

Divine Love in the Father's Plan

By President Dallin H. Oaks

The purpose of the doctrine and policies of this restored Church is to prepare God's children for salvation in the celestial kingdom and for exaltation in its highest degree.

The gospel plan shows our Heavenly Father's love for all His children. To understand this, we must seek to understand His plan and His commandments. He loves His children so much that He gave His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to be our Savior and Redeemer, to suffer and die for us. In the restored Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we have a unique understanding of our Heavenly Father's plan. This gives us a different way of viewing the purpose of mortal life, the divine judgment that follows it, and the ultimate glorious destiny of all of God's children.

I love you, my brothers and sisters. I love all of God's children. When Jesus was asked, "Which is the great commandment in the law?" He taught that to love God and to love our neighbors are the first of God's great commandments.¹ Those commands are first because they invite us to grow spiritually by seeking to imitate God's love for us. I wish we all had a better understanding of the loving doctrine and policies that our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, have established in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. What I say here seeks to clarify how God's love explains that doctrine and the Church's inspired policies.

Micah's Thoughts:

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saint's purpose is to prepare God's children for the highest degree of the celestial kingdom. That is its purpose. It is not there to help people get to the terrestrial kingdom; it is not there to help people become angels in the celestial kingdom etc. A theme of this talk is that many wish for the Church to adapt into its policies and doctrines acceptance of lifestyles that will net someone a lower degree of glory. Worse, some seek to lower the standards themselves as though the doctrine could be changed. This is one of those cases where an understanding of Joseph Smith's Lectures on Faith is paramount- if one had such a knowledge the idea of the standards of celestial law being changed would be ludicrous even laughable. God being an unchangeable God and us knowing that about Him is one of the requirements for us to be able to have enough faith to exercise unto life and salvation. Thus believing that the standards could be lowered and that God can change in an admission that one lacks the faith necessary unto life and salvation- so even if the standards were lowered (which they can't be) it would avail them nothing for without faith no one pleases God.

I too wish that we all had a better understanding of the doctrine *and* policies that our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, have established in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Everything I have done at the behest of the Spirit on social media has been done singularly with that being the goal ("increase your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ by deepening your understanding of the doctrine taught in the restored Church"). Anybody who seeks to spread their own opinions versus the doctrine, anybody who seeks to normalize a telestial or

terrestrial lifestyle, anyone who takes gain for preaching the word of God etc. anyone who does any of these things does not truly love you. They are simply attempting to gratify their own sins by overlooking them in another.

I.

A common misunderstanding of the judgment that ultimately follows mortal life is that good people go to a place called *heaven* and bad people go to an everlasting place called *hell*. This erroneous assumption of only two ultimate destinations implies that those who cannot keep all the commandments required for heaven will necessarily be forever destined for hell.

A loving Heavenly Father has a better plan for His children. The revealed doctrine of the restored Church of Jesus Christ teaches that *all the children of God*—with exceptions too limited to consider here—will finally wind up in a kingdom of *glory*.² “In my Father’s house are many mansions,”³ Jesus taught. From modern revelation we know that those mansions are in three different kingdoms of glory. In the Final Judgment each of us will be judged according to our deeds and the desires of our hearts.⁴ Before that, we will need to suffer for our unrepented sins. The scriptures are clear on that.⁵ Then our righteous Judge will grant us residence in one of those kingdoms of glory. Thus, as we know from modern revelation, all “shall be judged . . . , and every man shall receive according to his own works, his own dominion, in the mansions which are prepared.”⁶

The Lord has chosen to reveal comparatively little about two of these kingdoms of glory. In contrast, the Lord has revealed much about the highest kingdom of glory, which the Bible describes as the “glory of the sun.”⁷

In the “celestial” glory⁸ there are three degrees, or levels.⁹ The highest of these is exaltation in the celestial kingdom, wherein we may become like our Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. To help us develop the godly attributes and the change in nature necessary to realize our divine potential, the Lord has revealed doctrine and established commandments based on eternal law. This is what we teach in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints because the purpose of the doctrine and policies of this restored Church is to prepare God’s children for salvation in the celestial glory and, more particularly, for exaltation in its highest degree.

The covenants made and the blessings promised to the faithful in the temples of God are the key. This explains our worldwide building of temples, about which the choir has sung so beautifully. Some are puzzled at this emphasis, not understanding that the covenants and ordinances of the temple guide us toward achieving exaltation. This can be understood only in the context of the revealed truth of *three* degrees of glory. Because of our Heavenly Father’s great love for all of His children, He has provided other kingdoms of glory—as Elder Quentin L. Cook explained yesterday—all of which are more wonderful than we can comprehend.¹⁰

The Atonement of Jesus Christ makes all of this possible. He has revealed that He “glorifies the Father, and *saves all the works of his hands*.”¹¹ That salvation is granted in different kingdoms of glory. We know from modern revelation that “all kingdoms have a law given.”¹² Significantly: “He who is not able to abide the law of a celestial kingdom cannot abide a celestial glory.

“And he who cannot abide the law of a terrestrial kingdom cannot abide a terrestrial glory.

“And he who cannot abide the law of a telestial kingdom cannot abide a telestial glory.”¹³

In other words, the kingdom of glory we receive in the Final Judgment is determined by the laws we choose to abide by in our Heavenly Father’s loving plan. Under that plan there are multiple kingdoms so that all of His children can be assigned to a kingdom where they can “abide.”

Tracy’s Thoughts:

The Lord has chosen to reveal comparatively little about two of these kingdoms of glory. In contrast, the Lord has revealed much about the highest kingdom of glory, which the Bible describes as the “glory of the sun.”⁷

This is the case because this is what Heavenly Father wants our goal to be. Moses 1: 39 For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man. God has no other goal. Unfortunately for his plan, but fortunately for the Children of God, he’s had to make provisions for those who choose not to want to live in His presence, although he has given us limited information on those provisions...because that’s not where he wants our eyes to settle on.

In the “celestial” glory⁸ there are three degrees, or levels.⁹ The highest of these is **exaltation** in the celestial kingdom, wherein we may become like our Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

With this very clear definition, when I hear about books like, “Odds are, you’re going to be exalted” (by Alonzo Gaskill), I cringe. There may be lots of good things in this book, but to have such a priestcrafty/catchy title such as this weakens what it actually takes to live as God lives in the highest degree of the Celestial Kingdom. If we had that many people who were living in such a way that “odds are, they will be exalted”, then where is Zion? Have you looked out of the window yet? It’s not there. We are not even close to being as the City of Enoch. And to cheapen the requirements it take to reach the highest degree of the CK, ie Exaltation, would make God a liar and then he would cease to exist, so you wouldn’t even be going to the CK anyway, because it wouldn’t be real.

To help us develop the godly attributes and the change in nature necessary to realize our divine potential, the Lord has revealed **doctrine and established commandments based on eternal law**. This is what we teach in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints because the purpose of the doctrine and policies of this restored Church is to prepare God’s children for salvation in the celestial glory and, more particularly, for exaltation in its highest degree.

The covenants made and the blessings promised to the *faithful* in the temples of God are the key.

It’s not just the making of covenants, is it? Making covenants is useless unless we are FAITHFUL to those covenants.

Elder Maxwell has said, “Today my plea is to those members *already inside* but whose discipleship is casual... These comments are for the essentially “honorable” members who are

skimming over the surface instead of deepening their discipleship and who are casually engaged rather than “anxiously engaged.” (D&C 76:75; D&C 58:27.) Though nominal in their participation, their reservations and hesitations inevitably show through. *They may even pass through our holy temples, but, alas, they do not let the holy temples pass through them.*” (Settle This in Your Hearts, Oct 1992)

From this we can gather that there are so many members who are “going through the motions”, “checking things off their spiritual to-do list” and when all those checks are done, they say, “I’m good to jump on my comfortable cloud of Christianity now!”

“Even Saints who are otherwise faithful can be derailed by the steady beat of Babylon’s band.” President Nelson (Oct 2021)

We lack the discipline to continue to study our covenants, deepen our understanding of the scriptures and the words of the prophets, and sell all the things/precepts that Babylon has sold us. We set aside the importance to learn the nature of God. Joseph Smith taught, “The Scriptures inform us that ‘This is life eternal that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.’ If any man does not know God, and inquires what kind of being he is, if the declaration of Jesus and the apostles be true, he will realize that he has not eternal life; for there can be eternal life on no other principle.”

“While casual members are not unrighteous, they often avoid appearing to be too righteous by seeming less committed than they really are—an ironic form of hypocrisy.” Elder Maxwell (Settle)

We can’t seem “too righteous” for fear of man that we might be called “Peter Priesthood” and “Molly Mormon”. We heed the call of the scorner and mocker from the large and spacious building and still hope to appreciate the taste of the fruit of the tree of life. “...the Nephites [after the coming of Christ] had to work all the time to preserve the [celestial] order -- eating, fasting, praying, and doing all the other things. *They couldn't tolerate the righteous pace, so they were lifted up in pride...*” (Hugh Nibley, Approaching Zion Ch. 11 pg 325-326)

This explains our worldwide building of temples, about which the choir has sung so beautifully. *Some are puzzled at this emphasis, not understanding that the covenants and ordinances of the temple guide us toward achieving exaltation.*

“He who is not able to abide the **law of a celestial kingdom** cannot abide a celestial glory.

This is what I hinted at before...if we were here as a people then where is Zion? God has declared, “ But behold, they have not learned to be obedient to the things which I required at their hands, but are full of all manner of evil, and do not impart of their substance, as becometh saints, to the poor and afflicted among them; And are not united according to the union required by the law of the celestial kingdom; **And Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom**; otherwise I cannot receive her unto myself.” (D&C 105:3-5)

In other words, the kingdom of glory we receive in the Final Judgment is determined by the laws we choose to abide by in our Heavenly Father's loving plan. Under that plan there are multiple kingdoms so that all of His children can be assigned to a kingdom where they can "abide."

I want you to read these last couple of lines until they sink deep into your soul. How can the above be true and at the same time people accept books by keyless individuals titled, "Odds are you're going to be exalted." It makes reason stare. God has said, "There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated— And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated." President Nelson has said, "In *every* age, the temple has underscored the precious truth that those who make covenants with God and keep them are children of the covenant."

As I said above, making covenants doesn't matter one iota unless we keep those covenants. As we keep our covenants to the best of our ability we gain more light because the Spirit is there to increase our intelligence. If we follow this logic, the scriptures teach us intelligence=light=truth=glory (D&C 93:30). And as we gain that intelligence in this life, that is how we obtain a higher glory in the resurrection (D&C 130:18). God continues in verse 19, "And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come."

So, odds are if you living by every word that proceeds forth from the mouth of God, then you will be exalted. Anything less than that, you won't be living with God as he lives.

I know that this Church is true. It is the Lord's church and it is here as a preparatory school for exaltation if we are willing to be "anxiously engaged" and do all things that the Lord asks of us. I know that President Nelson is his mouthpiece on earth now. I know that Joseph Smith is the dispensation head and he was called of God to restore all things. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Micah's Thoughts:

President Oaks says that with very few exceptions all will inherit a kingdom of glory- he says "with exceptions too limited to consider here"- this is actually something that I disagree with. It is far easier to become a son of perdition for members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saint than they realize. Joseph Smith taught that many, if not most, of the early apostates of the Church would become sons of perdition. It is true that with very few exceptions wholistically everyone will inherit a kingdom of glory, however, those who do not obtain a kingdom of glory i.e., Sons of perdition, are entirely made up of members of either former day or Latter-day Saints, 100%. Now think about that. Who on the planet should be hearing about becoming sons of perditions, the Muslims, the Buddhists? The only people it applies to are members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. If you view conference as a global event where the leaders of the Church are talking to the world generally speaking than President Oaks' remarks make sense; however if you view conference as how it was originally intended to be which is a conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to the members of the Church, than

his remarks don't make sense. Because there isn't a group of people on earth who need to understand sons of perdition more than members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Do Not Betray the Brethren

O ye Twelve! and all Saints! profit by this important Key—that in all your trials, troubles, temptations, afflictions, bonds, imprisonments¹⁴ and death, see to it, that you do not betray heaven;¹⁵ that you do not betray Jesus Christ;¹⁶ that you do not betray the brethren;¹⁷ that you do not betray the revelations¹⁸ of God, whether in the Bible, Book of Mormon, or Doctrine and Covenants, or any other that ever was or ever will be given and revealed unto man in this world or that which is to come. Yea, in all your kicking and floundering, see to it that you do not this thing, lest innocent blood be found upon your skirts,¹⁹ and you go down to hell.²⁰ All other sins are not to be compared to sinning against the Holy Ghost,²¹ and proving a traitor to the brethren.²² (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p.156)

Doctrine and Covenants 132:27

27 The blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, which shall not be forgiven in the world nor out of the world, is in that ye commit murder wherein ye shed innocent blood, and assent unto my death, after ye have received my new and everlasting covenant, saith the Lord God; and he that abideth not this law can in nowise enter into my glory, but shall be damned, saith the Lord.

D&C 132 deals with the new and everlasting covenant of marriage tied to ordinances in the temple which many, many members have covenanted to.

Alma 36:14

14 Yea, and I had murdered many of his children, or rather led them away unto destruction; yea, and in fine so great had been my iniquities, that the very thought of coming into the presence of my God did rack my soul with inexpressible horror.

Matthew 18:5–10. A Warning Not to Offend Little Ones

Though Jesus was speaking to leaders of His day when He issued a stern warning not to offend little ones, the message recorded in Matthew 18:5–10 applies to all of us (see D&C 50:40–41 for a broader definition of “little children”). We must not cause anyone seeking greater understanding of the gospel plan to stumble in their faith, nor should we do anything to block their progress toward eternal life. Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught about this warning:

“Few crimes are as gross and wicked as that of teaching false doctrine and leading souls away from God and salvation. ... If eternal joy is the reward given those who teach the truth and bring souls to salvation, shall not those who teach false doctrines and lead souls to damnation receive as their reward eternal remorse? (D. & C. 18:10–16.)

“... *It is better to die and be denied the blessings of continued mortal existence than to live and lead souls from the truth, thereby gaining eternal damnation for oneself*” (Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, 1:420).

President Oaks correctly teaches that we will need to suffer for our unrepentant sins- in this week's Come Follow Me that I did with the Three Brothers I went over this point in great depth so if people are confused on this or want to know more about this concept, check out that CFM so I don't have to repeat myself twice in the same week!

President Oaks then goes into talking about the highest degree of the celestial kingdom and what is required to get there- I suppose it is always a good refresher to remind people that all of us born into mortality will receive resurrected bodies therefore receiving what we teach as immortality- only those who reach the celestial kingdom are said to inherit eternal life which is living with the Father and the Son forever, while only the highest degree of the celestial kingdom (some older apostles and prophets would refer to this as the highest exaltation in the celestial kingdom) will obtain a continuation of the seed forever, i.e., will truly become as the Father and the Son.

“The covenants made and the blessings promised to the faithful in the temples of God are the key”

This is a perfect summation as to why covenants and honesty is the first thing we teach and understand in the School of Joseph's Boys. Being faithful is a synonym for being honest. Covenants made in the temple and our honesty to those covenants are truly the key to receiving the promised blessings.

Our honesty in abiding the laws is what determines where we go- if we can honestly live celestial law we will go to the celestial kingdom, if we can honestly live terrestrial law we will go to the terrestrial kingdom, etc. A lot of disgruntled members are claiming that there isn't a middle ground for them in the Church and on this point they are clearly wrong- it is called the terrestrial kingdom. What they are really upset about or what they are really desiring is to live a celestial or terrestrial law while demanding to be represented in the celestial kingdom. This is why there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth in that day. Much like the baker being forced to bake cakes for the gay wedding they don't simply want a place among you, they demand conformity and acceptance to their way of life.

Joseph Smith taught:

All Ordinances Necessary

The question is frequently asked, “Can we not be saved without going through with all those ordinances? I would answer, No, not the fulness of salvation.⁴ Jesus said, There are many mansions in my Father's house, and I will go and prepare a place for you.⁵ *House* here named should have been translated kingdom; and any person who is exalted to the highest mansion has to abide a celestial law,⁶ and the whole law⁷ too.

But there has been a great difficulty in getting anything into the heads of this generation. It has been like splitting hemlock knots with a corn-dodger for a wedge, and a pumpkin for a beetle. Even the Saints are slow to understand.⁸

Unwillingness of Saints to Learn

I have tried for a number of years to get the minds of the Saints prepared to receive the things of God;⁹ but we frequently see some of them, after suffering all they have for the work of God,¹⁰ will fly to pieces like glass as soon as anything comes that is contrary to their traditions:¹¹ they cannot stand the fire¹² at all. How many will be able to abide a celestial law,¹³ and go through and receive their exaltation,¹⁴ I am unable to say, as many are called, but few are chosen.¹⁵ (Jan. 20, 1844.) DHC 6:183–185.

(TPJS, p.331)

II.

The teachings and policies of the Lord's restored Church apply these eternal truths in a way that can be fully understood only in the context of our Heavenly Father's loving plan for *all* of His children.

Thus, we honor individual agency. Most are aware of this Church's great efforts to promote religious freedom. These efforts are in furtherance of our Heavenly Father's plan. We seek to help *all* of His children—not just our own members—enjoy the precious freedom to choose. Similarly, we are sometimes asked why we send missionaries to so many nations, even among Christian populations. We are also asked why we give enormous humanitarian aid to persons who are not members of our Church without linking this to our missionary efforts. We do this because the Lord has taught us to esteem all of His children as our brothers and sisters, and we want to share our spiritual and temporal abundance with everyone.

Eternal doctrine also provides a distinctive perspective on children. Through this perspective we see the bearing and nurturing of children as part of the divine plan. It is a joyful and sacred duty of those given the power to participate in it. Therefore, we are commanded to teach and contend for principles and practices that provide the best conditions for the development and happiness of children under God's plan.

Dallan's Thoughts:

The parts of our Heavenly Father's plan that President Oaks mentions in this section are agency, missionary work, caring for the poor and afflicted, and the importance of the family. The reasons why these four things are essential elements of the gospel are based on the purpose of life and its role in eternity. Knowing and understanding the true purposes of mortality, then, concerns not only learning how to manage our physical bodies but reaches into eternity.

These purposes cannot be learned by scientific inquiry, as they extend far beyond the rules and substance of this world; rather these purposes can only be learned and understood by revelation from God. In a philosophy course I took in college, the teacher made an argument that God would be unjust if he made rules which were not based on eternal truth. Thus he didn't want us to mention God in any philosophical argument, believing we could instead cite eternal truth as the basis for any ethical argument.

This logic is flawed for two reasons:

1. Due to the conditions of mortal life there is a purpose and plan for us being here, and some of the rules of this life depend on the purpose of life, rather than eternal purposes.

In such cases temporary rules are sometimes needed in the fulfillment of a temporary purpose or situation, life is such a temporary condition. For instance, in a class room one common rule is to remain quiet when the teacher is talking, so the students can hear and learn. Mission rules exist for a temporary condition to facilitate the purposes of a mission. But life's purpose could not be fulfilled if these rules were extended throughout the entire duration of life. On earth we are required to repent and be baptized. These rules are not only unnecessary in exaltation, but would be a false indication of a perfect being's need for change and rebirth.

Lectures on Faith 3:21 "But it is equally as necessary that men should have the idea that he is a God who changes not, in order to have faith in him, as it is to have the idea that he is gracious and long suffering. For without the idea of unchangeableness in the character of the Deity, doubt would take the place of faith. But with the idea that he changes not, faith lays hold upon the excellencies in his character with unshaken confidence, believing he is the same yesterday, today and forever, and that his course is one eternal round."

2. The second reason eternal truths can't be cited directly in a philosophical argument is simply that God is the source of all truth. Our Heavenly Father has two attributes that make him the only source in this life we can look to for absolute truth, first, he knows everything, and second he is perfectly honest.

2 Nephi 2:24 "But behold, all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things."

Lectures on Faith 3:22 "And again, the idea that he is a God of truth and cannot lie, is equally as necessary to the exercise of faith in him, as the idea of his unchangeableness. For without the idea that he was a God of truth and could not lie, the confidence necessary to be placed in his word in order to the exercise of faith in him, could not exist. But having the idea that he is not man that he can lie, it gives power to the minds of men to exercise faith in him."

The world thinks to learn truth by experimentation, but this works much like a blind man seeking to learn the inner workings of a car by opening the hood and feeling around. They may burn their hands, stick their fingers into a belt here, or a piston there, and may succeed in injuring themselves or jamming up the workings a bit, but will never grasp the grander truths of how the car operates.

Satan sought to destroy our agency. Yet, agency has value to all parties. Imagine for a moment that you were living in Satan's plan. That each person was forced to serve you, profess love to you, or even sacrifice for you. How much joy would you feel at each enslaved act of service? How much love would it inspire in you at each forced profession of love? What would their robotic sacrifices mean to you? How would you feel when forced to do the same to those around you? Truly, such a plan would be hell.

What is the power of the love felt when someone sacrifices for you? Surely it is in the fact that they chose to do so. It is the same for all other expressions of love. What is the joy found in accomplishing a goal? Surely it is in the fact that you chose that goal in hopes of finding the fruits of its completion.

Because the need for missionary work and caring for the poor and needy are well understood by both the church and the sectarian world I will move on to the vital need and purpose of the family, not just in eternity, as that is covered later in President Oaks' talk, but in mortality.

Joseph Smith taught: "We came to this earth that we might have a body and present it pure before God in the Celestial Kingdom. The great principle of happiness consists in having a body. The Devil has no body, and herein is his punishment" (The Words of Joseph Smith, ed. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook [1980], 60).

D&C 93

30 All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself, as all intelligence also; otherwise there is no existence.

31 Behold, here is the agency of man, and here is the condemnation of man; because that which was from the beginning is plainly manifest unto them, and they receive not the light.

32 And every man whose spirit receiveth not the light is under condemnation.

33 For man is spirit. The elements are eternal, and spirit and element, inseparably connected, receive a fulness of joy;

34 And when separated, man cannot receive a fulness of joy.

35 The elements are the tabernacle of God; yea, man is the tabernacle of God, even temples; and whatsoever temple is defiled, God shall destroy that temple. Our body is a temple, and that is more than a spiritual thing.

John 2

19 Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.

21 But he spake of the temple of his body.

Orson Pratt said "So God created man, male and female. He did not tell us all the particulars of the creation— that we were born male and female in the spirit world, and so on, but yet there are many sayings which indicate that such was the fact. For instance, in the books of Moses and in the books of the New Testament we read that God is the Father of all our spirits, that we were begotten sons and daughters unto God. The vision given in 1832 to our Prophet, Joseph Smith, shows this matter more clearly. Besides showing the vast number of worlds that the Lord had created, the voice of the Lord, in that vision, declares that all the inhabitants of all those worlds were begotten sons and daughters unto God. The Book of "Mormon" bears testimony to the same great doctrine. "You who are familiar with that book will recollect reading in the book of Ether how that the brother of Jared fell to the earth with fear when he saw the finger of the Lord, after the veil fell from his natural eyes. And the Lord spoke to him, saying, "Why hast thou fallen?" Then the brother of Jared answered, "I saw the finger of the Lord, and I knew not that the Lord had flesh and bones." It did resemble flesh and bone, but he, doubtless, thought it was so in reality, whereas it was the body of his Spirit. Then said the Lord, "I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people; I am Jesus Christ; I am the

Father and the Son, and the body which thou now beholdest is the body of my spirit. Seest thou not that thou art created after the body of my spirit, and all men,” says Jesus to the brother of Jared, “have I created in the beginning after the image of the body of my spirit.” (JD 19:311, Orson Pratt, Temples in Ancient America, Etc.)

Again President Oaks teaches us that an environment based on eternal doctrine, eternal truth, will provide children with the best chance for happiness.

Jesus taught “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. “This is the first and great commandment. “And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” [Matt. 22:37–39]

Of this President Oaks taught in 2019 “Our zeal to keep this second commandment must not cause us to forget the first, to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind. We show that love by “keep[ing] [His] commandments.”

Essentially Heavenly Father is a God of truth, so to love God is to love truth. And only by our love of truth can we understand the laws necessary to bring happiness to ourselves or anyone else. And to love our neighbor is to desire, not for their instant gratification, but for their long term happiness. This is why love of God is an essential prerequisite for loving our neighbor.

In Nov. 2009, then President Uchtdorf taught “God the Eternal Father did not give that first great commandment because He needs us to love Him. His power and glory are not diminished should we disregard, deny, or even defile His name. His influence and dominion extend through time and space independent of our acceptance, approval, or admiration. “No, God does not need us to love Him. But oh, how we need to love God! “For what we love determines what we seek. “What we seek determines what we think and do. “What we think and do determines who we are—and who we will become.” “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

We should not let the false teachings of the world distract or confuse us. God is the source of truth, the source of happiness, the source of family, the source of love and peace, the creator of the whole world.

“Now we have a world where people are confused. If you don’t believe it, go and watch the news. We can get direction all along our way, If we heed the prophets—follow what they say.” God teaches that happiness is found in love of truth, love of family, and love of neighbor. The world teaches that money and pleasure are the keys to happiness.

2 Nephi 28

9 Yea, and there shall be many which shall teach after this manner, false and vain and foolish doctrines, and shall be puffed up in their hearts, and shall seek deep to hide their counsels from the Lord; and their works shall be in the dark.

10 And the blood of the saints shall cry from the ground against them.

11 Yea, they have all gone out of the way; they have become corrupted.

12 Because of pride, and because of false teachers, and false doctrine, their churches have become corrupted, and their churches are lifted up; because of pride they are puffed up.

19 For the kingdom of the devil must shake, and they which belong to it must needs be stirred up unto repentance, or the devil will grasp them with his everlasting chains, and they be stirred up to anger, and perish;

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.

I pray that we will learn truth, love truth, and base our lives on these doctrines, that we may find happiness in this life and in eternity, is my prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Micah's Thoughts:

Hugh Nibley expands on a quote from President Ezra Taft Benson that I believe sums up our responsibility to children:

“There comes a time when the general defilement of a society becomes so great that the rising generation is put under undue pressure and cannot be said to have a fair choice between the way of light and the way of darkness. When such a point is reached the cup of iniquity is full, and the established order that has passed the point of no return and neither can nor will change its ways must be removed physically and forcibly if necessary from the earth, whether by war, plague, famine, or upheavals of nature” (Mormon 2:13-15) -Hugh Nibley (Collected Works of Hugh Nibley, Vol.6, Part.5, Ch.11, p.140), Ezra Taft Benson (Satan's Thrust- Youth, Ensign, December 1971)

III.

Finally, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is properly known as a family-centered Church. But not well understood is the reality that our family-centeredness is not limited to mortal relationships. Eternal relationships are also fundamental to our theology. The mission of the restored Church is to help all the children of God qualify for what God desires as their ultimate destiny. By the redemption provided through the Atonement of Christ, all may attain eternal life (exaltation in the celestial kingdom), which Mother Eve declared “God giveth unto all the obedient.”¹⁴ This is more than salvation. President Russell M. Nelson has reminded us that “in God’s eternal plan, salvation is an individual matter; [but] exaltation is a family matter.”¹⁵ Fundamental to us is God’s revelation that exaltation can be attained only through faithfulness to the covenants of an eternal marriage between a man and a woman.¹⁶ That divine doctrine is why we teach that “gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.”¹⁷

That is also why the Lord has required His restored Church to oppose social and legal pressures to retreat from His doctrine of marriage between a man and a woman, to oppose changes that homogenize the differences between men and women or confuse or alter gender.

The restored Church’s positions on these fundamentals frequently provoke opposition. We understand that. Our Heavenly Father’s plan allows for “opposition in all things,”¹⁸ and Satan’s

most strenuous opposition is directed at whatever is most important to that plan. Consequently, he seeks to oppose progress toward exaltation by distorting marriage, discouraging childbearing, or confusing gender. However, we know that in the long run, the divine purpose and plan of our loving Heavenly Father will not be changed. Personal circumstances may change, and God's plan assures that in the long run, the faithful who keep their covenants will have the opportunity to qualify for every promised blessing.¹⁹

A uniquely valuable teaching to help us prepare for eternal life, "the greatest of all the gifts of God,"²⁰ is the 1995 proclamation on the family.²¹ Its declarations are, of course, different from some current laws, practices, and advocacy, such as cohabitation and same-sex marriage. Those who do not fully understand the Father's loving plan for His children may consider this family proclamation no more than a changeable statement of policy. In contrast, we affirm that the family proclamation, founded on irrevocable doctrine, defines the kind of family relationships where the most important part of our eternal development can occur.

That is the context for the unique doctrine and policies of the restored Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Josline's Thoughts:

President Oaks refers to President Nelson's talk titled "Salvation and Exaltation" in which I found two related quotes:

Throughout the world, the family is increasingly under attack. If families fail, many of our political, economic, and social systems will also fail. And if families fail, their glorious eternal potential cannot be realized.." I found this to be very interesting linking the success of the family to the economic and political success.

"No man in this Church can obtain the highest degree of celestial glory without a worthy woman who is sealed to him.¹⁴ This temple ordinance enables eventual exaltation for both of them."

Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–3 I include 4 as well

- 1** In the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees;
- 2** And in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into this order of the priesthood [meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage];
- 3** And if he does not, he cannot obtain it.
- 4** He may enter into the other, but that is the end of his kingdom; he cannot have an "increase.

With the atonement of Christ all men may be saved, they will be resurrected, but to obtain exaltation we must work for it, we must make and keep the covenants required through the priesthood of God in order to qualify for the highest kingdom. And it is clear that the ordinance of Marriage between a man and a woman in the temple of God is a commandment, and the only path that leads to the highest exaltation.

President Oaks also refers to D&C 132 which we have heard and studied so much about on Discord

Doctrine and Covenants 132:16–17

16 Therefore, when they are out of the world they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but are appointed angels in heaven, which angels are ministering servants, to minister for those who are worthy of a far more, and an exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory.

17 For these angels did not abide my law; therefore, they cannot be enlarged, but remain separately and singly, without exaltation, in their saved condition, to all eternity; and from henceforth are not gods, but are angels of God forever and ever.

Many in the Christian world always ask if we as member of the church are saved. This scriptures answer that question for them. Yes we are saved as we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, but that's not all that we desire. We want to be with Christ and with our Heavenly Father in the highest degree of Glory, because that was promised by the Lord Himself that where he is we can be also and that we can be as He is. Just believing will not land us there

As Satan always opposed to our heavenly Father's plan of Salvation and exaltation President Oaks refers to

2 Nephi 2:11

11 For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things. If not so, my firstborn in the wilderness, righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither holiness nor misery, neither good nor bad. Wherefore, all things must needs be a compound in one; wherefore, if it should be one body it must needs remain as dead, having no life neither death, nor corruption nor incorruption, happiness nor misery, neither sense nor insensibility.

In reference to the talk he gave in 1993 he continues the same theme saying:

Although Satan and his followers have lost their opportunity to have a physical body, they are permitted to use their spirit powers to try to frustrate God's plan. This provides the opposition necessary to test how mortals will use their freedom to choose. Satan's most strenuous opposition is directed at whatever is most important to the Father's plan. Satan seeks to discredit the Savior and divine authority, to nullify the effects of the Atonement, to counterfeit revelation, to lead people away from the truth, to contradict individual accountability, to confuse gender, to undermine marriage, and to discourage childbearing (especially by parents who will raise children in righteousness).

Maleness and femaleness, marriage, and the bearing and nurturing of children are all essential to the great plan of happiness. Modern revelation makes clear that what we call gender was part of

our existence prior to our birth. God declares that he created “male and female” ([D&C 20:18](#); [Moses 2:27](#); [Gen. 1:27](#)). Elder James E. Talmage explained: “The distinction between male and female is no condition peculiar to the relatively brief period of mortal life; it was an essential characteristic of our pre-existent condition” (*Millennial Star*, 24 Aug. 1922, p. 539). To the first man and woman on earth, the Lord said, “Be fruitful, and multiply” ([Moses 2:28](#); see also [Gen. 1:28](#); [Abr. 4:28](#)). This commandment was first in sequence and first in importance. It was essential that God’s spirit children have mortal birth and an opportunity to progress toward eternal life. Consequently, all things related to procreation are prime targets for the adversary’s efforts to thwart the plan of God.”

With that I want to read [Hebrews 4:12](#)

12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

We should expect opposition from wicked men who are unrepentant. They may think that we are judging them because the words spoken in the scriptures are hard and they would prefer an easy way out. They may be comfortable in their sins, thinking that they are good enough and should obtain salvation from God in their filthiness. But God is the same yesterday today and forever. He has not changed, policies in the church might change but Doctrine of the Lord is rock solid.

If people aren’t honest they will have problem with the scriptures, which means, it is cutting them deep in the heart. In that case they should either humble themselves, drop on their knees ask for forgiveness, and change their lives to conform to the gospel; or they have to fight with God, or deny His existence. It’s one or the other. We should not throw stones at the messengers as they are only upholding the commandments of God. The prophet is the mouthpiece of the Lord, not the world. He will not be popular among the wicked. His teaching is not of the world, and his words are rooted from the doctrine of the gospel

The Church website definition on Sexual immorality:

- Willful participation in adultery,
- fornication, homosexual and lesbian behavior, incest, or any other unholy, unnatural, or impure sexual activity.

Here are some of the scriptures that back up those sayings from the prophet and the apostles of the Lord.

Leviticus 18:22–23

22 Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination.

23 Neither shalt thou lie with any beast to defile thyself therewith: neither shall any woman stand before a beast to lie down thereto: it is confusion.

These type of sins are the reasons the modern world is condemning the church for. As any other sins, they exist since the Old Testament and God was aware of them. They were condemned then, and they are condemned now. Clearly it was an abomination for a man to lay with a man the same as a woman with a woman and some other disgusting thing stated in these scripture verses that I will not repeat. Those things are unnatural. God commanded all His creatures to multiply and replenish the earth. These sins go against this commandment; and are found and condemned in many places in the scriptures.

Genesis 19:5-7

5 And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them.

6 And Lot went out at the door unto them, and shut the door after him,

7 And said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly.

Deuteronomy 23:17-18

17 There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel, nor a sodomite of the sons of Israel.

18 Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog, into the house of the LORD thy God for any vow: for even both these are abominations unto the LORD thy God.

Judges 19:22–25

22 Now as they were making their hearts merry, behold, the men of the city, certain sons of Belial, beset the house round about, and beat at the door, and spake to the master of the house, the old man, saying, Bring forth the man that came into thine house, that we may know him.

23 And the man, the master of the house, went out unto them, and said unto them, Nay, my brethren, nay, I pray you, do not so wickedly; seeing that this man is come into mine house, do not this folly.

24 Behold, here is my daughter a maiden, and his concubine; them I will bring out now, and humble ye them, and do with them what seemeth good unto you: but unto this man do not so vile a thing.

25 But the men would not hearken to him: so the man took his concubine, and brought her forth unto them; and they knew her, and abused her all the night until the morning: and when the day began to spring, they let her go.

As we can see here this is not new to the world, people long ago were also homosexual and bisexual they were considered wicked and an abomination to God. Why on earth people think that God will change His mind now and accept that kind of wickedness in His kingdom. If adultery is a sin, as well as all the others mentioned above, why would God change His stance on homosexuality? Why that sin is so special that it needs to be reviewed as if God made some kind of mistake? Why God would destroy the people of Sodom and Gomorra and leave those in modern times unscathed?

Isaiah 3:9

9 The shew of their countenance doth witness against them; and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not. Woe unto their soul! for they have rewarded evil unto themselves.

Here in this scripture is just like today, people were declaring their homosexuality as normal, and People in our day are not hiding it up either, they want everyone to accept their lifestyles otherwise we are called homophobes. Isaiah pronounced a woe onto their souls. They are the ones that rewarding evil onto themselves.

One would argue that those sins were only condemned in the Old Testament and Jesus Came to die for our sins and it is ok now because Jesus is loving and kind and with His atonement we are all saved. But let's dig a little deeper on the New Testament.

Roman 1: 24-32

24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:

25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:

27 And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet.

28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Left to their Own Devices

If people are unrepentant and want to know why things are the way they are in our time, verses 24-26 explains that clearly. God gave them up unto their vile affections and to their lusts. They are changing truths to lies, they are worshipping themselves instead of their Creator. If people want to change their ways and repent sincerely, God would help them and thereby changing them, where they could become new creatures. Instead people are fighting against God; they have not read their scriptures. They are comfortable with their own ways and want people to accept them as they are. They are condemning the church; they want it to change for their sakes. People are accountable at the age of eight but if they have parents in the church the parents need to warn their children about this pitfall. If the children do not heed the voice of their parents they should accept the fact that the child has fallen, they should not try to attack other people for condemning this kind of abomination. Instead, they need to pray for their children, they should continue to love them, but not accepting their behaviors, they should take it for what it is, just the same as any other sins that require forgiveness. They should also know that their hearts are not as aching as much as God's heart, after all they are also God's children, even more so then they are their parent's.

President Oaks talk has reference to “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” in which we read

All human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.

The family is ordained of God. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan. Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity.

These were prophetic words just as from ancient prophets, we must obey the Lord’s servants or we will be condemn; this proclamation was directed to all the world in 1995 not just members of the church. Any members of the church, who are honest with themselves, should know better as they were taught about this over and over again since they were in primary. We cannot proclaim members of the church and yet go against its teaching, we must be all in, or we are all out, there is no middle ground. I pray that every honest members of the church can take time to search the scriptures and ponder them so they can know for themselves that the Gospel as taught by the leaders of the church are totally in accord with the scriptures. We must strive to be obedient and keep the Lord’s commandments.

Doctrine and Covenants 14:7

7 And, if you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God.

Micah’s Thoughts:

Not recognized even by most members of the Church is the reality that our family-centeredness is not limited to mortal relationships, meaning what we do here and what we have there are one in the same. And why do I bring this up and what am I talking about? I’m talking about the fact that President Nelson is sealed to more than one woman, President Oaks is sealed to more than one woman etc. Men in the Church can be sealed to more than one woman even today, women cannot. Family relationships on earth and in heaven are based off of the same system- the Patriarchal Order. Members need to start wrapping their minds around this and gaining a testimony of it- it is a part of Celestial Law which President Oaks does a fantastic job of explaining, that we need to be living or willingly to live Celestial law in order to receive exaltation. And one cannot say, “well I don’t accept that in mortality but I will accept that in the eternities” for as Amulek clearly teaches us, “Ye cannot say, when ye are brought to that awful crisis, that I will repent, that I will return to my God. Nay, ye cannot say this; for that same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will have power to possess your body in that eternal world.”

President Oaks then goes onto declare that the Family Proclamation is not policy, it is doctrine. Another one of the key building blocks that we once again go over in the first three classes of Joseph’s Boys is the pyramid of truth and learning the difference between doctrine and policy. President Oaks in this talk speaks with the assumption that you know the difference between the

two. The pyramid of truth is a huge topic so obviously I won't break it down here; suffice to say it is crucial enough that every member should seriously study and understand.

President Oaks anti-anti's us here letting us know that Christ's doctrine will provoke opposition, so expect it to. The family is the center to everything, once again, the Patriarchal Order. This last week's book club *Approaching Zion* chapter 16 was entirely about Utopia/Zion, how all of them had family/patriarchal order in the center of societies and the opposition that came against them because of it. The book club was three hours so if you are interested in this specific concept I would highly recommend listening to that meeting.

IV.

In many relationships and circumstances in mortal life, each of us must live with differences. As followers of Christ who should love our fellow men, we should live peacefully with those who do not believe as we do. We are all children of a loving Heavenly Father. For all of us, He has destined life after death and, ultimately, a kingdom of glory. God desires all of us to strive for His highest possible blessings by keeping His highest commandments, covenants, and ordinances, all of which culminate in His holy temples being built throughout the world. We must seek to share these truths of eternity with others. But with the love we owe to all of our neighbors, we always accept their decisions. As a Book of Mormon prophet taught, we must press forward, having “a love of God and of all men.”²²

As President Russell M. Nelson declared in our last conference: “There has never been a time in the history of the world when knowledge of our Savior is more personally vital and relevant to *every human soul*. . . . The pure doctrine of Christ is powerful. It changes the life of everyone who understands it and seeks to implement it in his or her life.”²³

May we all implement that sacred doctrine in our own lives, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Laura's Thoughts:

In many relationships and circumstances in mortal life, **each of us must live with differences**. As followers of Christ who should love our fellow men, **we should live peacefully** with those who do not believe as we do.

President Oaks gave a conference talk in 2014 called *Loving Others and Living with Differences*, where his entire talk was about this. He stated, “In so many relationships and circumstances in life, we must live with differences. Where vital, our side of these differences should not be denied or abandoned, but as followers of Christ we should live peacefully with others who do not share our values or accept the teachings upon which they are based.”

In summary, he stated, “We accept the agency of others, we seek to be meek and avoid contention, we speak the truth in love, while also not compromising or diluting our commitments to the truth or surrendering our values... Loving kindness is required but a follower of Christ will be firm in the truth.”

I'm reminded of a statement from Elder Bednar from one of his Face2Face events--
"We don't need to defend the doctrine. We need to declare it. In the simplicity of the doctrine there's nothing to defend. It stands for itself. Others may choose to reject it, but our responsibility is to declare it, do our best to explain it, but we never need to be on the defensive."

I believe that is such a good reminder on how we should approach differences today.

We are all children of a loving Heavenly Father. For all of us, He has destined life after death and, ultimately, a kingdom of glory. **God desires all of us to strive for His highest possible blessings** by keeping His highest commandments, covenants, and ordinances, all of which culminate in His holy temples being built throughout the world.

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that God "institute[d] laws whereby [we] could have a privilege to advance like himself." God's greatest blessings are reserved for those who obey His laws, as He explained: "For all who will have a blessing at my hands shall abide the law which was appointed for that blessing."

I loved this part of Q&A session with Elder Bednar--

"How will I know where I'm going to go?
I can answer that for you.
You don't have to die to find out.
If living the gospel for you is hard,
If it's a chore,
If that's what you're like when you die,
Guess where you are going to go?
With other people that feel the same way.
Because that's the law that you've learned to love.
If, during the course of your life,
A little bit at a time
You have learned to love living the gospel,
Guess where you are going to go when you die?
With people who love living the gospel.
The Lord is not going to have to tell you.
When you come into his presence,
You won't think, gee, I hope He is in a really good mood today.
I hope He gives me some extra points,
So my grade will be a little bit better.
When you come into His presence
You will go where you know you belong
Based on what we have desired to do and become while we have lived on the earth
If you can look your bishop in the eye,
Because you are worthy and clean

You already know what the day of judgment will be like.”

In a similar sentiment, Elder Klebingat stated in a BYU-Hawaii devotional in 2018 -- “There won’t be any scratch marks on the outer door to the celestial kingdom. Nobody will want to get in there who is not fully prepared.”

Everyone that is trying to get the church to bend on its doctrine, throw out the eternal truths taught in the Family Proclamation, redefine the law of chastity, etc., in essence won’t want to be in the Celestial Kingdom anyway. They won’t want to live the laws required to live there. God, of course, wants all of us to choose to be there, but he will always respect our agency to choose where we want to go.

As President Russell M. Nelson declared in our last conference: “There has never been a time in the history of the world when knowledge of our Savior is more personally vital and relevant to *every human soul*. ... The pure doctrine of Christ is powerful. It changes the life of everyone who understands it and seeks to implement it in his or her life.”

I pulled up the talk from President Nelson, that President Oaks took this quote from and I just wanted to read the next couple of lines from--

“The pure doctrine of Christ is powerful. It changes the life of everyone who understands it and seeks to implement it in his or her life. The doctrine of Christ helps us find and stay on the covenant path. Staying on that narrow but well-defined path will ultimately qualify us to receive all that God has. Nothing could be worth more than *all* our Father has!”

Isn’t this what we’ve been studying in the Joseph’s Boys classes? I’m so thankful for the Plan of Happiness and the chance to learn and grow and continue to progress on the covenant path so I can become like our Savior and our Heavenly Father. We are God’s work and we are His glory. He wants us to become like Him and to bless us *with all* that He has. And like President Nelson said, nothing could be worth more than that.

Micah’s Thoughts:

President Oaks bears his testimony and commits us in this final section. A major theme of this conference is capsulated in this quote “we must seek to share these truths of eternity with others”. I believe President Oaks’ commitment at the end to implement sacred doctrine in our own lives as well as sharing these truths with others is not complete.

Doctrine and Covenants 11:21

21 Seek not to declare my word, but first seek to obtain my word, and then shall your tongue be loosed; then, if you desire, you shall have my Spirit and my word, yea, the power of God unto the convincing of men.

The quote from President Nelson is a more complete form of the commitment, “The pure doctrine of Christ is powerful. It changes the life of everyone *who understands it* and seeks to implement it in his or her life.”

With that said, let me expand upon President Oaks’ commitment here to first obtain the word, to understand it, *and then* implement that sacred doctrine and share it with others. We in the School of Joseph’s Boys are committed to doing this very thing in our own lives, seeking to obtain the word, seeking to share the word and understand it with others, and finally seeking to implement it in our own lives as we become one heart and one mind preparatory to the Zion of our God. It is my prayer that all within in the sound of my voice do so, and do so now, for time is running out, and in the words of Hugh Nibley, if you don’t do the work now you will die of shock when Zion shows up. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.