

# Are You Still Willing?

By Elder Kevin W. Pearson  
*Of the Seventy*

*Our willingness to follow Jesus Christ is directly proportionate to the amount of time we commit to be in holy places.*

## Section I (Andy)

One Sunday, while I was preparing to partake of the sacrament after several weeks of stake conference assignments, an interesting and powerful thought passed through my mind.

As the priest began offering the blessing on the bread, words I had heard so many times before pressed forcefully upon my mind and heart. “*And witness unto thee, O God, the Eternal Father, that they are willing to take upon them the name of thy Son, and always remember him and keep his commandments which he has given them; that they may always have his Spirit to be with them.*”<sup>1</sup> How many times have we witnessed unto God that we are willing?

As I pondered the significance of those sacred words, the word *willing* impressed me as never before. A flood of sweet and sacred experiences filled my mind and heart with love and gratitude for the atoning sacrifice of the Savior and His crucial role in the Father’s plan of redemption for my family and me. Then I heard and felt the penetrating words of the prayer on the water: “*That they may witness unto thee ... that they do always remember him.*”<sup>2</sup> I understood clearly in that moment that keeping my covenants must be more than good intentions.

Partaking of the sacrament is not a passive religious ritual implying our mere consent. It is a powerful reminder of the reality of the Savior’s infinite Atonement and the need to always remember Him and keep His commandments.

Willingness to focus on the Savior is so crucial it is the central message of the two most quoted scriptures in the Church: the sacrament prayers. Understanding the truth of what Heavenly Father so willingly offers each of us through His Only Begotten Son should evoke our utmost efforts to always be willing in return.

Is our own spiritual foundation built solidly on Jesus Christ?

If our spiritual foundation is shallow or superficial, we might be inclined to base our willingness on a social cost-benefit analysis or a personal inconvenience index. And if we embrace the narrative that the Church consists primarily of outdated or politically incorrect social policies, unrealistic personal restrictions, and time commitments, then our conclusions about willingness will be flawed. We should not expect the principle of willingness to trend positively with social media influencers or TikTok enthusiasts. The precepts of men rarely align with divine truth.

The Church is a gathering place for imperfect individuals who love God and who are willing to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. That willingness is rooted in the reality that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. This divine truth can be known only by the power of the Holy Ghost. Therefore, our willingness is directly proportionate to the amount of time we commit to be in holy places where the influence of the Holy Ghost is present.

We would do well to spend more time in meaningful conversation discussing our concerns with a loving Father in Heaven and less time seeking the opinions of other voices. We could also choose to change our daily news feed to the words of Christ in the holy scriptures and to prophetic words of His living prophets.

## Andy's Thoughts:

Black = Talk

Red = Additional scriptures or quotes from the keys

Blue – My thoughts

How many times have we witnessed unto God that **we are willing?**

I understood clearly in that moment that **keeping my covenants must be more than good intentions.**

Our covenant relationship with Heavenly Father is like a marriage and needs to be treated as such.

President Henry B. Eyring

“The book of Hosea, like the writings of Isaiah, uses what seem to me almost poetic images. The symbols in Hosea are a husband, his bride, her betrayal, and a test of marriage covenants almost beyond comprehension. ... Here are the fierce words of the husband, spoken after his wife has betrayed him in adultery: [Hosea 2:6–7].

“He goes on (through verse 13) to describe the punishment she deserves, and then comes a remarkable change in the verse that follows. ... : [Hosea 2:14–15, 19–23].

“At that early point in the story, in just two chapters, even my youngest students knew that the husband was a metaphor for Jehovah, Jesus Christ. And they knew that the wife represented his covenant people, Israel, who had gone after strange gods. They understood that the Lord was teaching them, through this metaphor, an important principle. Even though those with whom he has covenanted may be horribly unfaithful to him, he would not divorce them if they would only turn back to him with full purpose of heart.

“I knew that too, but even more than that, I felt something. I had a new feeling about what it means to make a covenant with the Lord. All my life I had heard explanations of covenants as being like a contract, an agreement where one person agrees to do something and the other agrees to do something else in return.

“For more reasons than I can explain, during those days teaching Hosea, I felt something new, something more powerful. This was not a story about a business deal between partners, nor about business law. ... This was a love story. This was a story of a marriage covenant bound by love, by steadfast love. What I felt then, and it has increased over the years, was that the Lord, with

whom I am blessed to have made covenants, loves me, and you, ... with a steadfastness about which I continually marvel and which I want with all my heart to emulate”  
(Covenants and Sacrifice [address to religious educators, 15 Aug. 1995], pp. 1–2).

**Partaking of the sacrament is not a passive religious ritual implying our mere consent.** It is a powerful reminder of the reality of the Savior’s infinite Atonement and the need to always remember Him and keep His commandments.

Willingness to focus on the Savior is so crucial it is the central message of the two most quoted scriptures in the Church: the sacrament prayers. **Understanding the truth of what Heavenly Father so willingly offers each of us through His Only Begotten Son should evoke our utmost efforts to always be willing in return.**

**Is our own spiritual foundation built solidly on Jesus Christ?**

3 Nephi 14

21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven.

22 Many will say to me in that day: Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works?

23 And then will I profess unto them: I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

24 Therefore, **whoso heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them**, I will liken him unto a wise man, who built his house upon a rock—

25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.

26 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand—

27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell, and great was the fall of it.

If our spiritual foundation is **shallow or superficial**, we might be inclined to base our willingness on a social cost-benefit analysis or a personal inconvenience index.

## Lifted Up upon the Cross

By Elder Jeffrey R. Holland Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2022/10/41holland?lang=eng>

To be a follower of Jesus Christ, one must sometimes carry a burden and go where sacrifice is required and suffering is inevitable.

That statement above would make any social cost-benefit analysis or personal inconvenience index scream to abandon ship, but there is so much at stake that we must press forward on the covenant path.

...we remind ourselves that President Gordon B. Hinckley once taught, “The lives of our people must [be] ... the symbol of our [faith].”<sup>10</sup> These considerations—especially the latter—bring me to what may be the most important of all scriptural references to the cross. It has nothing to do with pendants or jewelry, with steeples or signposts. It has to do, rather, **with the rock-ribbed integrity and stiff moral backbone** that Christians should bring to the call Jesus has given to every one of His disciples. In every land and age, He has said to us all, “If any man [or woman] will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”<sup>11</sup>

This speaks of the crosses we bear rather than the ones we wear. To be a follower of Jesus Christ, one must sometimes carry a burden—your own or someone else’s—and go where sacrifice is required and suffering is inevitable. **A true Christian cannot follow the Master only in those matters with which he or she agrees. No. We follow Him everywhere, including, if necessary, into arenas filled with tears and trouble, where sometimes we may stand very much alone.**

**...there is a cost to discipleship.**

And if we embrace the narrative that the Church consists primarily of outdated or politically incorrect social policies, unrealistic personal restrictions, and time commitments, **then our conclusions about willingness will be flawed.**

We must stay within the framework that God has established and follow the pyramid of truth. I like that he calls out the narrative. If we embrace an incorrect narrative about the church and don’t understand the pyramid of truth then our conclusions about willingness WILL be flawed. Not possibly, but will be.

Joseph Smith – Lectures on Faith

<https://lecturesonfaith.com/6/>

Let us here observe, that a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation.

The Church is a gathering place for imperfect individuals who love God and who are willing to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. That willingness is rooted in the reality that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. This divine truth can be known only by the power of the Holy Ghost. **Therefore, our willingness is directly proportionate to the amount of time we commit to be in holy places where the influence of the Holy Ghost is present.**

We would do well to spend more time in meaningful conversation discussing our concerns with a loving Father in Heaven and less time seeking the opinions of other voices.

Elder Robert D Hales

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2006/10/holy-scriptures-the-power-of-god-unto-our-salvation?lang=eng>

What a glorious blessing! For when we want to speak to God, we pray. And when we want Him to speak to us, we search the scriptures; for His words are spoken through His prophets. He will then teach us as we listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

We could also choose to change our daily news feed to the words of Christ in the holy scriptures and to prophetic words of His living prophets.

Are you willing? This question has been impressed on me as I've been studying this talk. I was led to look at this phrase and see where else it has been said and in what context.

Are you willing to pray? Are you willing to feast upon the words of Christ? Are you willing to pay the price for priesthood power in your home? Are you willing to let go of pride? Are you willing to take chastisement? Are you willing to make and keep covenants honestly? Are you willing to put your complete trust in the Savior? Are you willing to follow the prophet.

As my bishop just counseled me to do is the phrase, "to look up". Am I willing to look up?

Why are we willing or why should we be willing? What do we get out of it? Resurrection! The reality of seeing loved ones who have passed before us again in person, living. The reality of sickness, deformities, injuries, etc to be gone and made whole. The reality of being able to be with our families for eternity. If we are not willing to wholly follow Christ then that will not happen. The reality of having our mistakes, sins, and transgressions blotted out and healed. Having guilt, fear, remorse, hurt, disappointment swallowed up in Christ. Being able to become like Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

The price to pay is insignificant to the blessings and rewards that are in reality available to us if we are willing. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **Micah's Thoughts:**

The first line that really impressed me was "that keeping my covenants must be more than good intentions." How often do we teach the literal opposite of this? That we can preach for money, that we can ignore the Lord's mouthpiece etc. and still be living our covenants because of our "good intentions", because "our heart is in the right place". We are quick to excuse things and justify that excuse with a "you don't know my heart/intentions". People teach this faulty understanding almost entirely because people get the order of the sin wrong.

If one physically cheats with their neighbor their "heart/intentions" is moot... obviously they cheated in their heart and didn't have good intentions...

So how is the order wrong? People continue to blatantly sin *and then* say, "you don't know my heart/intentions!"

Yes! Yes we do! Period!

If one physically doesn't cheat with their neighbor, are they necessarily clean in their heart? Don't know! And only Christ can judge that! The "heart" is *in addition* to the physical law... Too many people in throwing out the physical law to live (as they put it) the "higher and more spiritual law!" fail to recognize that by throwing out the physical, they've already failed in the heart/spiritual...

By "loosening up" on all "the rules" people always say "Oh! This is a higher and holier way of worship!"

Yes! In that it requires *both* the obvious physical fulfillments *as well* as the heart! It means not only are tattoos unacceptable, so are matters of the heart regarding it... It gets *harder*, not easier...

Can someone's heart still be in the wrong place preaching the Word of God and "representing Him" even if they don't take money? Of course their heart can still be in the wrong- but we will never know that and cannot judge that!

But... someone who preaches for money their heart/intention is moot... Period... It doesn't matter where one "thinks their heart/intention is at or was at"; if one committed adultery, we know the heart is polluted...

This was nailed home by Hugh Nibley in his *Approaching Zion* for almost entire chapters- the concept of the single vision.

Elder Pearson then proceeds to give a fantastic intro to the need for understanding and gaining a testimony of the pyramid of truth. Don't be a #TikTokMormon. In fact, this paragraph was so good I would call it a golden paragraph- it's as meaty as possible with as little fat as you can cut that down to. If you are more drawn to your #TikTokMormon influencers than you are to the prophet of God that will directly influence your desire or willingness to follow the Lord.

It is no mistake that directly after teaching about the pyramid of truth as he did, to go directly into standing in holy places and being not moved. As we surround ourselves with those that are grounded on the pyramid of truth, our desire will increase in that direction. Whereas the opposite is true for those rehearsing doubts with other doubters. This concept or teaching goes really well with President Nelson's talk on spiritual momentum. Many in this group have gained powerful, personal testimonies on this subject in recent years.

## **Section II (Courtney and Ryan)**

The importance we place on our Sabbath day observance, paying an honest tithe, holding a current temple recommend, attending the temple, and honoring our sacred temple covenants are

all powerful indicators of our willingness and evidence of our commitment. Are we willing to put forth more than a superficial effort into strengthening our faith in Christ?

Heavenly Father loves us perfectly, but that love comes with great expectations. He expects us to willingly place the Savior at the very center of our lives. The Savior is our perfect example of willingness to submit to the Father in all things. He is “the way, the truth, and the life.”<sup>3</sup> He willingly atoned for our sins. He willingly eases our burdens, calms our fears, gives us strength, and brings peace and understanding to our hearts in times of distress and grief.

Yet faith in Jesus Christ is a choice. “If [we] can no more than desire to believe”<sup>4</sup> in His words, we have a starting point to begin or to reset our journey of faith. His words, if planted in our hearts like a seed and nourished with great care, will take root and our faith will grow into assurance and become a principle of action and power. The Book of Mormon is our most powerful resource for growing and restoring our faith. Willingness is the catalyst of faith.

Mortality, by divine design, is not easy and at times can be overwhelming. However, “[we] are, that [we] might have joy”!<sup>5</sup> Focusing on the Savior and our covenants brings lasting joy! The purpose of mortality is to prove our willingness. “*The great task of life* [and the cost of discipleship] is to learn the will of the Lord and then to do it.”<sup>6</sup> True discipleship leads to a fulness of joy. Are we willing to pay the price of discipleship?

The covenant path is not a simple checklist; it is a process of spiritual growth and deepening commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ. The central purpose of every commandment, principle, covenant, and ordinance is to build faith and trust in Christ. Our determination to center our lives on Christ, therefore, must be consistent—not conditional, situational, or superficial. We cannot afford to take vacation days or personal time off from our willingness to “stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places.”<sup>7</sup> Discipleship is not cheap, because the companionship of the Holy Ghost is priceless.

Surely the Lord was thinking of our day as He taught the parable of the ten virgins. Of the five who were wise, He said they “have taken the Holy Spirit for their guide, and have not been deceived,”<sup>8</sup> while the lamps of the foolish “are gone out” for lack of oil.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps the words of Nephi best describe these once-faithful members of the Church: “And others he will pacify, and lull them away into carnal security, that they will say: All is well in Zion.”<sup>10</sup>

Carnal security is seeking for and trusting in worldly things instead of Christ—in other words, looking through a secular lens instead of a spiritual lens. The Holy Ghost gives us the capacity to see “things as they really are, and ... as they really will be.”<sup>11</sup> Only “by the power of the Holy Ghost [can we] know the truth of all things”<sup>12</sup> and be not deceived. We place Christ at the center of our lives and pledge our willingness to obey His commandments not because we are blind but because we can see.<sup>13</sup>

### **Courtney’s Thoughts:**

2018–A:89, Dallin H. Oaks, *Small and Simple Things*

This morning I have felt to use as my text Alma’s teaching to his son Helaman, recorded in the Book of Mormon: “By small and simple things are great things brought to pass” Alma 37:6

We are taught many small and simple things in the gospel of Jesus Christ. We need to be reminded that in total and over a significant period of time, these seemingly small things bring to pass great things. There have been many talks on this subject by General Authorities and by other respected teachers. The subject is so important that I feel to speak of it again.

Surely these are small things, but surely they are good examples of what Alma taught his son Helaman: “And the Lord God doth work by means to bring about his great and eternal purposes; and by very small means the Lord ... bringeth about the salvation of many souls” Alma 37:7

President Steven C. Wheelwright gave an audience at Brigham Young University–Hawaii this inspired description of Alma’s teaching: “Alma confirms for his son that indeed the pattern the Lord follows when we exercise faith in Him and follow His counsel in small and simple things is that He blesses us with small daily miracles, and over time, with marvelous works.”

President Howard W. Hunter taught that “frequently it is the commonplace tasks ... that have the greatest positive effect on the lives of others, as compared with the things that the world so often relates to greatness.”

Elder Bednar said, “The spiritual pattern of small and simple things bringing forth great things produces firmness and steadfastness, deepening devotion, and more complete conversion to the Lord Jesus Christ and His gospel.”

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught this principle in words now included in the Doctrine and Covenants: “Let no man count them as small things; for there is much ... pertaining to the saints, which depends upon these things” D&C 123:15

In connection with the earliest attempts to establish the Church in Missouri, the Lord counseled patience for “all things must come to pass in their time” D&C 64:32 Then He gave this great teaching: “Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great” D&C 64:33

#### The Liahona as a Type and Shadow for Our Day

In our day the Book of Mormon is the primary source to which we should turn for help in learning how to invite the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost. The description in the Book of Mormon of the Liahona, the director or compass used by Lehi and his family in their journey in the wilderness, specifically was included in the record as a type and a shadow for our day and as an essential lesson about what we should do to enjoy the blessings of the Holy Ghost.

As we strive to align our attitudes and actions with righteousness, then the Holy Ghost becomes for us today what the Liahona was for Lehi and his family in their day. The very factors that caused the Liahona to work for Lehi will likewise invite the Holy Ghost into our lives. And the very factors that caused the Liahona not to work anciently will likewise cause us to withdraw ourselves from the Holy Ghost today.

#### The Liahona: Purposes and Principles



As we study and ponder the purposes of the Liahona and the principles by which it operated, I testify that we will receive inspiration suited to our individual and family circumstances and needs. We can and will be blessed with ongoing direction from the Holy Ghost.

The Liahona was prepared by the Lord and given to Lehi and his family after they left Jerusalem and were traveling in the wilderness (see Alma 37:38 D&C 17:1 This compass or director pointed the way that Lehi and his caravan should go (see 1 Ne. 16:10 even “a straight course to the promised land” Alma 37:44 The pointers in the Liahona operated “according to the faith and diligence and heed” 1 Ne. 16:28 of the travelers and failed to work when family members were contentious, rude, slothful, or forgetful (see 1 Ne. 18:12, 21 Alma 37:41, 43

2006–A:28, David A. Bednar, That We May Always Have His Spirit to Be with Us

The compass also provided a means whereby Lehi and his family could obtain greater “understanding concerning the ways of the Lord” 1 Ne. 16:29 Thus, the primary purposes of the Liahona were to provide both direction and instruction during a long and demanding journey. The director was a physical instrument that served as an outward indicator of their inner spiritual standing before God. It worked according to the principles of faith and diligence.

Just as Lehi was blessed in ancient times, each of us in this day has been given a spiritual compass that can direct and instruct us during our mortal journey. The Holy Ghost was conferred upon you and me as we came out of the world and into the Savior’s Church through baptism and confirmation. By the authority of the holy priesthood we were confirmed as members of the Church and admonished to seek for the constant companionship of “the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” John 14:17

As we each press forward along the pathway of life, we receive direction from the Holy Ghost just as Lehi was directed through the Liahona. “For behold, again I say unto you that if ye will enter in by the way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do” 2 Ne. 32:5

The Holy Ghost operates in our lives precisely as the Liahona did for Lehi and his family, according to our faith and diligence and heed.

“Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God. ...

“The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth” D&C 121:45–46

And the Holy Ghost provides for us today the means whereby we can receive, “by small and simple things” Alma 37:6 increased understanding about the ways of the Lord: “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” John 14:26

The Spirit of the Lord can be our guide and will bless us with direction, instruction, and spiritual protection during our mortal journey. We invite the Holy Ghost into our lives through

meaningful personal and family prayer, feasting upon the words of Christ, diligent and exacting obedience, faithfulness and honoring of covenants, and through virtue, humility, and service. And we steadfastly should avoid things that are immodest, coarse, crude, sinful, or evil that cause us to withdraw ourselves from the Holy Ghost.

Testimony of the Spirit of revelation by Courtney.

### **Micah's Thoughts:**

Are we willing to put forth more than just a superficial effort? This is a fantastic question. Joseph Smith taught "it is impossible for man to be saved in ignorance" (TPJS, p.301) Joseph Smith also said, "Add to your faith knowledge, etc. The principle of knowledge is the principle of salvation. This principle can be comprehended by the faithful and diligent; and every one that does not obtain knowledge sufficient to be saved will be condemned." (TPJS, p.297). Joseph Smith also said,

"Men are Saved Through Obedience to Knowledge

We have thieves among us, adulterers, liars, hypocrites. If God should speak from heaven, he would command you not to steal, not to commit adultery, not to covet, nor deceive, but be faithful over a few things. As far as we degenerate from God, we descend to the devil and lose knowledge, and without knowledge we cannot be saved, and while our hearts are filled with evil, and we are studying evil, there is no room in our hearts for good, or studying good. Is not God good? Then you be good; if He is faithful, then you be faithful. Add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, and seek for every good thing.

The Church must be cleansed, and I proclaim against all iniquity. A man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge, for if he does not get knowledge, he will be brought into captivity by some evil power in the other world, as evil spirits will have more knowledge, and consequently more power than many men who are on the earth. Hence it needs revelation to assist us, and give us knowledge of the things of God." (TPJS, p.217)

How many of us have been members for 5, 10, 30, 50 years? How much knowledge have we obtained? How sincere are we? Do we know what the redemption of Zion is all about? Let alone, as President Benson taught us, that it is our duty as members to prepare ourselves and make ourselves worthy for it? (Beware of Pride) Once again, it is more than simply "our intention/heart", it is our fruit and our true desires will always be made manifest in our fruits and where we spend our time. Nobody accidentally wakes up one day and is the best golfer on the planet, no one accidentally wakes up and is just the best pianist in the world, etc. And no one just wakes up and accidentally filled their head with the things of God.

When teaching missionaries, the first thing I always teach them about is desire. If one has a desire and worthily pursues that with the Lord, I know that they can obtain all the same things I have obtained. I have a desire to know the gospel, to teach the gospel, etc. and the Lord has blessed me abundantly with that. I got to be honest, I really don't care about pronunciation, I know that a lot of people really care, they really have a desire for pronunciation to be up to snuff, but I don't. And because of that, my ability to remember and ability to grasp and retain etc. pronunciations is greatly limited. I know that if members had just as strong a desire as I do for

learning and retaining gospel knowledge as they do for pronunciations, that they would know just as much as I do about the gospel.

The purpose of mortality is to prove our willingness and desires. Somebody didn't accidentally wake up and know how to pronounce all these words, and somebody didn't accidentally wake up having all of the scripture masteries memorized. Who we are is a reflection of our life's desires and willingness. This is a joyous truth for those who have taken advantage of it in positive ways and a terrifying reality for those who wish to cover up the sin of who they have become with an arbitrary and false understanding of "you can't judge my heart."

Are we willing to pay the price of discipleship or do we believe we can float on our cloud of comfortable Christianity, a cloud named good intentions?

The foolish virgins are members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints- those who believe that simply their presence is enough, believing that the oil will be provided via grace, and in an arrogant show of entitlement, they ask the wise for some- but they will be denied for keeping covenants requires more than mere presence and good intentions.

It requires obedience, obedience that is not blind. Here is more of the Boyd K Packer quote that Elder Pearson uses,

"The general quickly understood a truth that is missed even by some in the Church. Latter-day Saints are not obedient because they are compelled to be obedient. They are obedient because they know certain spiritual truths and have decided, as an expression of their own individual agency, to obey the commandments of God.

We are the sons and daughters of God, willing followers, disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, and "under this head are [we] made free." ([Mosiah 5:8](#).)

Those who talk of blind obedience may appear to know many things, but they do not understand the doctrines of the gospel. There is an obedience that comes from a knowledge of the truth that transcends any external form of control. We are not obedient because we are blind, we are obedient because we can see." (Agency and Control, April 1983)

## **Section III (David)**

What about the foolish virgins? Why were they unwilling to carry a vessel of spiritual oil? Did they simply procrastinate? They were perhaps too casual because it was inconvenient or seemed unnecessary. Whatever the reason, they were deceived about the crucial role of Christ. This is Satan's fundamental deception and why their lamps of testimony eventually went out for lack of spiritual oil. This parable is a metaphor for our time. Many leave the Savior and their covenants long before they leave His Church.

We live in unprecedented times long foretold by ancient prophets, a day when Satan rages "in the hearts of the children of men, and stir[s] them up to anger against that which is good."<sup>14</sup> Far

too many of us live in a virtual world awash in entertainment and messaging hostile to divine identity and belief in Christ.

The most powerful spiritual influence in the life of a child is the righteous example of loving parents and grandparents who faithfully keep their own sacred covenants. Intentional parents teach their children faith in the Lord Jesus Christ so that they too “may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins.”<sup>15</sup> Casual and inconsistent covenant keeping leads to spiritual casualty. The spiritual damage is often greatest on our children and grandchildren. Parents and grandparents, are we still willing?

President Russell M. Nelson has warned that “in coming days, it will not be possible to survive spiritually without the guiding, directing, comforting, and constant influence of the Holy Ghost.”<sup>16</sup> This is a clear and unmistakable warning to trim our lamps and increase our spiritual oil reserves. Are we still willing to follow the living prophets? What is the level of spiritual oil in your lamp? What changes in your personal life would enable you to have the influence of the Holy Ghost more constantly?

Today, as in the times of Jesus, there will be those who will turn back, unwilling to accept the price of discipleship. As harsh and hateful criticism is increasingly leveled at the Savior’s Church and those who follow Him, our discipleship will require a greater willingness to straighten and strengthen our spiritual spines and heed them not.<sup>17</sup>

If our spiritual foundation is built solidly on Jesus Christ, we will not fall and we need not fear.

“Behold, the Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind; and the willing and obedient shall eat the good of the land of Zion in these last days.”<sup>18</sup>

May we always be willing. In the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

Footnotes:

1.

[Doctrine and Covenants 20:77](#); emphasis added.

2.

[Doctrine and Covenants 20:79](#).

3.

[John 14:6](#).

4.

[Alma 32:27](#).

5.

[2 Nephi 2:25](#).

6.

Ezra Taft Benson, “[The Great Commandment—Love the Lord](#),” *Ensign*, May 1988, 4.

7.

[Mosiah 18:9](#).

8.

[Doctrine and Covenants 45:57](#).

9.

[Matthew 25:8](#).

10.

[2 Nephi 28:21](#).

11.

[Jacob 4:13](#).

12.

[Moroni 10:5](#).

13.

See Boyd K. Packer, "[Agency and Control](#)," *Ensign*, May 1983, 66.

14.

[2 Nephi 28:20](#).

15.

[2 Nephi 25:26](#).

16.

Russell M. Nelson, "[Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives](#)," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2018, 93.

17.

See [1 Nephi 8:26–27, 33](#).

18.

[Doctrine and Covenants 64:34](#).

## David's Thoughts:

What about the foolish virgins? Why were they unwilling to carry a vessel of spiritual oil? Did they simply procrastinate? They were perhaps too casual because it was inconvenient or seemed unnecessary. Whatever the reason, they were deceived about the crucial role of Christ. This is Satan's fundamental deception and why their lamps of testimony eventually went out for lack of spiritual oil. This parable is a metaphor

Love the scripture Abraham 3:25

"And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them;"

In this existence we live in, we are to be proven whether we will follow God or not. The parable of the 10 virgins has a task to be obedient to prepare themselves for the return of the Lord and to understand his will. Elder David A. Bednar in his talk "If Ye Had Known Me" what it means to know the Lord:

"Afterward came also the [five foolish] virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

'But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.' (Matthew 25:10–12)

The implications of this parable for each of us are expanded by another inspired revision. Importantly, the phrase 'I know you not,' as reported in the King James Version of the Bible, was clarified in the Joseph Smith Translation to 'Ye know me not.' Joseph Smith Translation, (Matthew 25:11) in Matthew 25:12 footnote a.

The phrases 'Ye never knew me' and 'Ye know me not' should be a cause of deep spiritual introspection for each of us. Do we only know about the Savior, or are we increasingly coming to know Him? How do

we come to know the Lord? These questions of the soul are the focus of my message. I earnestly invite the assistance of the Holy Ghost as we consider together this vital subject."

Brigham Young said the following about preparing ourselves for the Bride Groom:

"Fear not with regard to the success of this Church and kingdom. Rather fear you should not be counted worthy to be numbered among the sanctified Acts 20:32 when Jesus comes to make up his jewels; (Mal. 3:17, D&C 60:4, D&C 101:3) rather fear lest you should be found in the condition of the five foolish virgins whose lamps had gone out and who were unprepared to meet the bridegroom because they had no oil. (Matt. 25:1-13) Remember, Latter-day Saints, there were five wise and five foolish, (Matt. 25:2) an equal division, and yet they were all virgins. The application is a just one and has a direct bearing on us, as Latter-day Saints. (D&C 45:56-57) The wise among us will take heed, will hearken to the instructions and counsels of the servants of God, will pattern after Christ, and thirst after the things of God, and our lamps will be trimmed and burning, and we will be prepared to meet the bridegroom when he comes, and they that are ready will enter in with him to the marriage; and whether or not the door be shut upon those not so well prepared is a matter that belongs solely to him, and he can do just as he pleases about it. (Matt. 25:1-13) I want to have oil in my vessel, so that in case I should, in consequence of the weakness of the flesh, slumber a little, on arising my lamp would be trimmed ready to burn. This is doubtless your desire. Then live for it; mingle not your voices with the wicked, seek not after the delusive things of this world in their present state. But is not the Lord going to give the earth and the riches thereof to his Saints?"

(JD 19:1)

Lorenzo Snow said this in being counted worthy:

"If he were to come today, would you be counted among the 50 percent of the members of his kingdom who will be prepared, or among the 50 percent of his kingdom who will only be partly prepared, or will you not be counted in his kingdom at all, waiting for a time when Satan will be bound for you instead of binding him yourself?"

Brethren, is it not strange, and should we not be ashamed of ourselves that after receiving the words of life, and coming to a knowledge of glory and immortality and eternal lives, (D&C 128:12) instead of pressing forward and preparing ourselves for those blessings, we slacken our pace, close our eyes, and sink into a state of drowsiness? It was so with the people of the Lord in ancient times, and they were sorely chastised, and such as would not repent were destroyed."

(The Saints Have not Magnified Their Calling As Savors of the Living and the Dead—Oneness—Practical Repentance. A Discourse by Elder Lorenzo Snow,)

Wilford Woodruff said the following on letting the Saints Waken and trim their lamps:

Let the Saints read the revelations of God, and they will see that there are important events at our doors. Let us hearken and wake up, and be doing the things required of us. Let the missionaries first get their lamps trimmed Matt. 25:7 and burning, D&C 33:17 and then go among the people, and go with the

Spirit of God and the salvation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and let the other Quorums do the same; and when you do this you will see a reform, and sin and iniquity cannot abide in our habitations, in our wards, or in our city. (The People Asleep—Those Holding the Priesthood Must Magnify Their Callings or Be Removed—The Saints to Be Tried Even Unto Death. Remarks by Elder Wilford Woodruff)

We live in unprecedented times long foretold by ancient prophets, a day when Satan rages “in the hearts of the children of men, and stir[s] them up to anger against that which is good.”<sup>14</sup> Far too many of us live in a virtual world awash in entertainment and messaging hostile to divine identity and belief in Christ.

The scripture in 2 Nephi 28:20 seems to be a like to our day. People being stirred up in anger or wage war against those that serve God. Even in the Church people are aligning with false philosophies and history. Attacking the doctrine of Christ and the revelations of the early prophets.

2 Nephi 28:20 For behold, at that day shall he rage in the hearts of the children of men, and stir them up to anger against that which is good.

Dallin H Oaks talks about the children of men being stirred up and many lulled into false security with the idea of "all is well in Zion."

"To illustrate the opposition of temptation, the Book of Mormon describes three methods the devil will use in the last days. First, he will 'rage in the hearts of the children of men, and stir them up to anger against that which is good' (2 Nephi 28:20) Second, he will 'pacify, and lull [members] away into carnal security,' saying 'Zion prospereth, all is well' verse 21 Third, he will tell us 'there is no hell; and ... I am no devil, for there is none' verse 22 and therefore there is no right and wrong. Because of this opposition, we are warned not to be 'at ease in Zion!' verse 24" (Opposition in All Things

By Elder Dallin H. Oaks)

The most powerful spiritual influence in the life of a child is the righteous example of loving parents and grandparents who faithfully keep their own sacred covenants. Intentional parents teach their children faith in the Lord Jesus Christ so that they too “may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins.”<sup>15</sup> Casual and inconsistent covenant keeping leads to spiritual casualty. The spiritual damage is often greatest on our children and grandchildren. Parents and grandparents, are we still willing?

Our devotion is Christ as in 2 Nephi 25:26: And we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins.

We need to know the source of our remission of sins so we can be ready when he comes and not be caught unaware of the bridegroom.

Elder Delbert L. Stapley talks about preparing to enter the wedding feast by keeping covenants:

"'Watch therefore,' he admonished, 'for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh ' (Matt. 25:1-13)

I wonder, my brothers and sisters, which of the two categories we as members of the Church fall into? Do we and our families belong with the wise virgins or the foolish? Will we heed the Savior's warning given in this parable and make honest and wise preparation for entrance into his kingdom? Preparation for eternal glory must go progressively forward every day of our lives if we are not to be caught unprepared when earth life is finished or the great day of the Lord comes.

As descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob we are heirs to all the promises pledged to them and their posterity throughout their generations. We are bound by covenants and obligations to God even as our forefathers were.

Perhaps we should define the meaning and significance of a covenant. In a spiritual application a covenant is a solemn, binding compact between God and man whereby man agrees to keep God's commandments and serve him in righteousness and in truth unto the end. The gospel covenants and obligations bind Church members to obedience to laws and principles given of God which lead to happiness, love, and eternal joy. A covenant then is an agreement which includes obligations and is given as a principle with promise of blessings for obedience." (Keeping the Covenants; Elder Delbert L. Stapley)

President Russell M. Nelson has warned that "in coming days, it will not be possible to survive spiritually without the guiding, directing, comforting, and constant influence of the Holy Ghost."<sup>16</sup> This is a clear and unmistakable warning to trim our lamps and increase our spiritual oil reserves. Are we still willing to follow the living prophets? What is the level of spiritual oil in your lamp? What changes in your personal life would enable you to have the influence of the Holy Ghost more constantly?

Personal revelation is important to know for ourselves what is true. Elder Robert D Hales said the following:

"Personal revelation is the way we know for ourselves the most important truths of our existence: the living reality of God, our Eternal Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ; the truthfulness of the restored gospel; and God's purpose and direction for us."

(Personal Revelation: The Teachings and Examples of the Prophets; Elder Robert D. Hales)

President Russell M Nelson explains the willingness of our Heavenly Father to Reveal His words to us:

"One of the things the Spirit has repeatedly impressed upon my mind since my new calling as President of the Church is how willing the Lord is to reveal His mind and will. The privilege of receiving revelation is one of the greatest gifts of God to His children.

Imagine the miracle of it! Whatever our Church calling, we can pray to our Heavenly Father and receive guidance and direction, be warned about dangers and distractions, and be enabled to accomplish things we simply could not do on our own. If we will truly receive the Holy Ghost and learn to discern and



understand His promptings, we will be guided in matters large and small." (Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives

By President Russell M. Nelson)

It can sometimes be difficult to understand what is revelation until especially when is counterfeit revelation from a non Holy Ghost source. The question we have to ask and ponder: is it revelation? Elder Gerald N. Lund explains some things to help identify revelation from the Lord.

"In your mind and in your heart"—think about that. If the Lord spoke something to our mind, how would it come? We would probably describe it as 'thoughts.' If He tells us something in our hearts, we would probably describe that as 'feelings.'

something is counterfeit, it means it resembles the original so closely that it is difficult to distinguish which is the true and which is the false. We must ever be on guard against being deceived by our emotions or by revelation from an unworthy source.

Another mistake some make is to covet the more dramatic forms of revelation. God reveals His mind and will to man across a broad spectrum of experiences. These may range from the very direct and dramatic: the appearance of divine beings, open visions, fire from heaven. Or they may be very subtle: quiet premonitions, gentle thoughts, a feeling of peace. These are by far the most common. We must be careful we don't feel that only the more direct forms of revelation are valid." (Is It Revelation? By Elder Gerald N. Lund

Of the Seventy)

Today, as in the times of Jesus, there will be those who will turn back, unwilling to accept the price of discipleship. As harsh and hateful criticism is increasingly leveled at the Savior's Church and those who follow Him, our discipleship will require a greater willingness to straighten and strengthen our spiritual spines and heed them not.<sup>17</sup>

Elder Elder Gary B. Sabin gives a good example of being all in and standing up for what we believe in.

"The Apostle Paul could have been describing our day when he told Timothy that 'some having swerved, have turned aside unto vain jangling.' Timothy 1:6 There is a lot of 'vain jangling' going on in the world today. It is the conversation of those in the great and spacious building. [See 1 Nephi 8:26–28] Often it appears as a form of rationalization to justify wickedness or manifests itself when people lose their way and accelerate. It sometimes comes from those who have not paid the price to be "all in" and prefer to follow the natural man as opposed to the prophet. (Stand Up Inside and Be All In By Elder Gary B. Sabin Of the Seventy)

How many today that are not "all in" are engaging in jangling online to Nash their teeth at the Prophet or apostasy because their position is contrary to the world's view. Elder Neal A. Maxwell gave this on our enemies outside the church and inside the church

"True, the enemies and the critics of the Lord's work will not relent; they only regroup. Even among the flock, here and there and from time to time, are a few wolves, wearing various styles of sheep's clothing—ironically, just before the shearing season! A few defectors and "highminded" traitors (2 Tim. 3:4) even go directly to the "great and spacious building" to hire on (1 Ne. 8:26) There recruits are celebrated and feted until—like their predecessors—they have faded into the dark swamps of history. As President Heber C. Kimball said, divine justice will eventually require that they "pay all the debt of [all] the trouble that they have brought upon the innocent" (in Journal of Discourses, 5:94)." (For I Will Lead You Along By Elder Neal A. Maxwell)

If our spiritual foundation is built solidly on Jesus Christ, we will not fall and we need not fear.

"Behold, the Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind; and the willing and obedient shall eat the good of the land of Zion in these last days."18

To Be counted as the wise virgins, it is important to live our covenants and all we have been commanded. We should seek the Lord's mind in obedience and become one with him and the father. Doing so will fill our lamps with the needed oil preparing us for his coming. President Thomas S. Monson said the following"

"Obey the laws of God. They are given to us by a loving Heavenly Father. When they are obeyed, our lives will be more fulfilling, less complicated. Our challenges and problems will be easier to bear. We will receive the Lord's promised blessings. He has said, 'The Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind; and the willing and obedient shall eat the good of the land of Zion in these last days.' (Doctrine and Covenants 64:34) (Believe, Obey, and Endure

By President Thomas S. Monson)

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf said this on obedience and covenants:

"Our willingness to repent shows our gratitude for God's gift and for the Savior's love and sacrifice on our behalf. Commandments and priesthood covenants provide a test of faith, obedience, and love for God and Jesus Christ, but even more importantly, they offer an opportunity to experience love from God and to receive a full measure of joy both in this life and in the life to come."

(A Matter of a Few Degrees by President Dieter F. Uchtdorf)

Then from Elder Jörg Klebingat:

"Also, do the right things for the right reasons. The Lord, who 'requireth the heart and a willing mind' (D&C 64:34) and who 'is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart' D&C 33:1 knows why you go to church—whether you are present in body only or truly worshipping. You can't sing on Sunday, 'O Babylon, O Babylon, [I] bid thee farewell' and then seek or tolerate its company again moments later ("Ye Elders of Israel," Hymns, no. 319). Remember that casualness in spiritual matters never was happiness. Make the Church and the restored gospel your whole life, not just a part of your outward or social life. Choosing this day whom you will serve is lip service only—until you actually live accordingly (see Joshua 24:15)." (Approaching the Throne of God with Confidence By Elder Jörg Klebingat)

May we always be willing. In the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

I pray we can make the Church and the Savior our focus and put out attention to the things that fill our lamps and trim our wicks so we will be ready when the bridegroom comes. I say this in the name of Jesus Christ Amen.

### **Micah's Thoughts:**

It is an important distinction to be made with the five foolish virgins being unwilling. Too often we classify them as non-members who are wicked, when in reality they are "righteous members" who are unwilling. Much like in the parable of the wedding feast that we went over recently in Elder Bednar's talk, they were unwilling to wear the garment.

The last scripture Elder Pearson quotes is Doctrine and Covenants 64.

#### **Doctrine and Covenants 64:**

**34** Behold, the Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind; and the willing and obedient shall eat the good of the land of Zion in these last days.

**35** And the rebellious shall be cut off out of the land of Zion, and shall be sent away, and shall not inherit the land.

**36** For, verily I say that the rebellious are not of the blood of Ephraim, wherefore they shall be plucked out.

#### **D&C 64:34–36. "The Rebellious Are Not of the Blood of Ephraim"**

It seems strange that the Lord would say that blood, a symbol for descendancy, could be influenced by rebelliousness, a spiritual trait. Isn't one either a descendant of Ephraim or not a descendant of Ephraim? The answer is no, not in the eyes of the Lord, who views His children in terms of their spiritual qualities.

Nephi also understood this principle and taught: “For behold, I say unto you that as many of the Gentiles as will repent are the covenant people of the Lord; and as many of the Jews as will not repent shall be cast off; for the Lord covenanteth with none save it be with them that repent and believe in his Son, who is the Holy One of Israel” (2 Nephi 30:2).

Ephraim received the birthright under the hands of Jacob (see Genesis 48:5–22) and was considered by the Lord to be Joseph’s firstborn (see 1 Chronicles 5:1; Jeremiah 31:9). President Joseph Fielding Smith explained why:

“It is essential in this dispensation that Ephraim stand in his place at the head, exercising the birthright in Israel which was given to him by direct revelation. Therefore, Ephraim must be gathered first to prepare the way, through the gospel and the priesthood, for the rest of the tribes of Israel when the time comes for them to be gathered to Zion. The great majority of those who have come into the Church are Ephraimites. It is the exception to find one of any other tribe, unless it is of Manasseh.

“It is Ephraim, today, who holds the priesthood. It is with Ephraim that the Lord has made covenant and has revealed the fulness of the everlasting gospel. It is Ephraim who is building temples and performing the ordinances in them for both the living and for the dead. When the ‘lost tribes’ come—and it will be a most wonderful sight and a marvelous thing when they do come to Zion—in fulfilment of the promises made through Isaiah and Jeremiah, they will have to receive the crowning blessings from their brother Ephraim, the ‘firstborn’ in Israel.” (Doctrines of Salvation, 3:252–53.)

An understanding of this mission of Ephraim helps us understand why the Lord would say that “the rebellious are not of the blood of Ephraim” (D&C 64:36).

END QUOTE

This goes along perfectly with the last chapter we did in the Macro Last Day Timeline: Many Are Called, Few Aren’t Swept. May we listen to the voice of those whom God has set apart to lead us and stand in holy places and be not moved and avoid those lifting up their voice and cursing God and dying spiritually like the plague on our spiritually that they are. This is my commitment and prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.