

Parable of the Fig: A Marked Generation

Unlocking the Primary Interpretation

In this book I will go over parables of the utmost importance that have been used so often in their tertiary forms that most members don't understand or even know the primary interpretation of the parables. Can parables be interpreted or likened in multiple ways for the benefit of man? Yes. Can washing the vase and the dishes and placing them on a clean cloth add symbolic weight to traditions and ordinances (Mark 7:4-23)? Yes. The problem comes when the washing of the dishes in the eyes of the participant becomes the primary activity and they neglect the actual primary purpose. Jesus, pointing the Jews towards their behavior in doing this very thing, said you "have omitted the weightier matters of the law" (Matthew 23:23-28). Understanding how the Lord teaches is crucial to understanding the primary intent of the parable. Joseph Smith had a laugh at a member who thought that the beast kingdoms described in Daniel's vision were symbols of God's kingdoms. Joseph Smith said, "the Lord would never make use of a figure of a beast nor any of the brute kind to represent His Kingdom" (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p. 289). Joseph Smith taught that every jot and tittle of the word had to be literally fulfilled and this included parables, visions etc. Joseph Smith in identifying that the Lord even in a parable or vision wouldn't use something ungodly to represent something godly clarifies that even the symbols in parables have to make sense. Joseph Smith also taught on another occasion the best way to go about trying to find this primary purpose; "I have a key by which I understand the scriptures. I inquire, what was the question which drew out the answer, or caused Jesus to utter the parable?" (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p.276-277) Joseph then goes on to explain that the question being answered is the primary interpretation and "all straining on this point is a bubble" (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p.277).

So, the first step to understanding all parables is to answer what drew it out- what question was the Savior answering? If you find that your interpretation doesn't answer the question directly that the Savior was being asked, you can then know your interpretation is not the primary interpretation.

So the first thing we shall do in all parable breakdowns is answer "what drew out the parable/what question was being asked?"

What Drew Out the Parable/What is the Question?

Doctrine and Covenants 45:24-38

24 And this I have told you concerning Jerusalem; and when that day shall come, shall a remnant be scattered among all nations;

25 But they shall be gathered again; but they shall remain until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

26 And in that day shall be heard of wars and rumors of wars, and the whole earth shall be in commotion, and men's hearts shall fail them, and they shall say that Christ delayeth his coming until the end of the earth.

27 And the love of men shall wax cold, and iniquity shall abound.

28 And when the times of the Gentiles is come in, a light shall break forth among them that sit in darkness, and it shall be the fulness of my gospel;

29 But they receive it not; for they perceive not the light, and they turn their hearts from me because of the precepts of men.

30 And in that generation shall the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

31 And there shall be men standing in that generation, that shall not pass until they shall see an overflowing scourge; for a desolating sickness shall cover the land

32 But my disciples shall stand in holy places, and shall not be moved; but among the wicked, men shall lift up their voices and curse God and die.

33 And there shall be earthquakes also in divers places, and many desolations; yet men will harden their hearts against me, and they will take up the sword, one against another, and they will kill one another.

34 And now, when I the Lord had spoken these words unto my disciples, they were troubled.

35 And I said unto them: Be not troubled, for, when all these things shall come to pass, ye may know that the promises which have been made unto you shall be fulfilled.

36 And when the light shall begin to break forth, it shall be with them like unto a parable which I will show you—

37 Ye look and behold the figtrees, and ye see them with your eyes, and ye say when they begin to shoot forth, and their leaves are yet tender, that summer is now nigh at hand;

38 Even so it shall be in that day when they shall see all these things, then shall they know that the hour is nigh.

Doctrine and Covenants 35:16-17

16 And they shall learn the parable of the fig tree, for even now already summer is nigh.

17 And I have sent forth the fulness of my gospel by the hand of my servant Joseph; and in weakness have I blessed him;

The Savior was asked about the Jews being scattered, the promise of their return back to Jerusalem and the signs leading up the second coming. And he used the parable of the fig to further explain what he had just taught regarding those things. So if our breakdown doesn't answer these fundamental questions we have not understood the primary interpretation of the parable.

Identifying the Figures

So, what are the figures being represented in this parable and how do they directly relate back to what Jesus had taught from verse 24-33? There is springtime, summer, fig leaves, and figs; those are the major themes of this parable. And what was Jesus just teaching about directly before this? The times of the Gentiles, which was covered in the previous chapter. Therefore, we know that the parable of the fig deals with and relates directly back to the times of the Gentiles. And what is the entire purpose of the Lord's teaching of the times of the Gentiles? It is to identify a generation. Do not seasons represent perfectly a new generation of men (i.e. spring with young leaves and sprouts shooting forth)? And in the summertime this young generation is now fully grown, adults, figs.

1. Springtime: The time period in which the times of the Gentiles is fulfilled
2. Fig Leaves/Sprouts: the generation i.e., those born at that time
3. Summer: the period of time in which the figs are expected to become ripe fruit i.e., the lifetime of the generation in which the time of the gentiles is fulfilled
4. Figs: the generation in which the time of the gentiles was fulfilled now in adulthood

A deeper understanding of this parable, as well as additional figures, can be gained by bringing in other scriptures.

Revelation 6:13

13 And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her *untimely figs*, when she is shaken of a **mighty wind**.

IE figs that ripen late, hanging on the tree even into the **winter**.

Doctrine and Covenants 88:87-91

87 **For not many days hence and the earth shall tremble and reel to and fro as a drunken man; and the sun shall hide his face, and shall refuse to give light; and the moon shall be bathed in blood; and the stars shall become exceedingly angry, and shall cast themselves down as a fig that falleth from off a fig tree.**

88 **And after your testimony cometh wrath and indignation upon the people.**

89 **For after your testimony cometh the testimony of earthquakes, that shall cause groanings in the midst of her, and men shall fall upon the ground and shall not be able to stand.**

90 **And also cometh the testimony of the voice of thunders, and the voice of lightnings, and the voice of tempests, and the voice of the waves of the sea heaving themselves beyond their bounds.**

91 **And all things shall be in commotion; and surely, men's hearts shall fail them; for fear shall come upon all people.**

Doctrine and Covenants 112:24-26

24 **Behold, vengeance cometh speedily upon the inhabitants of the earth, a day of wrath, a day of**

burning, a day of desolation, of weeping, of mourning, and of lamentation; and as a whirlwind it shall come upon all the face of the earth, saith the Lord.

25 And upon my house shall it begin, and from my house shall it go forth, saith the Lord;

26 First among those among you, saith the Lord, who have professed to know my name and have not known me, and have blasphemed against me in the midst of my house, saith the Lord.

Alma 34:30-33

30 And now, my brethren, I would that, after ye have received so many witnesses, seeing that the holy scriptures testify of these things, ye come forth and bring fruit unto repentance.

31 Yea, I would that ye would come forth and harden not your hearts any longer; for behold, now is the time and the day of your salvation; and therefore, if ye will repent and harden not your hearts, immediately shall the great plan of redemption be brought about unto you.

32 For behold, this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; yea, behold the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors.

33 And now, as I said unto you before, as ye have had so many witnesses, therefore, I beseech of you that ye do not procrastinate the day of your repentance until the end; for after this day of life, which is given us to prepare for eternity, behold, if we do not improve our time while in this life, then cometh the night of darkness wherein there can be no labor performed.

Doctrine and Covenants 97:7-12, 22-26

7 The ax is laid at the root of the trees; and every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be hewn down and cast into the fire. I, the Lord, have spoken it.

8 Verily I say unto you, all among them who know their hearts are honest, and are broken, and their spirits contrite, and are willing to observe their covenants by sacrifice—yea, every sacrifice which I, the Lord, shall command—they are accepted of me.

9 For I, the Lord, will cause them to bring forth as a very fruitful tree which is planted in a goodly land, by a pure stream, that yieldeth much precious fruit.

10 Verily I say unto you, that it is my will that a house should be built unto me in the land of Zion, like unto the pattern which I have given you.

11 Yea, let it be built speedily, by the tithing of my people.

12 Behold, this is the tithing and the sacrifice which I, the Lord, require at their hands, that there may be a house built unto me for the salvation of Zion—

22 For behold, and lo, vengeance cometh speedily upon the ungodly as the whirlwind; and who shall escape it?

23 The Lord's scourge shall pass over by night and by day, and the report thereof shall vex all people; yea, it shall not be stayed until the Lord come;

24 For the indignation of the Lord is kindled against their abominations and all their wicked works.

25 Nevertheless, Zion shall escape if she observe to do all things whatsoever I have commanded her.

26 But if she observe not to do whatsoever I have commanded her, I will visit her according to all her works, with sore affliction, with pestilence, with plague, with sword, with vengeance, with devouring fire.

*These verses in Doctrine and Covenants 97 relate directly to the Parable of the Nobleman and His Olive Trees found in Doctrine and Covenants 101, specifically verses 47-51 and 51-56 but that parable is covered in a subsequent chapter.

New additional figures:

1. Untimely Figs/Unrepentant Lives: those members of that generation who failed to become ripe fruit, i.e., “those who professed to know the Lord but never knew Him”
2. Mighty Wind/Whirlwind: the judgements of God to be poured out, first on the untimely figs
3. Winter/Night of Darkness: when the cup of iniquity is full, time has run out, and the day of grace has passed them

So in summary and chronologically we have:

Spring	Summer	Winter
The Generation Born	The Generation’s Lifetime	The Generation as Elders
Times of the Gentiles Fulfilled	Promises fulfilled to Israel (Jews back to Jerusalem)	Generation matures slothfully, Whirlwind/Judgements
Fig Sprouts/Leaves	Figs	Untimely Figs

Spring: Looking for the Leaves

Joseph Smith (1839):

"Whatever you may hear about me or Kirtland, take no notice of it; for if it be a place of refuge, the devil will use his greatest efforts to trap the Saints. You must make yourselves acquainted with those men who like Daniel pray three times a day toward the House of the Lord. Look to the Presidency and receive instruction. Every man who is afraid, covetous, will be taken in a snare. The time is soon coming, when no man will have any peace but in Zion and her stakes.

I saw men hunting the lives of their own sons, and brother murdering brother, women killing their own daughters, and daughters seeking the lives of their mothers. I saw armies arrayed against armies. I saw blood, desolation, fires. The Son of Man has said that the mother shall be against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother. These things are at our doors. They will follow the Saints of God from city to city. Satan will rage, and the spirit of the devil is now

enraged. I know not how soon these things will take place; but with a view of them, shall I cry peace? No; I will lift up my voice and testify of them. How long you will have good crops, and the famine be kept off, I do not know; when the fig tree leaves, know then that the summer is nigh at hand.” (History of the Church, 3:390–91)

Wilford Woodruff:

As I before stated, so say I again, the Gospel of Christ requires faith all the day long, for no man can continue faithful to the end without it. God has set his hand a second time to build up that kingdom which Daniel was permitted to see in vision, and to establish that Zion in the mountains which Isaiah saw. He has set his hand, for the last time, to gather together all things which are in heaven and on earth which are in Christ, unto himself. The day has come when the Lord has sent forth a proclamation to warn the nations to prepare for his second coming; and the *signs of both heaven and earth all indicate the coming of the Son of Man, which is near at the door. No man knows the day or the hour when Christ will come, but the generation is clearly pointed out, the fig tree is leaving, and great changes are near at hand....* What other people on the face of the earth are preparing for Jesus Christ? The Lord Jesus Christ is coming to reign on earth. The world may say that he delays his coming until the end of the earth. But they know neither the thoughts nor the ways of the Lord. The Lord will not delay his coming because of their unbelief, and the signs both in heaven and earth indicate that it is near. *The fig trees are leafing in sight of all the nations of the earth, and if they had the Spirit of God they could see and understand them...But one thing is certain, though the Lord has not revealed the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man shall come, he has pointed out the generation, and the signs predicted as the fore-runners of that great event have **begun** to appear in the heavens and on the earth, and they will continue until all is consummated.”* (JD 19:357, Faith, Etc.; JD 16:32, Home Manufacture, Etc.; Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Wilford Woodruff, chapter 24 or Deseret News: Semi-Weekly, February 4, 1873, 2)

Bruce R. McConkie:

“Question: Does or will anyone know when the Lord will come? Answer: As to the day and hour, No; as to the generation, Yes. Question: Who shall know the generation? Answer: The Saints, the children of light, those who can read the signs of the times, those who treasure up the Lord’s word so they will not be deceived, will know the generation. (Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, 1:665-66).

Summer: The Figs

President Spencer W. Kimball:

“The leaves are commencing to show on the fig tree.” (Elder Bernard P. Brockbank, “The Leaves Are Commencing to Show on the Fig Tree”, May **1976**)

Neal A Maxwell:

“The Savior has told us that just as when the fig tree puts forth its leaves, we may know that summer is nigh, so it will be with his second coming (see Luke 21:28–30) The foreseen summer

of circumstances *is now upon us*. Let us not, therefore, complain of the heat!" (The Net Gathers of Every Kind, October 1980)

Winter: The Millennials

Spiritual Whirlwinds

By Elder Neil L. Andersen

Don't let the whirlwinds drag you down. These are your days—to stand strong as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I greet you this morning—*especially the young people* who are both here in the Conference Center and throughout the world. *Yours is a chosen generation of destiny, and I speak especially to you.*

Many years ago while we were visiting our family in Florida, a tornado touched down not too far from us. One woman living in a mobile home went into her bathroom for safety. The mobile home began to shake. A few moments passed. Then she heard her neighbor's voice: "I am here in the front room." Coming out of the bathroom, to her great astonishment, she discovered that the tornado had lifted and carried her mobile home through the air, landing it perfectly upright on the top of her neighbor's mobile home.

My young friends, the world will not glide calmly toward the Second Coming of the Savior. The scriptures declare that "all things shall be in commotion." Brigham Young said, "It was revealed to me in the commencement of this Church, that the Church would spread, prosper, grow and extend, and that in proportion to the spread of the Gospel among the nations of the earth, so would the power of Satan rise."

The whirlwinds in your youth, like the wind against a young tree, can increase your spiritual strength, preparing you for the years ahead. (April 2014)

How do you prepare for your whirlwinds? "Remember ... it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, ... his shafts in the whirlwind, ... when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power ... to drag you down ... because of the rock upon which ye are built." This is your safety in the whirlwind.

President Thomas S. Monson has said, "Where once the standards of the Church and the standards of society were mostly compatible, now there is a wide chasm between us, and it's growing ever wider." This chasm, for some, stirs strong spiritual whirlwinds. Let me share an example.

This past month the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve published a letter to leaders of the Church across the world. In part it read: "Changes in the civil law do not, indeed cannot, change the moral law that God has established. God expects us to uphold and keep His commandments regardless of divergent opinions or trends in society. His law of chastity is clear:

sexual relations are proper only between a man and a woman who are legally and lawfully wedded as husband and wife. We urge you to review ... the doctrine contained in ‘The Family: A Proclamation to the World.’”

As the world slips away from the Lord’s law of chastity, we do not. President Monson said: “The Savior of mankind described Himself as being in the world but not of the world. We also can be in the world but not of the world as we reject false concepts and false teachings and remain true to that which God has commanded.”

While many governments and well-meaning individuals have redefined marriage, the Lord has not. In the very beginning, God initiated marriage between a man and a woman—Adam and Eve. He designated the purposes of marriage to go far beyond the personal satisfaction and fulfillment of adults to, more importantly, advancing the ideal setting for children to be born, reared, and nurtured. Families are the treasure of heaven.

Why do we continue to talk about this? As Paul said, “We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.” As Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ, we have the responsibility to teach our Creator’s plan for His children and to warn of the consequences of disregarding His commandments.

Recently, I spoke with a Laurel from the United States. I quote from her email:

“This past year some of my friends on Facebook began posting their position on marriage. Many favored same-sex marriage, and several LDS youth indicated they ‘liked’ the postings. I made no comment.

“I decided to declare my belief in traditional marriage in a thoughtful way.

“With my profile picture, I added the caption ‘I believe in marriage between a man and a woman.’ Almost instantly I started receiving messages. ‘You are selfish.’ ‘You are judgmental.’ One compared me to a slave owner. And I received this post from a great friend who is a strong member of the Church: ‘You need to catch up with the times. Things are changing and so should you.’

“I did not fight back,” she said, “but I did not take my statement down.”

She concludes: “Sometimes, as President Monson said, ‘You have to stand alone.’ Hopefully as youth, we will stand together in being true to God and to the teachings of His living prophets.”

If you have a question about counsel from the leaders of the Church, please discuss your honest concerns with your parents and leaders. You need the strength that comes from trusting the Lord’s prophets. President Harold B. Lee said: “The only safety we have as members of this church is to ... learn to give heed to the words and commandments that the Lord shall give through His prophet. ... There will be some things that take patience and faith. You may not like what comes. ... It may contradict your political views ... your social views ... interfere with ... your social life. But if you listen to these things, as if from the mouth of the Lord Himself, ... ‘the gates of hell shall not prevail against you ... and the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before you ...’ (D&C 21:6).”

The Lord has given you another way to stand firm, a spiritual gift more powerful than the whirlwinds of the adversary! He said, “Stand . . . in holy places, and be not moved.” (D&C 45:32, 87:8)

My young brothers and sisters, how we love you, admire you, and pray for you. Don’t let the whirlwinds drag you down. These are your days—to stand strong as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Helaman 7:9

9 But behold, I am consigned that these are my days, and that my soul shall be filled with sorrow because of this the wickedness of my brethren.

Build more firmly your foundation upon the rock of your Redeemer.

Treasure more completely His incomparable life and teachings.

Follow more diligently His example and His commandments.

Embrace more deeply His love, His mercy and grace, and the powerful gifts of His Atonement.

As you do, I promise you that you will see the whirlwinds for what they are—tests, temptations, distractions, or challenges to help you grow. And as you live righteously year after year, I assure you that your experiences will confirm to you again and again that Jesus is the Christ. The spiritual rock under your feet will be solid and secure. You will rejoice that God has placed you here to be a part of the final preparations for Christ’s glorious return.

The Savior said, “I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.” This is His promise to you. I know this promise is real. I know that He lives, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

It is interesting to note that in this talk a generation was clearly being addressed and the judgments (i.e., whirlwinds) had already begun (with the Family Proclamation being once again central to that). We will go over the desolation and scourge in other chapters but an important tie in to make now would be understanding the connection between these spritual whirlwinds that are causing mass spiritual death currently in the Church and in the world and the following:

Isaiah 3:13-15, 25-26

13 The LORD standeth up to plead, and standeth to judge the people.

14 The LORD will enter into judgment with the ancients of his people, and the princes thereof: for ye have eaten up the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses.

15 What mean ye that ye beat my people to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor? saith the Lord GOD of hosts.

25 Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war.

26 And her gates shall lament and mourn; and she being desolate shall sit upon the ground.

The Family: A Proclamation to the World

We warn that individuals who violate covenants of chastity, who abuse spouse or offspring, or who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God. Further, we warn that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets.

Becoming True Millennials

President Russell M. Nelson

I bring you greetings and love from the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. We are thankful for your devotion to the Lord and His restored gospel. We are grateful for each time you stand up and speak up for truth—*especially when it is not popular*.

Many people refer to you as *Millennials*. I'll admit that when researchers refer to you by that word and describe what their studies reveal about you—your likes and dislikes, your feelings and inclinations, your strengths and weaknesses—I'm uncomfortable. There is something about the way they use the term *Millennial* that bothers me. And frankly, I am less interested in what the *experts* have to say about you than what the Lord has told me about you.

When I pray about you and ask the Lord how *He* feels about you, I feel something far different from what the researchers say. Spiritual impressions I've received about you lead me to believe that the term *Millennial* may actually be perfect for you. But for a much different reason than the experts may ever understand.

The term *Millennial* is perfect for you if that term reminds you of who you *really* are and what your purpose in life *really* is. A True Millennial is one who was taught and did teach the gospel of Jesus Christ premortally and who made covenants with our Heavenly Father there about courageous things—even *morally* courageous things—that you would do while here on earth. A True Millennial is a man or woman whom God trusted enough to send to earth during the most compelling dispensation in the history of this world. A True Millennial is a man or woman who lives now to help prepare the people of this world for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and His millennial reign. Make no mistake about it—you were born to be a True Millennial.

The question is “How can you stand and live as a True Millennial?” I have four recommendations.

Learn Who You Really Are

My first recommendation: Learn who you *really* are. Take time to think prayerfully about these facts:

- You are an elect son or daughter of God.
- You are created in His image.

- You were taught in the spirit world to prepare you for anything and everything you would encounter during this latter part of these latter days.¹ That teaching endures within you!

You are living in the “eleventh hour.” The Lord has declared that this is the last time that He will call laborers into His vineyard to gather the elect from the four quarters of the earth. And *you* were sent to participate in this gathering. Again and again I have seen firsthand the powerful influence of True Millennials as they bring others to a knowledge of the truth. This is part of your identity and your purpose as the seed of Abraham!

Doctrine and Covenants 33:3–6

3 For behold, the field is white already to harvest; and it is the eleventh hour, and the last time that I shall call laborers into my vineyard.

4 And my vineyard has become corrupted every whit; and there is none which doeth good save it be a few; and they err in many instances because of priestcrafts, all having corrupt minds.

5 And verily, verily, I say unto you, that this church have I established and called forth out of the wilderness.

6 And even so will I gather mine elect from the four quarters of the earth, even as many as will believe in me, and hearken unto my voice.

True Millennials... know who they really are. They are devout disciples of Jesus Christ who instinctively seize every opportunity to help themselves and others prepare for the millennial reign of our Savior.

Therefore, my first recommendation is to learn *for yourselves* who you really are. Ask your Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, how He feels about you and your mission here on earth. If you ask with real intent, over time the Spirit will whisper the life-changing truth to you. Record those impressions and review them often, and follow through with exactness.

I promise you that when you begin to catch even a glimpse of how your Heavenly Father sees you and what He is counting on you to do for Him, your life will never be the same!

Expect and Prepare to Accomplish the Impossible

My second recommendation: *Expect and prepare to accomplish the impossible.*

God has always asked His covenant children to do difficult things. Because you are covenant-keeping sons and daughters of God, living in the latter part of these latter days, the Lord will ask *you* to do difficult things. You can count on it—Abrahamic tests did not stop with Abraham. (President Nelson tells the Millennials to “expect and prepare to accomplish the impossible- he then tells them that we are living in the latter part of the latter days and the Lord will ask us to do difficult things. He then references Doctrine and Covenants 101)

Doctrine and Covenants 101:4-5

4 Therefore, they must needs be chastened and tried, even as Abraham, who was commanded to offer up his only son.

5 For all those who will not endure chastening, but deny me, cannot be sanctified.

By the end of this book you will become intimately acquainted with Doctrine and Covenants 101 and what the Lord expects in the latter part of the last days.

I know how unnerving it can be to be asked to do something that seems far beyond your capacity.... But the Lord is able to do His own work,⁵ and I [have been] privileged to watch the unfolding of one miracle after another—always, and only, *after* I had brought my best thinking, my most courageous efforts, and my most fervent prayers to the task.

As a True Millennial whom the Lord can count on, *you* will make history too! You will be asked to accept challenging assignments and become an instrument in the Lord’s hands. And He will enable you to accomplish the impossible.

How will you accomplish the impossible? By doing whatever it takes to strengthen your faith in Jesus Christ by increasing your understanding of the doctrine taught in His restored Church and by relentlessly seeking truth. As a True Millennial, anchored in pure doctrine, when you are asked to do impossible things, you will be able to step forward with faith and dogged persistence and cheerfully do all that lies in your power to fulfill the purposes of the Lord.

Doctrine and Covenants 123:17

17 Therefore, dearly beloved brethren, let us cheerfully do all things that lie in our power; and then may we stand still, with the utmost assurance, to see the salvation of God, and for his arm to be revealed.

(I’d be willing to bet that most people didn’t realize that when President Nelson was quoting “let us cheerfully do all that lies in our power” that he was referencing the day in which the Lord would make bare his arm in the eyes of all nations. We will get into that more specifically in later chapters)

You will have days when you will be thoroughly discouraged. So, pray for courage not to give up! You will need that strength because it will become less and less popular to be a Latter-day Saint. Sadly, some whom you thought were your friends will betray you. And some things will simply seem unfair.

However, I promise you that as you follow Jesus Christ, you will find sustained peace and true joy. As you keep your covenants with increasing precision, and as you defend the Church and

kingdom of God on the earth today, the Lord will bless you with strength and wisdom to accomplish the impossible.

Learn How to Access the Power of Heaven

My third recommendation: Learn how to access the power of heaven.

Every one of us has questions. Seeking to learn, understand, and recognize truth is a vital part of our mortal experience. Much of my life has been spent in research. You too will learn best by asking inspired questions.

Our Heavenly Father and His Son stand ready to respond to your questions through the ministering of the Holy Ghost. But it is up to you to learn how to qualify for and receive those answers.

Where can you start? Begin by spending more time in holy places. The temple is a holy place. So is the chapel, where you make new sacramental covenants each Sunday. I invite you also to make your apartment, your dorm, your home, or your room a holy place where you can safely retreat from the dark distractions of the world.

Prayer is a key. Pray to know what to stop doing and what to start doing. Pray to know what to add to your environment and what to remove so the Spirit can be with you in abundance.

Plead with the Lord for the gift of discernment. Then live and work to be worthy to receive that gift so that when confusing events arise in the world, you will know exactly what is true and what is not.

Serve with love. Loving service to those who have lost their way or who are wounded in spirit opens your heart to personal revelation.

Spend more time—much more time—in places where the Spirit is present. That means more time with friends who are seeking to have the Spirit with them. Spend more time on your knees in prayer, more time in the scriptures, more time in family history work, more time in the temple. I promise you that as you consistently give the Lord a generous portion of your time, He will multiply the remainder.

My dear brothers and sisters, you have as much access to the mind and will of the Lord *for your own life* as we Apostles do *for His Church*. Just as the Lord requires *us* to seek and ponder, fast and pray, and study and wrestle with difficult questions, He requires *you* to do the same as you seek answers to your own questions.

My dear young friends, you can know the mind and will of the Lord *for your own life*. You do not have to wonder if *you* are where the Lord needs *you* to be or if *you* are doing what He needs *you* to do. You can know! The Holy Ghost will tell you “all things what *ye* should do.”⁹

Follow the Prophets

My fourth recommendation: Follow the prophets.

Prophets see ahead. They see the harrowing dangers the adversary has placed or will yet place in our path. Prophets also foresee the grand possibilities and privileges awaiting those who listen *with the intent to obey*. I know this is true! I have experienced it for myself over and over again.

The Lord has promised us that He will never allow the prophet to lead us astray. President Harold B. Lee declared: “You may not like what comes from the authority of the Church. It may contradict your political views. It may contradict your social views. It may interfere with some of your social life. But if you listen to these things, as if from the mouth of the Lord Himself, with patience and faith, the promise is that ‘the gates of hell shall not prevail against you; yea, and the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before you, and cause the heavens to shake for your good, and his name’s glory’ (D&C 21:6).”

You may not always understand every declaration of a living prophet. But when you know a prophet is a prophet, you can approach the Lord in humility and faith and ask for your own witness about whatever His prophet has proclaimed.

Around 41 B.C., many Nephites joined the Church, and the Church prospered. But secret combinations also began to grow, and many of their cunning leaders hid among the people and were difficult to detect. As the people became more and more prideful, many of the Nephites made “a mock of that which was sacred, denying the spirit of prophecy and of revelation.”

Those same threats are among us today. The somber reality is that there are “servants of Satan” embedded throughout society. So be very careful about whose counsel you follow.

Helaman 4:12-13

12 And it was because of the pride of their hearts, because of their exceeding riches, yea, it was because of their oppression to the poor, withholding their food from the hungry, withholding their clothing from the naked, and smiting their humble brethren upon the cheek, making a mock of that which was sacred, denying the spirit of prophecy and of revelation, murdering, plundering, lying, stealing, committing adultery, rising up in great contentions, and deserting away into the land of Nephi, among the Lamanites—

13 And because of this their great wickedness, and their boastings in their own strength, they were left in their own strength; therefore they did not prosper, but were afflicted and smitten, and driven before the Lamanites, until they had lost possession of almost all their lands.

Helaman 12:23

23 Therefore, blessed are they who will repent and hearken unto the voice of the Lord their God; for these are they that shall be saved.

(These two scriptures that President Nelson references are fantastic segues for the next chapter, *Disobedience Necessitate Suffering*)

My beloved brothers and sisters, you were born to be True Millennials! You are a chosen generation, fore-determined by God to do a remarkable work—to help prepare the people of this world for the Second Coming of the Lord.

Now, as an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, I bless each one of you, as though I had my hands upon your heads, with the ability to become the True Millennial you were born to be. I bless you to have the desire and ability to learn your true identity and purpose, that you will expect and prepare to do “impossible” things, that you will be undaunted in your efforts to learn how to access the powers of heaven to help you solve your problems and answer your questions. And I bless you to follow the prophets with exactness, to feel peace in your heart as you do so. I bless you to know and feel how much the Lord loves you and how much confidence He has in you.

Jesus Christ is our Savior. This is His Church. We are His people! I so testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.