frequently referred to this style of meeting as a family council.

A House of Learning

Why is a house of learning next? Joseph Smith, when talking of Peter's virtues to have your calling and election made sure said, “What is the secret-the starting point? There could not anything be given, pertaining to life and godliness, without knowledge” (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p.305). We also know that faith cometh “by hearing the word of God” (Romans 10:17) then once the word has been tested (Alma 32) it becomes “knowledge unto him.” We also know that knowledge is the last of the 3 things pertaining unto the temptation of pride. With what we identified above we know that knowledge and thus a house of learning appears next- it must come after faith and before godliness.

What makes a house of learning? There are two types of learning- temporal learning and spiritual learning, and the Lord has commanded us to “seek knowledge from the best books” (D&C 88:118). Learning is a part of eternal progression and one is commanded to continue to learn regardless of age, until the end of this mortal probation. Due to the importance of this, countless of prophets have counseled parents to not delegate the responsibility of teaching your children to another.

How do we create a house of learning? The first and most important thing is to create an atmosphere of learning. If you create an atmosphere that is hostile to learning, people will only learn as much as they need to learn and then they will coast the rest of their life. Create an environment where everyone is in the process of learning daily. Homeschooling is obviously a must. Schedule daily personal and collective age appropriate spiritual learning. Also schedule and set goals pertaining to worldly skills and knowledge that is worthy of your attention.

A House of Fasting

Why is a house of fasting next? The first three houses deal with gaining control over one's mind (ie. Pride). Once one gains control over his mind, the next thing a person needs to gain control over is their body. If one can't control one's mind, he will have no ability to control his body, and if he has no control over his body, they can't affect their environment or their interactions with others (the next houses).

What makes a house of fasting? Fasting is the process by which we give the Spirit strength over the body. Fasting is the process by which we gain control over our body and our emotions. The control of one's emotions and the control of one's body is patience and temperance. Fasting is typically done from withholding food and water from the body for 24 hours but can and should be done with anything that you find has too much control over your life (ie. When President Nelson asked the women in 2018 to fast from social media for 10 days).

How do we create a house of fasting? We are commanded repeatedly to fast and pray often. When the Lord was teaching the sacrament to the Nephites he said "meet and pray often." If we are to interpret the Lord's words as literal, when He said often he meant weekly. So when the command is given to do something always, we can infer it should take place daily, and when the Lord tells us to do something "often" it should take place at least on a weekly basis. We as a church are commanded to fast *together* once a month, but much like with the young men and young women, even if a combined activity happens once a month it doesn't mean they don't meet separately for the other weeks of the month. Fasting gives us an opportunity to reflect on how much control things have over our life, gives us perspective and allows us to more clearly determine what things we should bring back into our life and in what quantity. What to do: fast from food and water for 24 hours weekly. If you are unsure about what to fast for, here is a blueprint you can follow until you come up with your own. 1st week: gratitude, 2nd week: forgiveness of sins/strength to overcome temptation, 3rd week: specific things the family needs, 4th week: ward/branch/community (fast Sunday), 5th week: missionary work. To practice temperance: make and keep an exercise schedule, sleep schedule, food schedule, sex schedule, as well as any other appetite that needs to "be bridled."

A House of Glory

Why is a house of glory next? You can't lift others to a higher standard than that of yourself. If you don't have control of your mind, you don't have control of your body and you don't have control of your emotions; you will not be able to help anybody else and that is what a house of glory is.

What makes a house of glory? The Lord said, "For behold, this is my work and my glory- to bring to pass the immortality and the eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39). The Lord also said, "And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father! And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me into the kingdom of my Father, how great will be your joy if you should bring many souls unto me!" (D&C 18:15-16) If God's house of glory is built upon missionary work and his children, when the Lord tells us to build a house of glory it is exactly the same. A house of glory is a house of children and a house of missionary work. It is also important to note here once again that you cannot serve God and mammon. And so a house of missionary work and a house of children is antithetical to the world and thus when an individual pursues a house of glory he pursues a lifestyle of godliness. So when Peter says we need to gain godliness, he is telling us to be like God. To be like God is to do what God does and what God does is missionary work and his children.

How do we create a house of glory? “Let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). The road to glory is paved on work; your work should be that of missionary work and family work. You are called to consecrate unto the Lord all of your time, skills, heart and effort to building up the kingdom of God. This means that every spare moment should be spent on missionary work and family work. Genealogy, temple work, inviting your friends to Christ, having children, teaching with the missionaries, etc.- if you limit any of these you by very definition can't be giving your all. Fill the rest of your life with these things.

A House of Order

Why is a house of order next? The first and great commandment is to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, might, mind and strength” (Deut. 6:4-5, Matt. 22:37-38, Luke 10:27, Mark 12:29-30). Building the houses of faith, prayer, learning, fasting and glory and how we overcome the first three temptations of appetite, pride and the world. And thus fulfills the first great commandment. The second great commandment is “like unto the first, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophet” (Matt. 22:39-40, Mark 12:31). The house of order is the second great commandment.

What makes a house of order? How does somebody know that they are being equal? How does somebody know that they are or aren't a respecter of persons? More specifically, how does somebody in a country, like America, know that America the country views all of its citizens equally? How or when does somebody know that the government or an individual is a respecter of persons? The answer is the law and how it is implemented. If you create a family, a society, a state, a country and it is “not a respecter of persons”, it “treats the neighbor as itself”, it would be built upon the law and the law is the same for everyone (ie. it is applied on everyone the same). A house of order is a house of law and a house of law is a house in which “justice is blind.” Meaning, there is no respecter of persons.

How do we create of house of order? We have already established you cannot have a house of order without laws and an equal implementation of those laws. God is a God of law and the equal implementation of thus, “I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say” (D&C 82:10) “And again, verily I say unto you, that which is governed by law is also preserved by law and perfected and sanctified by the same. That which breaketh a law, and abideth not by law, but seeketh to become a law unto itself, and willeth to abide in sin, and altogether abideth in sin, cannot be sanctified by law, neither by mercy, justice, nor judgment. Therefore, they must remain filthy still. All kingdoms have a law given; And there are many kingdoms; for there is no space in the which there is no kingdom; and there is no kingdom in which there is no space, either a greater or a lesser kingdom. And unto every kingdom is given a law; and unto every law there are certain bounds also and conditions. All beings who abide not in those conditions are not justified.” (D&C 88:34-39)

How do we create a house of order? Your house is a kingdom unto itself and needs to have clear, written laws, and the implementation of them needs to be blind. Anything short of this makes you a repector of persons and when a person is a respecter of persons they cannot love their neighbor as themselves and thus is incapable of true brotherly kindness and fail in the second great commandment.

A House of God

Why is a house of God last? Just like with the Church, the last house is the temple- the house of God.

What makes a house of God? What makes a temple the house of God and not just a really nice building? A house of the Lord is a house in which the risen Lord can and has come to. A temple is merely a building with the potential to become a temple until it is dedicated and the risen Lord attends it. It is merely a building consecrated with the potential to become a temple until the risen Lord visits it, at which point in time, it become literally, in every sense of the word, a house of the Lord. We learn that one cannot obtain a fulness of charity until one has their calling and election made sure. Our bodies are a temple of the Lord, we can merely consecrate our bodies with the potential to house charity, but until the Lord seals charity in our foreheads, we are merely a temple with brotherly kindness. Charity is synonymous with Christ.

How do we create a house of God? We first consecrate our bodies when we are baptized and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost literally purges the old blood from our bodies as we hearken unto it (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p.149). We consecrate our homes unto the Lord by priesthood ordinances and our works purge the world from our home. We consecrate our very lives to the Lord in the temple and couples consecrate themselves for each other in sealing. Once all of these things are done, we have merely consecrated ourselves with the potential of being a house of God until the risen Lord shows up and seals charity in our foreheads and officially makes our house a house of God. With this understanding we know it is people and keys that make places holy; it is not places that make people holy. Joseph Smith taught, "After a person has faith in Christ, repents of his sins, and is baptized for the remission of his sins and receives the Holy Ghost (by the laying on of hands), which is the first Comforter, then let him continue to humble himself before God, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and living by every word of God, and the Lord will soon say unto him, *Son, thou shall be exalted*. When the Lord has thoroughly proved him, and finds that the man is determined to serve him at all hazards, then the man will find his calling and election made sure then it will be his privilege to receive the other Comforter." To receive the other Comforter is to have Christ appear to him and to see the visions of eternity (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p.150).