Teachings of Presidents of the Church

Wilford Woodruff

TEACHINGS OF PRESIDENTS OF THE CHURCH

WILFORD WOODRUFF

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Wilford Woodruff

Introduction

The First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have established the *Teachings of Presidents of the Church* series to help you deepen your understanding of the restored gospel and draw closer to the Lord through the teachings of latter-day prophets. As the Church adds volumes to this series, you will build a collection of gospel reference books for your home.

This book features the teachings of President Wilford Woodruff, who served as President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from April 1889 to September 1898.

Personal Study

As you study the teachings of President Wilford Woodruff, seek the inspiration of the Spirit. Remember Nephi's inspired promise: "He that diligently seeketh shall find; and the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto them, by the power of the Holy Ghost" (1 Nephi 10:19).

At the end of each chapter, you will find "Suggestions for Study and Teaching." These questions, ideas, and scripture references will help you understand and apply President Woodruff's words. Consider reviewing them before you read the chapter. Also ponder the following questions while you study:

- What principle is President Woodruff teaching? What can I learn from this?
- How might President Woodruff's teachings help me in my personal life? How might these teachings help me in my responsibilities at home and in the Church?
- What should I do as a result of the things I have learned?

Teaching from This Book

If you serve as an instructor in Relief Society, elders quorum, or high priests group, you will have the opportunity to teach from this book. The following guidelines will help you.

Focus on President Woodruff's Words and the Scriptures

The Lord has commanded that we teach "none other things than that which the prophets and apostles have written, and that which is taught [us] by the Comforter through the prayer of faith" (D&C 52:9).

You may at times be tempted to set this book aside and prepare lessons from other materials. But your assignment is to help others learn the gospel through President Woodruff's words and the scriptures. Center each lesson on the quotations in this book and the related scriptures at the end of each chapter. Dedicate a significant portion of the lesson to reading and discussing President Woodruff's words.

Encourage participants to study the chapters before Sunday meetings and to bring the book to church. When they read in advance, they will be better prepared to participate and to edify one another.

Seek the Guidance of the Holy Ghost

As you pray for help and prepare diligently, the Holy Ghost will guide your efforts (see Alma 17:2–3; D&C 11:21; 42:14; 88:77–78). Through a still, small voice to your mind and heart, He will help you select the quotations from the book that will encourage others to learn and live the gospel.

When you teach, pray that the power of the Spirit will accompany your words and the class discussions. Nephi said, "When a man speaketh by the power of the Holy Ghost the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth it unto the hearts of the children of men" (2 Nephi 33:1; see also D&C 50:13–22).

Prepare a Lesson Outline

As the Spirit prompts you with ideas for teaching, write those ideas down so you will be able to remember them. Before you teach, prepare a written outline to organize the ideas into a lesson plan. Consider using this simple four-step approach:

1. *Study the chapter.* Read the chapter to become familiar with President Woodruff's teachings. Follow the counsel under "Personal Study," on page v.
2. *Prayerfully select the statements that will be most helpful for those you teach.* Study the chapter at least once more. Review the bold subheadings, which highlight the principles you should teach. Ask the Lord to guide you in selecting the statements that will best help members learn and apply those principles. Because each chapter contains more information than you can cover in one class period, you should not feel obligated to teach all the principles or use all the statements.
3. *Decide how to teach the statements.* Once you have selected statements, you are ready to plan ways to teach them. Prayerfully seek the Spirit's guidance as you do so. Look for ideas in "Suggestions for Study and Teaching" at the end of the chapter. Remember that your teaching should help members understand, discuss, and apply President Woodruff's words.
4. *Write an outline to organize your ideas.* A brief written outline will help you organize your ideas and conduct the lesson. Your outline should include three main parts:
   - *Introduction.* Prepare a brief introduction to help members focus their attention on President Woodruff's words.
   - *Discussion of President Woodruff's teachings.* Write your plans for teaching the statements you have selected. You may want to divide this part of your outline according to the principles in the chapter's bold subheadings.
   - *Conclusion.* Prepare to briefly summarize the principles you have discussed and bear testimony of those principles. You may also plan ways to invite others to share their testimonies.

Conduct Edifying Discussions

The Lord revealed principles of effective teaching when He said, "Appoint among yourselves a teacher, and let not all be spokesmen at once; but let one speak at a time and let all listen unto his sayings, that when all have spoken that all may be edified of all, and that every man may have an equal privilege" (D&C 88:122). The following guidelines may help you encourage and conduct edifying discussions:

- Seek the guidance of the Holy Ghost. He may prompt you to ask certain questions or to include certain people in the discussion.
- Help participants focus on President Woodruff's teachings. Have them read his words to generate discussion and to answer questions. Politely redirect discussions that begin to stray from the topic.
- Testify frequently of the truths that are discussed. Invite participants to share their testimonies as well.
- As appropriate, share experiences that relate to the principles in the chapter. Encourage others to share experiences as the Holy Ghost prompts them to do so.
- Do not talk too much. Encourage others to share their thoughts, ask questions, and teach one another.
- Do not be afraid of silence after you ask a question. Participants often need time to think or to look in their books before they share ideas, testimonies, and experiences.
- Acknowledge all contributions to the discussion. Listen sincerely, and seek to understand participants' comments. Express gratitude for their efforts.
- When participants share several ideas, consider asking someone to list the ideas on the chalkboard.
- Do not cut a good discussion short in an attempt to cover all the material you have prepared. What matters most is that participants feel the influence of the Spirit and grow in their commitment to live the gospel.

Good questions can lead to thoughtful learning, discussion, and application. At the end of each chapter in this book, you will find helpful questions in "Suggestions for Study and Teaching." Refer to these questions often. As needed, you may also develop your own questions. Prepare questions that will lead members to search, analyze, and apply President Woodruff's teachings, as shown below.

Search questions will encourage participants to read and discuss President Woodruff's statements. For example, you might ask, "What can we learn from President Woodruff's counsel about sharing the gospel?"

Analysis questions will lead participants to ponder President Woodruff's teachings and to deepen their understanding of gospel principles. For example, after participants have answered the search question above, you could ask, "Why is missionary work such a joyful experience?"

Application questions will help participants see how they can live according to President Woodruff's teachings. For example, you might ask, "What are some specific things we can do to share the gospel?"

Information about the Sources Quoted in This Book

The teachings of President Woodruff in this book are direct quotations from his sermons, published writings, and journals. In quotations from his journals, the punctuation, spelling, capitalization, and paragraphing have been modernized. Other quotations have retained the punctuation, spelling, capitalization, and paragraphing of the original sources unless editorial or typographic changes have been necessary to improve readability. For this reason, you may notice minor inconsistencies in the text. For example, the word *gospel* is lowercased in some quotations and capitalized in others.

Also, President Woodruff often used terms such as *men, man,* or *mankind* to refer to all people, both male and female. He frequently used the pronoun *he* to refer to both genders. This was common in the language of his era. Despite the differences between these language conventions and more current usage, President Woodruff's teachings apply to both women and men.

Historical Summary

This book is not a history; rather, it is a compilation of gospel principles as taught by President Wilford Woodruff. The following chronology provides a brief historical framework for these teachings. It omits many significant events in secular history. It also omits many important events in President Woodruff's personal life, such as his marriages and the births and deaths of his children.

1807, March 1	Wilford Woodruff is born in Farmington, Hartford County, Connecticut, to Beulah Thompson Woodruff and Aphek Woodruff.
1808, June 11	His mother dies at age 26.
1810, November 9	His father marries Azubah Hart.
1821	Begins work as a miller.
1832	Moves with his brother Azmon and Azmon's wife to Richland, Oswego County, New York, where they purchase a farm.
1833, December 29	Hears the restored gospel for the first time at a meeting conducted by two Latter-day Saint missionaries, Elders Zera Pulsipher and Elijah Cheney.
1833, December 31	Baptized and confirmed by Zera Pulsipher.
1834, January 2	Ordained a teacher by Zera Pulsipher.
1834, April	Goes to Kirtland, Ohio, where he meets the Prophet Joseph Smith.
1834, May to June	Travels with Zion's Camp to the state of Missouri. Stays in Clay County, Missouri, to help the Saints there.
1834, November 5	Ordained a priest by Simeon Carter in Clay County, Missouri.

1835, January 13	Leaves Missouri for his first full-time mission, preaching the gospel in Arkansas and Tennessee.
1835, June 28	Ordained an elder by Warren Parrish near Memphis, Tennessee.
1836, April 19	Called to the Second Quorum of the Seventy.
1836, May 31	Ordained a Seventy by David Patten.
1837, January 3	Called to the First Quorum of the Seventy.
1837, May 31	Leaves Kirtland, Ohio, to serve a mission in the Fox Islands, off the coast of the state of Maine.
1838, July 8	Called to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles by a revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith (see D&C 118).
1839, April 26	Ordained an Apostle by Brigham Young at the temple site in Far West, Missouri.
1839, August 8	Leaves for a mission in England.
1840 to 1841	Serves as a missionary in England. Helps lead about 2,000 people to baptism and confirmation. Helps secure the copyright to the Book of Mormon in London.
1841, October 6	Returns to his family and other Saints in Nauvoo.
1841, November 21	Witnesses the first baptisms for the dead that were performed in the baptistry of the Nauvoo Temple.
1843, July to November	Serves a mission in the eastern United States, seeking funds to help complete the construction of the Nauvoo Temple.

1844, May to August	Serves another mission in the eastern United States.
1844, July 9	Learns of the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, which occurred on June 27.
1844, August 6	Returns to Nauvoo with other members of the Quorum of the Twelve.
1844, August 8	Attends a conference in which the Latter-day Saints sustain President Brigham Young and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as the leaders of the Church.
1844, August 12	Accepts a call to preside over the European Mission.
1846, April to May	Returns to Nauvoo and later joins the Saints in their exodus west.
1847, April 7	Leaves Winter Quarters with the first company of pioneers bound for the Salt Lake Valley.
1847, July 24	Arrives in the Great Salt Lake Valley.
1847 to 1850	Fulfills several assignments to help the Saints migrate to Salt Lake City from Winter Quarters and the eastern United States.
1856 to 1883	Serves as Assistant Church Historian.
1877, January 1 to 1884, June 17	Serves as the first president of the St. George Utah Temple.
1877, August 29	Learns of the death of President Brigham Young and leaves St. George for Salt Lake City.

1880, October 10	Sustained as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles at the same general conference in which John Taylor is sustained as President of the Church.
1882	The United States Congress passes the Edmunds Act, making plural marriage a felony and prohibiting polygamists from voting, holding public office, or performing jury duty.
1883 to 1889	Serves as Church Historian.
1887, February 19	The United States Congress passes the Edmunds-Tucker Act, another antipolygamy law, allowing the federal government to confiscate much of the Church's real estate. The act becomes law on March 3, 1887.
1887, July 25	Becomes the senior Apostle and the presiding leader of the Church at the death of President John Taylor.
1888, May 17	Dedicates the Manti Utah Temple.
1889, April 7	Sustained as President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
1890, September 24	Having received a revelation from the Lord, issues a declaration stating that the Latter-day Saints should cease the practice of entering into plural marriage.
1890, October 6	Members of the Church attending general conference unanimously sustain the revelation President Woodruff received regarding plural marriage.
1893, April 6	Dedicates the Salt Lake Temple.

1894, November 13	Oversees the establishment of the Genealogical Society of Utah.
1897, March 1	Attends the celebration of his 90th birthday.
1898, September 2	Dies in San Francisco, California, after a brief illness.

The Life and Ministry of Wilford Woodruff

"God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform; He plants His footsteps in the sea and rides upon the storm."[1] So begins President Wilford Woodruff's favorite hymn, "God Moves in a Mysterious Way."

"He loved [that hymn]," remarked President Heber J. Grant, who served as an Apostle when Wilford Woodruff was President of the Church. "We sang it, I am sure, sometimes twice a month in our weekly meetings in the Temple, and very seldom did a month pass by when that song was not called for by Brother Woodruff. He believed in this work with all his heart and soul, and labored with all the power that God gave him for its advancement."[2]

Matthias F. Cowley, who also served with President Woodruff, observed: "Perhaps no man in the Church ever felt more profoundly the truth of the words, 'God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform,' than Wilford Woodruff. He was so intensely spiritual, so completely devoted to the service of God, that all through his life the miraculous manifestations of God's purposes were abundantly given. He had never based his faith upon miracles, they merely confirmed what he believed with all his heart and supported his ideas of the teachings of Holy Writ."[3]

As President Grant and Brother Cowley observed, President Woodruff's favorite hymn was a fitting theme for his life. It was also descriptive of the progress he witnessed in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The hymn continues:

Ye fearful Saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy and shall break
In blessings on your head.

His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding ev'ry hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.

Blind unbelief is sure to err
And scan his works in vain;
God is his own interpreter,
And he will make it plain.[4]

Wilford Woodruff was a prominent participant in many defining events of early Church history, and he became familiar with clouds of adversity that eventually led to blessings for the faithful. He tasted the bitterness of persecution and suffering, but through it all he also partook of the sweetness of being led by the hand of God. And as he saw the Restoration of the gospel unfold, he gained a clear understanding of God's work.

Wilford Woodruff's Childhood and Youth: A Solid Foundation Laid in the Home

Wilford Woodruff was born on March 1, 1807, in Farmington, Connecticut, to Aphek Woodruff and Beulah Thompson Woodruff. When he was 15 months old, his mother died of spotted fever. About three years later, Aphek remarried. Wilford and his two older brothers were raised by their father and by their stepmother, Azubah Hart Woodruff. Aphek and Azubah had six more children together, four of whom died in their infancy or childhood.

Wilford Woodruff's writings show that he grew up much like other boys of his time. He went to school and worked on the family farm. He also worked in his father's sawmill when he was very young, gaining experience that would help him as an adult when he operated a mill himself. One of his favorite pastimes was fishing, and he and his brothers often fished for trout in the stream that ran by their father's mill.

He loved his family and had profound respect for his parents. With admiration and gratitude, he described his father as a robust man who always did "a great amount of labor" and who

was "a man of great charity, honesty, integrity and truth."[5] He also recalled how his stepmother's gospel teachings helped lead him to seek the Lord's true Church.[6]

Even as he grew older, many of his greatest joys in life were linked to his parents and siblings. He joined the Church on the same day as his brother Azmon. He rejoiced when he was able to teach and baptize his father and stepmother and their household. Later in his life he ensured that temple work was done for his mother, a privilege that he said was enough to pay him for all the labors of his life.[7]

"The Protection and Mercy of God"

Looking back on his childhood and youth, Wilford Woodruff acknowledged the hand of the Lord in preserving his life many times. In an article titled "Chapter of Accidents," he described some of the accidents he had suffered, marveling that he had lived to tell about them. For example, he told of an adventure he had on the family farm: "When six years of age, I came near being killed by a surly bull. My father and I were feeding pumpkins to the cattle, [and] a surly bull drove my cow away from the one she was eating. I took the pumpkin he had left, upon which he pitched at me. My father told me to throw down the pumpkin and run. I ran down a steep hill, and took the pumpkin with me, being determined that the cow should have her rights. The bull pursued. As he was about to overtake me, I stepped into a post hole and fell; the bull leaped over me, after the pumpkin, and tore it to pieces with his horns, and would have served me in the same way, had I not fallen."[8]

He also told of an accident he had when he was 17 years old: "I was riding a very ill-tempered horse that I was not acquainted with; and while going down a very steep rocky hill, the horse taking advantage of the ground, suddenly leaped from the road, and ran down the steep, amid the rocks, at full speed, and commenced kicking up, and attempted to throw me over his head upon the rocks; but I lodged upon the top of his head, grasped hold of each ear as with a death grip, expecting every moment to be dashed to pieces against the rocks. While in this position, sitting

astride of his neck, with no bridle to guide him but his ears, he plunged down the hill under full speed, until he ran against a rock, and was dashed to the ground. I went over both his head and the rocks, about one rod [about five meters or five and one-half yards], and struck the ground square on my feet, being the only thing visible that saved my life; for, had I struck upon any other part of my body, it must have killed me instantly; as it was, my bones crushed from under me as though they were reeds. It broke my left leg in two places, and put out both my ankles in a shocking manner, and the horse came near rolling over me in his struggles to get up. My uncle, Titus Woodruff, saw me fall, got assistance, and carried me to his house. I lay from 2 p.m. till 10, without medical aid; then my father arrived, bringing Dr. Swift, of Farmington, with him, who set my bones, boxed up my limbs, and carried me in his carriage eight miles that night to my father's. My sufferings were very great. I had good attention, however, and in eight weeks I was out-doors upon my crutches."[9]

Wilford Woodruff's life continued to be preserved, despite frequent accidents even in his adulthood. At the age of 41, he gave a summary of the mishaps he had experienced, expressing gratitude for the preserving hand of the Lord:

"I have broken both legs—one in two places—both arms, my breast bone and three ribs, and had both ankles dislocated. I have been drowned, frozen, scalded and bit by a mad dog—have been in two water wheels under full head of water—have passed through several severe fits of sickness, and encountered poison in its worst forms—have landed in a pile of railroad ruins—have barely been missed by the passing bullets, and have passed through a score of other hair-breadth escapes.

"It has appeared miraculous to me, that with all the injuries and broken bones which I have had, I have not a lame limb, but have been enabled to endure the hardest labor, exposures and journeys—have often walked forty, fifty, and on one occasion, sixty miles in a day. The protection and mercy of God has been over me, and my life thus far has been preserved; for which blessings I feel to render the gratitude of my heart to my Heavenly Father, praying that the remainder of my days may be spent in His service and in the building up of His kingdom."[10]

Seeking and Finding the Lord's True Church

Wilford Woodruff was in his youth when he first desired to serve the Lord and learn of Him. He said, "At an early age my mind was exercised upon religious subjects."[11] However, he chose not to join any church. Instead he was determined to find the one true Church of Jesus Christ. Inspired by the teachings of his parents and other friends and by the whisperings of the Spirit, he became convinced "that the Church of Christ was in the wilderness—that there had been a falling away from pure and undefiled religion before God and that a great change was at hand."[12] He was particularly motivated by the teachings of a man named Robert Mason, who prophesied that Wilford would live to taste the fruit of the restored gospel (see pages 1–3 in this book).

Years later, believing that other Latter-day Saints could benefit from his personal experiences,[13] President Wilford Woodruff often told the story of his search for the truth. He recounted:

"I could not find any denomination whose doctrines, faith or practice, agreed with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, or the ordinances and gifts which the Apostles taught. Although the ministers of the day taught that the faith, gifts, graces, miracles and ordinances, which the ancient Saints enjoyed, were done away and no longer needed, I did not believe it to be true, only as they were done away through the unbelief of the children of men. I believed the same gifts, graces, miracles and power would be manifest in one age of the world as in another, when God had a Church upon the earth, and that the Church of God would be re-established upon the earth, and that I should live to see it. These principles were riveted upon my mind from the perusal of the Old and New Testament, with fervent prayer that the Lord would show me what was right and wrong, and lead me in the path of salvation, without any regard to the opinions of man; and the whisperings of the Spirit of the Lord for the space of three years taught me that he was about to set up his Church and kingdom upon the earth in the last days."[14]

"My soul was drawn out upon these things," he said. "In my early manhood I prayed day and night that I might live to see a

prophet. I would have gone a thousand miles to have seen a prophet, or a man that could teach me the things that I read of in the Bible. I could not join any church, because I could not find any church at that time that advocated these principles. I spent many a midnight hour, by the river side, in the mountains, and in my mill . . . calling upon God that I might live to see a prophet or some man that would teach me of the things of the kingdom of God as I read them."[15]

Wilford Woodruff's search ended when he was 26 years old. On December 29, 1833, he heard a sermon preached by Elder Zera Pulsipher, a Latter-day Saint missionary. In his journal he described his response to Elder Pulsipher's sermon:

"He commenced the meeting with some introductory remarks and then prayed. I felt the Spirit of God to bear witness that he was the servant of God. He then commenced preaching, and that too as with authority, and when he had finished his discourse I truly felt that it was the first gospel sermon that I had ever heard. I thought it was what I had long been looking for. I could not feel it my duty to leave the house without bearing witness to the truth before the people. I opened my eyes to see, my ears to hear, my heart to understand, and my doors to entertain him who had administered unto us."[16]

Wilford Woodruff invited Elder Pulsipher and his companion, Elijah Cheney, to stay in the Woodruff home. Two days later, having spent some time reading the Book of Mormon and meeting with the missionaries, Brother Woodruff was baptized and confirmed a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. From that day his life changed. Having found the truth, he dedicated himself to bringing it to others.

"A Desire to Go and Preach the Gospel"

Determined to keep the covenants he made at baptism, Wilford Woodruff was a willing instrument in the Lord's hands, always ready to do His will. In late 1834 he "had a desire to go and preach the Gospel,"[17] and he received a call to serve in the southeastern United States. He knew that trials awaited him and that his life could be in danger as he traveled, but he found strength in his

testimony and faith. He later recalled: "I knew the Gospel which the Lord had revealed to Joseph Smith was true, and of such great value that I wanted to tell it to the people who had not heard it. It was so good and plain, it seemed to me I could make the people believe it."[18]

When Wilford Woodruff began his first mission, he was a recently ordained priest in the Aaronic Priesthood. His companion, who had been ordained an elder, stayed with him through the early trials of the mission but soon became discouraged and returned to his home in Kirtland, Ohio. Left alone in an unfamiliar land, Wilford prayed for help and continued his missionary labors, wading through swamps and wetlands. He finally arrived in the city of Memphis, Tennessee, "weary and hungry."[19] In his first missionary experience there, he spoke to a large audience. He recounted:

"I went to the best tavern [or inn] in the place, kept by Mr. Josiah Jackson. I told him I was a stranger, and had no money. I asked him if he would keep me over night. He asked me what my business was. I told him I was a preacher of the Gospel. He laughed, and said that I did not look much like a preacher. I did not blame him, as all the preachers he had ever been acquainted with rode on fine horses or in fine carriages, clothed in broadcloth, and had large salaries, and would see this whole world sink to perdition before they could wade through one hundred and seventy miles of mud to save the people.

"The landlord wanted a little fun, so he said he would keep me if I would preach. He wanted to see if I could preach. I must confess that by this time I became a little mischievous, and pled with him not to set me preaching. The more I pled to be excused, the more determined Mr. Jackson was that I should preach. . . .

"I sat down in a large hall to eat supper. Before I got through, the room began to be filled by some of the rich and fashionable of Memphis, dressed in their broadcloth and silk, while my appearance was such as you can imagine, after traveling through the mud as I had been. When I had finished eating, the table was carried out of the room over the heads of the people. I was

placed in the corner of the room, with a stand having a Bible, hymn book and candle on it, hemmed in by a dozen men, with the landlord in the center. There were present some five hundred persons who had come together, not to hear a Gospel sermon but to have some fun. . . . How would you like this position? On your first mission, without a companion or friend, and to be called upon to preach to such a congregation? With me it was one of the most pleasing hours of my life, although I felt as though I should like company.

"I read a hymn, and asked them to sing. Not a soul would sing a word. I told them I had not the gift of singing; but with the help of the Lord, I would both pray and preach. I knelt down to pray, and the men around me dropped on their knees. I prayed to the Lord to give me his Spirit and to show me the hearts of the people. I promised the Lord in my prayer I would deliver to that congregation whatever He would give to me. I arose and spoke one hour and a half, and it was one of the best sermons of my life.

"The lives of the congregation were opened to the vision of my mind, and I told them of their wicked deeds and the reward they would obtain. The men who surrounded me dropped their heads. Three minutes after I closed I was the only person in the room.

"Soon I was shown to a bed, in a room adjoining a large one in which were assembled many of the men whom I had been preaching to. I could hear their conversation. One man said he would like to know how that Mormon boy knew of their past lives. In a little while they got to disputing about some doctrinal point. One suggested calling me to decide the point. The landlord said, 'no; we have had enough for once.'

"In the morning, I had a good breakfast. The landlord said if I came that way again to stop at his house, and stay as long as I might choose."[20]

In November 1836, Wilford Woodruff completed his mission in the southeastern United States. He recorded in his journal that in 1835 and 1836 he had traveled 9,805 miles, held 323 meetings, organized 4 branches of the Church, baptized 70 people and confirmed 62, performed 11 priesthood ordinations, and healed 4

people by the laying on of hands and that he had been delivered from the hands of 6 different mobs.[21] He was ordained an elder in June 1835 and a Seventy in May 1836.

When Elder Woodruff returned to Kirtland, he found that many Church members there had fallen into apostasy and were speaking against the Prophet Joseph Smith. "In the time of the apostasy in Kirtland," he later said, "Joseph Smith hardly knew when he met a man, unless the Spirit of God revealed it to him, whether he was friend or foe. Most of the leading men were fighting him."[22]

Even "in the midst of that darkness,"[23] Wilford Woodruff remained true to the Prophet and true to his own determination to preach the gospel. He was called to the First Quorum of the Seventy, and in that capacity he continued to testify of the truth, traveling to conferences in the area. After he had been in Kirtland for less than a year, he followed a prompting to serve a full-time mission on the Fox Islands, just off the coast of the state of Maine. He said:

"The Spirit of God said to me, 'You choose a partner and go straight to Fox Islands.' Well, I knew no more what was on Fox Islands than what was on Kolob. But the Lord told me to go, and I went. I chose Jonathan H. Hale, and he went with me. We cast out some devils there, preached the Gospel and performed some miracles. . . . I got to Fox Islands, and did a good work there."[24] When Elder Woodruff arrived at the Fox Islands, he found "a people there wishing for the ancient order of things." He later reported, "Without dwelling upon it, I will say I baptized over 100 while there."[25]

Continuing Missionary Service as an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ

While Elder Woodruff was serving a mission on the Fox Islands in 1838, he received a calling that expanded his missionary service for the rest of his life. "On the 9th of August, I received a letter," he said, "from Thomas B. Marsh, who was then President of the Twelve Apostles, informing me that Joseph Smith, the Prophet, had received a revelation, naming as persons

to be chosen to fill the places of those who had fallen: John E. Page, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff and Willard Richards.

"President Marsh added, in his letter, 'Know then, Brother Woodruff, by this, that you are appointed to fill the place of one of the Twelve Apostles, and that it is agreeable to the word of the Lord, given very lately, that you should come speedily to Far West, and on the 26th of April next, take your leave of the Saints here and depart for other climes across the mighty deep.' "

President Woodruff later commented, "The substance of this letter had been revealed to me several weeks before, but I had not named it to any person."[26]

The instruction to "depart for other climes across the mighty deep" referred to the Lord's command that the Twelve serve missions in Great Britain. Soon after being ordained an Apostle on April 26, 1839, Elder Wilford Woodruff departed for Great Britain as one of the "special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world" (D&C 107:23).

Elder Woodruff would later serve other missions in the United States and in Great Britain. He became known as one of the greatest missionaries in the history of the Church. This book contains many accounts from his missionary experiences.

Helping the Saints Gather Together

Today Latter-day Saints are encouraged to build up the kingdom of God in the areas where they live, thus strengthening the Church worldwide. In the early days of the Church, Latter-day Saint missionaries encouraged new converts to emigrate to the headquarters of the Church, whether that was in Kirtland, Ohio, or Jackson County, Missouri, or Nauvoo, Illinois, or Salt Lake City, Utah.

About two years after the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, the Saints were forced to leave their homes in Nauvoo, establishing a temporary settlement in Winter Quarters, Nebraska. Elder Woodruff, who had been serving a mission in England, returned to the main body of the Church. Departing from Winter Quarters, he helped lead the Saints on their most well-known

In 1839, Elder Wilford Woodruff (foreground), Elder Brigham Young (background), and other members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles left their homes to preach the gospel in England.

Elder Wilford Woodruff and his family lived in this home in Nauvoo, Illinois.

emigration: their journey across the plains and mountains of the United States to their promised land in the Salt Lake Valley. As part of the first company of pioneers, he transported President Brigham Young, who was ill, the last part of the journey. Elder Woodruff was present when President Young rose from his bed in the wagon, surveyed the land before them, and proclaimed: "It is enough. This is the right place. Drive on."[27]

Elder Woodruff continued to help the Saints gather to their promised land. On one of his missions, he and his family spent two and one-half years in Canada and the northeastern United States, helping Church members emigrate to the Salt Lake Valley. He was with the last group of these Saints when he had the following experience, showing his sensitivity to the promptings of the Spirit:

"I saw a steamer making steam ready to go out. I went to the captain and asked him how many passengers he had. 'Three hundred and fifty.' 'Could you take another hundred?' 'Yes.' I was just about to tell him we wanted to go aboard when that Spirit said to me, 'Don't go aboard that steamer, you nor your

company.' All right, said I. I had learned something about that still, small voice. I did not go aboard that steamer, but waited till the next morning. In thirty minutes after that steamer left, it took fire. It had ropes instead of wheel chains, and they could not go ashore. It was a dark night, and not a soul was saved. If I had not obeyed the influence of that monitor within me, I would have been there myself, with the rest of the company."[28]

Service in the Salt Lake Valley

After the Saints settled in the Salt Lake Valley, Elder Woodruff's duties changed. He was no longer sent abroad on full-time missions. Instead his activities included helping more Saints emigrate to Church headquarters, meeting with those who visited the area, serving as a legislator, working to irrigate and cultivate the land, and developing crops and farming methods. He frequently visited settlements of Latter-day Saints in Utah, Arizona, and Idaho, preaching the gospel and encouraging the Saints in their duties.

Wilford Woodruff served as Assistant Church Historian from 1856 to 1883 and as Church Historian from 1883 to 1889, a period spanning the majority of his service in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Although this responsibility required a great deal of time, he considered it a privilege, believing that "the history of this Church will remain through time and in eternity."[29] His service as a historian was a continuation of a work he had done since 1835, when he began keeping a journal—a personal record of his life and of the history of the Church (see pages 125–27).

In his continuing efforts to strengthen the Church, serve in the community, and provide for his family, Wilford Woodruff followed principles he had learned from his hardworking father. Elder Franklin D. Richards of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said that Elder Woodruff was "noted for his activity, industry and physical endurance. Though not a large man, he was able to perform labors that would have prostrated men of ordinary physique."[30]

Elder Woodruff's journal is full of entries recording long days of hard work. He once told of a time when, at age 67, he climbed

a 12-foot ladder with his son Asahel to gather peaches from a peach tree. Asahel started to lose his balance. In trying to save Asahel, Elder Woodruff himself fell. He wrote: "I fell under the ladder about 10 feet to the ground and struck on my right shoulder and hip and hurt me very much. It did not hurt Asahel much. I was very sore and lame all night."[31] The next day he recorded, "I was very sore and lame today, yet I went to the field and returned home in the evening."[32] Commenting on this occurrence, Matthias Cowley said: "One naturally wonders what a man at his time of life was doing up a tree. In the first place, with Elder Woodruff it was never a question of age when he saw something he thought ought to be done, provided it was possible for him to do it. He was everywhere. . . . He was ready for any emergency at any time. If he saw a limb in the top of an apple tree that should be sawed off, the thought barely took possession of him before he was in the top of the tree, and it was always hard for him to ask anybody else to do a thing that he could do himself."[33]

Temple Building and Temple Work

Whenever the Saints stayed for an extended period of time in a central location, they built a temple. They followed this pattern in Kirtland, in Nauvoo, and finally in Salt Lake City. In doing so, they were true to a revelation from the Lord through the Prophet Joseph Smith—a revelation that Elder Woodruff recorded in his journal:

"What was the object of gathering the Jews together, or the people of God in any age of the world? The main object was to build unto the Lord an house whereby He could reveal unto His people the ordinances of His house and glories of His kingdom and teach the people the ways of salvation. For there are certain ordinances and principles that when they are taught and practiced, must be done in a place or house built for that purpose. This was purposed in the mind of God before the world was, and it was for this purpose that God designed to gather together the Jews oft, but they would not. It is for the same purpose that God gathers together the people in the last days—to build unto the

The Manti Utah Temple, dedicated by President Wilford Woodruff in 1888.

Lord an house to prepare them for the ordinances and endowments, washings and anointings, etc."[34]

Elder Woodruff frequently exhorted his fellow Saints to partake of the blessings available in the temple. He said: "I consider that the building of temples is one of the important things required by the Lord of the Latter-day Saints in the dispensation of the fulness of times, that we may go into those temples and not only redeem the living but redeem our dead."[35] With characteristic diligence, he set an example of temple work, ensuring that the work be done for thousands of his ancestors.

Like many other prophets of his day, Elder Woodruff prophesied that the time would come when there would be temples all over the world.[36] He rejoiced in the opportunity to see that prophecy begin to be fulfilled, as four temples were built and dedicated in the Utah Territory during the first 46 years after the Saints arrived in the Salt Lake Valley—in the cities of St. George, Logan, Manti, and Salt Lake City.

President Woodruff offered the dedicatory prayers for the temples in Manti and Salt Lake City. In a message to all members

of the Church, he and his counselors in the First Presidency testified of blessings that come to those who attend temple dedications in a spirit of sincere worship: "The sweet whisperings of the Holy Spirit will be given to them and the treasures of Heaven, the communion of angels, will be added from time to time, for [the Lord's] promise has gone forth and it cannot fail!"[37] He wrote of one such experience, which he had at the dedication of the Logan Temple:

"While attending the dedication of this temple, the reflection came upon me of the many hours I had spent in prayer in my early manhood in calling upon God to permit me to live in the earth to see the Church of Christ established and a people raised up who would receive the ancient gospel and contend for the faith once delivered to the Saints. The Lord promised me that I should live to find the people of God and have a name and a place . . . within his house, a name better than of sons or of daughters, a name that should not be cut off. And I today rejoice in having a name with his people and assist in the dedication of another temple to his most holy name. Praise be unto God and the Lamb forever."[38]

Wilford Woodruff's Service as President of the Church

When President John Taylor died on July 25, 1887, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles became the Church's governing body, with President Woodruff as the presiding officer. Feeling the burden of leading the entire Church, President Woodruff recorded the following thoughts in his journal: "This places me in a very peculiar situation, a position I have never looked for during my life. But in the providence of God it is laid upon me, and I pray God my Heavenly Father to give me grace equal to my day. It is a high and responsible position for any man to occupy and a position that needs great wisdom. I never expected to outlive President Taylor. . . . But it has come to pass. . . . I can only say, Marvelous are thy ways, O Lord God Almighty, for thou hast certainly chosen the weak things of this world to perform thy work on the earth. May thy servant Wilford be prepared for whatever awaits him on earth and have power to perform whatever is required at his hands by

President Wilford Woodruff, center, with his counselors in the First Presidency: Presidents George Q. Cannon, left, and Joseph F. Smith, right.

the God of Heaven. I ask this blessing of my Heavenly Father in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God."[39] President Woodruff was sustained as President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on April 7, 1889. He was the fourth President of the Church in this dispensation.

Testifying of the Lord's Latter-day Work

In his messages to the members of the Church, President Woodruff repeatedly testified of the Restoration of the gospel, just as he had done throughout his ministry. However, he bore testimony with increased urgency during those last nine years of his life. He was the last living man to have served as an Apostle with Joseph Smith, and he felt a pressing need to leave a clear and abiding testimony of the Prophet of the Restoration. About a year before he died, he said:

"There are many things I do not understand, and one is why I am here at my present age. I do not understand why I have been preserved as long as I have been when so many Apostles and Prophets have been called home. . . . I am the only man living in

the flesh that received endowments under the hands of the Prophet Joseph Smith. I am the only man in the flesh that was with the Twelve Apostles when he turned over the kingdom of God to them and laid upon them the commandment to bear off this kingdom. He stood for some three hours in a room delivering to us his last lecture. The room was filled as with consuming fire. His face was as clear as amber; his words were like vivid lightning to us. They penetrated every part of our bodies from the crown of our head to the soles of our feet. He said, 'Brethren, the Lord Almighty has sealed upon my head every Priesthood, every key, every power, every principle that belongs to the last dispensation of the fulness of times, and to the building up of the kingdom of God. I have sealed upon your heads all those principles, Priesthood, apostleship, and keys of the kingdom of God, and now you have got to round up your shoulders and bear off this kingdom or you will be damned.' I do not forget those words—I never shall while I live. That was the last speech he ever made in the flesh. Soon afterward he was martyred and called home to glory."[40]

As President of the Church, President Woodruff urged the Saints to seek and follow the guidance of the Holy Ghost, be true to their covenants, preach the gospel at home and abroad, be honest in their temporal responsibilities, and be diligent in temple and family history work. His counsel echoed a statement he had made when he was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve: "However good we may be we should aim continually to improve and become better. We have obeyed a different law and gospel to what other people have obeyed, and we have a different kingdom in view, and our aim should be correspondingly higher before the Lord our God, and we should govern and control ourselves accordingly, and I pray God my Heavenly Father that his Spirit may rest upon us and enable us to do so."[41]

Issuing the Manifesto

Strengthened by the Lord's guiding hand, President Woodruff led the Latter-day Saints through one of the most turbulent times in this dispensation. In the late 1880s the Church continued to practice plural marriage in obedience to the Lord's command to

the Prophet Joseph Smith. However, the United States government had recently passed laws against the practice, with severe penalties for the violation of those laws, including confiscation of Church property and denial of Church members' basic civil rights, such as the right to vote. These developments also opened legal channels for the prosecution of Latter-day Saints who were practicing plural marriage. The Church made legal appeals, but to no avail.

These circumstances weighed heavily on President Woodruff. He sought the will of the Lord on the matter and eventually received a revelation that Latter-day Saints should cease the practice of entering into plural marriage. Obeying the Lord's command, he issued what came to be known as the Manifesto—an inspired statement that remains the basis of the Church's stance on the subject of plural marriage. In this public declaration, dated September 24, 1890, he stated his intention to submit to the laws of the land. He also testified that the Church had ceased teaching the practice of plural marriage.[42] On October 6, 1890, in a session of general conference, the Latter-day Saints sustained their prophet's declaration, unanimously supporting a statement that he was "fully authorized by virtue of his position to issue the Manifesto."[43]

Reaffirming the Eternal Nature of the Family

About three months before the Prophet Joseph Smith was martyred, he delivered a discourse to a large assembly of Saints. Elder Wilford Woodruff, who recorded a synopsis of the discourse, said that the Prophet spoke on "one of the most important and interesting subjects ever presented to the Saints."[44] As part of this sermon, the Prophet testified of the eternal nature of families. He spoke of the need to be sealed to our parents and to continue that sealing ordinance throughout our generations:

"This is the spirit of Elijah, that we redeem our dead and connect ourselves with our fathers which are in heaven and seal up our dead to come forth in the first resurrection, and here we want the power of Elijah to seal those who dwell on earth to those which dwell in heaven. . . . Go and seal on earth your sons

and daughters unto yourself and yourself unto your fathers in eternal glory."[45]

For the next few decades, the Latter-day Saints knew that there was to be "a welding link of some kind or other between the fathers and the children" (D&C 128:18). However, their procedures were not completely set in order; as President Woodruff observed, the Prophet Joseph had not lived long enough to "enter any further upon these things."[46] Acting according to "all the light and knowledge [they] had,"[47] they often had themselves sealed, or "adopted," to Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, or other Church leaders of their day rather than to their own fathers and mothers. As President of the Church, President Woodruff referred to this practice, saying: "We have not fully carried out those principles in fulfillment of the revelations of God to us, in sealing the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers. I have not felt satisfied, neither did President [John] Taylor, neither has any man since the Prophet Joseph who has attended to the ordinance of adoption in the temples of our God. We have felt that there was more to be revealed upon this subject than we had received."[48]

That additional revelation came to President Woodruff on April 5, 1894.[49] Three days later, in a general conference address, he told of the revelation: "When I went before the Lord to know who I should be adopted to . . . , the Spirit of God said to me, 'Have you not a father, who begot you?' 'Yes, I have.' 'Then why not honor him? Why not be adopted to him?' 'Yes,' says I, 'that is right.' I was adopted to my father, and should have had my father sealed to his father, and so on back; and the duty that I want every man who presides over a temple to see performed from this day henceforth and forever, unless the Lord Almighty commands otherwise, is, let every man be adopted to his father. . . . That is the will of God to this people. I want all men who preside over these temples in these mountains of Israel to bear this in mind. What business have I to take away the rights of the lineage of any man? What right has any man to do this? No; I say let every man be adopted to his father; and then you will do exactly what God said when he declared He would send Elijah the prophet in the last days [see Malachi 4:5–6]. . . .

"We want the Latter-day Saints from this time to trace their genealogies as far as they can, and to be sealed to their fathers and mothers. Have children sealed to their parents, and run this chain through as far as you can get it. . . .

"Brethren and sisters, lay these things to heart. Let us go on with our records, fill them up righteously before the Lord, and carry out this principle, and the blessings of God will attend us, and those who are redeemed will bless us in days to come. I pray God that as a people our eyes may be opened to see, our ears to hear, and our hearts to understand the great and mighty work that rests upon our shoulders, and that the God of heaven requires at our hands."[50]

"We Ever Pray for Thee"

On March 1, 1897, Latter-day Saints filled the Salt Lake Tabernacle to celebrate President Wilford Woodruff's 90th birthday. There they heard a new hymn: "We Ever Pray for Thee." Evan Stephens had adapted the music of an existing hymn and had written new words to pay tribute to the Church's beloved prophet:

We ever pray for thee, our prophet dear,
That God will give to thee comfort and cheer;
As the advancing years furrow thy brow,
Still may the light within shine bright as now,
Still may the light within shine bright as now.

We ever pray for thee with all our hearts,
That strength be given thee to do thy part,
To guide and counsel us from day to day,
To shed a holy light around our way,
To shed a holy light around our way.

We ever pray for thee with fervent love;
And as the children's prayer is heard above,
Thou shalt be ever blest, and God will give
All that is meet and best while thou shalt live,
All that is meet and best while thou shalt live.[51]

Eighteen months later, on September 2, 1898, President Wilford Woodruff passed away, finally joining his fellow Saints who had preceded him in death. At his funeral, which was held in the Salt Lake Tabernacle, a "spirit of peace . . . brooded over the entire arrangements, and pervaded the assembly and remained to soothe the feelings of all." The interior of the Tabernacle was "artistically draped in white," with "profuse and magnificent" floral arrangements and sheaves of wheat and oats. "On each side of the organ were the figures 1847 and large bunches of sagebrush and sunflowers [and] tops of pine trees," recalling the pioneers' entrance into the Salt Lake Valley in July 1847. Above a large portrait of President Woodruff, the declaration "Being dead yet speaketh" was illuminated, in tribute to a prophet of God whose teachings and example would continue to inspire the Latter-day Saints in their efforts to help build up the kingdom of God.[52]

Notes

1. *Hymns,* no. 285; text by William Cowper.
2. In Conference Report, April 1937, 11.
3. *Wilford Woodruff: History of His Life and Labors As Recorded in His Daily Journals* (1964), 37.
4. *Hymns,* no. 285.
5. "History of Wilford Woodruff (From His Own Pen)," *Millennial Star,* March 18, 1865, 167–68.
6. See Journal of Wilford Woodruff, preface to 1838, Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
7. See *Deseret Weekly,* February 24, 1894, 288.
8. "History of Wilford Woodruff (From His Own Pen): Chapter of Accidents," *Millennial Star,* June 10, 1865, 359–60; from a document Elder Woodruff wrote in 1858.
9. "History of Wilford Woodruff (From His Own Pen): Chapter of Accidents," *Millennial Star,* June 17, 1865, 374–75.
10. "History of Wilford Woodruff (From His Own Pen): Chapter of Accidents," *Millennial Star,* June 24, 1865, 392.
11. "History of Wilford Woodruff (From His Own Pen)," *Millennial Star,* March 25, 1865, 182.
12. Journal of Wilford Woodruff, preface to 1838.
13. See *Deseret Weekly,* September 5, 1891, 323.
14. *Millennial Star,* March 25, 1865, 182.
15. *Millennial Star,* November 21, 1895, 741.
16. Journal of Wilford Woodruff, introduction.
17. "Leaves from My Journal," *Millennial Star,* May 30, 1881, 342.
18. *Millennial Star,* May 30, 1881, 342.
19. "Leaves from My Journal," *Millennial Star,* June 20, 1881, 391.
20. *Millennial Star,* June 20, 1881, 391.
21. See Journal of Wilford Woodruff, summaries of 1835 and 1836.
22. *Deseret Weekly,* November 7, 1896, 643.
23. *Deseret Weekly,* November 7, 1896, 643.
24. *Deseret Weekly,* November 7, 1896, 643.
25. In Conference Report, October 1897, 46.
26. "Leaves from My Journal," *Millennial Star,* September 26, 1881, 621.
27. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* July 27, 1880, 2.

28. In Conference Report, April 1898, 30.
29. Journal of Wilford Woodruff, September 6, 1856.
30. "Wilford Woodruff," *Improvement Era,* October 1898, 865.
31. Journal of Wilford Woodruff, September 7, 1874.
32. Journal of Wilford Woodruff, September 8, 1874.
33. *Wilford Woodruff: History of His Life and Labors,* 484.
34. Quoted by Wilford Woodruff, in Journal of Wilford Woodruff, June 11, 1843.
35. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* May 2, 1876, 4.
36. See *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* March 26, 1878, 1.
37. "Address from the First Presidency," *Millennial Star,* April 10, 1893, 246.
38. Journal of Wilford Woodruff, May 17, 1884.
39. Journal of Wilford Woodruff, July 25, 1887.
40. *Deseret Weekly,* September 4, 1897, 356.
41. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* December 28, 1875, 1.
42. See Doctrine and Covenants, Official Declaration 1.
43. Lorenzo Snow, in text accompanying Doctrine and Covenants, Official Declaration 1.
44. Journal of Wilford Woodruff, March 10, 1844.
45. Quoted by Wilford Woodruff, in Journal of Wilford Woodruff, March 10, 1844.
46. "Discourse by President Wilford Woodruff," *Millennial Star,* May 28, 1894, 338.
47. *Millennial Star,* May 28, 1894, 337.
48. *Millennial Star,* May 28, 1894, 337.
49. See Journal of Wilford Woodruff, April 5, 1894.
50. *Millennial Star,* May 28, 1894, 338, 339, 341.
51. *Hymns,* no. 23.
52. See "In Memoriam: President Wilford Woodruff," *Woman's Exponent,* September 15, 1898, 44–45.

Beginning with Joseph Smith's First Vision, "the gospel has gone forth in our day in its true glory, power, order, and light."

The Restoration of the Gospel

Through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord restored His gospel in its true glory, power, order, and light.

From the Life of Wilford Woodruff

When Wilford Woodruff was a child, he and his family befriended Robert Mason, a man who was known for his distinctive religious beliefs. President Woodruff recalled:

"He believed that it was necessary to have prophets, apostles, dreams, visions and revelations in the church of Christ, the same as they had who lived in ancient days; and he believed the Lord would raise up a people and a church, in the last days, with prophets, apostles and all the gifts, powers, and blessings, which it ever contained in any age of the world. . . . He frequently came to my father's house when I was a boy, and taught me and my brothers those principles; and I believed him.

"[He] prayed a great deal, and he had dreams and visions, and the Lord showed him many things, by visions, which were to come to pass in the last days.

"I will here relate one vision, which he related to me. The last time I ever saw him, he said: 'I was laboring in my field at midday when I was enwrapped in a vision. I was placed in the midst of a vast forest of fruit trees: I was very hungry, and walked a long way through the orchard, searching for fruit to eat; but I could not find any in the whole orchard, and I wept because I could not find any fruit. While I stood gazing at the orchard, and wondering why there was no fruit, the trees began to fall to the ground upon every side of me, until there was not one tree standing in the whole orchard; and while I was marveling at the scene, I saw young sprouts start up from the roots of the trees which had

fallen, and they opened into young thrifty trees before my eyes. They budded, blossomed, and bare fruit until the trees were loaded with the finest fruit I ever beheld, and I rejoiced to see so much fine fruit. I stepped up to a tree and picked my hands full of fruit, and marveled at its beauty, and as I was about to taste of it the vision closed, and I found myself in the field in the same place I was at the commencement of the vision.

"'I then knelt upon the ground, and prayed unto the Lord, and asked him, in the name of Jesus Christ, to show me the meaning of the vision. The Lord said unto me: "This is the interpretation of the vision; the great trees of the forest represent the generation of men in which you live. There is no church of Christ, or kingdom of God upon the earth in your generation. There is no fruit of the Church of Christ upon the earth. There is no man ordained of God to administer in any of the ordinances of the gospel of salvation upon the earth in this day and generation. But, in the next generation, I the Lord will set up my kingdom and my Church upon the earth, and the fruits of the kingdom and church of Christ, such as have followed the prophets, apostles and saints in every dispensation, shall again be found in all their fulness upon the earth. You will live to see the day, and handle the fruit; but will never partake of it in the flesh."'"

President Woodruff continued: "When [he] had finished relating the vision and interpretation, he said to me, . . . 'I shall never partake of this fruit in the flesh; but you will, and you will become a conspicuous actor in that kingdom.' He then turned and left me. These were the last words he ever spoke to me upon the earth. . . .

"He had this vision about the year 1800, and he related it to me in 1830—the same spring that this Church was organized.

"This vision, with his other teachings to me, made a great impression upon my mind, and I prayed a great deal to the Lord to lead me by his Spirit, and prepare me for his Church when it did come."

When Wilford Woodruff joined the Church, he wrote a letter to his friend Robert Mason. "I . . . told him I had found the Church

of Christ that he had told me about," he later recalled. "I told him about its organization and the coming forth of the Book of Mormon; that the Church had prophets, apostles, and all the gifts and blessings in it, and that the true fruit of the kingdom and Church of Christ were manifest among the Saints as the Lord had shown him in his vision. He received my letter, and read it over many times, and handled it as he had handled the fruit in the vision; but he was very aged, and soon died. He did not live to see any Elder to administer the ordinances of the Gospel unto him.

"The first opportunity I had, after the doctrine of baptism for the dead was revealed, I went forth and was baptized for him."[1]

Teachings of Wilford Woodruff

The gospel of Jesus Christ is everlasting and unchangeable.

The Lord has set His hand many times in different dispensations to establish His kingdom upon the earth; He has raised up men—noble spirits—who have come forth and tabernacled in the flesh at different periods and times. He has inspired those men; given them revelations; filled them with inspiration, with light, with truth, with the things of the kingdom of God.[2]

If you were to meet with father Adam, with Seth, Moses, Aaron, Christ, or the apostles, they would all teach the same principles that we have been taught; they would not vary one particle. This gospel is everlasting in its nature and unchangeable in its character.[3]

There never was but one gospel, and never will be but one delivered to the children of men, and that never changed and never will change in time or eternity. It is the same in every age of the world; its ordinances are the same. Believers in the gospel had faith in Jesus before he came in the flesh, and repentance of sin was preached before his day as well as since; they also practiced baptism for the remission of sins and the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost; and they had the organization of the church with inspired men therein. . . . These things are necessary in every age of the world.[4]

Whenever the Lord has a Church upon the earth, and that Church receives the Gospel of Christ, and they enjoy the Holy Ghost, every gift and grace that ever did belong to the Church of God belongs to that Church.[5]

Jesus Christ established His Church during His mortal ministry, but the people fell into apostasy soon after His death and Resurrection.

Jesus Christ . . . brought the Gospel to the Jews and established His kingdom among them, and it came with all its gifts, graces and powers: the sick were healed; devils were cast out; the gifts were manifested among them. But the Jews rejected Him, and they finally put Him to death. . . . He was not received; and then, according to command, this Gospel went to the Gentiles.[6]

When the kingdom was presented to the Gentiles, it was presented with apostles and prophets, with healing powers, with revelations direct from God, and with every gift and grace the Jews believed in, and enjoyed while they remained faithful: when it went to the Gentiles it was perfect in its organization, but in process of time they changed the ordinances of the kingdom of God, and fell through the same example of unbelief, and have remained for centuries without the true order of heaven among them. . . . In process of time the gifts, and graces, and powers of the kingdom of God were taken away, and the men who officiated in the ancient church of God were nearly all put to death; they were slain because they endeavored to maintain it in its purity, and tried with all their might to establish the principles that God had revealed.[7]

Long centuries passed away. Millions of human beings were born, dwelt on the earth, died, and went into the spirit world, and not one soul of them, so far as we have any knowledge, had power to go forth among mankind and administer in the ordinances of the Gospel of life and salvation. There were, doubtless, millions of good men, who acted up to the best light that they had . . . , who came forth in their day and preached the Gospel according to the light which they possessed. But they did

"Jesus Christ . . . brought the Gospel to the Jews and established His kingdom among them."

not have the power to administer in one ordinance which had any force after death. They did not hold the holy Priesthood.[8]

The world was almost destitute of a knowledge of the truth, and of the Holy Ghost which is poured out to lead mankind in the way of truth. . . . The very fact that generation after generation have risen up and established systems and organizations, all professing to be according to the plan of salvation, and yet opposed one to another, until they have raised up scores of churches all differing on points of doctrine, proves that there has been something out of the way.[9]

After centuries of apostasy, the Lord restored the fulness of the gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith.

The gospel has gone forth in our day in its true glory, power, order, and light, as it always did when God had a people among men that he acknowledged. That same organization and gospel that Christ died for, and the apostles spilled their blood to vindicate, is again established in this generation. How did it come? By the ministering of an holy angel from God, out of heaven,

who [conversed] with man, and revealed unto him the darkness that enveloped the world, and unfolded unto him the gross darkness that surrounded the nations, those scenes that should take place in this generation, and would follow each other in quick succession even unto the coming of the Messiah [see Joseph Smith—History 1:30–49]. The angel taught Joseph Smith those principles which are necessary for the salvation of the world; and the Lord gave him commandments, and sealed upon him the priesthood, and gave him power to administer the ordinances of the house of the Lord. He told him the gospel was not among men, and that there was not a true organization of his kingdom in the world, that the people had turned away from his true order, changed the ordinances and broken the everlasting covenant, and inherited lies and things wherein there was no profit. He told him the time had come to lay the foundation for the establishment of the Kingdom of God among men for the last time preparatory to the winding up scene.[10]

What did Joseph Smith do after having received [the] priesthood and its ordinances? I will tell you what he did. He did that which seventeen centuries and fifty generations, that have passed and gone, of all the clergy and religions of Christendom, and the whole world combined were not able to do—he, although an [unlearned] youth, presented to the world the gospel of Jesus Christ in its fulness, plainness and simplicity, as taught by its Author and his apostles; he presented the church of Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God perfect in their organization, as Paul represents them—with head and feet, arms and hands, every member of the body perfect before heaven and earth [see 1 Corinthians 12:12–28]. How could he, an [unlearned] boy, do that which the whole of the learning of the Christian world for seventeen centuries failed to do? Because he was moved upon by the power of God, he was instructed by those men who, when in the flesh, had preached the same gospel themselves, and in doing this he fulfilled that which Father Adam, Enoch, Moses, Elias, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Jesus and his apostles all prophesied about.

Well might Paul say—"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation unto every one

The Prophet Joseph Smith "received under the hands of Peter, James and John the apostleship, and everything belonging thereto."

that believes." [See Romans 1:16.] So may the Latter-day Saints say—"We are not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." I am not ashamed to say that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God; I am not ashamed to bear record that he was called of God, and laid the foundation of this church and kingdom on the earth, for this is true, and any man or woman who is inspired by the Holy Ghost can see and understand these things.

. . . He lived until he received every key, ordinance and law ever given to any man on the earth, from Father Adam down, touching this dispensation. He received powers and keys from under the hands of Moses for gathering the house of Israel in the last days; he received under the hands of [Elijah] the keys of sealing the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to the fathers; he received under the hands of Peter, James and John the apostleship, and everything belonging thereto; he received under the hands of Moroni all the keys and powers required of the stick of Joseph in the hands of Ephraim; he received under the hand of John the Baptist the Aaronic priesthood, with all its keys and powers; and every other key and power belonging

to this dispensation, and I am not ashamed to say that he was a prophet of God.[11]

Joseph Smith, instead of living to be nearly a thousand years of age as Adam did, lived to be about thirty-eight years of age. He brought forth the record of the stick of Joseph in the hands of Ephraim—the history of the ancient inhabitants of this continent. By the power of God he translated that, and it has been published in many languages. Besides this, he organized the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints upon the foundation of apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus being the chief cornerstone [see Ephesians 2:20]. Men were ordained to the Priesthood and sent forth, from the various occupations of life, to carry this Gospel to the world. God informed Joseph Smith that he was called to prune the vineyard once more for the last time before the coming of the Son of Man [see D&C 24:19]. Since that, thousands of Elders of Israel have been sent into the world to preach the Gospel. . . . Let any man read the revelations in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, which were given through him during the little time he spent here in the flesh. It is one of the greatest records that any man ever gave to the human family. Not only this, but he organized the endowments and did a great deal of other work. Who could expect him, during the short time he lived in the flesh, to do more than he did? I received my endowments from under his hands. He brought forth all these ordinances that have been given unto the Latter-day Saints. In fact, it is a marvel and a wonder that he performed as much as he did.[12]

We now have the privilege of walking in the light of the restored gospel.

I consider any people blest of the Lord to whom he has revealed the gospel of Jesus Christ, to whom he has given the holy priesthood and authority to administer in the ordinances of his house. . . . I consider this to be our position to-day; we have the privilege of walking in the light, we have the privilege of comprehending and knowing the truth, of knowing the way to be saved and exalted in the presence of our Father and God. We are in a position to know his mind and will, through his servants the

prophets. The Lord has given unto us teachers and inspired men, men who are inspired by the Spirit and power of God; clothed them with truth and endowed them with wisdom to teach us at all times the path we should walk in. This is a great blessing.[13]

As I reflect . . . upon the condition of the human family, and consider how differently we are situated from the masses of mankind, I do feel that we ought to be grateful to our great Benefactor. There are millions of the human family who assemble in various houses, in cathedrals, churches and chapels, for the purpose of worshipping God, but is there one of those numerous congregations who come together with an understanding of the truth, except there be some Latter-day Saint Elder who is called to preach to the inhabitants of the earth? Do they come together understanding the principles of the same gospel, the same plan of salvation, the gospel of Jesus Christ, in a way and manner to make them one?

Now, God could not make a people one with so many kinds of faith, and such a multiplicity of doctrines, diametrically opposed to each other, as exist in the world, but we are a blessed people; we have the principles of union and oneness with us, and by carrying them out they bind us together and make us one.

It is upon this principle that the Latter-day Saints are blest, and made free. We are delivered in a great measure from those troubles and perplexities, false doctrines, the darkness, the error and superstition by which our minds have been beclouded until the light was made manifest unto the children of men that they were in darkness, for this was the case with us all; until the light came we were grovelling in the dark, in a great measure. Though we might be honest, and we might be actuated by the best and holiest feelings, yet until the fullness of the gospel was revealed, the world were like the blind groping for the wall [see Isaiah 59:9–11]. We had no Apostles, no Prophets, we had no inspired men to rise up and tell us what to do to be saved, and we had to go through with all that trouble, misery and darkness to which the children of men are subject while living under false doctrines, false traditions, and false teachers. . . .

We are liberated from these things, the cloud of darkness is taken from us, and the light of eternal truth has begun to shine upon our minds. . . .

This I count one of the greatest blessings that God has given to the children of men, to have the plain truth pointed out to them. . . .

Where is the man or woman that comprehended anything about God or about eternity until Joseph Smith revealed the fullness of the gospel? I could read of those things in the Bible which we now believe in and receive, but I was surrounded by the traditions of the world and could not comprehend them.

We are now taught, from time to time, the plain principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the plan of salvation—the way to live in order to have the approbation of our Father in Heaven. Is not this a blessing above all blessings? If this people could comprehend their blessings they never need have an unhappy moment. If this people could comprehend the position they stand in and their true relationship to God they would feel perfectly satisfied, and they would realize that our heavenly Father is merciful unto us and that he has bestowed great and glorious blessings upon us.[14]

I thank God that I live in this day and age of the world, when my ears have heard the sound of the fulness of the gospel of Christ.[15]

Suggestions for Study and Teaching

Consider these ideas as you study the chapter or as you prepare to teach. For additional help, see pages v–ix.

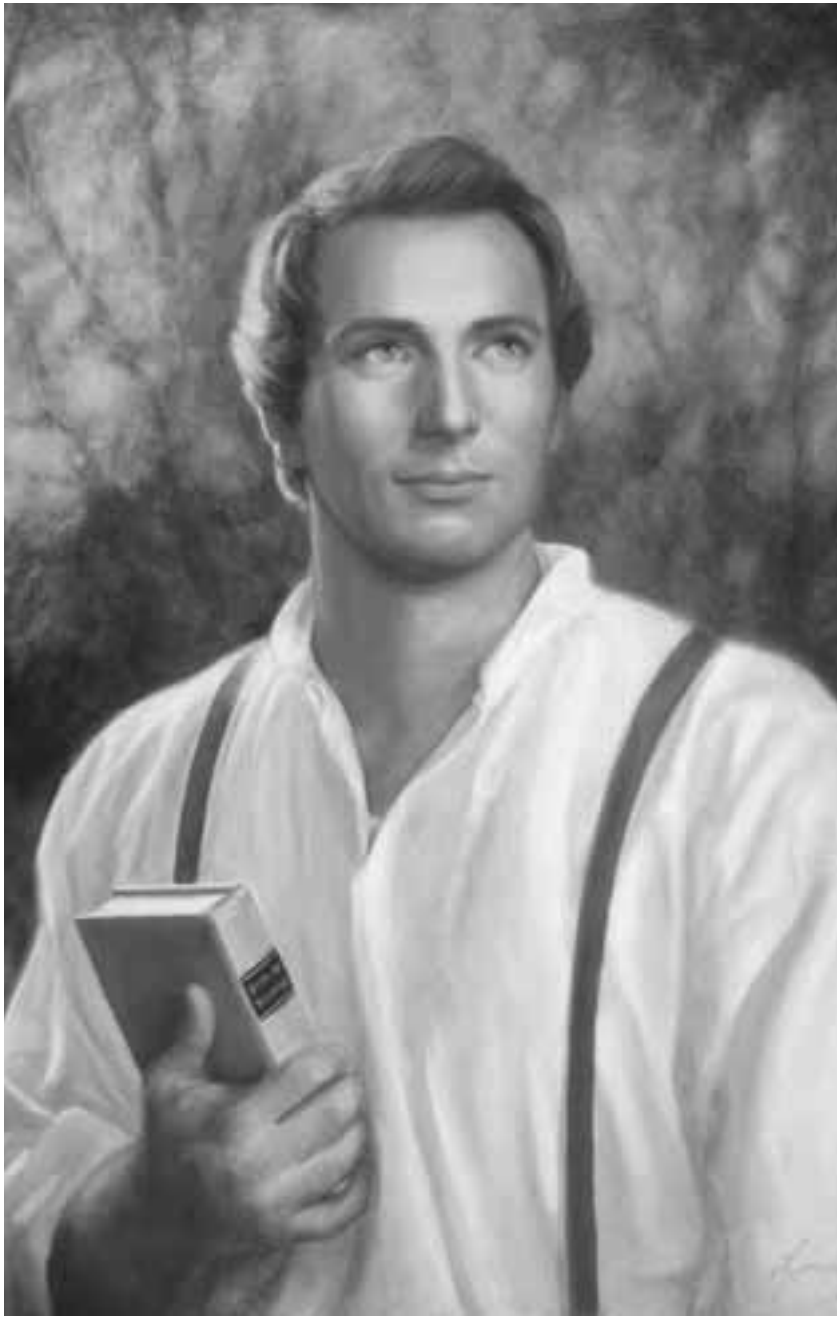
- Review the story on pages 1–3. What was missing from Robert Mason's life? What does this account teach about the Great Apostasy and the Restoration of the gospel?
- Study pages 3–5, looking for characteristics of the Lord's true Church. Why is it important that the Church always be established according to the same pattern?

- According to President Woodruff, what led to the Great Apostasy? What were some results of the Great Apostasy? (See pages 4–5.) How are these results evident today?
- Review pages 5–8, looking for some of the accomplishments of the Prophet Joseph Smith in the Restoration of the gospel. How have his accomplishments influenced your life?
- Read the statement that begins at the bottom of page 6. How can we show that we are not ashamed of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ?
- Note the words *darkness* and *light* on pages 8–10. What do you learn from President Woodruff's use of these words? What would be missing from your life if you had not embraced the restored gospel?

Related Scriptures: Isaiah 29:10–14; Amos 8:11–12; Mormon 1:13–14; D&C 128:19–21

Notes

1. "Leaves from My Journal," *Millennial Star,* May 23, 1881, 334–35.
2. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* July 1, 1866, 2.
3. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* sel. G. Homer Durham (1946), 24.
4. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* January 12, 1875, 1.
5. "The Faith of the Latter-day Saints," *Millennial Star,* July 25, 1892, 478.
6. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* June 13, 1882, 1.
7. *Deseret News,* March 21, 1855, 10.
8. *Deseret Weekly,* November 14, 1891, 658.
9. *Deseret News,* September 26, 1860, 234.
10. *Deseret News,* March 21, 1855, 10.
11. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* November 25, 1873, 1.
12. "Discourse by President Wilford Woodruff," *Millennial Star,* May 21, 1894, 324–25.
13. *Deseret News,* December 26, 1860, 338.
14. *Deseret News,* January 6, 1858, 350.
15. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* December 28, 1875, 1.



Of the Prophet Joseph, President Woodruff said, "In his public and private career he carried with him the Spirit of the Almighty, and he manifested a greatness of soul which I had never seen in any other man."

Joseph Smith: Prophet, Seer, and Revelator

Joseph Smith, the Prophet of this dispensation, was ever true to the revelations he received from on high, fulfilling his foreordained calling and sealing his testimony with his blood.

From the Life of Wilford Woodruff

From his early days as a new member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Wilford Woodruff had a testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith. He said: "I was fully satisfied that Joseph was a Prophet before I saw him. I had no prejudices on my mind against him."[1] In April 1834, about four months after he was baptized, Brother Woodruff traveled to Kirtland, Ohio, where he met the Prophet Joseph for the first time. He later recounted:

"My first introduction to him was rather singular. I saw him out in the field with his brother Hyrum; he had on a very old hat, and was engaged shooting at a mark [or target]. I was introduced to him and he invited me home with him.

"I accepted the invitation and I watched him pretty closely, to see what I could learn. He remarked, while passing to his house, that this was the first hour he had spent in recreation for a long time.

"Shortly after we arrived at his house he went into an adjoining room and brought out a wolf-skin, and said, 'Brother Woodruff, I want you to help me to tan this,' so I pulled off my coat, went to work and helped him, and felt honored in so doing. . . . He wanted this wolf's skin to put upon his wagon seat. . . .

"This was my first introduction to the Prophet Joseph Smith, the great Seer of this last dispensation."[2]

Recalling this experience, President Woodruff said that some people would have been offended to see a church leader participate in such activities. But his own observations of Joseph Smith, both in public and in private, only strengthened his testimony of the Prophet's mission. From those early days in Kirtland until the Prophet's martyrdom 10 years later, Wilford Woodruff served faithfully with Joseph Smith, even when friends and associates in the Church apostatized. He said, "With all the apostasies that we have had, and with all the difficulties and afflictions we have been called to pass through, . . . it was no temptation to me to doubt this work or to doubt that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God."[3]

On March 19, 1897, 90-year-old President Woodruff made an audio recording of his testimony. He was the first President of the Church to do so. In his short message he spent much of the time testifying of the Prophet Joseph's mission, reflecting a lifelong dedication to his friend and leader:

"I bear my testimony that Joseph Smith was a true Prophet of God, ordained of God to lay the foundation of His Church and kingdom in the last dispensation and fulness of times. . . . The Prophet Joseph laid down his life for the word of God and testimony of Jesus Christ, and he will be crowned as a martyr in the presence of God and the Lamb. In all his testimonies to us, the power of God was visibly manifest in the Prophet Joseph."[4]

Teachings of Wilford Woodruff

In public and private, the Prophet Joseph Smith was charitable, merciful, faithful, and true.

I traveled thousands of miles with Joseph Smith. I knew his spirit.[5]

I have felt to rejoice exceedingly in what I saw of brother Joseph, for in his public and private career he carried with him the Spirit of the Almighty, and he manifested a greatness of soul which I had never seen in any other man.[6]

His soul swelled wide as eternity for the welfare of the human family.[7]

Brother Joseph would have embraced the whole circle of the human family in the principles of salvation if he had possessed the power.[8]

The dispensation he was called to usher in is the greatest ever given to man; and it required just such a man to stand at the head of it—a man who was true to God and his brethren; who was a seer and revelator, and whose faith in God was such that he never wavered or doubted, but persevered himself and encouraged others to move forward in the great work before them.[9]

Joseph Smith was foreordained to establish God's work in the latter days.

Joseph Smith was kept in the spirit world for thousands of years to be born in the flesh at the right time, and to be inspired of God, to be visited by Him, and to be qualified and prepared for the mission given into his hands.[10]

Joseph Smith was appointed by the Lord before he was born as much as Jeremiah was. The Lord told Jeremiah—"Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." [Jeremiah 1:5.] He was commanded to warn the inhabitants of Jerusalem of their wickedness. He felt it a hard task, but ultimately he did as he was commanded. So I say with regard to Joseph Smith, he received his appointment from before the foundation of the world, and he came forth in the due time of the Lord to establish this work on the earth.[11]

The Prophet Joseph Smith was taught by God the Father, Jesus Christ, the Holy Ghost, and angels from heaven.

Joseph Smith has often been termed an illiterate, unlearned man. He was a farmer's son, and had very small chance of education. What primer had he to reveal the fullness of the gospel to the world? None at all, only as he was taught by the administration of angels from heaven, by the voice of God and by the

inspiration and power of the Holy Ghost. The principles which have been revealed to the world through him are true as the throne of God. Their influence is already felt in the earth, and will continue to increase until the coming of the Son of Man.[12]

Joseph Smith was moved upon by the Holy Ghost, and he was administered unto, in answer to his prayers, by the Father and the Son; and the Father said to him, "This is my beloved Son, hear ye Him." [See Joseph Smith—History 1:17.] He listened strictly to the words of Jesus Christ, and continued to do so until he, like the Savior, was put to death.[13]

I have never read anywhere, that I know of, of the same power manifested in any dispensation to the children of men, which was manifested to the Prophet of God in the organization of this Church, when the Father and the Son both appeared to the Prophet Joseph in answer to his prayer. . . . This was an important revelation, which has never been manifested in the same manner in any dispensation of the world, that God has given concerning His work. So in its organization, the Prophet of God was administered to by the angels of heaven. They were his teachers, they were his instructors, and all that he did, and all that he performed from the commencement, from that day to the day of his martyrdom, was by the revelation of Jesus Christ.[14]

I will say myself that I do not believe there ever was a man . . . that was more closely united and associated with God the Father, and God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, than the Prophet Joseph Smith. The power of revelation was with him from the day that he was called to receive the Priesthood up to the time when he was martyred. The power of inspiration was with him day by day. This is plainly manifest in the revelations contained in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants. Whenever the Lord felt disposed to reprove him, Joseph Smith, through his own mouth, had to reprove himself; and he did not hesitate to give the word of the Lord, though it was against himself. He was united with the Lord; he was united with the Holy Ghost; he was united with the angels in heaven.[15]

Prophecies, revelations, and decrees of the Almighty, as it were, surrounded that man, and he had to be taught, not by man nor

Joseph Smith was "administered unto, in answer to his prayers, by the Father and the Son."

by the will of man, but he required the angels of God to come forth and teach him; it required the revelations of God to teach him, and he was taught for years by visions and revelations, and by holy angels sent from God out of heaven to teach and instruct him and prepare him to lay the foundation of this church.

. . . Joseph himself could not comprehend, unless he was wrapped in the visions of eternity, the importance of the work the foundation of which he had laid. When his mind was opened he could understand, in many respects, the designs of God; and these revelations were around him and they guided his footsteps.[16]

Despite trials and persecution, the Prophet Joseph Smith remained true to his testimony.

When Joseph presented to the Christian world the principles that God had communicated to him, he at once aroused their prejudices; he had to struggle against traditions which they had inherited from their fathers who knew not God nor his ways, traditions which had come down to them through the ages, which were antagonistic to the saving truths of heaven.[17]

The whole world arose against him—priest and people. What was the matter? Simply that Joseph Smith was like other prophets and apostles. He brought forth a dispensation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which came in contact with the traditions of the people—traditions which have been handed down from generation to generation.[18]

His life was one continual struggle, meeting with opposition on every hand, especially from the priests of the day; but he lived through it and rejoiced greatly in his labors until he finished his testimony in the flesh, after laboring some fourteen years to that end. He had to wade through deep waters; but he never was discouraged or disheartened notwithstanding he had to contend against foes without and foes within. He never lost sight of the majesty of his calling, nor the divinity of this work; but spake and acted in the midst of the people under all circumstances the man that he was—the prophet of God, the seer and revelator of the last dispensation.[19]

Every feeling of his soul, every sentiment of his mind, and every act of his life, proved that he was determined to maintain the principle of truth, even to the sacrificing of his life.[20]

The Lord told Joseph that he would prove him, whether he would abide in his covenant or not, even unto death. He did prove him; and, although he had the whole world to contend against, and the treachery of false friends to withstand, although his whole life was a scene of trouble and anxiety and care, yet, in all his afflictions, his imprisonments, the mobbings and ill-treatment he passed through, he was ever true to his God, and true to his friends.[21]

With a vision of the Church's destiny, the Prophet Joseph Smith prepared the Twelve Apostles and empowered them to carry on the Lord's work.

The church was organized on the 6th of April, 1830, with six members, but Joseph had faith that the kingdom thus commenced, like a grain of mustard seed, would become a great church and kingdom upon the earth.[22]

Elder Wilford Woodruff was present when the Prophet Joseph Smith gave the keys of the kingdom to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Joseph Smith was what he professed to be, a prophet of God, a seer and revelator. He laid the foundation of this church and kingdom, and lived long enough to deliver the keys of the kingdom to the elders of Israel, unto the twelve apostles. He spent the last winter of his life, some three or four months, with the quorum of the twelve, teaching them. It was not merely a few hours ministering to them the ordinances of the gospel; but he spent day after day, week after week and month after month, teaching them and a few others the things of the kingdom of God.[23]

For some time before his death the Prophet Joseph was inspired of the Lord to anticipate his own departure from earthly scenes. This was shown in various ways; but especially in the great anxiety which he displayed to bestow upon the Twelve Apostles all the keys and authority of the Holy Priesthood which he had received. He declared in private and in public that they were equipped and fully qualified, and that he had rolled the kingdom of God on to the shoulders of the Twelve Apostles.

I, Wilford Woodruff, being the last man living in the flesh who was present upon that occasion, feel it a duty I owe to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, to the House of Israel, and to the whole world, to bear this my last testimony to all nations, that in the winter of 1843–4, Joseph Smith, the Prophet of God, called the Twelve Apostles together in the City of Nauvoo, and spent many days with us in giving us our endowments, and teaching us those glorious principles which God had revealed to him. And upon one occasion he stood upon his feet in our midst for nearly three hours, declaring unto us the great and last dispensation which God had set His hand to perform upon the earth in these last days. The room was filled as if with consuming fire; the Prophet was clothed upon with much of the power of God, and his face shone and was transparently clear, and he closed that speech, never-to-be-forgotten in time or in eternity, with the following language:

"Brethren, I have had great sorrow of heart for fear that I might be taken from the earth with the keys of the kingdom of God upon me, without sealing them upon the heads of other men. God has sealed upon my head all the keys of the kingdom of God necessary for organizing and building up of the Church, Zion, and kingdom of God upon the earth, and to prepare the Saints for the coming of the Son of Man. Now, brethren, I thank God I have lived to see the day that I have been enabled to give you your endowments, and I have now sealed upon your heads all the powers of the Aaronic and Melchizedec priesthoods and apostleship, with all the keys and powers thereof, which God has sealed upon me; and I now roll off all the labor, burden and care

of this Church and kingdom of God upon your shoulders, and I now command you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to round up your shoulders, and bear off this Church and kingdom of God before heaven and earth, and before God, angels and men; and if you don't do it you will be damned."

And the same Spirit that filled the room at that time burns in my bosom while I record this testimony.[24]

The Prophet Joseph Smith sealed his testimony with his blood.

Joseph Smith lived until he gave his testament to the world, and when he had sealed all these keys, powers and blessings upon the head of Brigham Young and his brethren; when he had planted these keys on the earth so that they should be removed no more forever; when he had done this, and brought forth that record, that book of revelation, the proclamation of which involved the destiny of this whole generation—Jew, Gentile, Zion and Babylon, all the nations of the earth, he sealed that testimony with his blood in Carthage jail, where his life and that of his brother Hyrum were taken by the hands of wicked and ungodly men.[25]

I may say that it seemed strange to me at that time why the Prophet and his brother Hyrum were permitted to be taken out of our midst. But Joseph Smith, by commandment of God and by the power and revelations of heaven, was ordained and laid the foundation of this great dispensation and fulness of times. He was brought into the world and ordained to organize this Church of Christ for the last time upon this earth, to prepare it for the coming of the Son of Man. After his death, on reflection, I became convinced that he had been ordained to die—to shed his blood as a testimony to this dispensation.[26]

Joseph . . . was true, faithful and valiant in the testimony of Jesus to the day of his death.[27]

He bore his testimony, left it on record, and sealed it with his blood and laid down his life, and that testimony is in force to-day upon all the world, and will remain so unto the end of time.[28]

Suggestions for Study and Teaching

Consider these ideas as you study the chapter or as you prepare to teach. For additional help, see pages v–ix.

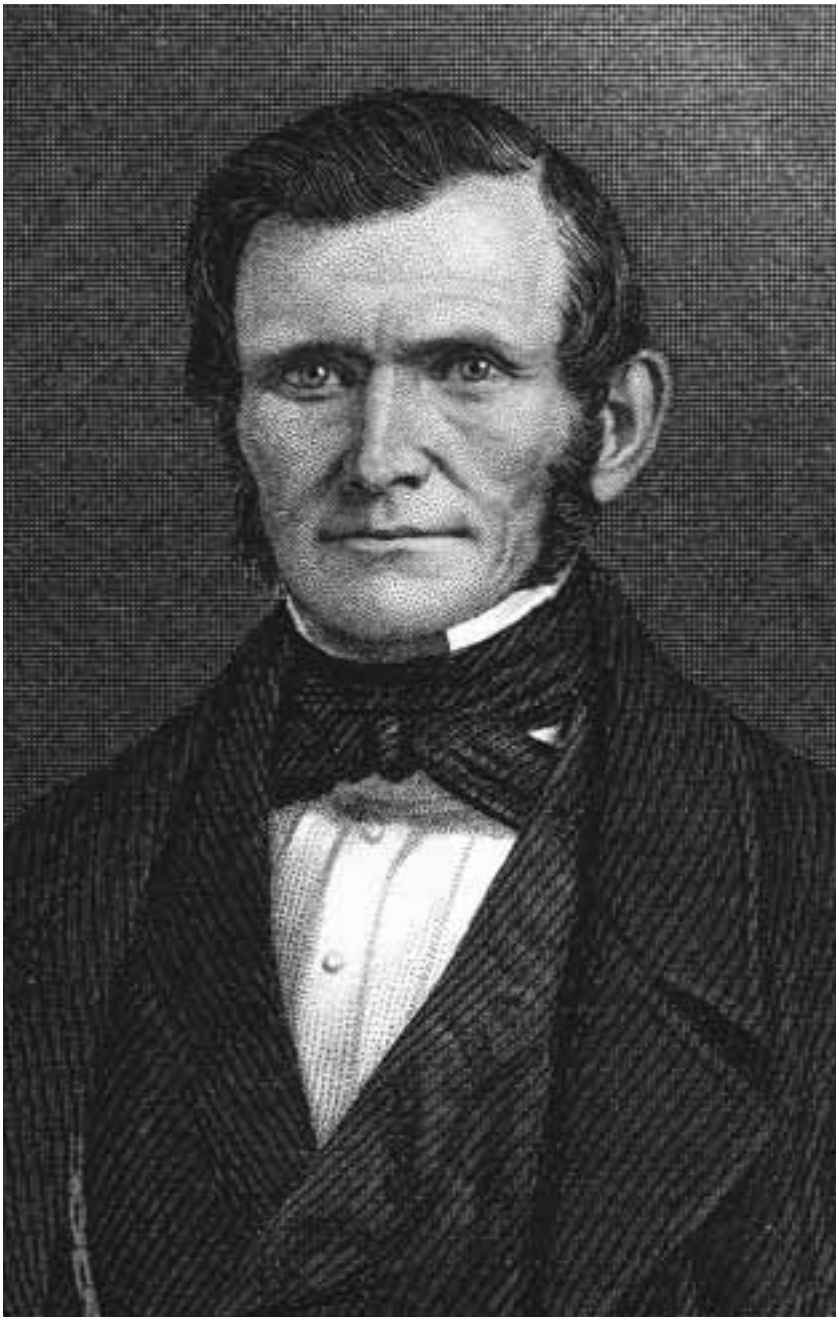
- What was unusual about Wilford Woodruff's introduction to Joseph Smith? (See pages 13–14.) What does this account teach about the Prophet Joseph Smith?
- Turn to pages 14–15, and review the section about Joseph Smith's character. Why is it helpful to know of Joseph Smith's character in private as well as in public? How does our private behavior affect our ability to teach and lead?
- What impresses you about the way Joseph Smith learned the fulness of the gospel? (See pages 15–17.)
- How did the Prophet Joseph respond to adversity? (See page 18.) How might we benefit from his example?
- Why did the Prophet Joseph Smith deliver the keys of the kingdom to the Twelve Apostles? (See pages 18–21.) Why is it important for us to know that this happened?
- Review President Woodruff's words about the death of Joseph Smith (page 21). What are your feelings as you think about the sacrifice Joseph and Hyrum Smith made?
- What has impressed you as you have read President Woodruff's words about the Prophet Joseph Smith?
- Why is it important to receive a testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith? What can we do to strengthen our testimonies of the Prophet?

Related Scriptures: 2 Nephi 3:6–15; D&C 5:10; 135; Joseph Smith—History

Notes

1. *Deseret News,* January 20, 1858, 363.
2. *Deseret News,* January 20, 1858, 363.
3. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* sel. G. Homer Durham (1946), 29–30.
4. *Testimonies of the Presidents of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (videocassette, 1986, item number 53242).
5. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 31.
6. *Deseret News,* January 20, 1858, 363.
7. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 36.
8. *Deseret News,* December 16, 1857, 324.
9. *Deseret Weekly,* October 26, 1889, 560.

10. "Revelation and Judgment," *Deseret Weekly,* August 25, 1894, 289.
11. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 281–82.
12. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* May 20, 1873, 1.
13. *Deseret Weekly,* November 14, 1891, 658.
14. *Millennial Star,* April 28, 1890, 258.
15. *Deseret Weekly,* August 30, 1890, 306.
16. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* November 25, 1873, 1.
17. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 31.
18. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 42–43.
19. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 31–32.
20. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 36.
21. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 33.
22. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* December 21, 1869, 1.
23. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 35.
24. "An Epistle to the Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," *Millennial Star,* November 14, 1887, 722.
25. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* November 25, 1873, 1.
26. *Deseret Weekly,* November 14, 1891, 658–59.
27. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* December 21, 1869, 1.
28. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* May 2, 1876, 4.



As a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Elder Wilford Woodruff worked diligently to help establish the Church of Jesus Christ in the dispensation of the fulness of times.

The Dispensation of the Fulness of Times

As Latter-day Saints, we have a sacred duty to help build up the kingdom of God in this last dispensation.

From the Life of Wilford Woodruff

At different times throughout the history of the world, the Lord has established gospel dispensations. In each dispensation, He has revealed His gospel through one or more authorized servants. The Prophet Joseph Smith was the Lord's instrument in establishing the current dispensation, which is referred to in the scriptures as "the dispensation of the fulness of times" (Ephesians 1:10; D&C 128:20).

In the spring of 1834, Wilford Woodruff attended a priesthood meeting in Kirtland, Ohio. At this meeting he began to understand the destiny of the Church in this dispensation. He later recounted:

"The Prophet called on all who held the Priesthood to gather into the little log school house they had there. It was a small house, perhaps 14 feet square. But it held the whole of the Priesthood of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who were then in the town of Kirtland. . . . That was the first time I ever saw Oliver Cowdery, or heard him speak; the first time I ever saw Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball, and the two Pratts [Orson and Parley], and Orson Hyde and many others. There were no Apostles in the Church then except Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. When we got together the Prophet called upon the Elders of Israel with him to bear testimony of this work. Those that I have named spoke, and a good many that I have not named, bore their testimonies. When they got through the Prophet said, 'Brethren I have been very much edified and instructed in your testimonies here tonight, but I want to say to you

before the Lord, that you know no more concerning the destinies of this Church and kingdom than a babe upon its mother's lap. You don't comprehend it.' I was rather surprised. He said 'it is only a little handfull of Priesthood you see here tonight, but this Church will fill North and South America—it will fill the world.' "[1]

Wilford Woodruff dedicated his life to building up the kingdom of God, and he continued to receive instruction from Joseph Smith, even after the Prophet's death. He told of a vision he received in which he spoke with Joseph Smith: "I saw him at the door of the temple in heaven. He came to me and spoke to me. He said he could not stop to talk with me because he was in a hurry. The next man I met was Father Smith [Joseph Smith Sr.]; he could not talk with me because he was in a hurry. I met half a dozen brethren who had held high positions on earth, and none of them could stop to talk with me because they were in a hurry. I was much astonished. By and by I saw the Prophet again and I got the privilege of asking him a question.

" 'Now,' said I, 'I want to know why you are in a hurry. I have been in a hurry all my life; but I expected my hurry would be over when I got into the kingdom of heaven, if I ever did.'

"Joseph said: 'I will tell you, Brother Woodruff. Every dispensation that has had the priesthood on the earth and has gone into the celestial kingdom has had a certain amount of work to do to prepare to go to the earth with the Savior when he goes to reign on the earth. Each dispensation has had ample time to do this work. We have not. We are the last dispensation, and so much work has to be done, and we need to be in a hurry in order to accomplish it.' "[2]

Teachings of Wilford Woodruff

The Lord and His prophets have looked to this dispensation from before the creation of the world.

All inspired men, from the days of father Adam to the days of Jesus, had a view, more or less, of the great and last dispensation of the fulness of times, when the Lord would set his hand to

prepare the earth and a people for the coming of the Son of Man and a reign of righteousness.[3]

I consider that the work . . . which has been going on from the time this church was organized, is but carrying out the great plan of our Father in Heaven,—that plan which was ordained from before the foundation of the world. In fact there is no dispensation that has been looked upon with as much interest by all the prophets of God and inspired men. . . .

Isaiah, in looking by prophetic vision to this day, makes use of very strong language in endeavoring to express his feelings in relation to it. In one instance he says "Sing O heavens, and rejoice O earth! Break forth into singing O ye mountains, for the Lord has comforted His people, and will have mercy on His afflicted yet." Zion says "The Lord has forsaken me, my God has forgotten me." "Can a woman forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?" "Yea," the Lord says, "a woman may do that," but He will not forget Zion. Says He "Zion is engraven on the palms of my hands, her walls are continually before me." [See Isaiah 49:13–16.]

Now this Zion of God has been before His face from before the foundation of the world.[4]

The Lord never created this world at random; he has never done any of his work at random. The earth was created for certain purposes; and one of these purposes was its final redemption and the establishment of his government and kingdom upon it in the latter days, to prepare it for the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ, whose right it is to reign. That set time has come, that dispensation is before us, we are living in the midst of it.[5]

Nothing can stop the Church from fulfilling its destiny.

This church has continued to rise. It is the only true church upon the face of the whole earth. Its history is before the world. It has continued to grow and increase from the day it was organized until the present time. . . . It is designed by the Most High God to stand on the earth in power and glory and dominion, as the prophets of God saw it in their day and generation. This is the

kingdom that Daniel saw, and it will continue to roll forth until it fills the whole earth [see Daniel 2:34–35, 44–45; D&C 65:2].[6]

We believe this Church will prepare the way for the coming of Christ to reign as king, and that this Church will then develop into the kingdom of God, which all Christians pray will come; that the will of God may be done on earth as it is in heaven [see Matthew 6:10].[7]

There is no power on the face of this earth that can break this Church. Why? Because God holds it in His hands. He is the Author of it, and He has promised, through the mouths of scores and scores of prophets, that it shall stand.[8]

When they put to death Joseph and Hyrum they did not kill "Mormonism," they did not kill faith in God, they did not kill hope and charity, they did not do away with the ordinances of the house of God, nor the power of the Holy Priesthood. The God of heaven had ordained these things.[9]

The kingdom of God is onward; it is not backward.[10]

Where is the Latter-day Saint or any other person who has ever seen this church or kingdom go backward? . . . No matter what our circumstances may have been this kingdom has been onward and upward all the day long until the present hour. Will it ever go backward? No, it will not. This Zion of the Lord, in all its beauty, power and glory is engraven upon the hands of Almighty God, and it is before his face continually; his decrees are set and no man can turn them aside.[11]

Though all the powers of darkness may war against us, the Lord is our Friend and He will sustain us and give us power to build up Zion and to carry out this work until the coming of the Son of Man. Therefore, let your hearts be comforted. . . . We all should be united in the cause in which we are engaged. Inasmuch as we do this we shall come off triumphant.[12]

We have not altogether traveled on beds of ease, we have had warfare and opposition from the commencement until this day; but we and the world may set our hearts at rest concerning "Mormonism," for it will never cease until the Lord Jesus Christ comes in the clouds of heaven.[13]

"This church has continued to rise. . . . This is the kingdom that Daniel saw, and it will continue to roll forth until it fills the whole earth."

Gold and silver may pass away; houses and lands may perish; all temporal matters will pass away; but the priesthood never, salvation never, the kingdom of God never, and prophecy will never fall unfulfilled.[14]

We were reserved in the spirit world to build up God's kingdom in this dispensation.

We have been reserved in the spirit world for thousands of years, to stand in the flesh in the latter days, and to take God's kingdom and build it up. Understanding these things then, what are we, as Latter-day Saints, thinking about? We have got a great warfare to fight. Lucifer, the son of the morning, and all his hosts, are united against us. We are but a little handful, compared with the inhabitants of the earth. There never were but few men and women, in any age of the world, who were independent enough to reject evil and to serve the Lord. But we have been counted worthy to be numbered as His people. It is time, therefore, that we arose, that we awoke, and that, clothed upon

with the power of God and the Holy Priesthood, we should magnify this Priesthood and obtain the blessings belonging thereto.[15]

There has never been a people like this. There has never been a work like this since God made the world. True, there have been men who have preached the gospel; but in the fulness of times the Lord has set his hand to establish his kingdom. This is the last dispensation. He has raised up men and women to carry on his work, and as I have often said, many of us have been held in the spirit world from the organization of this world until the generation in which we live.[16]

The revelations of God in the Bible, Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants are being fulfilled. We are fulfilling them. And while we are here let us be faithful to God, the Great Elohim, the God of the Jews as well as the Gentiles. He looks to us and to nobody else. He looks to the Latter-day Saints. Why? Because nobody else has received the fulness of the everlasting Gospel; nobody else has taken hold to build up this kingdom. My faith and feeling about this matter is that we were appointed before the world was, as much as the ancient apostles were, to come forth in the flesh and take hold of this Kingdom, and we have it to do, or be damned. That is our position to-day. The eyes of the heavenly hosts are over us; the eyes of God himself and his son Jesus Christ and all those apostles and prophets who have sealed their testimony with their blood are watching this people. They visit you, they observe your works, for they know very well that your destiny is to build up this Kingdom, to build up Zion, sanctify it, sanctify the earth and prepare the world for the coming of the Son of Man.[17]

As Latter-day Saints, we have a great work to do.

Joseph Smith . . . came in fulfillment of prophecy, accomplished what was required of him, laid the foundation of the work, received the keys of the priesthood and apostleship, and every gift and grace in the organization of the church necessary to carry it on. We are called to build on the foundation he laid.[18]

If we could open the vision of our minds and let it extend into the future and see this kingdom and what it is bound to

accomplish, and what we have to do, the warfare we have to pass through, we would certainly see that we have a great work on hand.[19]

Our special calling is to build up Zion, and prepare the people to stand in holy places while the judgments of the Lord are being poured out upon the wicked.[20]

It is the mind and will of God that the Latter-day Saints should thoroughly understand for themselves that they stand in the midst of the great and last dispensation of God unto men; and that they should also thoroughly understand the responsibilities devolving upon them as actors therein. And they should never lose sight of the fact that all the powers of darkness combined will never be able to frustrate the purposes of God with regard to the work which He has set His hand to perform, in the day and generation in which we live. The Latter-day Saints should live before the Lord in such a way as to understand the position we occupy, and the duties required at our hands; for the Lord requires certain things of us in our day and generation, as He has required of His people in every age, when He has given unto them the fulness of the everlasting Gospel, and the power and authority of the holy priesthood. . . .

It is the will of God also that we should pay our tithes and offerings; it is His will that we should obey the Word of Wisdom; it is His will that we should keep the commandments, and teach them to others. We shall be held responsible for all we fail to do which we ought to do, as well as that which we do. We should be of one heart and of one mind, and not permit anything of a temporal or spiritual nature to separate us from the love of God and man. . . .

. . . We ought to be united and we ought to seek each other's welfare. We ought to teach the principles of the Gospel of Christ to our sons and to our daughters, as well as to the world, and prepare ourselves for the events to come which are spoken of in the revelations which the Lord has given unto us. He has already commenced His work, His marvellous work, and a wonder, among the inhabitants of the earth, referred to by Isaiah [see Isaiah 29:14]. He will never withdraw His hand until His purposes are accomplished.[21]

"Our special calling is to build up Zion, and prepare the people to stand in holy places."

We have a great work before us, and it will require all our exertions and all our talents and ability to perform it. We must seek for the Spirit of God to assist us; for without this Spirit we can accomplish but very little.[22]

I tell you when you look around and see the state of the world on the one hand and what we have to perform on the other, and what the kingdom of God has got to arrive at in order to fulfill its destiny and the revelations of Jesus Christ, our chief object should be to build up the kingdom of God and roll it on. . . .

. . . We should look for the building up of the kingdom, and secure not only blessings for ourselves, but seek to become saviors of men on Mount Zion, and try to do all the good we can, laboring to promote the cause and interest of Zion in every department thereof where we are called to act.

By pursuing this course we shall be prospered, and have continual peace in our minds and as the Lord has said, nothing will be withheld from any man that seeks for the righteousness and blessings of the kingdom of God. . . .

. . . There [are] a great many things at our door, a great many changes to take place in the earth, and the kingdom is growing; and I would here exhort all the Latter-day Saints who hear me this day to study well the position you are in, and search your hearts and see if we are in favor of the Lord our God, and then let us increase continually in faith, in hope, in righteousness, and in every virtuous principle which is necessary for us to have to sustain us in every trial through which we may be called to pass in order to prove us as the friends of God, whether we will abide in the covenant or not; we will be tried from this time until the coming of the Messiah or while we live on the earth.[23]

There need be no fears if the Latter-day Saints will only be true to the covenants they have made with their God and strictly carry out the principles which He has told us must govern us in the building up of His Zion.

If, however, we forget our covenants, and depart from and disregard the teachings which He has given us, then be assured, Latter-day Saints, our position is full of peril to us. God's purposes will not be thwarted; but we shall be scourged, and those who persist in this course will be rejected and be deprived of all share in the blessings promised to Zion.[24]

The Lord is with this people, but as Latter-day Saints, I do not think that we always prize our privileges. We are called upon to perform a work; the Lord has placed this work in our hands, and we are held responsible before the heavens and the earth to use the talents—the light and truth, which have been committed into our hands.[25]

Suggestions for Study and Teaching

Consider these ideas as you study the chapter or as you prepare to teach. For additional help, see pages v–ix.

- Review pages 25–26. How is Joseph Smith's prophecy being fulfilled? What can we learn from President Woodruff's vision?
- Why have prophets looked forward to this dispensation? Why is it important for us to understand that "we are living in the midst of" the last dispensation? (See pages 26–27.)

- What do we mean when we testify that we belong to "the only true church upon the face of the whole earth"? (page 27; see also D&C 1:30). How can we humbly share this truth with others?
- What impresses you as you study President Woodruff's teachings about the destiny of the Church? (See pages 27–29.)
- Scan pages 28–29, looking for things that will perish and things that will last forever. What are some differences between things that will perish and things that will last?
- Read President Woodruff's teachings about our being "reserved in the spirit world" to be born in this dispensation (pages 29–30). What are your feelings as you ponder these statements?
- Look at the photograph on page 32. What does this picture have to do with building up the kingdom of God? According to President Woodruff, what are some of our duties as we help build up the kingdom of God? (See pages 30–33.)
- Read the last paragraph on page 33. What privileges do we have in this dispensation? What do you think it means to "prize our privileges"?

Related Scriptures: D&C 6:32–34; 64:33–34; 121:26–32; 138:53–56

Notes

1. In Conference Report, April 1898, 57.
2. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* sel. G. Homer Durham (1946), 288–89.
3. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* January 12, 1875, 1.
4. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* September 20, 1870, 2.
5. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 174.
6. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* July 6, 1880, 1.
7. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 193.
8. *Deseret Weekly,* August 6, 1892, 194.
9. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* January 31, 1882, 1.
10. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* December 21, 1880, 1.
11. *Deseret News,* April 24, 1872, 152.
12. "Discourse by President Wilford Woodruff," *Millennial Star,* June 6, 1895, 354.
13. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 110.
14. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 131.
15. *Deseret Weekly,* June 22, 1889, 824.
16. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* December 14, 1880, 1.
17. In Conference Report, April 1880, 84–85.
18. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* January 10, 1871, 2.
19. *Deseret News,* March 4, 1857, 411.
20. *Deseret Weekly,* October 26, 1889, 562.
21. *Salt Lake Herald Church and Farm,* June 15, 1895, 385, 386.
22. *Deseret Weekly,* June 22, 1889, 823.
23. *Deseret News,* March 4, 1857, 411.
24. "Epistle," *Woman's Exponent,* April 15, 1888, 174.
25. *Deseret News,* December 23, 1874, 741.

The Power and Authority of the Holy Priesthood

God bestows the priesthood on His people for their blessing and exaltation.

From the Life of Wilford Woodruff

In his youth, Wilford Woodruff longed to find a church with true priesthood authority—with "power before the heavens and on the earth."[1] In an address he gave in 1889, he related:

"I went to Sabbath school, in my boyhood. . . . In that Sabbath school I read the New Testament. I learned verse after verse and chapter after chapter. What did the Testament teach me? It taught me the Gospel of life and salvation; it taught me a Gospel of power before the heavens and on the earth. It taught me that the organization of the Church consisted of Prophets, Apostles, Pastors and Teachers, with helps and governments. What for? 'For the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the ministry: for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.' [See 1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11–13.]

"These are the things which I learned, and they made an impression upon me. I believed in them; yet I had never heard them taught by any clergyman or divine upon the earth. In my early manhood I attended the meetings of almost every denomination there was. On one occasion I attended one of those great meetings which were sometimes held in Connecticut, at which forty or fifty ministers of various denominations were gathered together. They prayed for a pentecostal season and for a good many other things. At this meeting permission was given for anybody to make remarks. I was quite young then. I arose and

Peter and John healing a lame man (see Acts 3). Young Wilford Woodruff sought "the faith once delivered to the Saints"—a religion with the same "power before God" as the Savior's Church in the meridian of time.

stepped into the aisle, and I said to that body of ministers: 'My friends, will you tell me why you don't contend for the faith once delivered to the Saints? Will you tell me why you don't contend for that Gospel that Jesus Christ taught, and that His Apostles taught? Why do you not contend for that religion that gives unto you power before God, power to heal the sick, to make the blind to see, the lame to walk, and that gives you the Holy Ghost and those gifts and graces that have been manifest from the creation of the world? Why do you not teach the people those principles that the ancient Patriarchs and Prophets taught while they were clothed with the revelations of God? They had the administrations of angels; they had dreams and visions, and constant revelation to guide and direct them in the path in which they should walk.'

"The presiding elder said: 'My dear young man, you would be a very smart man, and a very useful man in the earth, if you did not believe all those foolish things. These things were given to the children of men in the dark ages of the world, and they were given for the very purpose of enlightening the children of men

in that age, that they might believe in Jesus Christ. Today we live in the blaze of the glorious gospel light, and we do not need those things.' Said I: 'Then give me the dark ages of the world; give me those ages when men received these principles.' "[2]

Zera Pulsipher

On December 29, 1833, Wilford Woodruff finally heard the gospel from authorized servants of God. He recounted: "For the first time in my life, I saw an Elder in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. That was Zera Pulsipher. He told me that he was inspired of the Lord. He was threshing grain in his barn when the voice of the Lord came to him and told him to arise and go to the north, the Lord had business for him there. He called upon Brother [Elijah] Cheney, his neighbor and a member of the Church. They traveled sixty miles on foot . . . in deep snow, and the first place they felt impressed to call upon was the house of my brother and myself. They went into the house and talked with my brother's wife, and they told her who they were and what their business was. They told her that they were moved upon to go to the north, and they never felt impressed to stop anywhere until they came to that house. When they told her their principles, she said her husband and her brother-in-law both were men who believed those principles, and they had prayed for them for years. They appointed a meeting in the schoolhouse upon our farm.

"I came home in the evening, and my sister-in-law told me of this meeting. I had been drawing logs from the shores of Lake Ontario (I was in the lumber business), and I turned out my horses, did not stop to eat anything, and went to the meeting. I found the house and the dooryard filled with people. I listened for the first time in my life to a Gospel sermon as taught by the Elders of this Church. It was what I had sought for from my boyhood up. I invited the men home with me. I borrowed the Book of Mormon, and sat up all that night and read. In the morning

I told Brother Pulsipher I wanted to be baptized. I had a testimony for myself that those principles were true. Myself and my brother . . . went forth and were baptized—the two first in that county."[3]

Elder Pulsipher baptized Wilford Woodruff in a creek on December 31, 1833, and confirmed him on that same day. Three days later, Wilford Woodruff received the Aaronic Priesthood and was ordained to the office of teacher. This was the beginning of a lifelong ministry in the Lord's service. Looking back on that day, he said, "My mission immediately commenced."[4]

Teachings of Wilford Woodruff

God performs all His works by the power of the priesthood.

I do not know of any subject in the Church of more importance to the inhabitants of the earth and to ourselves than the Holy Priesthood.[5]

By the power of [the] Priesthood, God, our Eternal Father, has organized all worlds, and redeemed all worlds that have ever been redeemed. By that same Priesthood men have administered on the earth in the ordinances of the Gospel of Christ.[6]

The Holy Priesthood is the channel through which God communicates and deals with man upon the earth; and the heavenly messengers that have visited the earth to communicate with man are men who held and honored the priesthood while in the flesh; and everything that God has caused to be done for the salvation of man, from the coming of man upon the earth to the redemption of the world, has been and will be by virtue of the everlasting priesthood.[7]

The Lord never had a church on the face of the earth, from its first organization until today, unless that church was organized by revelation, with prophets and apostles, pastors, teachers, helps and governments endowed with the Holy Priesthood—that power delegated from God to man, which authorizes him to act for God; and without this Priesthood no man, from the day the world rolled into existence, has any right to administer in any of the ordinances of his holy house, neither has any man a

President Wilford Woodruff taught that the priesthood is the "power delegated from God to man, which authorizes him to act for God."

right to that Priesthood save he be called of God as was Aaron who, we are informed, was called by revelation [see Hebrews 5:4]. What is this Priesthood for? It is to administer the ordinances of the Gospel, even the Gospel of our Father in Heaven, the eternal God, the Eloheim of the Jews and the God of the Gentiles.[8]

No man has authority from God to administer to the children of men the ordinances of life and salvation [except] by the power of the Holy Priesthood. The power of that Priesthood is with the Latter-day Saints.[9]

Priesthood holders should use the priesthood to give service and build up the kingdom of God, not to build up themselves.

What a responsibility it is to hold this heavenly, this eternal, this everlasting Priesthood! And we shall have to give an account of it. Apostles, Seventies, High Priests, Elders, and all men who bear any portion of this Priesthood that has been given unto us, will be held responsible for it.[10]

We have a labor laid upon our shoulders. Joseph Smith had, Brigham Young had, the Twelve Apostles have, we all have, and we will be condemned if we do not fulfil it. We shall find it out when we get to the other side of the veil. . . . Many a time in my reflections I have wished I could fully comprehend the responsibility I have to God, and the responsibility every man is under who bears the priesthood in this generation. But I tell you, brethren, I think our hearts are set too much upon the things of this world. We do not appreciate, as men bearing the Holy Priesthood in this generation should, the mighty responsibility we are under to God and high heaven, as well as to the earth. I think we are too far from the Lord.[11]

If we . . . , bearing the holy priesthood, use that priesthood for any other purpose under heaven but to build up the Kingdom of God, if we do our power will fall. . . . A good many men have undertaken this—men high in the priesthood, even the Apostleship—to build themselves up upon the authority of the priesthood. And where have they gone? You may say amen to their power and authority. . . . Let us reflect on these things. I say the same to myself. I say the same to the Apostles, Seventies and High Priests. You cannot use the priesthood for any other purpose under heaven but to build up the kingdom and do the will of God; and when you attempt to do otherwise your power will be taken from you.[12]

I have ever read with a great deal of interest that revelation given to Joseph Smith in answer to his prayer in Liberty jail [see D&C 121:34–46]. I have ever looked upon that revelation of God to that man, considering the few sentences it includes, as containing as much principle as any revelation God ever gave to man. He gave Joseph to understand that he held the priesthood, which priesthood was after the order of God, after the order of Melchizedek, the same priesthood by which God himself performed all his works in the heavens and in the earth, and any man who bore that priesthood had the same power. That priesthood had communication with the heavens, power to move the heavens, power to perform the work of the heavens, and wherever any man magnified that calling, God gave his angels charge

concerning him and his ministrations were of power and force both in this world and the world to come; but let that man use that priesthood for any other purpose than the building up of the kingdom of God, for which purpose it was given, and the heavens withdraw themselves, the power of the priesthood departs, and he is left to walk in darkness and not in light, and this is the key to apostasy of all men whether in this generation or any other.[13]

We have had the priesthood given to us, and if we fail to use it aright, we shall be brought under condemnation. Therefore, let us round up our shoulders and bear off the kingdom. Let us labor to obtain the Holy Spirit—and power of the gospel of Jesus Christ—which has been put into our hands, and inasmuch as we do this, the blessing of God will attend our efforts.[14]

The Lord sustains any man that holds a portion of the Priesthood, whether he is a Priest, an Elder, a Seventy, or an Apostle, if he magnifies his calling and does his duty.[15]

I was very much pleased once in seeing a number of Deacons magnify their calling. . . . They went through [their] city and chopped every piece of wood which every widow in that town had. Brother [George] Teasdale, the President of the Stake, had three or four cords of cedar wood in his lot, and he went home one night and found that it had disappeared. He wondered what was the matter; but when he came to look around he found it all chopped up in his wood-house. They magnified their calling splendidly there.

Today we are, in some respects, in peculiar circumstances. We should trust in the Lord and do what is right. I know the Priesthood is given for the salvation of men and for the administration of ordinances both for the living and the dead. Tens of thousands have been redeemed in the spirit world by their posterity who stand in the flesh and hold the keys of the salvation of their dead. Saviors upon Mount Zion have been raised up, while the kingdom is the Lord's, as the Prophet Obadiah said they would be [see Obadiah 1:21]. This people are doing this work now. The Lord is with you, and your progenitors in the spirit world rejoice. Let us be faithful, therefore, while we are here.

"What a responsibility it is to hold this heavenly, this eternal, this everlasting Priesthood!"

God has appointed us to bear this Priesthood. Out of the . . . millions of people on the earth the Lord has chosen this handful of men to bear this; to ordain, to organize, to warn the world, to preach the Gospel to them. I hope my brethren that bear this Priesthood will remember the value of it. . . .

. . . Let us be true and faithful. Do not let us lose our hold on the Priesthood, nor upon the kingdom of God. Let us go in secret prayer before the Lord and call upon His holy name. There is where our strength lies.[16]

If we are true to our covenants and responsibilities, we will receive the blessings of the priesthood in this life and in the life to come.

When the Lord bestows gifts upon the children of men in connection with the Priesthood, those who receive those gifts are responsible for the use they make of them.[17]

When an apostle or president, bishop or any man holding the priesthood officiates, he administers by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ; then that priesthood has effect, and all the blessings

that a servant of God bestows upon the children of men, will take effect both in this life and in that which is to come. If I have a blessing given to me by the holy priesthood, or if I receive a blessing from a patriarch, those gifts and blessings will reach into the other world; and if I am true to my covenants through this life, I can claim every blessing that has been conferred upon me, because that authority by which they were conferred is ordained of God, and it is that by which the sons of the Most High administer unto the children of men the ordinances of life and salvation, and those official acts will have their effect upon those persons beyond the grave as well as in this life. These are the true riches; they are riches that will last to all eternity, and we have power through these blessings, conferred by the gospel, to receive our bodies again and to preserve our identity in eternity. Yes, we can claim this by virtue of the holy priesthood.[18]

I often reflect upon the promises made concerning the priesthood. The Lord, in a revelation upon this subject, says, . . . "Whosoever is faithful unto obtaining these two Priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies. . . . All that my Father hath shall be given unto him. Therefore, all those who receive the Priesthood, receive this oath and covenant of my Father, which he cannot break, neither can it be moved." [See D&C 84:33–40.] Now, I sometimes ask myself the question, Do we comprehend these things? Do we comprehend that if we abide the laws of the Priesthood we shall become heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ? I realize that our eyes have not seen, our ears have not heard, neither hath it entered into our hearts to conceive the glory that is in store for the faithful [see 1 Corinthians 2:9].[19]

What manner of men and women ought we to be, who are called to take part in the great latter-day work? We should be men and women of faith, valiant for the truth as it has been revealed and committed into our hand. We should be men and women of integrity to God and to His holy Priesthood, true to Him and true to one another. We should not permit houses and lands, gold and silver, nor any of this world's goods to draw us

aside from pursuing the great object which God has sent us to perform. Our aim is high, our destiny is high and we should never disappoint our Father, nor the heavenly hosts who are watching over us. We should not disappoint the millions in the spirit world, who too are watching over us with an interest and anxiety that have hardly entered into our hearts to conceive of. These are great and mighty things which God requires of us. We would not be worthy of salvation, we would not be worthy of eternal lives in the kingdom of our God, if anything could turn us away from the truth or from the love of it.[20]

Suggestions for Study and Teaching

Consider these ideas as you study the chapter or as you prepare to teach. For additional help, see pages v–ix.

- What impressions led young Wilford Woodruff to search for the true Church? (See pages 35–37.) How did these impressions relate to the priesthood?
- Review pages 38–39 and look for things the Lord accomplishes by the power of the priesthood. How do priesthood holders participate in the Lord's work?
- Why is it important for both men and women to learn about the priesthood?
- How has the priesthood blessed your life?
- As you read President Woodruff's teachings about the responsibilities of priesthood holders, what specific principles do you find? (See pages 39–42.)
- According to President Woodruff, what attitudes and actions cause the heavens to withdraw from a priesthood holder? Why is it impossible for a man to use the priesthood for personal gain? (See pages 39–42; see also D&C 121:34–40.) How must a priesthood holder live in order to have "power to perform the work of the heavens"? (See pages 40–42; see also D&C 121:41–46.)

- What does it mean to magnify a calling in the priesthood? (See pages 41–42.) What examples have you seen of brethren magnifying their callings in the priesthood?
- Review the final section in the chapter (pages 42–44). In what ways does the priesthood bring blessings both in this life and in the life to come?

Related Scriptures: John 15:16; Hebrews 5:4–6; Alma 13:1–20; D&C 84:17–48; 107:18–20; Articles of Faith 1:5

Notes

1. *Deseret Weekly,* April 6, 1889, 450.
2. *Deseret Weekly,* April 6, 1889, 450.
3. *Deseret Evening News,* March 1, 1897, 1.
4. "The Rights of the Priesthood," *Deseret Weekly,* March 17, 1894, 381.
5. *Deseret Weekly,* March 17, 1894, 381.
6. *Deseret Weekly,* April 6, 1889, 450.
7. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* sel. G. Homer Durham (1946), 64.
8. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* July 30, 1878, 1.
9. *Deseret Weekly,* March 17, 1894, 381.
10. *Deseret Weekly,* March 2, 1889, 294.
11. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 102.
12. In Conference Report, April 1880, 83.
13. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 67–68.
14. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* July 6, 1880, 1.
15. *Deseret Weekly,* November 7, 1896, 641.
16. *Deseret Weekly,* March 17, 1894, 381–82.
17. *Deseret Weekly,* March 17, 1894, 381.
18. *Deseret News,* February 26, 1862, 273.
19. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* January 15, 1883, 1.
20. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* October 18, 1881, 1.

The Holy Ghost and Personal Revelation

According to our faithfulness, we can receive the companionship of the Holy Ghost to enlighten and guide us in our lives and to lead us to eternal life.

From the Life of Wilford Woodruff

In October 1880, President Wilford Woodruff told the Saints that he had recently been visited by President Brigham Young, who had died in 1877, and by President Heber C. Kimball, who had died in 1868. "When we arrived at our destination," recounted President Woodruff, "I asked President Young if he would preach to us. He said, 'No, I have finished my testimony in the flesh. I shall not talk to this people any more.' 'But,' said he, 'I have come to see you; I have come to watch over you, and to see what the people are doing.' Then, said he, 'I want you to teach the people—and I want you to follow this counsel yourself—that they must labor and so live as to obtain the Holy Spirit, for without this you cannot build up the kingdom; without the Spirit of God you are in danger of walking in the dark, and in danger of failing to accomplish your calling as apostles and as elders in the church and kingdom of God.'"[1]

This counsel was not new to President Woodruff. His brethren knew him as "a man susceptible to the impressions of the Spirit of the Lord, a man guided by inspiration in the performance of his duty, far more than by any gift of wisdom or of judgment that he himself possessed."[2] He often related an experience he had with the impressions of the Spirit. It occurred as he and his

family traveled to the eastern United States, where he had been called to serve a mission. He said:

"I drove my carriage one evening into the yard of Brother Williams [a local member of the Church]. Brother Orson Hyde [of the Quorum of the Twelve] drove a wagon by the side of mine. I had my wife and children in the carriage. After I turned out my team and had my supper, I went to bed in the carriage. I had not been there but a few minutes when the Spirit said to me, 'Get up and move that carriage.' I told my wife I had to get up and move the carriage. She said, 'What for?' I said, 'I don't know.' That is all she asked me on such occasions; when I told her I did not know, that was enough. I got up and moved my carriage. . . . I then looked around me and went to bed. The same Spirit said, 'Go and move your animals from that oak tree.' . . . I went and moved my horses and put them in a little hickory grove. I again went to bed.

"In thirty minutes a whirlwind came up and broke that oak tree off within two feet from the ground. It swept over three or four fences and fell square in that dooryard, near Brother Orson Hyde's wagon, and right where mine had stood. What would have been the consequences if I had not listened to that Spirit? Why, myself and wife and children doubtless would have been killed. That was the still, small voice to me—no earthquake, no thunder, no lightning; but the still, small voice of the Spirit of God. It saved my life. It was the spirit of revelation to me."[3]

President Woodruff emphasized the need for all members of the Church to be guided by the Holy Ghost—to seek personal revelation. He asserted, "The Church of God could not live twenty-four hours without revelation."[4]

Teachings of Wilford Woodruff

The Holy Ghost is a personage of spirit who bears witness of God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the truthfulness of the gospel.

The Holy Ghost is one of the personages of the Godhead. God the Father and God the Son possess tabernacles [bodies of

The gift of the Holy Ghost can be given "to every faithful man and woman, and to every child who is old enough to receive the gospel of Christ."

flesh and bone], and God himself has created man after His own image; but the Holy Ghost is a personage of Spirit, which bears witness of the Father and Son unto the children of men [see D&C 130:22].[5]

What is the greatest testimony any man or woman can have as to this being the work of God? I will tell you what is the greatest testimony I have ever had, the most sure testimony, that is the testimony of the Holy Ghost, the testimony of the Father and the Son.[6]

Our eyes and ears may be deceived by the cunning and machination of man; but the Holy Ghost never deceives anybody.[7]

The scriptures tell us that there is a spirit in man and that the inspiration of the Almighty giveth it understanding [see Job 32:8]. It is upon this principle that we become acquainted with the

truth, and the power of the gospel which we have received. The principles of eternal life are manifested unto us by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, for that Spirit rests upon us, it influences our minds, and if we watch those teachings, having within us the right feeling, we shall comprehend things clearly as they are.[8]

Each faithful Latter-day Saint can receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, which is the greatest gift anyone can receive in mortality.

Every person who has ever repented of his sins, and has been baptized for their remission, after the order of God, and after the similitude of Jesus Christ, who was buried in water in the likeness of his death, and came forth in the likeness of his resurrection, has a right to the Holy Ghost; it is promised, and it belongs to him; it is the right of all persons to enjoy this, and if they receive the Holy Ghost and [His] gifts they have inspiration, light and truth; they have eyes to see, ears to hear and hearts to understand.[9]

Now, if you have the Holy Ghost with you—and every one ought to have—I can say unto you that there is no greater gift, there is no greater blessing, there is no greater testimony given to any man on earth. You may have the administration of angels; you may see many miracles; you may see many wonders in the earth; but I claim that the gift of the Holy Ghost is the greatest gift that can be bestowed upon man. It is by this power that we have performed that which we have. It is this that sustains us through all the persecutions, trials and tribulations that come upon us.[10]

Every man or woman that has ever entered into the church of God and been baptized for the remission of sins has a right to revelation, a right to the Spirit of God, to assist them in their labors, in their administrations to their children, in counseling their children and those over whom they are called upon to preside. The Holy Ghost is not restricted to men, nor to apostles or prophets; it belongs to every faithful man and woman, and to every child who is old enough to receive the gospel of Christ.[11]

We should acquaint ourselves with the still, small voice of the Holy Ghost—the voice of revelation.

There is an appointed way . . . in which revelation from the Lord for the government of his church is received. There is but one man on the earth, at a time, who holds this power. But every individual member has the privilege of receiving revelation from the Lord for his guidance in his own affairs, and to testify to him concerning the correctness of public teachings and movements.[12]

What is revelation? It is the inspiration of the Holy Ghost to man. Joseph Smith said to Brother John Taylor in his day: "Brother Taylor, you watch the impression of the Spirit of God; you watch the whisperings of Spirit to you; you carry them out in your life, and [this] will become a principle of revelation in you, and you will know and understand this Spirit and power." This is the key, the foundation stone of all revelation. . . . In my own experience I have endeavored to get acquainted with that Spirit, and to learn its operations.[13]

How many of you have had revelation? How many of you have had the Spirit of God whisper unto you—the still small voice? . . . I have had many testimonies since I have been connected with this Church and kingdom. I have been blessed at times with certain gifts and graces, certain revelations and ministrations; but with them all I have never found anything that I could place more dependency upon than the still small voice of the Holy Ghost.[14]

Man is apt to look too high or expect too great things so that they often times mistake the Spirit of God and the inspiration of the Almighty. It is not in the thunder or whirlwind that we should look for the Spirit of God but in the still small voice [see 1 Kings 19:11–12].[15]

Through the gift of the Holy Ghost, we receive blessings to guide our lives now and to prepare us for eternal life.

You may surround any man or woman with all the wealth and glory that the imagination of man can grasp, and are they satisfied? No. There is still an aching void. On the other hand, show me a beggar upon the streets, who has the Holy Ghost, whose

mind is filled with that Spirit and power, and I will show you a person who has peace of mind, who possesses true riches, and those enjoyments that no man can obtain from any other source.[16]

When we enjoy the Holy Spirit, when we are trying to live our religion here on the earth, we are the happiest people on God's footstool, no matter what our circumstances may be. I do not care whether we are rich or poor, whether in happiness or affliction, if a man is living his religion and enjoys the favor and Spirit of God, it makes no difference to him what takes place on the earth. There may be earthquakes, war, fire or sword in the land, but he feels that it is all right with him. That is the way I feel.[17]

Every man who receives that Spirit has a comforter within—a leader to dictate and guide him. This Spirit reveals, day by day, to every man who has faith, those things which are for his benefit. . . . It is this inspiration of God to his children in every age of the world that is one of the necessary gifts to sustain man and enable him to walk by faith, and to go forth and obey all the dictations and commandments and revelations which God has given to His children to guide and direct them in life.[18]

Every man should get the Spirit of God, and then follow its dictates. This is revelation. It doesn't make any difference what the Spirit tells you to do; it will never tell you to do anything that is wrong.[19]

We are surrounded by . . . evil spirits that are at war against God and against everything looking to the building up of the kingdom of God; and we need this Holy Spirit to enable us to overcome these influences. . . .

. . . This is the Spirit that we must have to carry out the purposes of God on the earth. We need that more than any other gift. . . . We are in the midst of enemies, in the midst of darkness and temptation, and we need to be guided by the Spirit of God. We should pray to the Lord until we get the Comforter. This is what is promised to us when we are baptized. It is the spirit of light, of truth, and of revelation, and can be with all of us at the same time.[20]

Worthy Latter-day Saints can receive the Holy Ghost "to assist them in their labors, in their administrations to their children, in counseling their children and those over whom they are called upon to preside."

You will find if ever we seek to do something else besides carrying out the dictates of the Holy Spirit, we will get into the fog and into darkness and trouble, and we shall be ignorant of the way we are pursuing. Every day that we live we need the power of the Lord—the power of his Holy Spirit and the strength of the priesthood to be with us that we may know what to do. And if we will so live before the Lord, the Spirit will reveal to us every day what our duties are; I do not care what it is we are engaged in, we should first find out the will of the Lord and then do it, and then our work will be well done and acceptable before the Lord.[21]

Through all my life and labors, whenever I have been told to do anything by the Spirit of the Lord, I have always found it good to do it. I have been preserved by that power. . . . Get the spirit of revelation with you. And when you get that you are safe, and you will do exactly what the Lord wants you to do.[22]

The thought that we can obey and be sanctified by the gospel, and be prepared thereby to inherit eternal life, is one of the most

glorious principles ever revealed to man. . . . We have a hope that the world knows not of, and it can not enter into their thoughts. Unless they are born of the Spirit of God they can not even see the kingdom of God, and they can not get into it unless they are born of the water and of the Spirit [see John 3:5], hence they can not share in the joyous anticipations and hopes that we possess. Their eyes, ears and hearts are not opened to see and hear and feel the power of the gospel of Christ.[23]

It is our privilege to follow the dictates of the Spirit of the Lord, and to have it for our guide and companion, and by doing this the blessings of the heavens will be upon us as fast as we are prepared to receive them.[24]

The constant companionship of the Spirit requires our constant labor and faithfulness.

I am anxious . . . that we as a people may do our duty, may live our religion, may keep the faith, may so walk before the Lord that the Holy Ghost may be our constant companion to lead us in the days that lie before us. This is my prayer and my desire.[25]

I know that it requires constant warfare, labor and faithfulness before the Lord in order for us to keep in fellowship with the Holy Spirit, and to live in such a manner that we may obtain these blessings.[26]

There is nothing that we ought to labor more to obtain while in the flesh than the Spirit of God, the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, which we are entitled to receive by reason of our having obeyed the requirements of the Gospel.[27]

The great promise which accompanies the preaching of the Gospel, as revealed from heaven in our day, is that the Holy Ghost will be bestowed upon the sincerely penitent who obey its holy ordinances. Through the Holy Ghost a knowledge of things past, present and to come is communicated and the mind and will of the Father made known. In this way the Almighty reveals His purposes to those who obey His commandments and whose lives are pure and acceptable before Him, so that they can be prepared for all the events and trials that may lie in their pathway.

If there are any members of the Church who do not know by their own experience that this is true, they may be assured that they do not live up to their privileges. All Saints should be in close communion with the Holy Ghost, and, through it, with the Father, or there is danger of their being overcome of evil and falling by the wayside.

We, therefore, say to the Latter-day Saints: The Holy Ghost will not dwell in an unholy tabernacle. If you would enjoy the full powers and gifts of your religion, you must be pure. If you are guilty of weaknesses, follies and sins, you must repent of them; that is, you must thoroughly forsake them. In no other way can we please God. "Man of holiness" is His name [see Moses 6:57], and He delights in the efforts of His children to be pure.[28]

If we do not have revelation, it is because we do not live as we should live, because we do not magnify our [callings in the] priesthood as we ought to; if we did we would not be without revelation, none would be barren or unfruitful.[29]

Let us lay aside all evil practices, all those habits which will prevent our communing with God. . . . If these little things have a tendency to hinder our enjoyments and debase us in the eyes of the Lord, we ought to lay them aside and manifest a determination to do the will of our Father in Heaven, and to accomplish that work which is laid upon us to perform. . . . When I do anything that prevents me from enjoying the Spirit of the Lord, as soon as I ascertain that, I immediately throw it aside.[30]

We are trying to abide the celestial law of God; we are preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ and endeavoring to carry out its principles. Now the question is, will it pay us to do so? Will it pay us to be faithful? Will it pay us to pass through whatever trials or afflictions, or persecutions, or even death itself, for the kingdom of God, for salvation and eternal life, the greatest of all gifts which God can bestow on the children of men? I say it will, and I hope that the Latter-day Saints, that all men in authority—that we will all be faithful before the Lord, that we will remember our prayers, labor for the Holy Spirit, labor to know the mind and will of God, that we may know the path to walk in, that we may

obtain the Spirit of the Lord and the Holy Ghost, and that we may overcome the world and magnify our calling till we get through this probation.[31]

Suggestions for Study and Teaching

Consider these ideas as you study the chapter or as you prepare to teach. For additional help, see pages v–ix.

- What do you learn from the stories on pages 46–47?
- As you have studied this chapter, what have you learned about the Holy Ghost and His roles?
- Review the second full paragraph on page 49. Why might we consider the gift of the Holy Ghost to be "the greatest gift" we can receive in mortality? Review the final paragraph in the chapter, on pages 54–55. How does the gift of the Holy Ghost prepare us for eternal life, "the greatest of all gifts"?
- How can President Woodruff's teachings help us recognize the promptings of the Holy Ghost? (See pages 47, 50; see also D&C 6:15, 22–23; 11:12–14.) Why is it important to remember that the Holy Ghost usually communicates in a "still, small voice"?
- Read the paragraph that begins at the bottom of page 50. What are some of the "true riches" that we receive when we have the Holy Ghost with us? (See pages 50–53.)
- Think of an experience when you were guided by the Holy Ghost. In what ways have you been blessed through the companionship of the Holy Ghost?
- Review the final section of the chapter (pages 53–55). Why must we labor constantly in order to receive the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost? What can prevent us from feeling the influence of the Holy Ghost? What can help us feel the influence of the Holy Ghost?

Related Scriptures: John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13; 1 Corinthians 2:9–14; 1 Nephi 10:17–19; 2 Nephi 32:1–5; Moroni 10:5; D&C 8:2–3; 14:7

Notes

1. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* sel. G. Homer Durham (1946), 290; see also page 289.
2. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine,* 5th ed. (1939), 171.
3. *Deseret Weekly,* September 5, 1891, 323.
4. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 61.
5. *Deseret Weekly,* September 21, 1889, 393.
6. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* September 7, 1880, 1.
7. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* July 30, 1878, 1.
8. *Deseret News,* June 26, 1861, 130.
9. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* May 2, 1876, 4.
10. *Deseret Weekly,* April 6, 1889, 451.
11. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 53.
12. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 54.
13. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 45–46.
14. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 45.
15. Journal of Wilford Woodruff, January 20, 1872, Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
16. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 5.
17. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* July 20, 1875, 1.
18. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 7–8.
19. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 293–94.
20. *Deseret Weekly,* November 7, 1896, 643.
21. *Deseret News,* March 4, 1857, 411.
22. In Conference Report, April 1898, 31.
23. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* March 4, 1873, 3.
24. *Deseret News,* December 26, 1860, 338.
25. *Deseret Weekly,* March 6, 1897, 371.
26. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* July 20, 1875, 1.
27. *Contributor,* August 1895, 637.
28. "Epistle," *Woman's Exponent,* April 15, 1888, 174; from a letter written by President Woodruff in behalf of the Quorum of the Twelve.
29. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 51.
30. *Deseret News,* February 26, 1862, 274.
31. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 129.

CHAPTER 6

Teaching and Learning by the Spirit

We need the guidance of the Holy Ghost as we learn the gospel and as we teach it to others.

From the Life of Wilford Woodruff

As Elder Wilford Woodruff prepared for a conference in October 1855, he prayed for guidance, asking what he and his brethren should teach the people. In answer to his prayer, he received the following revelation: "Let my servants obtain the Holy Ghost and keep my Spirit with them, and that will instruct them what to teach the people continually; and instruct the people to keep my Spirit with them, and they will be enabled to understand the word of the Lord when it is taught them."[1]

With an abiding testimony of this principle, President Woodruff frequently began his conference addresses by expressing a desire to teach by the power of the Holy Ghost. In addition, he often reminded the Saints of their duty to listen and learn by that same power. He once said, "We are all of us dependent upon the Spirit of the Lord, upon revelation, upon inspiration, upon the Holy Ghost, in order to be qualified to teach the people before whom we are called to speak, and if the Lord does not give me the Holy Spirit this afternoon, I promise you all [that] you will not get much out of Brother Woodruff."[2]

Teachings of Wilford Woodruff

We must teach the gospel only as we are inspired by the Holy Ghost.

I am not capable, nor is any man capable of teaching the children of men and edifying them in the Gospel of Jesus Christ

As gospel teachers, we must seek the Spirit so we can follow Jesus's example. When we meet to learn the gospel, we should be attentive and faithful, as Mary was when she "sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word" (see Luke 10:38–42).

without the Holy Spirit, without revelation, without the inspiration of Almighty God. Therefore, I want the faith of the Latter-day Saints, and also their prayers. I need the Spirit of God to assist me, as does every man who attempts to teach the people the things of the kingdom of heaven.[3]

My faith is that no man, in this or any other generation, is able to teach and edify the inhabitants of the earth without the inspiration of the Spirit of God. As a people we have been placed in positions . . . which have taught, in all our administrations and labors, the necessity of acknowledging the hand of God in all things. We feel this necessity to-day. I know that I am not qualified to teach either the Latter-day Saints or the world without the Spirit of God. I desire this . . . and also your faith and prayers, that my mind may be led in a channel which may be beneficial to you. In my public teaching I never permit my mind to follow in any channel except that which the Spirit dictates to me, and this is the position we all occupy when we meet with the Saints, or when we go forth to preach the gospel.[4]

The Lord said, speaking through Joseph Smith: "And whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost, shall be scripture, shall be the will of the Lord, shall be the mind of the Lord, shall be the word of the Lord, shall be the voice of the Lord, and the power of God unto salvation." [D&C 68:4.] Why is this? Because the Holy Ghost is one of the Godhead, and consequently when a man speaks by the Holy Ghost, it is the word of the Lord. We should seek to obtain this Spirit that it may be with us all the time and become a principle of revelation to us.[5]

The minds of this people need feeding continually, and we all have to depend upon the Holy Spirit and the Lord to feed our minds from that inexhaustible fountain of intelligence which comes from God, for we cannot obtain food from any other source to feed the immortal mind of man.[6]

Man possesses a spirit that must endure forever, a spirit that comes from God, and inasmuch as he is not fed from that same source or power that created him he is not and cannot be satisfied.[7]

If we do not have the Holy Ghost we have no business to teach.[8]

As we teach the gospel, we must remember that the plainest and most simple truths are the most edifying.

The revelations of Jesus Christ teach us that the Savior was born in the flesh, and the Father said that he did not give him a fulness at first but continued from grace to grace until he had received a fulness and was called the Son of God because he did not receive a fulness at first [see D&C 93:12–14]; we in like manner should seek with all our souls to grow in grace, light and truth, that in due time we may receive a fulness [see D&C 93:20].

The Lord has a great many principles in store for us, and the greatest principles which he has for us are the most simple and plain. The first principles of the gospel which lead us unto eternal life are the simplest and yet none are more glorious or important unto us. Men may labor to make a great display of talent, learning and knowledge either in printing or preaching, they may try to preach the mysteries and to present something strange, great and wonderful, and they may labor for this with all their might, in the spirit and strength of man without the aid of the Holy Spirit of God and yet the people are not edified and their preaching will not give much satisfaction. It is the plainest and the most simple things that edify us the most, if taught by the Spirit of God, and there is nothing more important or beneficial unto us. If we have that Spirit dwelling with us, if it abides with us continually, enlightening our minds by day and by night—we are in the safe path.[9]

I wish to say that in my acquaintance in this Church, I have seen men, from time to time rise up and try to be servants of God. They try to explain things they know nothing about, to make themselves appear clever. There is a great deal of this kind of thing in this age. There was one of the leading Elders of the Church who went before the people and undertook to preach certain principles. Joseph heard of it and desired him to present the doctrine to him in writing. He wrote it, and when he completed it read it to the Prophet. He asked Joseph what he thought of it. "Why," said Joseph, "it is a beautiful system, I have but one fault to find with it—" "What is that, Brother Joseph?"

Joseph said—"It is not true." So I say, every little while someone, thinking he is smart, tries to teach something that is not in the Doctrine and Covenants and Church works, and which is not true. . . .

. . . Preach the truth as you understand it. Do not speculate on things you know nothing about, for it will benefit no one. If you listen to false doctrine you will be led away by false spirits. Remember and observe this, and you will be all right. Keep in the paths of truth, and all will be well with you.[10]

When we meet to learn the gospel, we need the Spirit as much as the teacher does.

I trust that the Spirit of God may be with not only those who speak and teach . . . , but with those also who sit and hear.[11]

We all need the inspiration of the Almighty . . . , whether we preach or listen.[12]

I say to my brethren and sisters, let us try and prepare our minds and hearts by prayer before the Lord, that we may obtain enough of the light of the Spirit and of the influence of the Holy Ghost, to see and be preserved in the path of life, and when we receive the teachings and counsels of the servants of God, that we may be disposed to treasure them up in our hearts and practice them in our lives.[13]

If we have that portion of the Spirit of God which it is our privilege to enjoy, and magnify our calling, we shall have that testimony we ought to have within us when any new doctrine is brought forth, or old doctrine more fully explained. In this way we shall profit by the preaching of our brethren, and be able to treasure up the principles of eternal life.[14]

I hope and pray that while we assemble together we may enjoy the Spirit of God and our hearts be united together as the heart of one man; that our prayers may be drawn out before the Lord, that His blessings may be with us and that those who speak to us may do so by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost and the power of God.[15]

We should give [the teacher] our attention, prayers and faith, and if we do this we shall receive out of the abundance of his heart those things which will benefit us.[16]

When any of the Presidency of this Church, or of the Quorum of the Twelve, or any of the Elders rise . . . to speak, this people look unto them, and expect they will enjoy the Holy Spirit sufficiently to say something that will edify them; the people almost unanimously look for this. I will say on the other hand that the Presidency, the Twelve, and the Elders . . . expect that the people will [also] have the Spirit of the Lord that they may come to understanding, and this is just as much required, that they may comprehend what is said unto them as much as it is required of the brethren who speak to teach doctrine, principle, truth and the revelations of Jesus Christ.

When the minds of the people are quickened, and enlightened by the power of God and the gift of the Holy Ghost that they can appreciate and prize the principles of eternal truth and the revelations which God has given . . . then they are prepared to be benefited by those blessings which are poured out upon them. Any of you that have experienced this blessing, and I presume that all have at times, have been astonished at certain periods of their lives that there has been such a difference in their minds. I know this is the case with myself and I presume it is with others.

There [have] been times that the vision of my mind has been opened to comprehend the word of God and the teachings of his servants.—The vision of my mind has been open and quickened by the power of God and the gift of the Holy Ghost. So that when I have sat here and heard the Presidency, and the servants of God teach the principle of righteousness, and the word of God unto us, I have felt the force, the power and the importance of these eternal truths which they have presented unto our minds, while at other times the same truths may have been taught, but they have passed off without making the same impression upon my mind.

"We all need the inspiration of the Almighty . . . , whether we preach or listen."

. . . I consider it important that we labor to obtain that Spirit, to have it increased upon us and carry it with us that when we hear teaching our minds may be prepared to receive it. . . .

I will now say that inasmuch as many of us have received the gospel and gathered with the Saints of God, it is important that we labor to-day, that we live under the influence of that Spirit that it may continue to increase and to govern us in our acts among the children of men.—Now when a man has the Holy Spirit and hears the plain, simple truths of salvation they appear more valuable than all else besides, and he is ready to sacrifice everything of a temporal nature to secure to himself salvation, but when people's minds become darkened, they lose the Holy Spirit and the value of that gospel, and they do not realize the privilege and the honor of being associated with the Saints of God . . . , neither do they maintain their allegiance to their Heavenly Father, and honor his name upon the earth or prize their associations with those that bear the holy priesthood, and therefore they go into darkness. . . . We marvel and wonder when we are enlightened by

the Spirit of God and the revelations which he has given unto us, and when we are aroused to a sense of the importance of these things we then see the effect and the bearing they will have upon us, not only the fitting of our minds to go into the world of spirits, but to prepare us to meet with our Father in Heaven.[17]

Suggestions for Study and Teaching

Consider these ideas as you study the chapter or as you prepare to teach. For additional help, see pages v–ix.

- Read President Woodruff's statements in the first two paragraphs of this chapter (page 57). What insights do these statements provide about him? What insights do they provide about teaching and learning?
- What do you learn from President Woodruff's words about teaching by the power of the Spirit? (See pages 57, 59; see also 2 Nephi 33:1–2.) How can we prepare to receive the guidance of the Holy Ghost when we teach?
- What experiences have you had with teaching and learning by the Spirit?
- Review the section that begins on page 60. Why is it dangerous to speculate about things we do not understand? Why are we edified most by plain and simple truths?
- What are some duties of learners? (See pages 61–64.) How can we get the greatest benefit from a gospel lesson or sermon? Ponder or discuss ways you can prepare to be taught by the Spirit.
- Review the first paragraph on page 62. In your experiences with teaching the gospel, how have you benefited from the "attention, prayers and faith" of those you have taught?
- How can the principles in this chapter help us in our study of this book? (See also pages v–ix.) How do these principles apply as we learn and teach the gospel in our homes?

Related Scriptures: Hebrews 4:2; 2 Peter 1:21; 2 Nephi 31:3; Alma 17:2–3; D&C 11:18–21; 42:14; 50:13–22; 52:9; 100:5–8

Notes

1. Journal of Wilford Woodruff, October 19, 1855, Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
2. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* September 11, 1883, 1.
3. *Millennial Star,* November 21, 1895, 737–38.
4. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* February 4, 1873, 2.
5. *Deseret Weekly,* August 17, 1889, 226.
6. *Deseret News,* March 4, 1857, 410.
7. *Deseret News,* December 26, 1860, 338.
8. *Deseret Weekly,* April 19, 1890, 560.
9. *Deseret News,* April 1, 1857, 27.
10. *Millennial Star,* May 26, 1890, 324.
11. In Conference Report, April 1898, 2.
12. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* March 26, 1878, 1.
13. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* May 20, 1873, 1.
14. *Deseret News,* July 30, 1862, 33.
15. *Deseret Weekly,* April 13, 1895, 513.
16. *Deseret News,* April 1, 1857, 27.
17. *Deseret News,* April 1, 1857, 27.

"The Lamb of God has . . . performed that for man which [man] could not accomplish for himself."

The Atonement of Jesus Christ

The Atonement of Jesus Christ is the fundamental principle of salvation and the mainspring of hope for all mankind.

From the Life of Wilford Woodruff

When Elder Wilford Woodruff began his ministry as an Apostle, he and his brethren labored in the United States and England among people who revered Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the Redeemer of mankind. Knowing that their hearers already had a fundamental belief in the Atonement of Jesus Christ, they focused their teaching on subjects such as the calling of the Prophet Joseph Smith, the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, and the restoration of the priesthood.[1] However, when people challenged the doctrine of the Atonement, Elder Woodruff refuted their claims with power and clarity. He testified that "the object of Christ's mission to the earth was to offer himself as a sacrifice to redeem mankind from eternal death."[2]

In 1845 a Church member in the British Isles published a pamphlet attempting to prove that it was not necessary for Jesus Christ to suffer and die for the redemption of mankind. Elder Woodruff, who was then serving as the presiding Church authority in the British Isles, publicly refuted this claim in an article titled "Rationality of the Atonement." In publishing the article, he hoped to ensure "that [the Church's] views on the subject may be rightly understood by all, and that the Saints of God may be prepared to withstand the assaults of the grand enemy of man's salvation, as well as to set the matter for ever at rest in the minds of those who believe in the revelations of God."[3] His words, both in condemnation of the false teaching

and in praise of the Savior, revealed his abiding love for the Lord and his deep gratitude for the plan of redemption.

He expressed sorrow that the man who had written the pamphlet "should have his mind so much overcome by the powers of darkness, as to stray so widely from the order and counsel of the kingdom of God." He observed, "It would be far better for a man to be entirely divested of talents, than to use them in endeavouring to prove the inefficacy of the atonement of Christ, and striking at the fundamental principle of salvation as he has done."[4]

Elder Woodruff dedicated most of his article to quotations from the scriptures, showing a "flood of testimony" from ancient prophets and from the Lord Himself.[5] He said that the doctrine of the Atonement was "not only a theme on which the ancient prophets and servants of God delighted to dwell, but the main spring of all their hopes, and the source from which they drew strength and support."[6]

Teachings of Wilford Woodruff

In accordance with His Father's will, Jesus Christ came to earth to redeem us from the effects of the Fall.

I believe that the Almighty knew what He was going to do with this world before He made it. He knew what kind of spirits were going to occupy it, and what kind of work would have to be performed in order to save His sons and daughters who should come upon the earth. And in reading the history of the dealings of God with men, from the creation of the world to this dispensation, we see the Father has labored to bless His sons and daughters. He gave His only begotten Son to die to redeem the world—a sacrifice such as only God himself could give. And in these last days He has commenced the organization of the great and last dispensation—the greatest of all dispensations.[7]

We are informed by the Saviour himself, what object his Father had in view in his coming into the world. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life: for

God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." [John 3:16–17.]

The revelations that God has given to man, abundantly prove that God and the eternal worlds are governed by a celestial law; and in order that man might endure the same glory with himself, it was requisite that he should keep the same law, "that which is governed by law is also preserved by law, and perfected and sanctified by the same." [D&C 88:34.] But man, having transgressed the law of God, justly entailed upon himself the curse of disobedience, from which he was incapable of redeeming himself, neither could any less than an infinite sacrifice atone for his fall.

The effect of his disobedience, it is well known, was death, and this curse has been hereditary to all the posterity of Adam. Let it be borne in mind that man, while submitting to this punishment, does so without any inherent power, independently, in himself to accomplish his resurrection and restoration to the presence of God and his glory. He is now under the jurisdiction and within the dominion of death, and to achieve a victory over death it was necessary that some one more holy and pure than the being who had become the transgressor should enter into his dominion, in order that he might thereby have that dominion destroyed; and unless this be done, the control which death will hold over mankind must be eternal. It will require little argument to prove that the Son of God was, in every way, competent to perform this task, being pure, holy, and unspotted; and that he was the individual appointed to accomplish this, is fully substantiated by the testimony of John concerning him—"Behold, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world" [see John 1:29]—that "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." [1 Corinthians 15:22.] . . .

. . . It [has] been fully established beyond all controversy, from the flood of testimony . . . from the revelations of God, given in various dispensations and ages of the world, and in different parts of the globe, that the object of Christ's mission to the earth was to offer himself as a sacrifice to redeem mankind

"The object of Christ's mission to the earth was to offer himself as a sacrifice to redeem mankind from eternal death."

from eternal death, and that it was perfectly in accordance with the will of the Father that such a sacrifice should be made. He acted strictly in obedience to his Father's will in all things from the beginning, and drank of the bitter cup given him. Herein is brought to light, glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life, with that charity which is greater than faith or hope, for the Lamb of God has thereby performed that for man which [man] could not accomplish for himself.[8]

We can receive the gift of exaltation only through the Atonement of Jesus Christ and our obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel.

We should, as a people, be awake to the fact that our Father in Heaven has done all he could for the salvation of the human family. He has made known the laws necessary for the exaltation and glory of man and has done all that can be done by law. . . . Jesus has died to redeem all men; but in order that they may be benefitted by His death, and that His blood may cleanse them from all actual sin committed in the flesh, they must abide the

law of the gospel. The sins done through Adam we have been redeemed from by the blood of Christ; and in order to obtain salvation we must be obedient and faithful to the precepts of the gospel.[9]

If I ever obtain a full salvation it will be by my keeping the laws of God.[10]

Justice in the first place has had its claim, and the words of God have been verified—"In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." [See Genesis 2:17.] So, on the other hand, mercy has been extended, and the love of God manifested in breaking the bands of death, whereby the spirits and bodies of men are re-united. The spirits of the just receive an exaltation in the presence of God and the Lamb—in the same tabernacles [physical bodies] in which they toiled, laboured, and suffered while on earth, without which union it is impossible for the souls of men to receive a fulness of glory. There is a glory connected with this, that will be an eternal source of joy to every citizen of the celestial kingdom. The spirits, on the other hand, of those who reject the Gospel of Christ and slight his proffered mercies, must return to their bodies in the last resurrection to receive a fulness of their punishment in the same tabernacles in which they dwelt while warring against God. We would hereby warn all men who may hear the sound of these words, to repent of their sins and obey the Gospel of the Son of God.[11]

What is the gospel as taught by Jesus himself? The very first principle was faith in the Messiah; this was the first principle ever taught to man. When Adam, after being driven from the garden of Eden, went to Adam-ondi-Ahman to offer sacrifice, the angel of the Lord asked him why he did so. Adam replied that he did not know, but the Lord had commanded him to do it. He was then told that the blood of bulls and goats, of rams and lambs should be spilt upon the altar as a type of the great and last sacrifice which should be offered up for the sins of the world. [See Moses 5:4–7.] The first principle, then, ever taught to Father Adam was faith in the Messiah, who was to come in the meridian of time to lay down his life for the redemption of man. The second principle was repentance. And what is repentance? The

forsaking of sin. The man who repents, if he be a swearer, swears no more; or a thief, steals no more; he turns away from all former sins and commits them no more. It is not repentance to say, I repent today, and then steal tomorrow; that is the repentance of the world, which is displeasing in the sight of God. Repentance is the second principle.

I have heard many men say no ordinances are necessary, that belief only in the Lord Jesus Christ is necessary to be saved. I have not learned that myself from any revelation of God to man, either ancient or modern. But on the contrary, faith in Christ, repentance, and baptism for the remission of sins were taught by patriarchs and prophets and by Jesus Christ and His apostles. Baptism for the remission of sins is an ordinance of the gospel. Says one, baptism is not essential to salvation. Jesus not only taught it, but rendered obedience himself to that requirement, not that he was baptized for the remission of sins—but, as he said, "to fulfil all righteousness," thus in this, as in all other respects giving the example for all who follow [see Matthew 3:15]. When these principles of the gospel are complied with, a man is then a fit subject to receive the Holy Ghost; and this holy gift is bestowed today as it was anciently, by the laying on of hands by men possessing the authority to administer in the ordinances of the gospel. These are the first principles of the gospel which we Latter-day Saints believe in and teach to our fellow men.[12]

When men are called upon to repent of their sins, the call has reference to their own individual sins, not to Adam's transgressions. What is called the original sin was atoned for through the death of Christ irrespective of any action on the part of man; also man's individual sin was atoned for by the same sacrifice, but on condition of his obedience to the gospel plan of salvation when proclaimed in his hearing.[13]

All the children of men who [have arrived] at the years of accountability are guilty of sin, all being inclined to do evil as the sparks are to fly upwards. "What shall we do to be saved" was the cry of the people who heard the preaching of Peter on the day of Pentecost [see Acts 2:37], and the same may be said to be applicable to all men in every generation. The answer would be, obey

"There is no being that has power to save the souls of men and give them eternal life, except the Lord Jesus Christ, under the command of His Father."

the law of the Gospel. This is the safe means given for the salvation of the human family.[14]

I feel as though we as a people ought to rejoice; and we should prize these gifts and blessings God has put into our hands, and we should seek to magnify our callings, and as a people fulfill the expectation of our Father in Heaven, and the expectation of those who have gone before us. . . .

. . . The Gospel of Christ is one of the greatest blessings that can be bestowed upon man. Eternal life, the Lord says, is the greatest gift of God [see D&C 14:7]. We can obtain that, only through obedience to this Gospel. This, brethren and sisters, is our blessing.[15]

My earnest prayer is that the blessings of our God may be over us in time, that when we get through and shall pass behind the veil, we shall have done all that was required of us, and be prepared to dwell with the sanctified and the just made perfect through the blood of the Lamb.[16]

Through the merits of the Atonement, we can be perfected in Christ.

There is no being that has power to save the souls of men and give them eternal life, except the Lord Jesus Christ, under the command of His Father.[17]

It should be our chief study to treasure up the words of life that we may grow in grace and advance in the knowledge of God and become perfected in Christ Jesus, that we may receive a fullness and become heirs of God and joint heirs of Jesus Christ. [See Romans 8:16–17.][18]

Brethren and sisters, are we not the sons and daughters of God, and when he shall appear, if we are faithful, shall we not be like him? [See 1 John 3:2.] Yes; and when the glorious day arrives we shall once more have the privilege of standing upon this earth and meeting in joy and thanksgiving . . . thousands of others who have washed their robes white in the blood of the Lamb, and who, through the merits of His atonement, are anointed kings and priests unto God, and with Him reign exalted in His kingdom. May we all be found worthy of this reward; and now, while we travel through this world of change and sorrow, may we take pattern by the lives of the worthy . . . and, above all, follow in the steps of the great Exemplar of all righteousness, our Lord Jesus Christ, whose grace be ever with you all.[19]

Suggestions for Study and Teaching

Consider these ideas as you study the chapter or as you prepare to teach. For additional help, see pages v–ix.

- What does the story on pages 67–68 reveal about President Woodruff's feelings toward Jesus Christ?

- Review the teachings on pages 68–70. What did President Woodruff teach about our need for the Savior's Atonement?
- Scan the chapter and study some of the scriptures listed at the bottom of this page. As you do so, look for phrases describing what Jesus Christ endured to save us all from physical death and to offer us salvation from our sins. How do you feel as you ponder what the Savior has done for you?
- What might you say to someone who claims that "no ordinances are necessary, that belief only in the Lord Jesus Christ is necessary to be saved"? (See pages 70–74.)
- Read the final section of this chapter (page 74), giving special attention to the phrase "the merits of His atonement." Then study 2 Nephi 2:6–8 and Alma 22:14. How do these teachings enhance your understanding of the Atonement?
- How has your testimony of the Savior's Atonement influenced your life?

Related Scriptures: In the article mentioned on pages 67–68, Elder Woodruff quoted or referred to the following scripture passages about the Atonement of Jesus Christ: Job 19:25; Matthew 26:28; 27:52; John 1:29; 3:16–17; Acts 2:23; 4:12; 20:28; Romans 3:24–25; 1 Corinthians 15:22; Galatians 3:17–24; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:19–20; Hebrews 9:28; 10:7–10, 29; 11:26, 35; 1 Peter 1:18–21; 1 John 2:2; Revelation 1:5; 5:9–10; 13:8; 1 Nephi 10:5–6; 11:32–33; 2 Nephi 2:26; 9:3–14; 26:23–24; Jacob 6:8–9; Mosiah 3:11, 16–18; 15:19–20; 18:2; Alma 7:12; 11:42; 21:9; 34:8–15; 42:13–17; 3 Nephi 11:9–11; 27:14; Mormon 9:13; Ether 3:14; Moroni 10:33; D&C 18:10–11; 19:16–19; 35:2; 38:4; 45:3–4; 88:34

Notes

1. See Dallin H. Oaks, in Conference Report, October 1990, 38; or *Ensign,* November 1990, 31.
2. "Rationality of the Atonement," *Millennial Star,* October 1, 1845, 118.
3. *Millennial Star,* October 1, 1845, 113.
4. *Millennial Star,* October 1, 1845, 113.
5. *Millennial Star,* October 1, 1845, 118.
6. *Millennial Star,* October 1, 1845, 113–14.
7. *Deseret Weekly,* August 17, 1889, 225.
8. *Millennial Star,* October 1, 1845, 114–15, 118.
9. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* August 11, 1868, 2.

10. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* sel. G. Homer Durham (1946), 23.
11. *Millennial Star,* October 1, 1845, 118–19.
12. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 18–19.
13. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 3–4.
14. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* June 13, 1882, 1.
15. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* August 11, 1868, 2.
16. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* July 26, 1881, 1.
17. *Deseret Semi-Weekly News,* February 15, 1898, 7.
18. *Deseret News,* April 1, 1857, 27.
19. *Millennial Star,* July 9, 1888, 436–37.

CHAPTER 8

Understanding Death and Resurrection

When loved ones die and when we contemplate our own mortality, we can find comfort and assurance in the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and in the eternal reality of the resurrection.

From the Life of Wilford Woodruff

In early August 1839, Elder Wilford Woodruff left his home in Montrose, Iowa, obeying the Lord's call to serve a mission in the British Isles. He bade farewell to his wife, Phoebe, and his only child, one-year-old Sarah Emma. At the time, Phoebe was pregnant with Wilford Jr., who would be born March 22, 1840.

A few months after leaving Montrose, Elder Woodruff was in the eastern United States, preaching the gospel and preparing for the journey to Great Britain. During this stay he wrote in his journal of three separate dreams in which he saw his wife. After the first dream he wrote the following entry in his journal: "I saw Mrs. Woodruff in deep affliction in a dream at Montrose. I did not see Sarah Emma."[1] His report of the second dream was also short: "I had a dream during the night and had an interview with Mrs. Woodruff but did not see Sarah Emma."[2] The third dream was more detailed: "We rejoiced much at having an interview with each other, yet our embraces were mixed with sorrow, for after conversing a while about her domestic affairs, I asked where Sarah Emma was. . . . She said, weeping, . . . 'She is dead.' We sorrowed a moment, and I awoke. . . . Is this dream true? Time must determine."[3]

On July 14, 1840, Elder Woodruff, now in Great Britain, wrote a journal entry commemorating an important day for his family:

President Woodruff testified that the Savior was "the first fruit of the resurrection."

"Sarah Emma is two years old this day. May the Lord preserve my wife and children from sickness and death until my return." Always one to acknowledge the Lord's will, he added, "O Lord, I commit them into thy hands; feed, clothe, and comfort them, and thine shall be the glory."[4] Three days later, little Sarah Emma died.

Elder Woodruff did not learn of his daughter's death until October 22, 1840, when he read the news in a letter sent to one of his brethren in the Quorum of the Twelve.[5] Four days later he finally received the news from Phoebe, in a letter dated July 18. He copied part of her letter in his journal:

"My dear Wilford, what will be your feelings when I say that yesterday I was called to witness the departure of our little Sarah Emma from this world? Yes, she is gone. The relentless hand of death has snatched her from my embrace. . . . When looking on her, I have often thought how I should feel to part with her. I thought I could not live without her, especially in the absence of my companion. But she has gone. The Lord hath taken her home to Himself for some wise purpose.

"It is a trial to me, but the Lord hath stood by me in a wonderful manner. I can see and feel that He has taken her home and will take better care of her than I possibly could for a little while until I shall go and meet her. Yes, Wilford, we have one little angel in heaven, and I think it likely her spirit has visited you before this time.

"It is hard living without her. . . . She left a kiss for her papa with me just before she died. . . . The elders laid hands upon her and anointed her a number of times, but the next day her spirit took its flight from this to another world without a groan.

"Today Wilford [Jr.] and I, with quite a number of friends accompanying us, came over to Commerce, [Illinois,] to pay our last respects to our little darling in seeing her decently buried. She had no relative to follow her to the grave or to shed a tear for her but her ma and little Wilford. . . . I have just been to take a pleasing, melancholy walk to Sarah's grave. She lies alone in peace. I can say that the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord [see Job 1:21]."[6]

Other than copying Phoebe's letter, Elder Woodruff wrote very little about his daughter's passing. He merely said that Sarah Emma had been "taken from time" and that she was "gone to be seen no more in this life."[7]

In his 91 years, Wilford Woodruff endured the deaths of many loved ones, including a number of family members and all the Apostles with whom he served under the direction of the Prophet Joseph Smith. At these solemn times, he found comfort in his testimony of the restored gospel and in the "eternal reality" of the resurrection.[8] He often taught that the death of a righteous Latter-day Saint is both a trying time and a time to rejoice. In fact, toward the end of his life he wrote the following instructions concerning his own funeral: "I do not wish my family or friends to wear any badge of mourning for me at my funeral or afterwards, for if I am true and faithful unto death there will be no necessity for anyone to mourn for me."[9]

Teachings of Wilford Woodruff

At death each person's spirit enters the spirit world, where the righteous rejoice together and continue in the Lord's work.

A great many [people] believe when a man dies that is the end of him, that there is no hereafter. Can any sensible man believe that the God of heaven has created two or three hundred thousand million spirits, and given them tabernacles [physical bodies], merely to come and live upon the earth and then to pass away into oblivion or to be annihilated? It seems to me that no reflecting man can entertain such belief. It is contrary to common sense and to serious reflection.[10]

When mourning the loss of our departed friends, I cannot help but think that in every death there is a birth; the spirit leaves the body dead to us, and passes to the other side of the veil alive to that great and noble company that are also working for the accomplishment of the purposes of God, in the redemption and salvation of a fallen world.[11]

There is rejoicing when the spirit of a Saint of the Living God enters into the spirit world and meets with the Saints who have gone before.[12]

Some labor this side of the veil, others on the other side of the veil. If we tarry here we expect to labor in the cause of salvation, and if we go hence we expect to continue our work until the coming of the Son of Man.[13]

Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, all persons will be resurrected, their spirits reuniting with their immortal bodies.

We acknowledge that through Adam all have died, that death through the fall must pass upon the whole human family, also upon the beasts of the field, the fishes of the sea and the fowls of the air and all the works of God, as far as this earth is concerned. It is a law that is unchangeable and irrevocable. . . . The Savior himself tasted of death; He died to redeem the world; His body was laid in the tomb, but it did not see corruption; and after three days it arose from the grave and put on immortality. He was the first fruit of the resurrection.[14]

I am satisfied, always have been, in regard to the resurrection. I rejoice in it. The way was opened unto us by the blood of the Son of God.[15]

When the resurrection comes, we shall come forth clothed with immortal bodies; and the persecutions, suffering, sorrow, pain and death, incident to mortality, will be done away forever.[16]

This doctrine of the resurrection of the dead is most glorious. It is comforting, at least to my spirit, to think, that, in the morning of the resurrection, my spirit will have the privilege of dwelling in the very same body that it occupied here. As elders of Israel we have travelled a great many thousand miles in weariness and fatigue, laboring to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to the children of men. I would be very glad to have the same body in the resurrection with which I waded swamps, swam rivers and travelled and labored to build up the kingdom of God here on the earth.[17]

"Just as soon as we obtain the gospel and learn the principle of the resurrection the gloom, sorrow and suffering occasioned by death are, in a great measure, taken away."

The gospel provides comfort when loved ones die.

Without the gospel of Christ the separation by death is one of the most gloomy subjects it is possible to contemplate; but just as soon as we obtain the gospel and learn the principle of the resurrection the gloom, sorrow and suffering occasioned by death are, in a great measure, taken away. I have often thought that, to see a dead body, and to see that body laid in the grave and covered with earth, is one of the most gloomy things on earth; without the gospel it is like taking a leap in the dark. But as quick as we obtain the gospel, as soon as the spirit of man is enlightened by the inspiration of the Almighty, he can exclaim with one of old—"Oh grave, where is thy victory, Oh death, where is thy sting? The sting of death is sin, and the gift of God is eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ." [See 1 Corinthians 15:55–57.] The resurrection of the dead presents itself before the enlightened mind of man, and he has a foundation for his spirit to rest upon. That is the position of the Latter-day Saints to-day. We do know for ourselves, we are not

in the dark with regard to this matter; God has revealed it to us and we do understand the principle of the resurrection of the dead, and that the gospel brings life and immortality to light [see 2 Timothy 1:10].[18]

It is hard, of course, to part with our friends. . . . It is natural for us to give expression to our feelings in tears in laying away the bodies of our beloved friends, and there is a degree to which we may go which is proper and right; but there are extremes which are often indulged in, which is neither proper nor right for Latter-day Saints to copy after.[19]

For some cause or reason unbeknown to me, I have lived to attend the funerals and follow to the grave a great share of the Prophets and Apostles and many of the Saints who have labored in this Church in their day and generation. . . . I have never felt to mourn in my spirit to follow any Prophet, any Apostle, any Saint of the living God to the grave who has been true and faithful to God, who has been true and faithful to His covenants, who has received the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the ordinances thereof, and the holy Priesthood. Such men and women have filled their mission here upon earth with honor, with labor, with love, until they have been called home. They have died in the faith, and they will receive a crown of glory.

Those have been my feelings in the death of President [Brigham] Young, Brother [Heber C.] Kimball, Brother [John] Taylor, the Twelve Apostles, and all men who have received the Gospel of Christ and been true and faithful in that mission. There is an eternal reality—which the whole world will find out—in life. There is an eternal reality in death. There is an eternal reality in the resurrection, and in the future judgments, and in God's dealing with all men in the future according to the deeds done in the body; and when a man or a woman who has entered into covenant with the Lord, who has received the Gospel and the ordinances thereof, and been true and faithful in his or her day and generation, has been called home into the spirit world, where is the man who comprehends these principles that can mourn for that brother or sister?[20]

Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, all children who die before arriving at the years of accountability will inherit celestial glory.

There is no infant or child that has died before arriving at the years of accountability, but what is redeemed, and is therefore entirely beyond the torments of hell. . . . I will defy any man to find in any of the records of divine truth any ordinance instituted for the salvation of little innocent children; it would be unnecessary on the face of it, and the only thing that can be found is where Jesus took the little ones in his arms and blessed them, which is and would be perfectly right to do according to the order of God. But the sprinkling of infants or the doctrine that infants go to hell under any circumstances, is a doctrine ordained of man and not of God, and is therefore of no avail and entirely wrong and displeasing in the sight of God. So much about the infants. . . . They are redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ.[21]

Children are innocent before the Lord; as to their death and the cause thereof, that is in the hands of God, and we should not complain of the Lord or his dispensations any more than Job did. . . . There is this consolation connected with the matter—they are innocent, they are not in transgression. They have paid the law of death which God passed on Adam and all his posterity; but when their spirits left their bodies and got into the spirit world their trouble and affliction were over. . . . They will come forth out of their graves in the morning of the resurrection, . . . clothed with glory, immortality and eternal life, in eternal beauty and bloom, and they will be given into the hands of their parents, and they will receive them in the family organization of the celestial world, and their parents will have them for ever. They will live as long as their God lives. This, to Latter-day Saints, who believe in the resurrection, should be a source of comfort and consolation.

. . . The question may arise with me and with you—"Why has the Lord taken away my children?" But that is not for me to tell, because I do not know; it is in the hands of the Lord, and it has been so from the creation of the world all the way down. Children are taken away in their infancy, and they go to the spirit world. They come here and fulfil the object of their coming, that

Testifying of the Savior's Atonement, President Wilford Woodruff offered comfort to parents whose little children had died.

is, they tabernacle in the flesh. They come to receive a probation and an inheritance on the earth; they obtain a body, or tabernacle, and that tabernacle will be preserved for them, and in the morning of the resurrection the spirits and bodies will be reunited, and as here we find children of various ages in a family, from the infant at the mother's breast to manhood, so will it be in the family organization in the celestial world. Our children will be restored to us as they are laid down if we, their parents, keep the faith and prove ourselves worthy to obtain eternal life; and if we do not so prove ourselves our children will still be preserved, and will inherit celestial glory. This is my view in regard to all infants who die, whether they are born to Jew or Gentile, righteous or wicked. They come from their eternal father and their eternal mother unto whom they were born in the eternal world, and they will be restored to their eternal parentage; and all parents who have received children here according to the order of God and the holy priesthood, no matter in what age they may have lived, will claim those children in the morning of the resurrection, and they will be given unto them and they will grace their family organizations in the celestial world. . . .

. . . I will say to our mourning friends, your children are taken away and you cannot help it, we cannot any of us help it; there is

no censure to be given to parents when they do the best they can. A mother should not be censured because she cannot save her sick child, and we have to leave these things in the hand of God. It will be but a little time until they will be restored to us. . . .

With regard to the growth, glory or exaltation of children in the life to come God has not revealed anything on that subject to me, either about your children, mine or anybody else's, any further than we know they are saved. And I feel that we have to put our trust in the Lord in these afflictions, we have to lean upon his arm and to look to him for comfort and consolation. We do not mourn under these afflictions as those who have no hope; we do not mourn the loss of our children as though we were never going to see them again, because we know better. The Lord has taught us better, and so has the gospel; the revelations of Jesus Christ have shown us that they will be restored to us in the resurrection of the just. . . .

. . . I pray my Heavenly Father that he will bless Brother and Sister Wheeler [a couple whose four-year-old and six-year-old sons had recently died] in their bereavement, and give them his Holy Spirit, that, when they lie down at night and rise in the morning and miss their children, they may feel to commit themselves into the hands of the Lord, and realize that their separation from their little ones is not for ever, but that in a little time they will be restored to them. This applies to us all in the loss of our children. We lay them away in the grave, but they will come forth in the morning of the resurrection, and if we are faithful to the truth, we shall receive them and rejoice with them.[22]

We should live in such a way that we will be prepared to receive the blessings God has in store for us when we die.

Our future destiny lies on the other side of the veil. When I die I want the privilege of going where God my Heavenly Father is, and where Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, is.[23]

We should try to improve our time, our talents and our opportunities while we are here upon the earth. I realize that this world is not our abiding place. We have an evidence of this every day of our lives. We are called upon to bury our prophets,

apostles, elders, fathers, mothers, wives and children, all of which shows us that we have no lease of life. We should therefore improve our time to-day.[24]

This admonition comes home forcibly to the living, "Be ye also ready." [Matthew 24:44.] And it applies to us all. And it is for us as parents and elders of Israel to labor in the cause of God, while we are permitted to tarry; living up to the light and knowledge that we have been blessed with. For there is a time appointed unto all men; and he takes away many according to the counsels of his own will. He takes whom he will take, and spares whom he will spare for a wise purpose in himself.[25]

When we have passed through the sorrows of mortality and have the joy and glory of the celestial kingdom conferred upon us we shall then know that the afflictions of mortality have prepared us for and enabled us to appreciate the blessings which God has in store for the faithful.[26]

That this people may repent of all their sins and wake up and have power to come before God that their prayers may be heard, be prepared to defend the kingdom and never desert their covenants and their brethren, or betray the gospel, but overcome the world and be prepared to become joint heirs with Christ to the fulness of the first resurrection which is prepared for those who keep the commandments of God, is my prayer.[27]

Suggestions for Study and Teaching

Consider these ideas as you study the chapter or as you prepare to teach. For additional help, see pages v–ix.

- Review the account of Sarah Emma Woodruff's death (pages 77, 79–80). What doctrines comforted and strengthened Elder and Sister Woodruff? What can we learn from this story?
- According to President Woodruff, what experiences can we look forward to in the spirit world? (See pages 80–81.) How does this knowledge help you?
- As you read President Woodruff's counsel about mourning the deaths of loved ones, what principles do you see? (See pages

82–83.) How have you found peace when loved ones have died? How can we help others who mourn in times of death?

- How does the Atonement of Jesus Christ take the sting out of death? (See pages 81–83; see also 1 Corinthians 15:55–57; Mosiah 16:6–9.)
- What do you learn from President Woodruff's teachings about little children who die? (See pages 84–86.)
- Review page 87. Try to recall family members or friends who seemed ready when it was their time to die. What can we learn from these people? According to President Woodruff, what must we do to prepare for life after death? (See pages 86–87.)
- How do President Woodruff's teachings contribute to your understanding of death and resurrection?

Related Scriptures: 1 Corinthians 15; Alma 11:42–45; 28:12; 34:32–41; Moroni 8:12–19; D&C 42:45–47; 76:50–70; 138:57

Notes

1. Journal of Wilford Woodruff, November 8, 1839, Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
2. Journal of Wilford Woodruff, November 11, 1839.
3. Journal of Wilford Woodruff, November 28, 1839.
4. Journal of Wilford Woodruff, July 14, 1840.
5. See Journal of Wilford Woodruff, October 22, 1840.
6. In Journal of Wilford Woodruff, October 26, 1840.
7. Journal of Wilford Woodruff, summary of the year 1840.
8. *Deseret Weekly,* April 4, 1891, 462.
9. In "President Wilford Woodruff," *Millennial Star,* September 22, 1898, 604.
10. *Deseret Weekly,* September 21, 1889, 394.
11. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* sel. G. Homer Durham (1946), 245.
12. *Deseret Weekly,* April 4, 1891, 463.
13. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 246.
14. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 244.
15. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* January 17, 1882, 1.
16. *Deseret Weekly,* February 24, 1894, 288.
17. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* December 28, 1875, 1.
18. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* July 20, 1875, 1.
19. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 247.
20. *Deseret Weekly,* April 4, 1891, 462.
21. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 232–33.
22. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* July 20, 1875, 1.
23. *Deseret Weekly,* April 6, 1889, 451.
24. *Millennial Star,* November 21, 1887, 742.
25. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 246.
26. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* July 20, 1875, 1.
27. *Deseret News,* December 31, 1856, 340.

CHAPTER 9

Proclaiming the Gospel

We should be diligent and faithful in helping others receive the blessings of the restored gospel.

From the Life of Wilford Woodruff

Shortly after Wilford Woodruff was baptized and confirmed a member of the Church, he "had a great desire to preach the Gospel." He recalled: "One Sunday evening I retired into the woods alone, and called upon the Lord in earnest prayer, to open my way to go and preach the Gospel to the inhabitants of the earth. The Spirit of the Lord bore witness that my prayer was heard, and should be answered. I arose from my knees happy, and walked some forty rods [about two hundred meters or two hundred twenty yards], and met Elias Higbee, a High Priest, with whom I had stayed a number of months. As I approached him, he said, 'Brother Wilford, the Spirit of the Lord tells me that you should be ordained, and go on a mission.' I replied, 'I am ready.' "[1]

Under the direction of his bishop, Wilford Woodruff was ordained a priest on November 5, 1834, and called to serve a mission in the southern United States. He served with faith and diligence, beginning a lifetime of missionary service in which he would help thousands embrace the restored gospel. Of him, President Heber J. Grant said, "I believe that no other man who ever walked the face of the earth was a greater converter of souls to the gospel of Jesus Christ."[2]

In January 1840, soon after being ordained an Apostle, Elder Wilford Woodruff arrived in England to serve as a missionary. He began his service in the county of Staffordshire, enjoying considerable success. "There were 40 added to the church by baptism," he reported, "and many new doors opening; and in the midst of the prosperity of the work, as I arose to speak before a

The farm of John Benbow. Through diligent Bible study, John Benbow and his family and friends prepared themselves to embrace the restored gospel.

large congregation in Hanly, on the 1st day of March, the Lord manifested unto me that it would be the last time I should warn that people for many days, and as I arose and informed the people it would be the last time they would hear my voice for many days, they marveled, for they expected, as well as myself, when I entered the house, that I should spend months in their midst; but the ways and thoughts of God are not like our ways and thoughts in every respect."

Elder Woodruff sought the Lord in prayer the next day, asking where he should go. He recounted: "Believing it to be my privilege and duty to know the will of the Lord upon the subject, therefore, I asked my Heavenly Father in the name of Jesus Christ to teach me his will in this thing, and as I asked, the Lord gave, and showed me that it was his will that I should go immediately to the south of England. I conversed with brother William Benbow upon this subject, who had lived in Herefordshire and had friends still residing there, and much wished me to visit that region of country, and [he] generously proffered to accompany me to his brother's house and pay my fare, which I readily accepted."[3]

On March 4, 1840, Elder Woodruff and William Benbow arrived at the home of William's brother John. "In one hour after I arrived at his house," recalled President Woodruff, "I learned why the Lord had sent me there. . . . I found a company of men and women, some six hundred, who had banded together under the name of United Brethren, and were laboring for the ancient order of things. They wanted the Gospel as taught by the prophets and apostles, as I did in my youth."[4]

The Benbow family quickly accepted the message of the Restoration, and William returned to Staffordshire "after having the happy privilege of seeing his brother John Benbow, and all his household, . . . baptized into the new and everlasting covenant."[5] Elder Woodruff stayed in the area for about eight months. He later recalled: "The first thirty days after I arrived in Herefordshire I baptized forty-five preachers and several hundred members. . . . We brought in two thousand in about eight months' labor."[6]

Referring to this experience, President Woodruff wrote: "The whole history of this Herefordshire mission shows the importance of listening to the still small voice of God and the revelations of the Holy Ghost. The Lord had a people there prepared for the Gospel. They were praying for light and truth, and the Lord sent me to them."[7]

About two years before Elder Woodruff served in England, the Spirit led him to preach the gospel to a smaller group of people—his own family. In his patriarchal blessing, given through Joseph Smith Sr., he had been promised that he would "bring [his] father's household into the kingdom of God."[8] In 1838, while he was serving a mission in an area close to his hometown, he felt that the time had come for this prophecy to be fulfilled. He wrote:

"I spent . . . eighteen days in Farmington and Avon, visiting my father's household, my uncles, aunts, cousins, neighbors and friends, preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ unto them, and striving to bring them into the kingdom of God. . . . By the help of God, I preached the Gospel faithfully to my father's household and to all that were with him, as well as to my other relatives."

On July 1, 1838, Elder Woodruff baptized six people, including all those who lived in his father's house, just as he had been promised in his patriarchal blessing. "It was truly a day of joy to my soul," he said. "My father, step-mother and sister were among the number baptized. I afterwards added a number of relatives. I felt that this day's work alone amply repaid me for all my labor in the ministry.

"Who can comprehend the joy, the glory, the happiness and consolation that an Elder of Israel feels in being an instrument in the hands of God of bringing his father, mother, sister, brother, or any of the posterity of Adam through the door that enters into life and salvation? No man can, unless he has experienced these things, and possesses the testimony of Jesus Christ and the inspiration of Almighty God."[9]

Teachings of Wilford Woodruff

God holds us responsible for sharing the gospel with others.

Mankind in all ages search for happiness; they desire social and domestic peace; and when they think of the vast future, they desire to participate in the blessings that are spoken of as pertaining to that state of existence; but they know not how to obtain them, except a servant of God comes along and points out the way of life.[10]

We are the only people to whom this holy gospel, priesthood and covenants have been committed in our day, and we shall be held responsible for the use we make of it. Then we should be diligent and faithful in offering this great salvation unto the children of men, and in building up Zion and the kingdom of our God.[11]

However insignificant this people may be in the eyes of the world, the God of heaven holds us responsible for preaching this Gospel to every nation under heaven, and we have it to do or we will be damned. We cannot avoid this. Why? Because, as Paul says: "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel." [1 Corinthians 9:16.] There is but one Gospel; never has been but one, and never will

As we sincerely nurture our friendship with others, the Lord will provide opportunities for us to share the gospel.

be; and Paul says: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." [Galatians 1:8.] That Gospel, ye Saints of the living God, . . . is in our hands, sent to us by the ministrations of Angels—the same Gospel that was taught from Adam to Christ, and from Christ down to our day and generation, when God has had a people on the earth.[12]

There never was a set of men since God made the world under a stronger responsibility to warn this generation, to lift up our voices long and loud, day and night as far as we have the opportunity and declare the words of God unto this generation. We are required to do this. This is our calling. It is our duty. It is our business.[13]

I have waded swamps and swum rivers, and have asked my bread from door to door; and have devoted nearly fifty years to this work. And why? Was there gold enough in California to have hired me to do it? No, verily; and what I have done and what my brethren have done, we have done because we were commanded

of God. And this is the position we occupy today. We have preached and labored at home and abroad, and we intend to continue our labors, by the help of God, as long as we can have liberty to do it.[14]

I think, many times, that we, as elders of Israel and as Latter-day Saints, come far short of realizing our position before the Lord. The work required at our hands is great and mighty; it is the work of Almighty God. We are held responsible for presenting the gospel of Christ to all the nations of the earth. . . . We are held responsible for all this and for building temples to the Most High, wherein we can enter and attend to ordinances for the salvation of our dead.[15]

And then, we are surrounded at home with many to whom it is our duty to preach, for it is just as necessary to preach at home as abroad.[16]

We find great joy in helping others come unto Christ and progress toward exaltation.

You give unto any soul the principles of life and salvation and administer these ordinances to him, and you become an instrument in the hands of God in the salvation of that soul. There is nothing given to the children of men that is equal to it. . . .

. . . The Lord [said], "And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father." [D&C 18:15.] . . . We have preached the Gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, as far as the Lord has opened doors for us and we have had the privilege of going. Still the world to-day is full of people who have not heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and while the Priesthood rests upon our shoulders we are still under obligation and are still held responsible for the salvation of the children of men, as far as we have the privilege of bestowing these gifts upon the sons and daughters of Adam. Only think that by embracing the Gospel of Christ we can become heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ, that we can have part in the first resurrection, and come

forth out of our graves and be clothed with glory, immortality, and eternal lives, and pass into the presence of God and the Lamb and dwell with them eternally in the heavens! Who comprehends this? Do the inhabitants of the earth? They do not. . . . I realize myself that we are dependent upon the Lord in all things. The Lord is our preserver. He is the author of our salvation. Jesus Christ has laid down His life to redeem us by His blood, and through that we have these blessings bestowed upon us. . . .

. . . There is no calling a man can be called to any greater than to have this right and privilege to go forth and save the souls of men—save them by preaching the Gospel to them, by administering the ordinances of the house of God to them, that they may be prepared themselves to go into the kingdom of heaven and into a celestial glory. . . .

I think many times that we ourselves do not prize the blessings that we enjoy and that are within our reach. Our hearts should be set upon the building up of the kingdom of God, the Zion of God, and the work of God, while we are here and have power to perform these things. It is our duty as the Presidency and as Apostles, not only to labor ourselves, but to send forth the Elders of Israel to the nations of the earth to proclaim the Gospel. Doors are open to-day among many of the nations for the spread of the Gospel of Christ, and to bring the people unto Christ, that they may receive these blessings.[17]

My whole life almost has been spent in this Church; and from the time I came into the Church I went on missions and have never ceased altogether from that day to this. I have always rejoiced in this, and do to-day. When I die and lay down my body, I do not want anybody to rise up and say that I have neglected my duty in trying to give him salvation as far as I could. I have always rejoiced in preaching the Gospel; I have rejoiced in administering the ordinances of life and salvation at home and abroad, because I have known that this was the work of God, and I know it is to-day.[18]

Rather than criticize others' religions, we should live in a way that shows the truth and goodness of our own.

When you go into a neighborhood to preach the Gospel, never attempt to tear down a man's house, so to speak, before you build him a better one; never, in fact, attack any one's religion, wherever you go. Be willing to let every man enjoy his own religion. It is his right to do that. If he does not accept your testimony with regard to the Gospel of Christ, that is his affair, and not yours. Do not spend your time in pulling down other sects and parties. We haven't time to do that. It is never right to do that.[19]

Seek by faith, prayer and humility, to obtain wisdom, and the Spirit of God to dictate in all your labours. Wisdom is one of the greatest gifts of God, and the voice of wisdom will not tell us to spend our time in warring against the sects of the day, opposing the opinions of men, ridiculing the religions that surround us, thereby cutting off the ears of the hearer; barring the hearts of men against light and truth; the opinions and religions of other men are as dear unto them as ours are unto us. . . . Let *Salvation* be your text, in meekness and humility, with the power of eternal truth, wisdom, light and knowledge that are hid in the first principles of the gospel of the Son of God. You can be instrumental in saving the souls of men, and they will rejoice with yourselves that they have ever beheld the light thereof; we should never get above the gospel, or leave it to preach something that is foreign to our calling; or to make strife about words to no profit; every tree is known by its fruit; if we are faithful before the Lord, pursue a wise and prudent course, good fruit will be sure to follow our labours.[20]

It should be the aim of all the members of the Church to carry out practically in their lives the principles of the Gospel. In no way can we better convince the world of their truth than in showing in our acts and dealings with one another and with mankind the elevating effect they have upon us. We make high professions, and there should be such a high standard of purity of life among us as to correspond with these professions.[21]

As we strive to share the gospel, we must seek the guidance of the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Ghost provides guidance for those who share the gospel and for those who receive it.

The whole secret of our success as far as making converts is concerned is, that we preach the same gospel in all its simplicity and plainness that Jesus preached, and that the Holy Ghost rests upon those who receive it, filling their hearts with joy and gladness unspeakable, and making them as one; and they then know of the doctrine for themselves whether it be of God or man.[22]

How did these hundreds and thousands of Elders of Israel . . . have power to go abroad, . . . and preach the Gospel to the convincing of the sons and daughters of Adam? It has been done by the power of God. No Elder in this Church has had power to go forth and do the will of God [except] by the power of God. If we have any power, it is of God, and we should trust Him with regard to all things.[23]

When he who has the authority preaches the gospel, he promises, in the name of Jesus Christ, to all that believe and obey, that the Holy Ghost will be given them. By virtue of this promise, all

such can know for themselves, whether it is of God, or whether it is of man. If an unauthorized man goes forth, pretending to proclaim this same gospel, and it matters not how able and talented he may be, his doctrine can be detected, because the promises which were to follow the believers in Christ are not realized, the Holy Ghost which imparts its gifts unto men [is] not received, and hence the fallacy of the doctrines of men is exposed, so that none need be deceived.[24]

Unless you have the Holy Ghost with you when you go out to preach the Gospel, you cannot do your duty; but when you have that you are safe, go where you will, and your words will have their effect in the hearts of the honest and meek of the earth.[25]

It does not make any difference what age a man is in preaching the gospel, whether he be twenty-five, ninety, or five hundred years of age, if he is only inspired by the Spirit and power of God.[26]

May the Lord go before us and prepare the way and give us access to the hearts of the people, that good may be done and the kingdom of God roll forth.[27]

Suggestions for Study and Teaching

Consider these ideas as you study the chapter or as you prepare to teach. For additional help, see pages v–ix.

- Review the account of Elder Wilford Woodruff going to the home of John Benbow (pages 89–91). In what ways was Elder Woodruff led to the Benbow farm? As you read this account, what do you learn from the example of William Benbow?
- On pages 91–92, look for words or phrases that show how William Benbow and Wilford Woodruff felt when their family members embraced the gospel. How have you felt when loved ones have joined the Church or returned to activity in the Church?
- Review President Woodruff's words about our responsibility to share the gospel (pages 92–94). Specifically, what can we do to share the gospel with family members and friends? In what ways can we work with full-time missionaries in this effort?

- In what ways can we fulfill our responsibility to teach the gospel "to all the nations of the earth"? (page 94).
- Why do we sometimes hesitate to share the gospel? How can we overcome our fears?
- Why is missionary work such a joyful experience? (See pages 94–95.) What experiences have you had in which you have felt the joy of sharing the gospel?
- Why is it important to avoid criticizing others' religions? (See page 96.) How can we testify of the truthfulness of the Church without criticizing other churches?
- Review the final paragraph on page 96. In what ways do our actions influence people's opinions about the Church?
- As you read President Woodruff's words about the Holy Ghost and missionary service, what do you learn? (See pages 97–98.) What must we do to qualify for the companionship of the Spirit?

Related Scriptures: Matthew 28:19–20; D&C 4; 18:10–16; 42:11–14; 50:13–22; 60:2–3; 84:88; 88:81

Notes

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4. *Millennial Star,* November 28, 1895, 754.
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6. *Millennial Star,* November 28, 1895, 754.
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19. *Contributor,* August 1895, 636–37.
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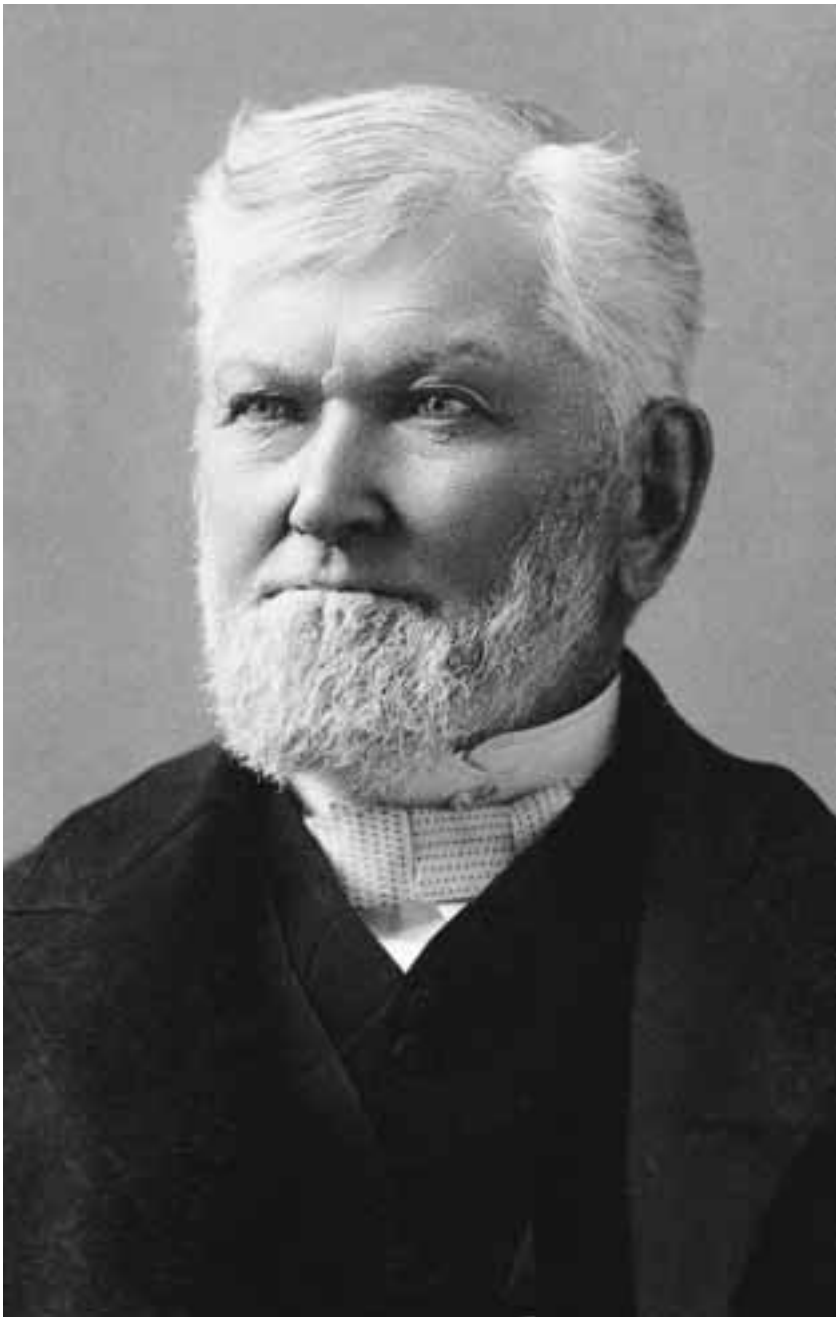
22. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 136.
23. *Deseret Weekly,* March 2, 1889, 294.
24. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 135–36.
25. In Conference Report, April 1898, 32.
26. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 275.
27. "Correspondence," *Millennial Star,* August 1840, 93.



President Wilford Woodruff said: "I am obliged to give God the glory for all I have ever received. If I have ever done any good . . . it has been by the power of God."

Humble Reliance on God

True strength comes from humble reliance on God.

From the Life of Wilford Woodruff

"The only marvel I have had all my life," said President Wilford Woodruff, "has been that the Lord ever chose me for anything, especially as an Apostle and as President. But that is His own business; it was not mine."[1]

Although President Woodruff was surprised at his callings in the Church, he knew why the Lord had called him. He observed: "Why did the Lord choose such a weak man as Wilford Woodruff to preside over His Church? Why did He choose Joseph Smith—an illiterate boy, as he was called? Why has He chosen that class of men? Because He could handle them. He has chosen men that will acknowledge the hand of God."[2]

President Woodruff always acknowledged the hand of God, both in personal successes and the advancement of the Church. In a discourse he delivered at the Salt Lake Tabernacle, he said: "I thank the Lord for my life. I thank Him for His blessings and mercies to me. I have reason to rejoice in this, and I am obliged to give God the glory for all I have ever received. If I have ever done any good; if I have been able to preach the Gospel and to pursue a course whereby I have edified my fellow man, at home or abroad, it has been by the power of God. . . . This power has been with us. That is why we are here today. That is why this Tabernacle stands here today, in fulfillment of the predictions of the prophets of God in ancient days. It is why the Zion of God is planted here in these valleys of the mountains. It has all been by the power of God, and not of man."[3]

Teachings of Wilford Woodruff

We are dependent upon God for all spiritual and temporal blessings.

I am entirely dependent upon the Lord. I always have been during my life, and in my travels and pilgrimages, preaching the gospel of Christ to my fellow men.[4]

We should begin to understand that God's ways are infinitely superior to our ways, and that His counsels, though they may seem to call for sacrifice, are always the best and the safest for us to adopt and carry out. Thousands among us can testify to the truth of this from individual experience. . . . We also should learn this great truth, that God will have all the glory and honor for the establishment of His Church and kingdom on the earth. Man cannot claim it in this or any other age of the world. Nothing but the power of God could have brought forth the fulness of the Gospel, organized the Church, gathered His people to Zion in fulfillment of revelation and performed the work which has been accomplished.[5]

We want to bear in mind that our strength, our hope and our power is in the hands of God, and not in men. The Lord Himself has stretched forth His hand to establish this Church, His kingdom, His work. . . . We have no power in ourselves. We never have had in the guidance and direction of this kingdom, only through the interposition of Almighty God.[6]

The very fact that we have a people, that we have a Zion, that we have a kingdom, that we have a church and a priesthood which is connected with the heavens, and which has power to move the heavens, and that we know that the heavens are communicating with us, directing the performance of this great latter-day work in which the Latter-day Saints are engaged, this very fact alone should fill our hearts with humility before the Lord our God, and it should continually remind us in our reflections and feelings of the responsibility we are under both to Him and to one another, and also of our dependence upon him for all the blessings we enjoy of a spiritual as well as a temporal nature.[7]

My feelings and views are that the Lord never did have a people from Father Adam to the present time that were called upon to build up His Kingdom and establish His Zion in the world, or to preach the gospel of repentance to the children of men, but what they were dependent entirely upon the God [of] heaven for their support.[8]

We know and understand very well that our destiny, our position, and our blessings are all in his hands.[9]

I say to all men—Jew and Gentile, great and small, rich and poor—that the Lord Almighty has power within himself, and is not dependent upon any man, to carry on his work; but when he does call men to do his work they have to trust in him.[10]

God chooses the humble to do His work.

The Lord has chosen the weak things of the world to do His work. But He is as able to teach me, or any of my brethren, as He ever has been in any age of the world. He has always selected the weak things. Take Moses in leading the children of Israel. Moses said he was slow of speech, and he thought that he could not do anything. But the Lord said he would raise up a spokesman for him. When the Lord wanted a king for Israel, he chose David, the son of Jesse, who was herding sheep. All the sons of Jesse, except David, were brought before the Prophet; but Samuel would not anoint [any] of them. He asked Jesse if he had any more sons. Jesse said, Yes; there is a little fellow down here taking care of the sheep. The Prophet wanted to see him. When he came, Samuel anointed him king of Israel. So in the days of the Apostles. Who were they? [Unlearned] fishermen. So it is today. Begin with Joseph Smith and take the whole of us. Who are we? We are poor, weak worms of the dust. But the Lord has chosen us because He thought He could do something with us. I hope He can.

I suppose I have held the Apostleship longer than any man that has been on the face of the earth in these last days. Should I boast over this or be proud and exalted because I have held the Priesthood so long? If I did, I should be a very foolish man. We are obliged to honor God; we are obliged to acknowledge the

hand of God. The devil has sought to destroy me from the time I was born until the present day. But the Lord has always been on my right hand and saved me. There have been two powers at work—one to destroy me, the other to save me. And I am here today, a weak instrument in the hands of God. But, as God lives, if He will tell me what my duty is, I am going to do it!

. . . I pray God to give us wisdom, and to help us to be humble, faithful, meek and lowly of heart.[11]

How many times have I heard men say in my travels—Why did God choose Joseph Smith, why did he choose that boy to open up this dispensation and lay the foundation of this Church? why didn't he choose some great man . . . ? I have had but one answer in my life to give to such a question, namely, that the Lord Almighty could not do anything with them, he could not humble them. They were not the class of men that were chosen for a work of this kind in any age of the world. The Lord Almighty chose the weak things of this world. He could handle them. He therefore chose Joseph Smith because he was weak, and he had sense enough to know it.[12]

When individuals become prideful, they fall.

You have never seen a day, you never will see a day, in time or in eternity, when you can get beyond the need of the protection and care of God. You need it all the way through your lives. When our young men, or our old men, or our maidens, feel that they have arrived at a point that they are independent of the Lord, they will find that they are greatly mistaken.[13]

If the President of the Church or either of his counselors or of the apostles or any other man feels in his heart that God cannot do without him, and that he is especially important in order to carry on the work of the Lord, he stands upon slippery ground. I heard Joseph Smith say that Oliver Cowdery, who was the second apostle in this Church, said to him, "If I leave this Church it will fall."

Said Joseph, "Oliver, you try it." Oliver tried it. He fell; but the kingdom of God did not. I have been acquainted with other

apostles in my day and time who felt that the Lord could not do without them; but the Lord got along with his work without them.[14]

I have seen Oliver Cowdery when it seemed as though the earth trembled under his feet. I never heard a man bear a stronger testimony than he did when under the influence of the Spirit. But the moment he left the kingdom of God, that moment his power fell. . . . He was shorn of his strength, like Samson in the lap of Delilah. He lost the power and testimony which he had enjoyed, and he never recovered it again in its fulness while in the flesh, although he died [a member of] the Church.[15]

One-third of the hosts of heaven were cast out because of their rebellion. . . . They are in every city and hamlet wherein the inhabitants of the earth dwell, and especially where there are any Latter-day Saints. . . . Do you suppose these devils are around us without trying to do something? Are they asleep? Have they not a work to perform? I say to my brethren who bear the Priesthood, we have got a mighty warfare to wage with these spirits. We cannot escape it. What will they do to you? They will try to make us do anything and everything that is not right. These devils would be very glad to make me and my brethren think we are great men, smarter than any one else; to divide us one against the other, and to cause us to seek to confess our brother's sins instead of our own. We should therefore watch ourselves well. I should do this; my Counselors and the Apostles should; we all should. . . . And if our eyes are open to comprehend the things of God, we can comprehend our responsibilities; we can comprehend the powers of the Holy Priesthood and the relationship which we sustain to God. We certainly should humble ourselves before the Lord.[16]

Be humble, be watchful, be prayerful. Beware of pride, lest you fall like others.[17]

When we humbly rely on the Lord,
He protects and strengthens us.

Two great virtues . . . give a man power with the heavens—integrity and purity of character. Let a man possess these, let his heart be true and unflinching, let his life be pure, and, if we add

to these humility, he is [protected] against a multitude of weaknesses and can resist a host of temptations. We all have our weaknesses; God has permitted them that we might be taught humility in ourselves and charity towards others.

We none of us are perfect whilst we dwell in the flesh; but the man who in humble reliance upon God never falters in the fight for the right, never wavers in his allegiance to the truth, and ever maintains inviolate his covenants, is one whom we can all pause to admire, and strive, by heaven's help, to imitate.[18]

I wish to say to the Latter-day Saints, all that we have to do is to be faithful, to keep His commandments, to be humble, to seek Him in mighty prayer, and all will be well with us.[19]

God is with this people. But we are required to hearken to His voice, obey His commandments, and humble ourselves before Him. . . . There is a calmness prevailing among the Mormons—so called—that is a marvel and a wonder to the world. . . . The reason of our calmness is—God is our friend, our lawgiver, our deliverer. If the Lord cannot sustain His work, we certainly cannot. But He can. He has always done it, and will do it to the end. Therefore I say to the Saints, fear not. Trust in God. Let not your hearts be faint. Let your prayers ascend to the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth day and night. Ask what you want. When you do that, the Lord will answer your prayers, if you ask what is right. There is where our strength lies. It is in God.[20]

Suggestions for Study and Teaching

Consider these ideas as you study the chapter or as you prepare to teach. For additional help, see pages v–ix.

- Why is it important to acknowledge our dependence on God? (See pages 102–3.) How does this acknowledgment influence our approach to life?
- Whom did President Woodruff refer to as "weak things of the world"? (See pages 101, 103–4; see also 1 Corinthians 1:25–28.) Why does the Lord choose such people to accomplish His work? When have you seen the Lord work through "weak things of the world"?

- Read the third full paragraph on page 104, and ponder or discuss what your life would be like without God's protection and care. What does this teach you about pride? What are some of the results of pride?
- What can we learn from the story about Oliver Cowdery on pages 104–5?
- Read the second full paragraph on page 105. Why do Satan and his hosts want us to "think we are great [and] smarter than anyone else"? Why do they want us to "confess our brother's sins instead of our own"? How can we withstand these temptations?
- Review the final four paragraphs of the chapter, noting words and phrases that are meaningful to you (pages 105–6). What blessings do we receive when we rely on the Lord?

Related Scriptures: Proverbs 3:5–7; Luke 18:9–14; Jacob 2:13–21; Alma 36:3; Helaman 3:35; D&C 112:10; 121:34–40

Notes

1. *Millennial Star,* November 21, 1895, 739.
2. *Millennial Star,* November 21, 1895, 739.
3. *Deseret Semi-Weekly News,* December 21, 1897, 1.
4. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* sel. G. Homer Durham (1946), 275.
5. "An Epistle to the Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," *Millennial Star,* November 14, 1887, 729.
6. *Millennial Star,* April 28, 1890, 258.
7. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* May 14, 1878, 1.
8. *Deseret Weekly,* September 21, 1889, 393.
9. In Conference Report, April 1880, 10.
10. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 123–24.
11. *Deseret Weekly,* March 23, 1889, 391.
12. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* September 7, 1880, 1.
13. *Deseret Weekly,* July 20, 1889, 115.
14. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 123.
15. *Deseret Weekly,* March 23, 1889, 391.
16. *Deseret Weekly,* April 20, 1889, 515.
17. In *Elders' Journal,* July 1838, 36.
18. *Millennial Star,* July 9, 1888, 436.
19. "Priesthood, and the Right of Succession," *Millennial Star,* August 22, 1892, 532.
20. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* January 22, 1884, 1.

"There is one admonition of our Savior that all the Saints of God should observe, but which, I fear, we do not as we should, and that is, to pray always and faint not."

Praying to Receive the Blessings of Heaven

When we pray in faith, we prepare ourselves to receive the blessings Heavenly Father has in store for us.

From the Life of Wilford Woodruff

In March 1835, while serving his first mission, Wilford Woodruff had to travel through rivers and swamps in the southeastern United States. To traverse the swamps, he and his companion cut down a tree and made it into a canoe. They rowed safely for about 150 miles before abandoning the canoe and walking. President Woodruff later recalled that they took a road that "lay through swamps, and was covered with mud and water most of the way, for one hundred and seventy miles. We walked forty miles in a day through mud and water knee-deep. On the 24th of March, after traveling some ten miles through mud, I was taken lame with a sharp pain in my knee. I sat down on a log."

At this point in the journey, his companion, who had become weary of the work and had decided to return home, left him there, sitting on a log in an alligator swamp. Undaunted, Wilford Woodruff turned to the Lord. He said, "I knelt down in the mud and prayed, and the Lord healed me, and I went on my way rejoicing."[1]

Years later, President Woodruff showed his faith as he, his wife, and several others traveled by boat to serve in England. "We had been traveling three days and nights in a heavy gale, and were being driven backwards," he recounted. "Finally I asked my companions to come into the cabin with me, and I told them to pray that the Lord would change the wind. I had no fears of being lost; but I did not like the idea of being driven back to New York, as I wanted to go on my journey. We all offered the same prayer, both

men and women; and when we got through we stepped on to the deck and in less than a minute it was as though a man had taken a sword and cut that gale through, and you might have thrown a muslin handkerchief out and it would not have moved it."[2]

Teachings of Wilford Woodruff

It is our duty to pray in faith for the help we need.

There is one admonition of our Savior that all the Saints of God should observe, but which, I fear, we do not as we should, and that is, to pray always and faint not [see Luke 18:1; D&C 88:126]. I fear, as a people, we do not pray enough in faith. We should call upon the Lord in mighty prayer, and make all our wants known unto him. For if he does not protect and deliver us and save us, no other power will. Therefore our trust is entirely in him. Therefore our prayers should ascend into the ears of our Heavenly Father day and night.[3]

The inhabitants of the earth do not realize the effect and benefit of prayer. The Lord hears and answers the prayers of men, women and children. Prayer has more power, a great deal, to bring down the blessings of God, than almost any other thing.[4]

When the world rise[s] up against the kingdom of God in these latter days, should the Saints have any fears? . . . We should not. There is one thing we should do, and that is, pray to God. Every righteous man has done this; even Jesus the Savior, the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh, had to pray, from the manger to the cross, all the way through; every day he had to call upon his Father to give him grace to sustain him in his hour of affliction and to enable him to drink the bitter cup. So with his disciples.[5]

Whatever is necessary for us to receive and enjoy, it is our duty to ask the Lord for. We should go before Him in secret places and make our wants known, that our prayers may be heard and answered upon our heads. Herein lies our strength. Our trust is in God, and not in man.[6]

It is the duty of every Saint of God . . . to let his prayers ascend into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, day and night in the season

thereof, in the family circle and in private places, for the Lord to sustain his people, build up Zion and fulfill his promises. . . .

. . . I have more faith in prayer before the Lord than almost any other principle on earth. If we have no faith in prayer to God, we have not much in either him or the gospel. We should pray unto the Lord, asking him for what we want. Let the prayers of this people ascend before the Lord continually in the season thereof, and the Lord will not turn them away, but they will be heard and answered, and the kingdom and Zion of God will rise and shine, she will put on her beautiful garments and be clothed with the glory of her God, and fulfill the object of her organization here upon the earth [see D&C 82:14].[7]

As a people we should rise up in faith and power before God and make our wants known, and leave our destiny in His hands. It is there anyhow. It will remain there.[8]

We must pray in order to understand the Lord's will and receive His guidance.

I feel that we should lift our hearts in prayer to God our Heavenly Father for His mercies, and that He will guide and direct us by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, that our minds may be enlightened, and our understanding opened to comprehend His mind and will concerning His people.[9]

Whenever you are in doubt about any duty or work which you have to perform, never proceed to do anything until you go and labor in prayer and get the Holy Spirit. Wherever the Spirit dictates you to go or to do, that will be right; and, by following its dictates, you will come out right.

We shall be brought to many places during our career in the ministry among the nations of the earth, where we may consider a certain course of procedure to be right; but, if we do not know, it will be better for us to go before the Lord, and ask in faith that we may be instructed in the way of life.[10]

Let us labor faithfully and pray unto the Lord for wisdom day by day, that we may have power to conquer and overcome.[11]

Parents have sacred duties to teach their children to pray and to ensure that the family prays together.

It is the mind and will of God that every man and woman who have entered into the marriage covenant, and who have sons and daughters given unto them, as soon as those children are old enough, should teach them to pray.

It is the duty of the Latter-day Saints to teach their children to pray while they are young; to teach them to understand the principle and benefits of prayer, so that they can pray for their parents and everything that is necessary. If you begin with children in this way, and you train them up in the fear of the Lord, they will seldom depart therefrom. The head of the family should not do all the praying himself, but should call upon members of his family to pray, and to ask the blessing at [the] table.[12]

When we live the gospel, our prayers will be answered with blessings on our heads.

We as a people should be humble, be prayerful, be submissive to the powers that be that we may receive the promised blessings of our Heavenly Father.[13]

We should live in that way and manner that we can go before the Lord and ask for those blessings, in faith and in power, that we need to sustain us to carry out the purposes of God. . . . This is necessary for our advancement.[14]

God intends to give to His Saints the good things of the earth, as well as the blessings of heaven, as they shall become able to use them properly. . . .

. . . Many of you have learned how to pray; then fail not to let your prayers ascend up into the ears of the God of Sabaoth; and He will hear you. . . . But the blessings of heaven can only be obtained and controlled upon the principles of righteousness.[15]

We have no time to lose to prepare ourselves for the things that are coming on the earth; and who wants to lose his crown, his glory, and hope of eternal lives that he has had in days past and gone by receiving the gospel of Jesus Christ? No man that

has any portion of the Spirit of God. Let us rise up and magnify our calling, and labor before God until we can get the Holy Spirit, and until our prayers rend the veil of eternity and enter into the ears of the God of Sabaoth and [are] answered in blessings upon our heads.[16]

Suggestions for Study and Teaching

Consider these ideas as you study the chapter or as you prepare to teach. For additional help, see pages v–ix.

- Review the stories on pages 109–10. Ponder or discuss different ways Elder Woodruff might have responded in each of these situations. What can we learn from his responses?
- What impresses you as you read President Woodruff's teachings about our duty to pray? (See pages 110–11.) What does it mean to you to pray in faith? Why must we pray in order to receive the blessings we need? What are some other purposes of prayer?
- Read the third full paragraph on page 110. Why did the Savior need to pray? What can we learn from His prayers? (See Matthew 26:39; John 11:41; 3 Nephi 13:9–13.)
- How can prayer help us when we have decisions to make or when we have questions about our duties? (See page 111.)
- What are some ways Heavenly Father has answered your prayers? How should we respond when an answer to prayer is different from the answer we have hoped to receive?
- What assurance did President Woodruff give parents who teach their children to pray? (See page 112.) What are some principles of prayer that parents should teach their children? How can parents help their children make prayer a part of their lives?
- In family prayers, why is it important that all family members receive opportunities to pray? (See page 112.) How has prayer strengthened your family?
- Study the final section of the chapter (pages 112–13), looking for attributes that President Woodruff said we should have. Why are these attributes necessary as we pray and as we seek answers to our prayers?

Related Scriptures: Matthew 7:7; James 1:5–6; 5:16; 2 Nephi 32:8–9; Alma 33:3–11; 34:17–28; 37:36–37; 3 Nephi 18:19–21; D&C 10:5; 68:28; 112:10

Notes

1. See "Leaves from My Journal," *Millennial Star,* June 20, 1881, 390–91.
2. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* sel. G. Homer Durham (1946), 288.
3. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 221.
4. *Millennial Star,* May 7, 1893, 305.
5. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* February 4, 1873, 2.
6. "The Rights of the Priesthood," *Deseret Weekly,* March 17, 1894, 381.
7. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* January 12, 1875, 1.
8. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* January 22, 1884, 1.
9. *Millennial Star,* May 18, 1891, 306.
10. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 134.
11. *Deseret Semi-Weekly News,* December 21, 1897, 1.
12. *Salt Lake Herald Church and Farm,* June 15, 1895, 385.
13. *Deseret News,* November 26, 1856, 299.
14. *Deseret Weekly,* August 30, 1890, 307.
15. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* March 20, 1883, 1.
16. *Deseret News,* December 31, 1856, 340.

Rich Treasures in the Scriptures

When we search the scriptures in the same Spirit by which they were given, we gain a greater understanding of God's will.

From the Life of Wilford Woodruff

On March 1, 1845, Elder Wilford Woodruff, who was then serving as the presiding Church authority in the British Isles, received a letter from a friend in the United States. Included with that correspondence was a copy of another letter, in which a man outlined a plan to print the Doctrine and Covenants in England and secure the copyright there for himself. This man's action would have prevented the Church from printing the book in England. Elder Woodruff wrote in his journal: "This certainly is a bold move, for an apostate or apostates to undertake to print the works of the Church and rob them out of it. I view it [as] nothing more than the mercy of God in putting the knowledge of this thing into my hands. I spent the day in examining the law to see what I could learn concerning securing copyrights."[1] He hired a printer to typeset and print 3,000 copies of the book.[2] Then, having gained an understanding of British copyright laws, he secured the copyright in his own name on June 7, 1845, "in forty-eight hours after the last sheets were obtained from the printers."[3] Thus he preserved the Church's legal right to print the book in England.

This was not the first time Wilford Woodruff worked to get the scriptures into the hands of the Latter-day Saints. Before the Doctrine and Covenants was ever printed, he copied many of the revelations by hand and took them on his missionary journeys. While he was serving his first mission in England, from January

"We should treasure up the words of life.
We should search the records of divine truth."

1840 to April 1841, he worked with President Brigham Young and others to publish the first edition of the Book of Mormon outside the United States. He later assisted the Prophet Joseph Smith in Nauvoo, Illinois, setting type for the Church's periodical titled *Times and Seasons.* Between March 1, 1842, and January 16, 1843, the following documents appeared in the *Times and Seasons,* many years before they were published in the Pearl of Great Price: the book of Abraham; Joseph Smith—History; the Wentworth letter, which contained the Articles of Faith; and a portion of the book of Moses.

Having helped the Saints get the scriptures in their hands, President Woodruff exhorted them to "lay them up in [their] hearts."[4] He said: "We should live our religion. We should practice ourselves what we preach. We should treasure up the words of life. We should search the records of divine truth. We should seek to comprehend the day and age in which we live. This is the way I look upon our situation to-day. I do not look upon the revelations recorded in these books, touching the dispensation of the fulness of times, as something that will pass away unfulfilled."[5]

Teachings of Wilford Woodruff

We must study the truths in the scriptures, treasure them in our hearts, and practice them in our lives.

Read the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants and the records which the Lord has given unto us, and treasure up these revelations and see what the Lord has promised unto us. We then treasure up something of worth to us.[6]

It is our duty . . . as Latter-day Saints to contemplate, to reflect, to read the word of God, and try to comprehend our condition, our position, and our responsibility before the Lord.[7]

The world is far from the Lord. We ourselves are too far from the Lord as a people. We ought to draw near to the Lord, and labor to obtain the Holy Spirit, so that when we read the revelations of God we may read them by the same Spirit by which they were given. Then we can understand their [meaning] when given to the children of men.[8]

The devil is abroad in the earth, and he will destroy every person that he can. Search the scriptures that have come directly to us, as well as those contained in the Bible, and learn to comprehend the mind and will of God, which we can do by reading them when the light of the Holy Spirit is within us, and thus prepare yourselves for that which will come to pass in life.[9]

These things [the principles taught in the scriptures] are true. We should study them; lay them up in our hearts, and practice them in our lives.[10]

The Prophets, Apostles and Patriarchs have left their inspired writings on record for our use and benefit, and we shall be held accountable in the exercise of our agency for the manner in which we treat the Word of God that has come unto us.[11]

The Bible and Book of Mormon join to proclaim the fulness of the gospel.

I am not ashamed to acknowledge myself a firm believer in the literal fulfillment of the Bible, as well as every communication of God to man. . . . I believe that holy men of old wrote and spoke as they were moved upon by the Holy Ghost, and that they meant what they said and said what they meant, and . . . "that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation." [See 2 Peter 1:20–21.][12]

I bear testimony that Joseph Smith was raised up by Almighty God as a Prophet in the last dispensation and fullness of times; that he brought forth the Book of Mormon and translated it by the gift and power of God for the benefit of the world in the latter days. I know that the Book of Mormon is true and is a divinely inspired record.[13]

We have the Bible—the stick of Judah—containing the law of God through Moses and through the ancient prophets and patriarchs. It has been handed down to us through the thousands of years that are past and gone. While libraries, like the library of Alexandria . . . have perished, the Bible has been preserved unto us, and we have it to read. It gives unto us the law of God given to the ancients. But there has been no change in that law, so far

as the gospel is concerned, from that day until this. The Bible—the Old and the New Testament—gives unto us the law whereby we may be exalted and go back again into the presence of God and dwell with Him for ever and ever. It gives unto us the course we should pursue in order to receive a part in the first resurrection, that we may come forth clothed with glory, immortality and eternal life. It also gives us the history, not only of what is passed with the Jews, but of what is to come to pass. Then we have a Book of Mormon—the stick of Joseph in the hands of Ephraim—that was written upon [the American] continent by apostles and prophets. It contains, among other things, the teachings of Jesus Christ when he appeared, after his resurrection, in his immortal and glorious body, and taught the gospel here. Those revelations contain a great many principles. They show unto us the final winding-up scene, the situation of great Babylon and the judgments that were to come to pass in the last days before the coming of the Son of Man.[14]

Ezekiel says that in the last days the stick of Joseph in the hands of Ephraim should be placed with the stick of Judah, before the eyes of the nations in the hands of the Lord, for a special purpose—to gather the house of Israel in the latter days [see Ezekiel 37:15–28]. These two records were also to be made use of in order to preach the fulness of the everlasting gospel to both Jew and Gentile; and they will stand in judgment against the generation living on the earth when they come forth.[15]

Here is the Bible, the record of the Jews, given by the inspiration of the Lord through Moses and the ancient patriarchs and prophets. Is it an imposture, and as the infidels say, the work of man? No, it is not in the power of any man who ever breathed the breath of life to make such a book without the inspiration of the Almighty. It is just so with the Book of Mormon—all the ingenuity of all the men under heaven could not compose and present to the world a book like the Book of Mormon. Its principles are divine—they are from God. They could never emanate from the mind of an impostor, or from the mind of a person writing a novel. Why? Because the promises and prophecies it contains are being fulfilled in the sight of all the earth.[16]

Does the Book of Mormon contain a different gospel to that contained in the Bible? It does not. It gives a history of the people who dwelt upon [the American] continent anciently, tells where they came from and how they came here, tells of the dealings of God with them, and the establishment of the Church of Christ among them. They were visited by Jesus after His resurrection. Hence He said "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd." [John 10:16.] . . . Both books contain the same gospel. There was never but one gospel and there never will be any other revealed to the human family.[17]

The Doctrine and Covenants is our testament in the latter days.

We have also the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, which you have in your houses and which you can read. This code of revelation was given through the mouth of the Prophet Joseph Smith, by the Urim and Thummim and otherwise. That book contains some of the most glorious and most sublime revelations God ever gave to man. It shows unto us what lies before us, what awaits this nation and the nations of the earth, and what is at the door of the inhabitants of the earth. These things are clear, they are pointed, they are strong, and they are the revelations of God, and they will be fulfilled, whether men believe it or not.[18]

I hold in my hand the Doctrine and Covenants, containing revelations given through the Prophet Joseph Smith while he dwelt in the flesh. Read those revelations, and from beginning to end they unite with all dispensations God has had on the earth.[19]

I consider that the Doctrine and Covenants, our Testament, contains a code of the most solemn, the most Godlike proclamations ever made to the human family. I will refer to the "Vision" [in section 76] alone, as a revelation which gives more light, more truth and more principle than any revelation contained in any other book we ever read. It makes plain to our understanding our present condition, where we came from, why we are here, and where we are going to. Any man may know through that

The Book of Commandments, an early compilation of revelations to Joseph Smith. This copy of the book contains Wilford Woodruff's signature.

revelation what his part and condition will be. For all men know what laws they keep, and the laws that men keep here will determine their position hereafter; they will be preserved by those laws and receive the blessings that belong to them.[20]

The Doctrine and Covenants [is] a code of revelations which the Lord gave to Joseph Smith. This book contains some of the most glorious revelation upon doctrine, upon principle, upon government, upon the kingdom of God and the different glories, and upon a great many things which reach into the eternal worlds.[21]

The Pearl of Great Price contains glorious truths revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith.

Note: For much of Wilford Woodruff's life, the Pearl of Great Price was not one of the standard works of the Church. However, its teachings were widely read by the Saints, with excerpts first published in some of the Church's periodicals. On October 10, 1880, the Pearl of Great Price became a standard work of the Church by action of the First Presidency and by a sustaining vote in general conference.

In the following excerpts from his journal, Elder Woodruff expresses his testimony concerning the book of Abraham, which the Prophet Joseph Smith translated by the power of God and which was later included in the Pearl of Great Price.

The Lord is blessing Joseph with power to reveal the mysteries of the kingdom of God, to translate . . . ancient records and hieroglyphics as old as Abraham or Adam, which causes our hearts to burn within us while we behold their glorious truths opened unto us. Joseph the Seer has presented us some of the book of Abraham, which was written by his [Abraham's] own hand but hid from the knowledge of man for the last four thousand years but has now come to light through the mercy of God.[22]

The truths of the book of Abraham are truly edifying, great, and glorious, which are among the rich treasures that are revealed unto us in the last days.[23]

The prophecies in the scriptures can help us prepare for the events of the last days.

Brethren and sisters, let us read the revelations of God for ourselves, and when we read them, let us believe them, and try to live in such a way that we may be ready for whatever dispensations the Lord may have in store for us, and so that we can acknowledge his hand as Job did, and not find any fault with him because of his providences toward us. If we cannot comprehend them now, we shall be able to do so in a little while.[24]

"Who am I, saith the Lord, that I command and am not obeyed? Who am I, saith the Lord, that I promise and do not fulfill?" [See D&C 58:30–32.] . . . We have said, time after time, and year after year, that we live in a very peculiar age, generation and dispensation, and this is true. Time rolls on, carrying with it its events, and fulfilling the revelations of God, unto us especially. We live in a day of darkness; unbelief and infidelity are covering the whole face of the earth. . . . It astonishes the Latter-day Saints to see the amount of darkness and infidelity that are abroad in the earth. Hence, as Latter-day Saints, I think it requires on our

part an increase of faithfulness in the practice of our religion, and in the various revelations of God contained in the Bible, Book of Mormon and Book of Doctrine and Covenants.

We see before our eyes, year after year, the signs of heaven and of earth, and the fulfilment of prophecy, but how much are we as a people increasing in faith in God? Do we increase in that respect in proportion to the increase of infidelity in the world? Perhaps I am not a judge, but it appears to me that we do not comprehend. The work in which we are engaged, and the Bible, Book of Mormon and the Book of Doctrine and Covenants are just as true to-day as they were twenty, thirty, or forty years ago. . . . I say that this work is just as true now as then, and so is the saying which I quoted—"Who am I, saith the Lord, that I command and am not obeyed? Who am I, saith the Lord, that I promise and do not fulfil?" I believe that the Lord will fulfil what he says; I believe that he will fulfil his promises unto the Latter-day Saints and unto the world, unto Zion and Babylon; and if he does there is something at the door, something for us, as Latter-day Saints, to do.[25]

I want to say to the Latter-day Saints: Exercise faith in God, and exercise faith in His revelations, and read them and ponder over them and pray earnestly that you may have a correct understanding of all that God has revealed, that you may grow in the light and knowledge of God, and see the importance of living your religion and of living uprightly before Him.[26]

Suggestions for Study and Teaching

Consider these ideas as you study the chapter or as you prepare to teach. For additional help, see pages v–ix.

- What do you think it means to read the scriptures "by the same Spirit by which they were given"? (page 117).
- Review the first paragraph on page 118. How do the scriptures offer protection from the influence of the devil?
- In the second paragraph on page 118, President Woodruff counsels us to do three things with the scriptures. Why are these actions important?

- Why is it important to study both the Bible and the Book of Mormon? (See pages 118–20; see also 1 Nephi 13:40; 2 Nephi 3:12.)
- What impresses you about President Woodruff's testimony of the Doctrine and Covenants? (See pages 120–21.) In what ways is the Doctrine and Covenants "our Testament"?
- Wilford Woodruff said that the truths in the book of Abraham are "rich treasures" (page 122). What treasures have you found in the Pearl of Great Price?
- How do the scriptures help us prepare "for that which will come to pass in life"? (See pages 118, 122–23.)
- What have you done to make your scripture study meaningful? What scripture passages have been particularly helpful for you? How have these passages helped you?
- How can parents, grandparents, and teachers help children and youth study the scriptures and apply them in their lives?

Related Scriptures: 1 Timothy 4:13–16; 2 Timothy 3:16; 1 Nephi 15:24; Helaman 3:29–30; Moroni 10:3–5

Notes

1. Journal of Wilford Woodruff, March 1, 1845, Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
2. See Journal of Wilford Woodruff, June 7, 1845.
3. *History of the Church,* 7:426; see also Journal of Wilford Woodruff, June 7, 1845.
4. *Millennial Star,* November 21, 1887, 742.
5. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* July 6, 1880, 1.
6. *Deseret Weekly,* August 17, 1889, 226.
7. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* September 7, 1880, 1.
8. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* July 6, 1880, 1.
9. *Contributor,* August 1895, 639.
10. *Millennial Star,* November 21, 1887, 742.
11. *Deseret Weekly,* September 21, 1889, 394.
12. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* March 26, 1878, 1.
13. "Mormonism Brought Prominently before the Public," *Millennial Star,* August 5, 1897, 493.
14. *Deseret Weekly,* April 19, 1890, 560.
15. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* May 2, 1876, 4.
16. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* May 20, 1873, 1.
17. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* August 16, 1881, 1.
18. *Deseret Weekly,* April 19, 1890, 560.
19. *Millennial Star,* November 10, 1896, 741.
20. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* July 26, 1881, 1.
21. "The Keys of the Kingdom," *Millennial Star,* September 2, 1889, 548.
22. Journal of Wilford Woodruff, February 19, 1842.
23. Journal of Wilford Woodruff, March 19, 1842.
24. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* July 20, 1875, 1.
25. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* May 2, 1876, 4.
26. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* July 30, 1878, 1.

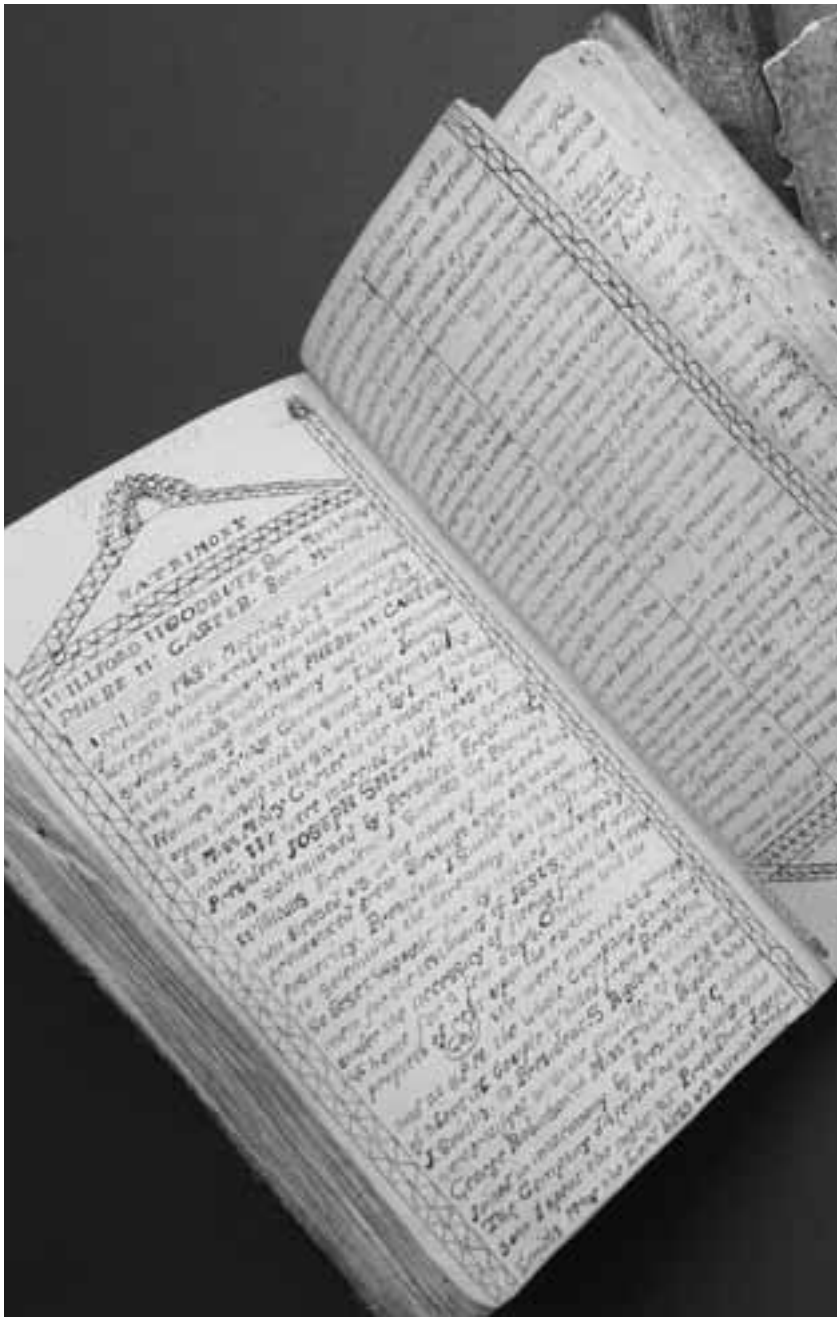
Journals: "Of Far More Worth than Gold"

Our journals are valuable to us personally, and they can also bring blessings to our families and all future generations.

From the Life of Wilford Woodruff

In 1835 Wilford Woodruff began his first journal, "believing it to be beneficial to review our past life and not only our privilege but duty to keep an accurate account of our proceedings." He wrote, "It is to this intent that I shall endeavour henceforth to keep a journal of my travels, that when required I may give an account of my stewardship."[1] He kept a journal for the next 63 years, making his final entry on August 31, 1898, two days before he died. His journal entries leave a true and faithful record of his personal life, showing his love for his family, his interest in his surroundings, his diligence in performing daily tasks, his faith during trials, and his testimony and understanding of the gospel. The entries also provide glimpses into the lives of other members of the Church at the time.

In addition to writing about his personal life and his ministry, Wilford Woodruff kept a careful record of Church history. He explained: "I have been inspired and moved upon to keep a journal and write the affairs of this Church as far as I can. I did not understand why my feelings were exercised so much in the early age of this Church, but I understand it now. I seldom ever heard Brother Joseph or the Twelve preach or teach any principle but what I felt as uneasy as a fish out of water until I had written it. Then I felt right. I could write a sermon of Joseph's a week after it was delivered almost word for word, and after it was written, it was taken from me or from my mind. This was a gift from God unto me."[2]



On this page of his journal, Wilford Woodruff recorded his feelings about his marriage to Phoebe Whittemore Carter.

As part of his effort to chronicle Church history, President Woodruff recorded important details from meetings he attended. In one meeting, he taught a principle that can be applied to journals as well as to official Church records: "While walking in a rapid stream we cannot tread twice in the same water. Neither can we spend twice the same time. When we pass out of that door, the work of this meeting will be closed to us forever. We shall never spend the time of this evening again. Then should we not keep a record of our work, teachings, and counsel which we give in this meeting? We should."[3]

Through his journals, President Woodruff gave an enduring gift to his descendants and to all members of the Church. Biographer Matthias F. Cowley observed: "The life of Wilford Woodruff was full of marvels. It was a simple life in which he revealed his heart and his purposes freely. The frankness of his expressions, his care for details, and his conscientious regard for the truth made him, perhaps, the best chronicler of events in all the history of the Church."[4] Elder B. H. Roberts, a member of the First Council of the Seventy and a noted Church historian, wrote: "President Woodruff rendered a most important service to the church. His *Journals,* regularly and methodically and neatly kept and strongly bound, . . . constitute an original documentary historical treasure which is priceless. The church is indebted to these *Journals* for a reliable record of discourses and sayings of the Prophet of the New Dispensation—Joseph Smith—which but for him would have been lost forever. The same is true as to the discourses and sayings of Brigham Young, and other leading elders of the church; [and] for minutes of important council meetings, decisions, judgments, policies, and many official actions of a private nature, without which the writer of history may not be able to get right viewpoints on many things—in all these respects these *Journals* of President Woodruff are invaluable."[5]

Most of the statements in this chapter are taken from President Woodruff's records of sermons he delivered in priesthood meetings. Although he often addresses elders in these statements, his teachings are valuable for all Church members.

Teachings of Wilford Woodruff

When we record our life history, we benefit ourselves, our posterity, and the Church.

The record and history of this Church and kingdom will be wanted in a future day. There has been no dispensation on earth the proceedings of which will be more interesting than the one in which we live. . . .

It is true that Joseph Smith kept a history of his own life and those things in some measure connected with him. He is now dead, but his life and testimony is now being published to the world. . . . Also President Young [had] scribes who [recorded] his daily acts and life, which is right and good. But does that record the life history and the dealings of God with the many thousands of the Apostles and elders who are or will be in all the world among every nation under heaven? No, verily no. Then all ye elders of Israel write your history and the dealings of God with you in all the world for your own benefit and that of your posterity, for the benefit of the house of Israel, for the benefit of Jew and Gentile, for the benefit of future generations.[6]

It may be considered by some not important to write or keep a record of our work or the work of God, but I believe it is. Otherwise the prophets would not have been moved upon to exhort us to faithfulness upon this subject. The Lord has told us that what we seal on earth shall be sealed in heaven and what we record on earth shall be recorded in heaven, and what is not sealed or recorded on earth is not sealed or recorded in heaven [see D&C 128:7–8]. Therefore it appears to be very important that we do keep a true and faithful record in all things.[7]

Some may say [journal keeping] is a great deal of trouble. But we should not call anything trouble which brings to pass good. I consider that portion of my life which has been spent in keeping journals and writing history to have been very profitably spent.[8]

If there was no other motive in view [except] to have the privilege of reading over our journals and for our children to read, it would pay for the time spent in writing it.[9]

We should record God's blessings to us and our official acts in the Church.

Every man should write a brief history of his life: his parentage, his birth, his religion, when he was baptized and by whom, when ordained, what to, and by whom—give a brief sketch of all his missions and of all his official acts and the dealings of God with him. Then if he were to die and the historians wished to publish his history, they would have something to go by. Many may think this a dry subject and unimportant, but it is not so to me.[10]

I would advise you to get all of your blessings written and preserve them. . . . I do feel to enjoin it upon you to make a record of every official act of your life. If you baptize, confirm, ordain, or bless any person or administer to the sick, write an account of it. If every man will do this, the Church can write a correct account of it. . . . If the power and blessings of God are made manifest in your preservation from danger, . . . you should make a record of it. Keep an account of the dealings of God with you daily. I have written all the blessings I have received, and I would not take gold for them.[11]

Should we not have respect enough to God to make a record of those blessings which He pours out upon us and our official acts which we do in His name upon the face of the earth? I think we should.[12]

The Presidency of the Church who are now leading us . . . keep a history of the dealings of both God and man with them . . . which will be interesting to millions of future generations. But does this excuse the many thousands of elders and high priests and Apostles who have traveled for many years and built up this Church and kingdom and had the gifts of the Holy Ghost with them so they have had power to heal the sick and cast out devils, open the eyes of the blind, unstop the ears of the deaf, cause the lame to leap . . . , and commanded the demon and they obey them, and have had guardian angels to preserve them from danger and death? I say, shall the elders be blessed with these things and not count them worth recording? Not even make the

mark of a pen to leave the account on record for their children and future generations to read? I say they should. I think the Lord requires this at our hands, and it is a rich and holy legacy which is justly due our posterity.[13]

We should make a record of events as they transpire.

We are the people ordained of God to establish His kingdom upon the earth, build up Zion, and prepare the way for the coming of Jesus Christ. Now, should we not keep a journal, record, and history of the dealings of God with [us] as they transpire day by day before our eyes? We should. . . .

. . . Instead of neglecting this branch of our work let every man who can, keep a journal and record events as they pass before our eyes day by day. This will make a valuable legacy to our children and a great benefit to future generations by giving them a true history of the rise and progress of the Church and kingdom of God upon the earth in this last dispensation, instead of leaving it to our enemies to write a false history of the true Church of Christ.[14]

We are not apt to think of the importance of events as they transpire with us, but we feel the importance of them afterwards. We are living in one of the most important generations that man ever lived on earth, and we should write an account of those important transactions which are taking place before our eyes in fulfillment of the prophecies and the revelations of God. There is a great flood of revelations fulfilling in our day, and as they are transpiring before our eyes we want a record made of them.[15]

Children should begin early to keep journals.

I wish to say to my young friends that it will be a great blessing to them, and their children after them, if they will keep a daily journal of what takes place with them and around them. Let all the boys and girls get them a little book, and write a little in it almost every day.

"Let all the boys and girls get them a little book, and write a little in it almost every day."

"What shall I write?" you ask. Write about anything that is worth preserving, or the best you have; and if you begin this while you are young, it will be quite easy for you when you become men and women. How pleasing it would be to you, and to your children, thirty, fifty, or eighty years hence, to sit down and read what took place around you in your childhood and youth! Would you not like to read what took place with our fathers, and mothers, and grand parents, while they were young and during their lives? But the object is not so much to get you to keep a journal while you are young, as it is to get you to continue it after you become men and women, even through your whole lives. This is especially needed in the generation in which you live, for you live in as important a generation as the children of men ever saw, and it is far more important that you should begin early to keep a journal and follow the practice while you live, than that other generations should do so.

You are the children of Zion, and your parents have been called of God to build up the Church of Christ and the Kingdom of God upon the earth in the last days, and soon your parents

will be dead, and you will have to take their places. You will be fathers and mothers, and [you] little boys . . . will become prophets, apostles and elders, and will live to travel and preach the gospel, and will live to receive the word of the Lord. Then it will be very necessary that you should keep a journal and write an account of the dealings of the Lord with you. . . .

. . . It is now a great pleasure to me and my family to sit down and read an account of our travels, where we have been, and what we have done, and the dealings of God with us, and the many good times we have had with our friends. I can read in my journals the good teachings I have heard many years ago from Presidents Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, the Twelve Apostles, and many other good elders, and the good times we have had together. If my young friends will begin to do this and continue it, it will be of far more worth than gold to them in a future day.[16]

Suggestions for Study and Teaching

Consider these ideas as you study the chapter or as you prepare to teach. For additional help, see pages v–ix.

- Why are President Woodruff's journals important to the Church? (See pages 125, 127.) What might President Woodruff say to people who think their journals will never make a difference to anyone else?
- What are some events that have occurred in the Church in your lifetime? How might your record of these events help your children and grandchildren?
- Review the first paragraph on page 127. How does President Woodruff's statement in this paragraph apply to journal keeping? Ponder the impact of important events being lost to present and future generations.
- Scan the chapter, looking for different types of information we should include in our journals. How do such records benefit us personally? In what ways do they benefit our families?

- What would you like to know about your ancestors' lives? What does this suggest about what you could write in your journal?
- Why is it important to write about events soon after they occur? (See page 130.) What can we do to make time for journal keeping?
- Turn to pages 130–32 and review President Woodruff's counsel to children and youth. How can parents and grandparents share these ideas with their children and grandchildren? How might you use these ideas in a family home evening or family council?

Related Scriptures: 1 Nephi 1:1; Omni 1:17; Mosiah 1:1–6; Alma 37:1–9; Moses 6:5–6

Notes

1. Journal of Wilford Woodruff, no date, Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
2. Journal of Wilford Woodruff, March 17, 1857.
3. Journal of Wilford Woodruff, March 17, 1857.
4. *Wilford Woodruff: History of His Life and Labors As Recorded in His Daily Journals* (1964), v.
5. *A Comprehensive History of the Church,* 6:354–55.
6. Journal of Wilford Woodruff, February 15, 1853.
7. Journal of Wilford Woodruff, March 17, 1857.
8. Journal of Wilford Woodruff, February 12, 1862.
9. Journal of Wilford Woodruff, September 6, 1856.
10. Journal of Wilford Woodruff, March 17, 1857.
11. Journal of Wilford Woodruff, September 6, 1856.
12. Journal of Wilford Woodruff, February 12, 1862.
13. Journal of Wilford Woodruff, November 18, 1855.
14. Journal of Wilford Woodruff, February 12, 1862.
15. Journal of Wilford Woodruff, September 6, 1856.
16. "Keep a Journal," *Juvenile Instructor,* January 1, 1867, 5–6.

Remembering Our Spiritual Heritage

Accounts of the early Latter-day Saints' sacrifices and faith can inspire us to be more diligent in keeping our covenants and building up the kingdom of God.

From the Life of Wilford Woodruff

In teaching members of the Church, President Wilford Woodruff often repeated accounts of the faith and courage of the early Latter-day Saints. He urged those of his own generation to continue in the faith, and he exhorted the rising generation to follow the example of their forebears—to "keep in mind the toil, the care, and the hardships which [their] fathers endured in laying the foundation of the Zion of our God."[1] He said: "It has been by [God's] mercies that we have been guided until the present time. The blessings of God have been multiplied upon our heads year after year, and we have had more than we deserve bestowed upon us, and the counsel and instructions given us have been good. I hope that we will be wise, and not let those things pass away as idle tales, but follow them up and be on hand for every thing that is required at our hands."[2]

This chapter contains President Woodruff's accounts of four events that were significant in his personal life and in the history of the Church: (1) Zion's Camp; (2) fulfilling the Lord's command to meet at the temple site in Far West, Missouri; (3) healing the sick in Commerce, Illinois, and Montrose, Iowa; and (4) the pioneers' arrival in the Salt Lake Valley. These accounts are part of the spiritual heritage of every member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Teachings of Wilford Woodruff

Zion's Camp

In 1833 the Saints of God were driven out of Jackson County, Missouri, by a lawless mob, into Clay County. . . . Their houses were burned and their property was destroyed, and they were driven, penniless and destitute, across the [Missouri] river. The Council [in that area] called for volunteers to go to Kirtland, a thousand miles distant, to see the Prophet Joseph for counsel to know what to do. Parley P. Pratt, who with his family was now destitute of all earthly means of support, and Lyman Wight, with his wife lying beside a log in the woods, with a babe three days old, and without food, raiment or shelter, volunteered to go to visit the Prophet of God. . . .

When Elders Pratt and Wight arrived in Kirtland, they told their tale of woe to the Prophet Joseph, who asked the Lord what he should do. The Lord told him to go to and gather up the strength of the Lord's house, the young men and middle aged, and go up and redeem Zion. . . . It was the will of God that they should gather up 500 men, but they were not to go with less than 100 [see D&C 103]. The Saints of the Lord gathered up 205 men, most of whom assembled in Kirtland in the spring of 1834. . . . We were organized into companies of tens with a captain over each, and the Prophet of God led this company of 205 men of Zion's Camp 1,000 miles.

. . . The counsel and the word of the Lord through the prophet of the Lord, and its fulfillment, with our joys and our sorrows in connection with those scenes and events, are engraven upon our hearts as with an iron pen upon a rock, and the history thereof will live through all time and in eternity.[3]

I was in Zion's Camp with the Prophet of God. I saw the dealings of God with him. I saw the power of God with him. I saw that he was a Prophet. What was manifest to him by the power of God upon that mission was of great value to me and to all who received his instructions. I will refer to one instance. A short time before we landed in Missouri Joseph called the camp together. He there prophesied unto us, and told us what lay before us. He gave us the

Referring to Zion's Camp, President Woodruff said, "We gained an experience that we never could have gained in any other way."

reason why chastisement was before us. He says: "You consider me a boy with the rest of you. You have not realized my position before the Lord. But there is a chastisement before this camp." He told us that this would come upon us because he had not been obeyed in his counsels. In one hour after we landed in Missouri and pitched our tents . . . , one man began to fall here, another there, and in a few moments we had a dozen of our camp stretched upon blankets with the cholera. The Prophet of God, when he saw this, felt to sympathize with them, and he and Hyrum laid their hands upon Brother Carter, the first man that was taken sick, but as soon as they did it they were seized themselves, and they both had to leave the camp. He said afterwards: "I told you what was coming to pass, and when affliction came I stretched out my hand to stay it, and I came very near falling by it myself." That mission was very interesting to me.[4]

As we were drawing near Clay County, Missouri, the inhabitants of Jackson County became very uneasy, and a ferry boat, containing twelve men, crossed the Missouri River to Liberty, Clay County, calling a meeting of the inhabitants in the State House,

and made flaming speeches to stir up the people to go out and destroy the Mormon Camp. But the inhabitants of Clay county did not feel disposed to do it. . . .

However, a mob was raised in Jackson county, of both cavalry and footmen, which crossed the river into Clay county and came down to meet and destroy us. We had camped on the east side of Fishing River, and they there intended to give us battle. We camped by the side of a Baptist meeting-house, under a clear sky, with not a cloud to be seen. As soon as we had got our tents pitched, two men on horseback passed through our camp, uttering terrible oaths. . . . As they rode east out of the camp, there was a small cloud appeared in the north-west, which began to unroll itself like a scroll, and soon the whole heavens over our heads were lined with a cloud as black as ink. In a short time the lightnings flashed, the thunders rolled, the rain descended in torrents, and sheets of hail fell, some in our own camp about the size of robin's eggs, which soon covered the earth as with a white mantle. We all had to flee into the meeting-house for protection. The Prophet Joseph was among the last that came in.[5]

As the Prophet Joseph came in shaking the water from his hat and clothing he said, "Boys, there is some meaning to this. God is in this storm." We sang praises to God, and lay all night on benches under cover while our enemies were in the pelting storm.[6]

The river, that we could have crossed almost dryshod when we camped, rose twenty feet, so that no enemy could reach us from the west, and the cavalry, which were on the east, had to flee into a school-house, or any shelter they could get from the large hailstones that fell among them. Their horses were driven by the hail and the storm generally, and scattered many miles through the forest, with their saddles and bridles on, and were not found for many days.[7]

It was reported that the captain of the company in the schoolhouse said it was a strange thing that they could do nothing against the Mormons but what there must be some hail storm or some other thing to hinder their doing anything, but they did not feel disposed to acknowledge that God was fighting our battles.[8]

We were thankful that the Lord fought our battles and delivered us, and that our enemies did not attempt to come against us any more.

In the morning following (June 22nd) that revelation was given, at Fishing River, that is recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants, section 105 [see verses 9–14, in which the Lord puts an end to the original mission of Zion's Camp]. From that date the hearts of the people were softened in Clay County, and we continued our journey into that county, making our final camp . . . , where we passed through some afflictions in fulfillment of the word of the Lord through the mouth of Joseph the Prophet. . . .

After tarrying a few days and setting in order the Church in Clay County, the Prophet Joseph returned to Kirtland with those members of Zion's Camp who had families, but those of us who had not, tarried in Missouri until [we] went abroad to other parts of the nation to preach the Gospel of Christ.[9]

When the members of Zion's Camp were called, many of us had never beheld each other's faces; we were strangers to each other and many had never seen the prophet. We had been scattered abroad, like corn sifted in a sieve, throughout the nation. We were young men, and were called upon in that early day to go up and redeem Zion, and what we had to do we had to do by faith. We assembled together from the various states at Kirtland and went up to redeem Zion, in fulfilment of the commandment of God unto us. God accepted our works as He did the works of Abraham. We accomplished a great deal, though apostates and unbelievers many times asked the question, "What have you done?" We gained an experience that we never could have gained in any other way. We had the privilege of beholding the face of the prophet, and we had the privilege of traveling a thousand miles with him, and seeing the workings of the Spirit of God with him, and the revelations of Jesus Christ unto him and the fulfilment of those revelations.[10]

The experience [we] obtained in travelling in Zion's Camp was of more worth than gold, and the history of that camp will be handed down to the last generations of men.[11]

Fulfilling the Lord's command to meet at the temple site in Far West, Missouri

Note: On April 26, 1838, the Lord revealed through the Prophet Joseph Smith that the presiding officers of the Church were to begin building a temple in the city of Far West, Missouri (see D&C 115:7–10). He also commanded them to "re-commence laying the foundation" on April 26, 1839, exactly one year from the day this revelation was given (see D&C 115:11). President Wilford Woodruff later explained that this was a commandment to "lay the corner stone of the Temple."[12] On July 8, 1838, the Prophet Joseph petitioned, "Show us thy will, O Lord, concerning the Twelve" (section heading, D&C 118). In response, the Lord revealed that the next spring, members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles would go to England to preach the gospel. The Quorum was to meet at the temple site in Far West on April 26, 1839, to signal the beginning of that mission. They were also to take action so that Elders John Taylor, John E. Page, Wilford Woodruff, and Willard Richards could fill vacancies in the Quorum of the Twelve. (See D&C 118:4–6.)

When the revelation was given [in 1838], all was peace and quietude in Far West, Missouri, the city where most of the Latter-day Saints dwelt; but before the time came for its fulfillment, the Saints of God had been driven out of the State of Missouri into the State of Illinois, under the edict of Governor Boggs; and the Missourians had sworn that if all the other revelations of Joseph Smith were fulfilled, that [one] should not be. It stated the day and the place where the Twelve Apostles should take leave of the Saints, to go on their mission across the great waters, and the mobocrats of Missouri had declared that they would see that it should not be fulfilled. . . .

When the time drew near for the fulfillment of this commandment of the Lord, Brigham Young was the President of the Twelve Apostles; [Thomas] B. Marsh, who was the senior Apostle, had fallen. Brother Brigham called together those of the Twelve who were then at Quincy, Illinois, to see what their minds would be about going to Far West, to fulfill the revelation. The Prophet

Joseph and his brother Hyrum, Sidney Rigdon, Lyman Wight and Parley P. Pratt were in prison in Missouri, at that time; but Father Joseph Smith [Sr.], the Patriarch, was at Quincy, Illinois. He and others who were present did not think it wisdom for us to attempt the journey, as our lives would be in great jeopardy. They thought the Lord would take the will for the deed. But when President Young asked the Twelve what our feelings were upon the subject, we all of us, as the voice of one man, said the Lord God had spoken, and it was for us to obey. It was the Lord's business to take care of his servants, and we would fulfill the commandment, or die trying.

To fully understand the risk the Twelve Apostles ran in making this journey my readers should remember that Lilburn W. Boggs, governor of the State of Missouri, had issued a proclamation, in which all the Latter-day Saints were required to leave that State or be exterminated. Far West had been captured by the militia, who were really only an organized mob; the citizens had been compelled to give up their arms; all the [Church's] leading men who could be got hold of had been taken prisoners; the rest of the Saints—men, women and children—had to flee as best they could out of the State to save their lives, leaving all their houses, lands and other property which they could not carry with them, to be taken by the mob. In fact, they shot down the cattle and hogs of the Saints wherever they could find them, and robbed them of nearly everything they could lay their hands upon. Latter-day Saints were treated with merciless cruelty and had to endure the most outrageous abuses. It was with the greatest difficulty that many of them got out of the State, especially the prominent men; for there were many men of that State at that time, who acted as though they thought it no more harm to shoot a "Mormon" than a mad dog. . . .

Having determined to carry out the requirement of the revelation, . . . we started for Far West. . . .

On the morning of the 26th of April, 1839, notwithstanding the threats of our enemies that the revelation which was to be fulfilled this day should not be, and notwithstanding that ten thousand of the Saints had been driven out of the State by the edict of

The temple site in Far West, Missouri, where members of the Quorum of the Twelve met on April 26, 1839, in obedience to the Lord's command.

the governor, and though the Prophet Joseph and his brother, Hyrum Smith, with other leading men were in the hands of our enemies, in chains and in prison, we moved on to the temple ground in the city of Far West, and held a council, and fulfilled the revelation and commandment given unto us, and we performed many other things at this council. . . .

Bidding good-by to the small remnant of Saints who remained on the temple ground to see us fulfill the revelation and commandments of God, we turned our back on Far West and Missouri, and returned to Illinois. We had accomplished the mission without a dog moving his tongue at us [see Exodus 11:7], or any man saying, "Why do you so?"

We crossed the Mississippi River on the steam ferry, entered Quincy on the 2nd of May, and all had the joy of reaching our families once more in peace and safety.[13]

Healing the sick in Commerce, Illinois, and Montrose, Iowa

Before starting on our mission to England [in 1839], we were under the necessity of settling our families. A place called Commerce, afterwards named Nauvoo, was selected as the place at which our people should settle.

I left Quincy, in company with brother Brigham Young and our families on the 15th of May, and arrived in Commerce [on] the 18th. After an interview with Joseph we crossed the [Mississippi] river at Montrose, Iowa. President Brigham Young and myself, with our families, occupied one room about fourteen feet square. Finally brother Young obtained another room. . . . Then brother Orson Pratt and family moved into the same room with myself and family.

While I was living in this cabin in the old barracks, we experienced a day of God's power with the Prophet Joseph. It was a very sickly time and Joseph had given up his home in Commerce to the sick, and had a tent pitched in his door-yard and was living in that himself. The large number of Saints who had been driven out of Missouri, were flocking into Commerce; but had no homes to go into, and were living in wagons, in tents, and on the ground. Many, therefore, were sick through the exposure they were subjected to. Brother Joseph had waited on the sick, until he was worn out and nearly sick himself.

On the morning of the 22nd of July, 1839, he arose reflecting upon the situation of the Saints of God in their persecutions and afflictions, and he called upon the Lord in prayer, and the power of God rested upon him mightily, and as Jesus healed the sick around him in his day, so Joseph, the Prophet of God, healed all around on this occasion. He healed all in his house and door-yard; then, in company with Sidney Rigdon and several of the Twelve, he went through among the sick lying on the bank of the river, and he commanded them in a loud voice, in the name of Jesus Christ, to come up and be made whole, and they were all healed. When he had healed all that were sick on the east side of the river, they crossed the Mississippi River in a ferry boat to the west side, to Montrose, where we were. The first house they

went into was President Brigham Young's. He was sick on his bed at the time. The Prophet went into his house and healed him, and they all came out together. As they were passing by my door, brother Joseph said: "Brother Woodruff, follow me." These were the only words spoken by any of the company from the time they left brother Brigham's house till we crossed the public square, and entered brother [Elijah] Fordham's house. Brother Fordham had been dying for an hour, and we expected each minute would be his last.

I felt the power of God that was overwhelming his Prophet.

When we entered the house, brother Joseph walked up to brother Fordham, and took him by the right hand; in his left hand he held his hat.

He saw that brother Fordham's eyes were glazed, and that he was speechless and unconscious.

After taking hold of his hand, he looked down into the dying man's face and said: "Brother Fordham, do you not know me?" At first he made no reply; but we could all see the effect of the Spirit of God resting upon him.

He again said: "Elijah, do you not know me?"

With a low whisper, brother Fordham answered, "yes!"

The Prophet then said, "Have you not faith to be healed?"

The answer, which was a little plainer than before, was: "I am afraid it is too late. If you had come sooner, I think it might have been."

He had the appearance of a man awaking from sleep. It was the sleep of death.

Joseph then said: "Do you not believe that Jesus is the Christ?"

"I do, brother Joseph," was the response.

Then the Prophet of God spoke with a loud voice, as in the majesty of the Godhead: "Elijah, I command you, in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, to arise and be made whole!"

The words of the Prophet were not like the words of man, but like the voice of God. It seemed to me that the house shook from its foundation.

On July 22, 1839, the Prophet Joseph Smith went among the sick in Commerce, Illinois, and Montrose, Iowa, healing them by the power of the priesthood.

Elijah Fordham leaped from his bed like a man raised from the dead. A healthy color came to his face, and life was manifested in every act.

His feet were done up in . . . poultices. He kicked them off his feet, scattering the contents, and then called for his clothes

and put them on. He asked for a bowl of bread and milk, and ate it; then put on his hat and followed us into the street, to visit others who were sick.

The unbeliever may ask: "Was there not deception in this?"

If there is any deception in the mind of the unbeliever, there was certainly none with Elijah Fordham, the dying man, nor with those who were present with him, for in a few minutes more he would have been in the spirit world, had he not been rescued. . . .

As soon as we left brother Fordham's house, we went into the house of Joseph B. Noble, who was very low and dangerously sick. When we entered the house, brother Joseph took him by the hand, and commanded him, in the name of Jesus Christ, to arise and be made whole. He did arise and was immediately healed.

While this was going on, the wicked mob in the place . . . had become alarmed, and followed us into brother Noble's house.

Before they arrived there, brother Joseph had called upon brother Fordham to offer prayer.

While he was praying, the mob entered, with all the evil spirits accompanying them.

As soon as they entered, brother Fordham, who was praying, fainted and sank to the floor.

When Joseph saw the mob in the house, he arose and had the room cleared of both that class of men and their attendant devils. Then brother Fordham immediately revived and finished his prayer.

This shows what power evil spirits have upon the tabernacles of men. The Saints are only saved from the power of the devil by the power of God.

This case of Brother Noble's was the last one of healing upon that day. It was the greatest day for the manifestation of the power of God through the gift of healing since the organization of the Church.[14]

The pioneers' arrival in the Salt Lake Valley

Note: In April 1834, Wilford Woodruff heard the Prophet Joseph Smith prophesy: "There will be tens of thousands of Latter-day Saints who will be gathered in the Rocky Mountains, and there they will open the door for the establishing of the Gospel among the Lamanites, who will receive the Gospel and their endowments and the blessings of God. This people will go into the Rocky Mountains; they will there build temples to the Most High."[15] In fulfillment of this prophecy, the Saints began to settle in the Salt Lake Valley 13 years later, after being persecuted and driven from place to place. Elder Woodruff, then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, was part of the first pioneer company that traveled to their new promised land, leaving Winter Quarters, Nebraska, in April 1847 and arriving in the Salt Lake Valley in July 1847.

On the 22nd [of July 1847] Orson Pratt, [George] A. Smith and seven others rode into the valley, leaving their camp to follow and work the road. President Young being sick, I was carrying him on a bed made up in my carriage, and we camped with the main body of the company. . . .

On the 24th, I drove my carriage, with President Young lying on a bed in it, into the open valley, the rest of the company following. When we came out of the canyon into full view of the valley, I turned the side of my carriage around, open to the west, and President Young arose from his bed and took a survey of the country. While gazing upon the scene before us, he was enwrapped in vision for several minutes. He had seen the valley before in vision, and upon this occasion he saw the future glory of Zion and of Israel, as they would be, planted in the valleys of these mountains. When the vision had passed, he said, "It is enough. This is the right place. Drive on." So I drove to the encampment already formed by those who had come along in advance of us.

When we arrived on the ground, the brethren had commenced plowing. I had brought a bushel of potatoes with me, and I resolved that I would neither eat nor drink until I had

On July 24, 1847, President Brigham Young arose from his bed in Wilford Woodruff's wagon and said: "It is enough. This is the right place. Drive on."

planted them. I got them into the ground by 1 o'clock, and these, with the potatoes that the other brethren had planted, became the foundation for the future potato crops of Utah.

In the evening, in company with Heber C. Kimball, [George] A. Smith and E. T. Benson, I rode up City Creek [Canyon] to look for timber. While there we had a thunder shower, and the rain reached nearly over the whole valley. . . .

In the morning of the 28th, . . . President Young held a council with the Twelve, and took a walk above our encampment. He then stopped, stuck his cane down, and said, "Here will be the Temple of our God." This was about the centre of the site of the [Salt Lake] Temple.[16]

God has blessed us, he has blessed the earth, and our labors in the tilling of the soil have been greatly prospered. . . . It was barren, desolate, abounding with grasshoppers, crickets and coyote wolves, and these things seemed to be the only natural productions of the soil. We went to work by faith, not much by sight, to cultivate the earth. We broke almost all the plows we had the first day. We had to let streams of water out to moisten

the earth, and by experience we had to learn to raise anything. The stranger comes into Salt Lake City and sees our orchards, and the trees in our streets, and he thinks, what a fruitful and delightful place it is. He does not think that, for twenty or twenty-four years, almost every tree he beholds, according to its age, has had to be watered twice a week through the whole summer season, or they would all have been dead long since. We have had to unite upon these things, the Lord has blessed our labors, and his mercies have been over this people.[17]

In the pioneer journey, coming here [to the Salt Lake Valley], we had to come by faith; we knew nothing about this country, but we intended to come to the mountains. Joseph had organized a company to come here, before his death. He had these things before him, and understood them perfectly. God had revealed to him the future of this Church and Kingdom, and had told him, from time to time, that the work of which he was laying the foundation would become an everlasting kingdom—would remain forever. President Young led the pioneers to this country. He had faith to believe that the Lord would sustain us. All who travelled hither at that time had this faith. The Spirit of God was with us, the Holy Ghost was with us; and the Angels of the Lord were with us and we were blessed. All, and more than we anticipated, in coming here, has been realized, as far as time would permit.[18]

We, as pioneers and as the people of God, are fulfilling prophecy and making history. . . . Our whole life, history and travels have been pointed out by the ancient prophets. As the Pioneers came into this barren desert, and the Saints have followed them to fulfil the prophecies to make the desert blossom as the rose [see Isaiah 35:1], to sow our grain beside all small streams and still waters, and to use the fir, the pine, and the box [tree], to beautify the place of God's sanctuary, and to make the place of his feet glorious [see Isaiah 60:13], . . . let us magnify our calling and build up the Zion and kingdom of God until it is perfected before the heavens and the earth, and not disappoint those who sent us, nor those who have seen us by vision and revelation, but let us finish and fulfil our destiny to the satisfaction of our Heavenly Father, his angels, and all good men.[19]

Suggestions for Study and Teaching

Consider these ideas as you study the chapter or as you prepare to teach. For additional help, see pages v–ix.

- Review President Woodruff's comments on page 134. Why should we learn about the early Latter-day Saints? How can we ensure that their stories do not "pass away as idle tales"? How can we preserve accounts from the lives of our own ancestors?
- In what ways did Wilford Woodruff benefit from his experiences in Zion's Camp? (See pages 135–38.) How do you think these experiences helped him prepare to lead the Church later in his life? In what ways have your experiences helped you prepare to serve?
- Why did members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles feel they should go to the temple site in Far West, Missouri? (See pages 139–41.) What can we learn from this account?
- What do you learn from the story about the healing of Elijah Fordham and others? (See pages 142–45.) How can this account help Melchizedek Priesthood holders when they prepare to administer to the sick?
- What does the pioneer journey to the Salt Lake Valley teach about faith? What other principles of the gospel do you see in the lives of these early pioneers? (See pages 146–48.)
- Who are some modern-day pioneers in your family? in your community or nation? What have these people done that makes them pioneers?
- In what ways do all members of the Church share the spiritual heritage of the early Latter-day Saints?

Related Scriptures: James 5:14–15; Alma 15:1–12; Ether 12:6; D&C 42:44–48; 103; 105; 115; 118; 136

Notes

1. "A Pioneer Address," *Millennial Star,* September 3, 1888, 563.
2. In *Journal of Discourses,* 9:223.
3. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* July 27, 1880, 2.
4. In Conference Report, April 1898, 29–30.
5. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* July 27, 1880, 2.
6. In *History of the Church,* 2:104, footnote.
7. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* July 27, 1880, 2.
8. In *History of the Church,* 2:104, footnote.
9. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* July 27, 1880, 2.
10. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* sel. G. Homer Durham (1946), 305.
11. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* July 27, 1880, 2.
12. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* December 21, 1869, 1.
13. "Leaves from My Journal," *Millennial Star,* October 10, 1881, 645–47.
14. "Leaves from My Journal," *Millennial Star,* October 10 and 17, 1881, 647, 669–71.
15. Quoted by Wilford Woodruff in Conference Report, April 1898, 57.
16. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* July 27, 1880, 2.
17. *Deseret News,* May 22, 1872, 216.
18. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* December 21, 1869, 1.
19. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* July 27, 1880, 2–3.

CHAPTER 15

Living by Faith

We walk by faith and not by sight, with the assurance that the Lord will strengthen us in our efforts to build His kingdom on the earth.

From the Life of Wilford Woodruff

In November 1834, Wilford Woodruff was ordained a priest in the Aaronic Priesthood and given his first assignment as a full-time missionary. He was then living in Clay County, Missouri, having stayed there after serving in Zion's Camp. Before he began his mission, he spoke with his bishop, who had given him the assignment. He asked about the route he should take to his field of labor. He also asked if he and his companion were to travel without purse or scrip, as the Lord had commanded missionaries at the time (see D&C 24:18; 84:78, 86). To travel without purse or scrip means to go without money, relying on the goodness of Church members and others to provide food and shelter. President Woodruff later recalled his conversation with his bishop:

"It was then dangerous for any of our brethren to go through Jackson County [Missouri]. He wanted me to go to Arkansas, and the road led square through Jackson County. I asked him if we should go through there (I had a companion with me—an elder).

"Said he, 'If you have got faith to do it, you may; I haven't.'

"I thought that was a curious remark from a bishop.

" 'Well,' said I, 'the Lord says we must travel without purse or scrip; shall we do it?'

"Said he, 'That is the law of God; if you have faith to do it, you can do it.' "[1]

"Even the labors of Jesus . . . were all by faith. It was by the power of the Father, whose work He had come to perform, that He was sustained."

Soon after that discussion, Wilford Woodruff and his companion set out on their mission, traveling through Jackson County without purse or scrip. President Woodruff later said: "We put some Books of Mormon and some clothing into our valises, strapped them on our backs, and started on foot. We crossed the ferry into Jackson County, and went through it. In some instances the Lord preserved us as by miracle, from the mob."[2]

In addition to protecting the two missionaries from the Jackson County mob, the Lord protected them from other perils along the way. President Woodruff recounted one such experience. As he and his companion approached a grove of trees, a large black bear came out toward them. "We were not afraid of him," he said, "for we were on the Lord's business, and had not mocked God's prophet as did the forty-two wicked children who said to Elisha 'Go up thou bald head,' for which they were torn by bears [see 2 Kings 2:23–24]. . . . When the bear got within eight rods of us [a distance of about 44 yards or 40 meters] he sat on his haunches and looked at us a moment, and then ran away; and we went on our way rejoicing."[3]

President Woodruff often spoke of this first mission, remembering the blessings he received as he served the Lord with faith: "Never in my life, as an apostle, as a seventy, or as an elder, have I ever had more of the protection of the Lord than while holding the office [of] a priest. The Lord revealed to me by visions, by revelations, and by the Holy Spirit, many things that lay before me."[4]

Teachings of Wilford Woodruff

During our life on the earth, we are to walk by faith and not by sight.

Faith is the first principle of the Gospel. What is faith? Paul, in writing to the Hebrews, undertakes to explain it. He says that "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen;" and to prove this he goes on to tell what different men accomplished through faith [see Hebrews 11]. I look upon faith as one of the most important principles that God ever revealed to man.[5]

If we had correct understanding we should all see as the Lord does, and should understand how his purposes will be accomplished; but we are to walk by faith and not by sight.[6]

When we get to the other side of the veil, we shall know something. We now work by faith. We have the evidence of things not seen. The resurrection, the eternal judgment, the celestial kingdom, and the great blessings that God has given in the holy anointings and endowment in the temples, are all for the future, and they will be fulfilled, for they are eternal truths. We will never while in the flesh, with this veil over us, fully comprehend that which lies before us in the world to come. It will pay any man to serve God and to keep His commandments the few days he lives upon the earth.[7]

Brethren and sisters, you should live by faith, realizing every day that all power rests with God, and that it is through him that we are able to live in peace and enjoy plenty.[8]

The Gospel of Christ requires faith all the day long.[9]

We show our faith by our works.

It is truly good to . . . hear the word of the Lord, and it is truly a good thing to believe in it, but it is still better to practice it.[10]

The first principle of [the] Gospel is faith. Well, the people of the world may say, we all believe in Jesus Christ. Yes, but there is something to do besides believing in Christ. We must repent of our sins, be baptized for the remission of them, and receive the Holy Ghost. This is the doctrine taught by Christ and His Apostles.[11]

Faith is required on the part of the Saints to live their religion, do their duty, walk uprightly before the Lord and build up his Zion on the earth. Then it requires works to correspond with our faith. . . . It is our duty as a people to unite together and not to be slothful in welldoing.[12]

We must exercise faith as we help build the kingdom of God.

This gift and principle of faith is necessary for the Saints in every age of the world to enable them to build up the kingdom of God and perform the work required of them.[13]

Read the eleventh chapter of Hebrews and you will find that, beginning with the creation of the world, everything has been accomplished by faith. The whole of the work of all the ancient patriarchs and prophets was accomplished by the exercise of this principle; and it is just so in the last dispensation of the fulness of times.[14]

Even the labors of Jesus, from the manger to the cross, through His whole life of pain, sorrow, affliction, suffering, persecution and derision, were all by faith. It was by the power of the Father, whose work He had come to perform, that He was sustained. He fully believed that He would be able to accomplish all that He had been sent to perform. It was on this principle that He fulfilled every requirement and obeyed every law, even that of baptism. . . . The apostles, in their labors, had to work on the same principle that the Saints in both former and latter days have had to work upon,—namely the principle of faith.

Joseph Smith had to work by faith. It is true that he had a knowledge of a great many things, as the Saints in former days had, but in many things he had to exercise faith. He believed he was fulfilling the prophecies of the ancient prophets. He knew that God had called him, but in the establishment of His kingdom he had to work continually by faith. The church was organized on the 6th of April, 1830, with six members, but Joseph had faith that the kingdom thus commenced, like a grain of mustard seed, would become a great church and kingdom upon the earth; and from that day until the day on which he sealed his testimony with his blood, his whole life was as if wading through the deep waters of persecution and oppression, received from the hands of his fellowmen. He had all this to endure through

faith, and he was true, faithful and valiant in the testimony of Jesus to the day of his death. . . .

. . . In our labors to build up the Church and Kingdom of God upon the earth, we have had to labor by faith. It is still requisite.[15]

Hundreds of people are laboring in [temples]. Who for? Both for the living and the dead. Why do they labor for the dead? Have they ever seen the resurrection of the dead? No, except by vision or revelation. But they have faith in it, and as an evidence of that faith they perform this work. They look forward to the resurrection and eternal judgment, to the celestial kingdom and the great blessings which God has revealed for the salvation and exaltation of the children of men. They do this by faith, and it is by this power that they have accomplished what they have. . . . By faith [the Salt Lake] tabernacle has been built, . . . temples have been reared, and . . . people have been gathered from the nations of the earth.

Thousands of Elders have been called, not from colleges, but from the various occupations of life, and sent forth into the world to preach the Gospel without money and without price. . . . Men have listened to them, and some spirit or power has convinced them that the testimony which these Elders have borne was true. . . . What has been the result of this? Thousands have believed that testimony and proved that it was true. These Elders labored by faith; they traveled by faith; they worked by faith. It was faith that sustained them all the way through. They traveled without purse and scrip, and through their faith the God of heaven fed and clothed them, and opened the way before them. . . . And many people believed the testimony of these simple men. They repented of their sins, were baptized for the remission of them, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; they received that Holy Ghost, and it bore testimony to them of the truths of the Gospel.[16]

In any and every age of the world when God has called or commanded a man or a people to perform a certain work, they through determination and perseverance, and faith in him, have been enabled to accomplish it.[17]

President Woodruff said that missionaries "labored by faith; they traveled by faith; they worked by faith. It was faith that sustained them."

As we keep our covenants and obey the commandments, the Lord increases the power of faith within us.

All the labors that we have performed . . . have been by faith, and we, as Latter-day Saints, should seek to cherish and grow in this principle.[18]

It is our duty to be continually increasing in faith, that we may be enabled to call upon the Lord with acceptance.[19]

I consider that the Lord requires this at the hand of every man and woman in Israel, every Latter-day Saint, that we first obtain the Holy Spirit [and] then bring forth the fruits of it unto salvation. Then you will see this people keep their covenants and obey the commandments of God; this is the duty of all of us, and we should live our religion and follow its dictates. When this is done you will see this people awake and bring forth works of righteousness, then they will have faith and they will have power, and rise up and the power and glory of God will be made manifest through such instruments as the Lord has chosen in this dispensation upon the earth, into whose hands he has committed the Holy Priesthood.[20]

I do feel that the Lord is gracious unto us, and that we should prize above all things upon the earth the words of eternal life that are given unto us. As long as we are governed by the Holy Spirit our minds are strengthened, and our faith is and will be increased. And we shall labor for the building up of the kingdom of God.[21]

Almighty Father, increase within us the powers of that faith delivered to and possessed by thy Saints. Strengthen us by the memories of the glorious deliverances of the past, by the remembrance of the sacred covenants that thou hast made with us, so that, when evil overshadows us, when trouble encompasses us, when we pass through the valley of humiliation, we may not falter, may not doubt, but in the strength of thy holy name may accomplish all thy righteous purposes with regard to us, fill the measure of our creation, and triumph gloriously, by thy grace, over every besetting sin, be redeemed from every evil, and be numbered in the kingdom of heaven amongst those who shall dwell in thy presence forever.[22]

Suggestions for Study and Teaching

Consider these ideas as you study the chapter or as you prepare to teach. For additional help, see pages v–ix.

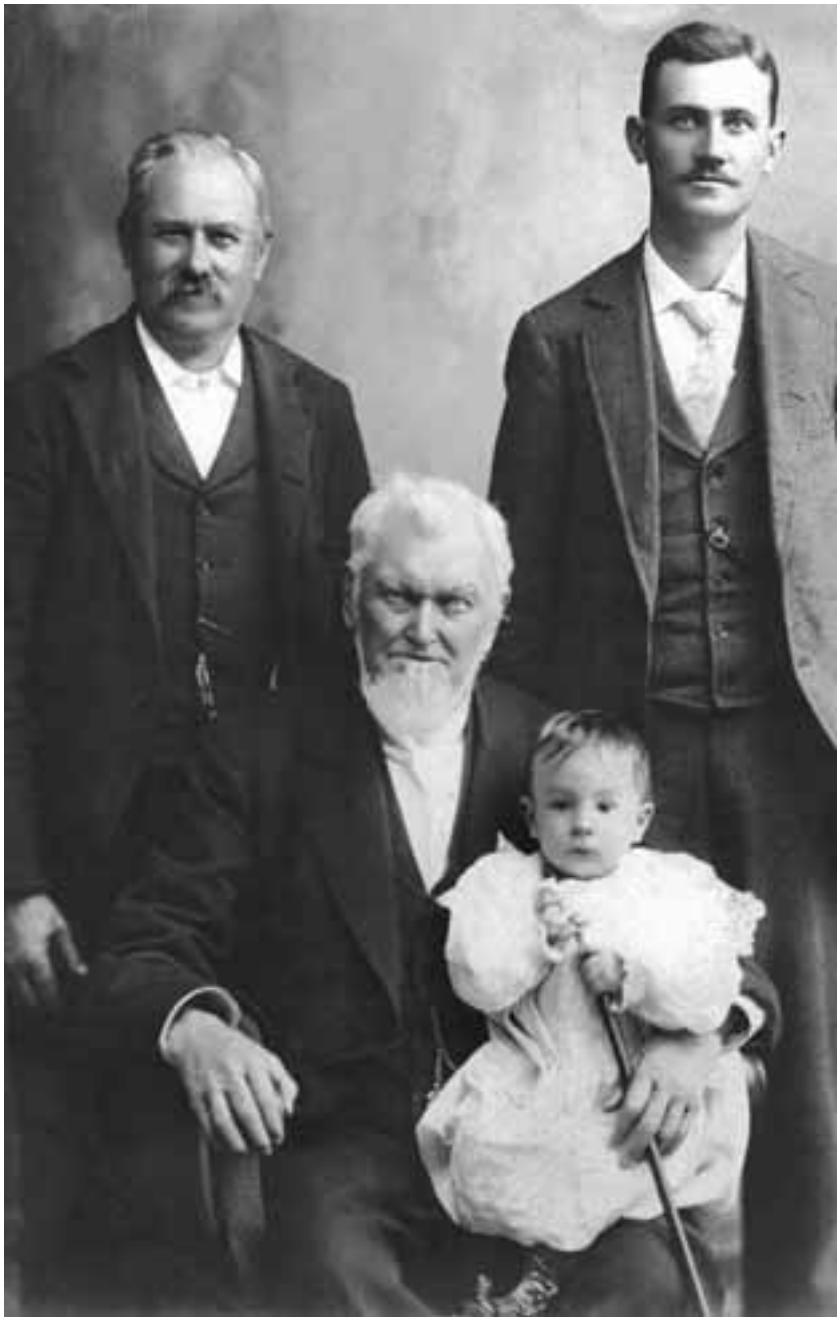
- What is faith? (See pages 153–54; see also Hebrews 11:1, footnote *b;* Alma 32:21.) How do we receive "the evidence of things not seen"? What does it mean to you to "walk by faith and not by sight"?
- How can faith in Jesus Christ influence our everyday life? How does faith in Jesus Christ influence our hope for eternal life? (See Moroni 7:41–42.)
- As you study President Woodruff's teachings in this chapter, what relationship do you see between our faith and our actions? (See also James 2:17–26.)
- How did Wilford Woodruff show his faith when he was called to serve his first full-time mission? (See pages 151, 153.) What experiences have you had in which you have needed to exercise faith?

- What can we learn about faith from the example of Jesus Christ? from the example of the Prophet Joseph Smith? from the examples of missionaries and new converts today? (See pages 155–56.)
- In what ways has the Lord blessed you as you have exercised faith in Him?
- Note the word *gift* in the first paragraph on page 155. Think about or discuss the importance of remembering that faith is a gift from God. What must we do to receive this gift? (See pages 157–58.)

Related Scriptures: Romans 10:17; 2 Corinthians 5:7; Helaman 15:7–8; Ether 12:2–27; Moroni 7:20–33

Notes

1. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* sel. G. Homer Durham (1946), 299–300.
2. "Leaves from My Journal," *Millennial Star,* May 30, 1881, 343.
3. "More of My First Mission," *Juvenile Instructor,* May 1, 1867, 69.
4. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 300.
5. *Deseret Weekly,* February 3, 1894, 193.
6. *Deseret News,* September 26, 1860, 234.
7. *Deseret Weekly,* February 3, 1894, 194.
8. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 222.
9. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* July 30, 1878, 1.
10. *Deseret News,* June 26, 1861, 130.
11. *Millennial Star,* November 19, 1896, 739–40.
12. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* January 12, 1875, 1.
13. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* December 21, 1869, 1.
14. *Deseret News,* December 23, 1874, 741.
15. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* December 21, 1869, 1.
16. *Deseret Weekly,* February 3, 1894, 193.
17. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 278.
18. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* December 21, 1869, 1.
19. *Deseret News,* January 6, 1858, 350.
20. *Deseret News,* February 4, 1857, 379.
21. *Deseret News,* April 1, 1857, 27.
22. From the dedicatory prayer of the Salt Lake Temple, in *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 349.



Four generations in President Woodruff's family. Clockwise from top left: son Wilford Woodruff Jr., grandson Wilford S. Woodruff, great-grandson Charles W. Woodruff, and President Wilford Woodruff.

Marriage and Parenthood: Preparing Our Families for Eternal Life

Guided by righteous and loving parents, families can unite to help build up the kingdom of God and partake of all the blessings of heaven.

From the Life of Wilford Woodruff

Wilford Woodruff and Phoebe Whittemore Carter were married on April 13, 1837, in Kirtland, Ohio. Throughout their life together, they endured many trials, thus growing in their devotion to each other, their children, and the kingdom of God. One such experience came in the winter of 1838, about five months before Wilford Woodruff's call to the apostleship. As Brother Woodruff led a group of Saints on a journey to gather with other members of the Church, his wife became very ill. He later recounted:

Phoebe Woodruff

"On the 23rd of November my wife, Phoebe, was attacked with a severe headache, which terminated in brain fever. She grew more and more distressed daily as we continued our journey. It was a terrible ordeal for a woman to travel in a wagon over rough roads, afflicted as she was. At the same time our child was also very sick."

In the ensuing days, Sister Woodruff's condition worsened, even though they had been able to pause on their journey and find places to rest. Brother Woodruff recalled: "December 3rd found my wife very low. I spent the day in taking care of her, and the following day I returned to Eaton [a nearby town] to get some

things for her. She seemed to be gradually sinking, and in the evening her spirit apparently left her body, and she was dead.

"The sisters gathered around her body, weeping, while I stood looking at her in sorrow. The Spirit and power of God began to rest upon me until, for the first time during her sickness, faith filled my soul, although she lay before me as one dead."

Strengthened in his faith, Wilford Woodruff gave his wife a priesthood blessing. "I laid my hands upon her," he said, "and in the name of Jesus Christ I rebuked the power of death and the destroyer, and commanded the same to depart from her, and the spirit of life to enter her body.

"Her spirit returned to her body, and from that hour she was made whole; and we all felt to praise the name of God, and to trust in him and keep his commandments.

"While this operation was going on with me (as my wife related afterwards) her spirit left her body, and she saw her body lying upon the bed, and the sisters weeping. She looked at them and at me, and upon her babe, and, while gazing upon this scene, two personages came into the room. . . . One of these messengers informed her that she could have her choice: she might go to rest in the spirit world, or, on one condition she could have the privilege of returning to her tabernacle and continuing her labors upon the earth. The condition was, if she felt that she could stand by her husband, and with him pass through all the cares, trials, tribulations and afflictions of life which he would be called to pass through for the Gospel's sake unto the end. When she looked at the situation of her husband and child she said: 'Yes, I will do it!'

"At the moment that decision was made the power of faith rested upon me, and when I administered unto her, her spirit entered her tabernacle. . . .

"On the morning of the 6th of Dec., the Spirit said to me: 'Arise, and continue thy journey!' and through the mercy of God my wife was enabled to arise and dress herself and walk to the wagon, and we went on our way rejoicing."[1]

Faithful to her promise, Sister Woodruff stood by her husband, even when his duties as an Apostle required him to be

away from the family for long periods of time. On May 4, 1840, when Elder Woodruff was serving a mission in England, she sent him a letter, saying: "I know that it is the will of God that you should labour in his vineyard; therefore, I feel reconciled to his will in these things. I have not been left to murmur or complain since you left me, but am looking forward to the day when you shall return home once more to the bosom of your family, having fulfilled your mission in the love and fear of God. You are always present with me when I go before the throne of grace, and when I am asking for protection and blessings upon myself and children, I claim the same for my dear companion, who has gone far from me, even to a foreign nation, to preach the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ."[2]

At such times of separation, President Woodruff also expressed a longing for his family, combined with a resolve to do the will of the Lord. On April 3, 1847, he prepared to travel with the first pioneer company to the Salt Lake Valley. He wrote in his journal: "I have never felt more weight upon my mind at any time while leaving my family to go on a mission than now. My prayer to God is that He will sustain myself and family to meet again on the earth as he hath done in the many missions I have taken on the earth in the vineyard of the Lord."[3] Four days later his family watched him depart from the Saints' settlement at Winter Quarters, Nebraska. Stopping at the top of a ridge not far from the settlement, he took time to look back at his family through his field glasses.[4]

Wilford Woodruff rejoiced in the knowledge that his family could be eternal. This truth gave him strength to endure the difficulties of life. He said, "I have thought many a time that if I labored until I was as old as Methuselah and by that means could have my family dwell with me in glory in the eternal worlds, it would pay me for all the pain and suffering I could endure in this world."[5] The promise of an eternal family influenced his actions toward his family members. In a letter to his daughter Blanche, he observed: "We are all expecting to live together forever after death. I think we all as parents and children ought to take all the pains we can to make each other happy as long as we live that we may have nothing to regret."[6]

Teachings of Wilford Woodruff

The blessings of marriage and parenthood are far greater than worldly wealth.

The Lord has informed us that marriage is ordained of God unto man [see D&C 49:15]. The institution of marriage, in some communities of which we read, is falling almost into disrepute. It is alleged that there is a growing tendency in this direction among us. The cause is, doubtless, traceable to the increase of wealth and the disinclination of young men to take upon them the burdens of a wife and family. As we depart from the simplicity of early days, we may naturally expect that this tendency will increase as young men may be restrained from offering marriage to young ladies unless they can give them something like as comfortable a home as they enjoy under their parents' roof. Extravagant or luxuriant habits of training on the part of the girls will also have the effect to deter young men from marrying. . . . The young of both sexes should be taught that it is not necessary to happiness in marriage to be in the possession of wealth.[7]

When the daughters of Zion are asked by the young men to join with them in marriage, instead of asking—"Has this man a fine brick house, a span of fine horses and a fine carriage?" they should ask—"Is he a man of God? Has he the Spirit of God with him? Is he a Latter-day Saint? Does he pray? Has he got the Spirit upon him to qualify him to build up the kingdom?" If he has that, never mind the carriage and brick house, take hold and unite yourselves together according to the law of God.[8]

It is the duty of these young men [in] Zion to take the daughters of Zion to wife, and prepare tabernacles [physical bodies] for the spirits of men, which are the children of our Father in Heaven. They are waiting for tabernacles, they are ordained to come here, and they ought to be born in the land of Zion instead of Babylon.[9]

I call upon parents throughout Zion to do what you can to induce your sons and daughters to walk in the paths of righteousness and truth and to improve the opportunities before

them. Do not let your hearts be altogether upon the vanity and affairs of the world, but learn to appreciate the fact that faithful children are among the choicest and greatest of blessings.[10]

The blessing that God has revealed to us in the patriarchal order of marriage—being sealed for time and eternity—is not prized by us as it should be.[11]

We should prize our families, and the associations we have together, remembering that if we are faithful we shall inherit glory, immortality and eternal life, and this is the greatest of all the gifts of God to man [see D&C 14:7].[12]

Through parents' teaching and example, children can prepare to serve in the Church and remain true to the faith.

I have never had any doubts with regard to the truth and final triumph of this work. I have none today. I have no doubts about Zion becoming all that the prophets saw it, in its glory, its power, its dominion and strength, with the power of God resting upon it.

In view of all these things, the question which has arisen in my mind, and which has caused me a good deal of thought, is, who is going to take this kingdom and bear it off? Unto whom is the Lord going to look to take this kingdom in its final triumph and prepare it in its perfection and glory for the coming of the Son of Man? To our sons and daughters. . . . Upon their shoulders this kingdom has got to rest, when their fathers and elders have passed to the other side of the veil. This is before me just as plain as the light of the sun in the firmament of heaven. And when I consider this, I ask myself, what condition are our young men and women in? Are we, as parents, doing our duty towards them? Are they trying to qualify themselves and preparing for the great destiny and work which lie before them?[13]

None of us know what course our children will take. We set good examples before them, and we strive to teach them righteous principles; but when they come to years of accountability they have their agency and they act for themselves.[14]

In our zeal to preach the Gospel to the people of all nations, we should not forget the duties devolving upon us in regard to the proper bringing up of our own children, instilling in them,

when young, a love for truth and virtue, and reverence for sacred things, and affording them a knowledge of the principles of the Gospel.[15]

Let us try and bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord [see Ephesians 6:4]. Let us set them good examples and teach them good principles while they are young. They are given to us by our heavenly Father; they are our kingdom, they are the foundation of our exaltation and glory; they are plants of renown [see D&C 124:61], and we should strive to bear them up before the Lord, and teach them to pray to and to have faith in the Lord as far as we can, that when we are passed and gone and they succeed us on this stage of action they may bear off the great latter-day work and kingdom of God upon the earth.[16]

Those who live under what is called civilized rule, are taught the moral law—the ten commandments—they are taught not to lie, not to swear, not to steal, in short, not to do those things that are counted ungodly, unholy and unrighteous in the midst of society. When parents teach their children these principles in early youth they make an impression upon their minds, and as quick as children arrive at years of accountability, early impressions will have an influence upon their actions, and throughout the rest of their lives. Children so impressed and so trained, are ever after shocked when they hear their associates swear, and take the name of God in vain, and if ever they learn so to swear it first requires a great effort to overcome their early impressions.[17]

It is . . . a great blessing to children to have parents who pray and teach their children good principles, and set a good example before them. Parents cannot properly reprove children for doing things which they practice themselves.[18]

If we set a good example before our children, and try to instruct them from their childhood to maturity; teach them to pray and to honor the Almighty; teach them those principles that will sustain them in the midst of all trials, that the Spirit of the Lord may rest upon them, . . . then they will not easily be led astray. Good impressions will follow them through life, and whatever principles may be presented, those good impressions will never leave them.[19]

"Let us try and bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Wise parents will not allow outside concerns to take precedence over their families.

I have long been satisfied that the devil was making great exertions to drive a wedge in between parents and children, trying to inspire and instil into the minds of the sons and daughters of the saints those corrupting notions that will prevent them from following the footsteps of their fathers and mothers. . . .

. . . How important it is that we should be wise fathers and mothers, and that we should act wisely in instilling into their youthful minds all those principles that will lead them to that which is just, and to carry out in their lives the principles of righteousness and truth. . . .

. . . It is a great thing to know how to act so as to gain the feelings and affections of our families, that will lead them in the path wherein they may be saved. This is a study and a work that should not be laid aside by parents. . . . Many times we may consider business so urgent that it must crowd these things out of our minds, but this should not be. Any man's mind that is open, and who

looks forward to the work that lies before us, will see and feel that the responsibility that rests upon him concerning his own family, and especially in the rearing up of his children, is very great.

We want to save our children, and to have them partake of all the blessings that encircle the sanctified, to have them receive the blessings of their parents who have been faithful to the fulness of the gospel.[20]

Let us all look at home, and each one try to govern his own family and set his own house in order.[21]

Each father should preside in his family with kindness and righteousness.

When I was a boy and went to school, the schoolmaster used to come with a bundle of sticks about eight feet long, and one of the first things we expected was to get a whipping. For anything that was not pleasing to him we would get a terrible thrashing. What whipping I got then did not do me any good. . . . Kindness, gentleness and mercy are better every way. I would like this principle instilled into the minds of our young men, that they may carry it out in all their acts in life. Tyranny is not good, whether it be exercised by kings, by presidents, or by the servants of God. Kind words are far better than harsh words. If, when we have difficulties one with another, we would be kind and affable to each other, we would save ourselves a great deal of trouble.

. . . You go into a family where a man treats his wife and children kindly, and you will find that they will treat him in the same way. Complaints reach me of the treatment of men to their wives. They do not provide for them. They do not treat them kindly. All this pains me. These things should not be. . . . We should be kind to one another, do good to one another, and labor to promote the welfare, the interest and the happiness of each other, especially those of our own households.

The man stands at the head of the family. He is the patriarch of his household. . . . There is no more beautiful sight on earth than to see a man stand at the head of his family and teach them righteous principles and give them good counsel. These children

honor their father, and they take consolation and joy in having a father who is a righteous man.[22]

A mother's teachings and example can influence her family through time and eternity.

As a rule, we regard the mother as the one who gives shape to the character of the child. I consider that the mother has a greater influence over her posterity than any other person can have. And the question has arisen sometimes, "When does this education begin?" Our prophets have said, "When the spirit life from God enters into the tabernacle." The condition of the mother at that time will have its effect upon the fruit of her womb; and from the birth of the child, and all through life, the teachings and the example of the mother govern and control, in a great measure, that child, and her influence is felt by it through time and eternity.[23]

Upon the shoulders of you mothers rests, in a great measure, the responsibility of correctly developing the mental and moral powers of the rising generation, whether in infancy, childhood, or still riper years. . . . No mother in Israel should let a day pass over her head without teaching her children to pray. You should pray yourselves, and teach your children to do the same, and you should bring them up in this way, that when you have passed away, and they take your places in bearing off the great work of God, they may have principles instilled into their minds that will sustain them in time and in eternity. I have often said it is the mother who forms the mind of the child. . . .

. . . Show me a mother who prays, who has passed through the trials of life by prayer, who has trusted in the Lord God of Israel in her trials and difficulties, and her children will follow in the same path. These things will not forsake them when they come to act in the kingdom of God.[24]

Our sisters . . . have their duties to perform to their husbands. They should consider his position and his circumstances. . . . Every wife should be kind to her husband. She should comfort him and do what good she can for him, under all circumstances

in life. When all the family are united together, they enjoy a heavenly spirit here on the earth. This is how it should be; for when a man in this Church takes unto himself a wife he expects to remain with her through all time and eternity. In the morning of the first resurrection he expects to have that wife and his children with him in a family organization, to remain in that condition forever and forever. What a glorious thought that is![25]

Suggestions for Study and Teaching

Consider these ideas as you study the chapter or as you prepare to teach. For additional help, see pages v–ix.

- What impresses you about the relationship between Wilford and Phoebe Woodruff? (See pages 161–63.)
- Review President Woodruff's counsel to his daughter Blanche (page 163). Think about or discuss specific things you can do to help your family members be happy.
- What impresses you as you read President Woodruff's counsel to the youth about marriage and parenthood? (See page 164.) How might his counsel apply in the lives of all Church members?
- Read the final three paragraphs in the first section of teachings (pages 164–65). In what ways can "the vanity and affairs of the world" distract us from the joys of family? How can we counteract such influences? How can we show family members that we prize our association with them?
- Read the first full paragraph on page 166. What do you think it means to "bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord"? What are some things you have done to accomplish this?
- Review the third and fourth full paragraphs on page 165. How can parents help their children gain a desire to serve in the Church?
- As you read President Woodruff's counsel about teaching children, what specific principles do you find? (See pages 165–66.)

- Review the section that begins on page 167. What can parents do to make family relationships a top priority?
- What principles can parents learn from young Wilford Woodruff's experiences with his schoolmaster? (See page 168.)
- What did President Woodruff say about the influence of husbands and fathers? (See pages 168–69.) What did he say about the influence of wives and mothers? (See pages 169–70.) How can husbands and wives help each other in their responsibilities?
- How do the teachings in this chapter relate to grandparents? What experiences have shown how grandparents can have a righteous influence on their grandchildren?
- What examples have you seen of parents and grandparents fulfilling their responsibilities toward their families?

Related Scriptures: Enos 1:1; Mosiah 4:14–15; Alma 56:45–48; D&C 68:25–31; 93:38–40

Notes

1. "Leaves from My Journal," *Millennial Star,* October 3, 1881, 638–39.
2. Quoted in *Millennial Star,* August 1840, 90.
3. Journal of Wilford Woodruff, April 3, 1847, Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
4. See Journal of Wilford Woodruff, April 7, 1847.
5. *Deseret Weekly,* August 17, 1889, 226.
6. Wilford Woodruff to Blanche Woodruff, September 16, 1894; quoted in Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism,* 4 vols. (1992), 4:1582.
7. "An Epistle to the Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," *Millennial Star,* November 14, 1887, 728.
8. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* sel. G. Homer Durham (1946), 271.
9. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 271.
10. "Y. M. M. I. A. Annual Conference," *Contributor,* August 1895, 636.
11. *Deseret Weekly,* June 26, 1867, 202.
12. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* March 4, 1873, 3.
13. *Deseret Weekly,* August 17, 1889, 225–26.
14. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* July 20, 1875, 1.
15. *Salt Lake Herald Church and Farm,* June 15, 1895, 385.
16. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* July 20, 1875, 1.
17. *Deseret News,* February 22, 1865, 162.
18. "Selfishness," *Juvenile Instructor,* March 15, 1867, 45.
19. *Deseret News,* December 26, 1860, 338.
20. *Deseret News,* December 26, 1860, 338.
21. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 264.
22. *Deseret Weekly,* June 22, 1889, 823.
23. *Deseret Weekly,* August 17, 1889, 225.
24. *Deseret News,* April 24, 1872, 152.
25. *Deseret Weekly,* June 22, 1889, 823.

"We want the Latter-day Saints . . . to trace their genealogies as far as they can, and to be sealed to their fathers and mothers."

Temple Work: Turning Our Hearts to Our Families and to the Lord

When we enter the house of the Lord worthily, we receive ordinances that help prepare us, our ancestors, and our descendants to dwell in God's presence forever.

From the Life of Wilford Woodruff

When the Kirtland Temple was dedicated on March 27, 1836, Wilford Woodruff was serving a full-time mission in the southern United States. Three weeks later he heard of the events of the dedication and wrote in his journal that the news was "glorious in the first degree."[1] After he had completed his mission, he returned to Kirtland, arriving "on foot in a hard snowstorm." He recorded, "We came in sight of the temple of the Lord before we reached the village, and I truly felt to rejoice at the sight as it was the first time that mine eyes ever beheld the house of the Lord built by commandment and revelation."[2]

Wilford Woodruff's love for temple work never faded. He participated in all phases of the work—from construction to dedication and from family history work to ordinance work for the dead. He also rejoiced in the temple ordinances he and his family members received for themselves.

President Woodruff spoke often of the time when he received the endowment. The Prophet Joseph Smith, sensing that his earthly ministry would soon come to an end, administered the endowment to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in Nauvoo, even before the temple was completed. President Woodruff testified: "Joseph Smith first made known to me the very ordinances which we give to the Latter-day Saints in our endowments. I received my endowments under the direction of Joseph Smith."[3]

As a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and later as President of the Church, Wilford Woodruff participated in a continuing effort to build temples. He assisted in the work at the temple in Nauvoo, Illinois, and at temples in four cities in Utah: Logan, St. George, Manti, and Salt Lake City. He offered the dedicatory prayers at the temples in Manti and Salt Lake City.

The Salt Lake Temple, which was completed after 40 years of the Saints' devoted labor, had special significance for President Woodruff. He first saw the temple in a detailed vision before the Saints reached the Salt Lake Valley.[4] Four days after arriving in the valley, he was present when President Brigham Young was inspired to choose the temple site.[5] Years before the temple's completion, he had a dream in which he was given the key to the temple and was instructed by President Young to "let all into the temple who seek for salvation."[6] He was a tireless advocate for the completion of the temple, even during times of trial and persecution. And when the construction was finally completed in April 1893, he followed President Young's instruction in the dream, organizing three weeks of dedicatory services to ensure that all the Saints would have an opportunity to attend.

After the dedication of the Salt Lake Temple, President Woodruff emphasized the importance of the family in temple work. He said: "We want the Latter-day Saints from this time to trace their genealogies as far as they can, and to be sealed to their fathers and mothers. Have children sealed to their parents, and run this chain through as far as you can get it."[7] (To read the historical account behind this teaching, see pages xxxiii–xxxv in this book's introduction.)

In 1894, President Woodruff oversaw the establishment of the Genealogical Society of Utah, which led to the Church's current worldwide effort to help people search out their ancestors. One hundred years later, Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles observed, "Events of that historic year established family history research and temple service as *one work* in the Church."[8] These events were part of a continuing fulfillment of the prophecy that "the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers" (D&C 2:2; see also Malachi 4:5–6).

Because of President Woodruff's many significant teachings on temple work, this is the first of two chapters on the subject in this book. This chapter focuses on the blessings of temple attendance and the eternal nature of the family, and chapter 18 focuses more on the work for the dead.

Teachings of Wilford Woodruff

We participate in temple work with heavenly joy, knowing that it helps prepare us, our descendants, and our ancestors to dwell in God's presence.

There is no labor in which the Latter-day Saints feel more deeply interested than in the building and completing of temples.[9]

When I reflect upon the power we have had to erect Temples unto the name of the Most High God . . . and the privileges we have of going into those Temples and doing the work necessary for our own salvation and for the redemption of our dead as well, I rejoice greatly, and feel that we have been greatly blessed.[10]

The history of these Temples you have before you. You know the Prophets [Joseph and Hyrum Smith] were slain, and the Lord required the building of [the Nauvoo] Temple at the hands of the Saints before they were driven into the wilderness. There was a certain revelation given that inspired in a great measure the Elders of the Church of God to perform that work [see D&C 124:25–41]. They labored with all the power they possessed, and they accomplished that work. They went into that Temple and received ordinances and endowments before they left to go into the wilderness. These Temples that we have built . . . stand as a monument before God, angels and men, to the faith and works of the Latter-day Saints.[11]

It is evident that the Latter-day Saints appreciate the blessings to be obtained through this Temple work. . . . Our hearts are filled with gladness and we cannot refrain from praising our God and His goodness unto His people in permitting them, notwithstanding the opposition and many difficulties they have had to contend with, to erect such structures and to dedicate them, according to the pattern He has given for these sacred uses.

No right feeling Latter-day Saint can think upon this subject without being thrilled with heavenly joy for what God has done for us in our generation, furnishing us, as He has done, with every facility to prepare us, our posterity and our ancestors for that eternal world which lies beyond the present life. The Latter-day Saints are, in truth, a highly favored people, and praise to God should ascend from every heart and habitation in our land for the great mercy and goodness which He has shown unto us. He has made us promises of the most precious character, and He has fulfilled them up to the present time. We would be the most ungrateful and unworthy people that ever lived if, after receiving such wonderful manifestations of His goodness, we slackened in our diligence or failed in our obedience and devotion to Him and His great cause.[12]

We want to continue in these temples. We want them to be occupied by the Latter-day Saints. We want our brethren and sisters to continue to go there and redeem the dead and bless the living.[13]

From the dedicatory prayer of the Salt Lake Temple: O Lord, we regard with intense and indescribable feelings the completion of this sacred house. Deign to accept this the fourth temple which thy covenant children have been assisted by thee in erecting in these mountains. In past ages thou didst inspire with thy Holy Spirit thy servants, the Prophets, to speak of a time in the latter days when the mountain of the Lord's house should be established in the top of the mountains, and should be exalted above the hills [see Isaiah 2:2; Micah 4:2]. We thank thee that we have had the glorious opportunity of contributing to the fulfilment of these visions of thine ancient seers, and that thou hast condescended to permit us to take part in the great work.[14]

Through family history work and temple ordinances, we are sealed to our families, forming a welding link between generations.

The principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ have power and efficacy after death; they will bring together men and their wives and children in the family organization and will re-unite them worlds without end. . . . Unto the Latter-day Saints the sealing

ordinances have been revealed, and they will have effect after death, and, as I have said, will re-unite men and women eternally in the family organization. Herein is why these principles are a part of our religion, and by them husbands and wives, parents and children will be re-united until the links in the chain are re-united back to Father Adam. We could not obtain a fullness of celestial glory without this sealing ordinance.[15]

Brethren and sisters, the glory of the whole matter is, that when we get through we are going to have our families with us—our fathers and our mothers, our brothers and our sisters, our wives and our children—in the morning of the resurrection, in the family organization of the celestial world, to dwell forever and forever. This is worth all you or I can sacrifice the few years we have to spend here in the flesh.[16]

Let every man be [sealed] to his father; and then you will do exactly what God said when He declared He would send Elijah the prophet in the last days [see Malachi 4:5–6]. Elijah the prophet appeared unto Joseph Smith and told him that the day had come when this principle must be carried out [see D&C 110:13–16]. Joseph Smith did not live long enough to enter any further upon these things. His soul was wound up with this work before he was martyred for the word of God and testimony of Jesus Christ. He told us that there must be a welding link of all dispensations and of the work of God from one generation to another [see D&C 128:18]. This was upon his mind more than most any other subject that was given to him.

In my prayers the Lord revealed to me that it was my duty to say to all Israel to carry this principle out, and in fulfillment of that revelation I lay it before this people. . . . We want the Latter-day Saints from this time to trace their genealogies as far as they can, and to be sealed to their fathers and mothers. Have children sealed to their parents, and run this chain through as far as you can get it.[17]

From the dedicatory prayer of the Salt Lake Temple: Our Father in Heaven, we present before thee the altars which we have prepared for thy servants and handmaidens to receive their sealing blessings. We dedicate them in the name of the Lord

Jesus Christ, unto thy most holy name, and we ask thee to sanctify these altars, that those who come unto them may feel the power of the Holy Ghost resting upon them, and realize the sacredness of the covenants they enter into. And we pray that our covenants and contracts which we make with thee and with each other may be directed by thy Holy Spirit, be sacredly kept by us and accepted by thee, and that all the blessings pronounced may be realized by all the Saints who come to these altars, in the morning of the resurrection of the just. . . .

O thou God of our fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whose God thou delightest to be called, we thank thee with all the fervor of overflowing gratitude that thou hast revealed the powers by which the hearts of the children are being turned to their fathers and the hearts of the fathers to the children, that the sons of men, in all their generations can be made partakers of the glories and joys of the kingdom of heaven. Confirm upon us the spirit of Elijah, we pray thee, that we may thus redeem our dead and also connect ourselves with our fathers who have passed behind the veil, and furthermore seal up our dead to come forth in the first resurrection that we who dwell on earth may be bound to those who dwell in heaven. We thank thee for their sake who have finished their work in mortality, as well for our own, that the prison doors have been opened, that deliverance has been proclaimed to the captive, and the bonds have been loosened from those who were bound. We praise thee that our fathers, from last to first, from now, back to the beginning, can be united with us in indissoluble links, welded by the Holy Priesthood, and that as one great family united in thee and cemented by thy power we shall together stand before thee, and by the power of the atoning blood of thy Son be delivered from all evil, be saved and sanctified, exalted and glorified.[18]

We must prepare ourselves spiritually to receive the blessings of temple service.

Before you go into the Temple, . . . go by yourselves, in secret prayer. Offer up your prayers to the Lord, and pray that your sins may not only be forgiven, but that you may all have the Spirit of

God and the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ; that the Spirit of God may be with those who will assemble in the Temple. . . .

I have the desire for the Saints to do this, for I wish to see those who go into the Temple go in with pure hearts, and that the Spirit of God may be with them, that they may enjoy themselves, that they may all feel the influence of that power.[19]

No member of the Church who would be deemed worthy to enter that sacred house can be considered ignorant of the principles of the Gospel. It is not too much to presume that every one knows what his duty is to God and to his fellow man. None is so forgetful as to have lost sight of the admonition that we must be filled with love for and charity toward our brethren. And hence none can for a moment doubt the supreme importance of every member of the congregation being at peace with all his or her brethren and sisters, and at peace with God. How else can we hope to gain the blessings He has promised save by complying with the requirements for which those blessings are the reward!

Can men and women who are violating a law of God, or those who are derelict in yielding obedience to His commands, expect that the mere going into His holy house . . . will render them worthy to receive, and cause them to receive, His blessing?

Do they think that repentance and turning away from sin may be so lightly dispensed with?

Do they dare, even in thought, thus to accuse our Father of injustice and partiality, and attribute to Him carelessness in the fulfillment of His own words?

Assuredly no one claiming to belong to His people would be guilty of such a thing.

Then must those who are unworthy cease to expect a blessing from their attendance at the Temple while sin unrepented of still casts its odor about them, and while bitterness or even an unforgiving coolness exists in their hearts against their brethren and sisters.

On this latter subject we feel that much might be said. In the striving after compliance with the apparently weightier matters

Recommends like this one were distributed to Church members who were worthy to attend dedication services in the Salt Lake Temple.

of the law, there is a possibility that the importance of this spirit of love and kindness and charity may be underestimated. . . .

. . . Before entering into the Temple to present ourselves before the Lord . . . , we shall divest ourselves of every harsh and unkind feeling against each other; that not only our bickerings shall cease, but that the cause of them shall be removed, and every sentiment that prompted and has maintained them shall be dispelled; that we shall confess our sins one to another, and ask for forgiveness one of another; that we shall plead with the Lord for the spirit of repentance, and, having obtained it, follow its promptings; so that in humbling ourselves before Him and seeking forgiveness from each other, we shall yield that charity and generosity to those who crave our forgiveness that we ask for and expect from Heaven.

Thus may we come up into the holy place with our hearts free from guile and our souls prepared for the edification that is promised! Thus shall our supplications, undisturbed by a thought of discord, unitedly mount into the ears of Jehovah and draw down the choice blessings of the God of Heaven! . . .

. . . We call upon [the individual members of the Church] to seek to have the fellowship of their brethren and their sisters, and their entire confidence and love; above all to seek to have the fellowship and union of the Holy Ghost. Let this Spirit be sought and cherished as diligently within the smallest and humblest family circle as within the membership of the highest organization and quorum. Let it permeate the hearts of the brothers and sisters, the parents and children of the household, as well as the hearts of the First Presidency and Twelve. Let it mellow and soften all differences between members of the Stake Presidencies and the High Councils, as well as between neighbors living in the same ward. Let it unite young and old, male and female, flock and shepherd, people and Priesthood in the bonds of gratitude and forgiveness and love, so that [we] may feel approved of the Lord, and that we may all come before Him with a conscience void of offense before all men. Then there will be no disappointment as to the blessings promised those who sincerely worship Him. The sweet whisperings of the Holy Spirit will be given to them and the treasures of Heaven, the communion of angels, will be added from time to time, for His promise has gone forth and it cannot fail![20]

From the dedicatory prayer of the Salt Lake Temple: Our Father in Heaven, thou who hast created the heavens and the earth, and all things that are therein; thou most glorious One, perfect in mercy, love, and truth, we, thy children, come this day before thee and in this house which we have built to thy most holy name humbly plead the atoning blood of thine Only Begotten Son, that our sins may be remembered no more against us forever, but that our prayers may ascend unto thee and have free access to thy throne, that we may be heard in thy holy habitation. And may it graciously please thee to hearken unto our petitions, answer them according to thine infinite wisdom and love, and grant that the blessings which we seek may be bestowed upon us, even a hundredfold, inasmuch as we seek with purity of heart and fulness of purpose to do thy will and glorify thy name. . . .

We come before thee with joy and thanksgiving, with spirits jubilant and hearts filled with praise, that thou hast permitted us

to see this day for which, during these forty years, we have hoped, and toiled, and prayed, when we can dedicate unto thee this house which we have built to thy most glorious name. One year ago we set the capstone with shouts of Hosanna to God and the Lamb. And to-day we dedicate the whole unto thee, with all that pertains unto it, that it may be holy in thy sight; that it may be a house of prayer, a house of praise and of worship; that thy glory may rest upon it; that thy holy presence may be continually in it; that it may be the abode of thy well-beloved Son, our Savior; that the angels who stand before thy face may be the hallowed messengers who shall visit it, bearing to us thy wishes and thy will, that it may be sanctified and consecrated in all its parts holy unto thee, the God of Israel, the Almighty Ruler of mankind. And we pray thee that all people who may enter upon the threshold of this, thine house, may feel thy power and be constrained to acknowledge that thou hast sanctified it, that it is thy house, a place of thy holiness.[21]

Suggestions for Study and Teaching

Consider these ideas as you study the chapter or as you prepare to teach. For additional help, see pages v–ix.

- How did Elder Wilford Woodruff respond when he heard of the dedication of the Kirtland Temple and when he saw the temple for the first time? (See page 173.) Have you had similar experiences that would be appropriate to share?
- In what ways did the early Latter-day Saints show their interest in temples? (See pages 175–76.) Why should we be "deeply interested" in temple work?
- Review the final paragraph on page 174. In what ways do you see temple service and family history research as "one work"? (See pages 176–78.) How has this work helped you turn your heart to your ancestors and your descendants?
- Why do we need the sealing ordinance to "obtain the fullness of celestial glory"? (See pages 176–77; see also D&C 131:1–4.)
- Scan the entire chapter, looking for statements about family relationships. What can we learn from these teachings? How

can our understanding of the house of the Lord influence our feelings about our own homes?

- In what ways has attending the temple blessed you and your family? How can parents teach their children to reverence the temple and prepare to receive temple ordinances?
- Pages 178–81 contain some of President Woodruff's counsel to help the Saints prepare for the Salt Lake Temple dedication. How can this counsel help us each time we enter the temple?
- What are some principles that are taught in the dedicatory prayer of the Salt Lake Temple? (See pages 176, 177–78, 181–82.) Ponder or discuss how the words in the prayer can help us in our efforts to do temple and family history work.

Related Scriptures: Psalm 24:3–5; Matthew 16:18–19; D&C 27:9; 97:10–17; 109; 110; 138:46–48

Notes

1. Journal of Wilford Woodruff, April 19, 1836, Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
2. Journal of Wilford Woodruff, November 25, 1836.
3. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* sel. G. Homer Durham (1946), 148.
4. See *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 162.
5. See Journal of Wilford Woodruff, July 28, 1847.
6. Journal of Wilford Woodruff, March 12, 1887.
7. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 157.
8. In Conference Report, October 1994, 114; or *Ensign,* November 1994, 85.
9. In James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,* 6 vols. (1965–75), 3:236.
10. *Salt Lake Herald Church and Farm,* June 15, 1895, 386.
11. *Deseret Weekly,* August 6, 1892, 193.
12. "An Epistle to the Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," *Millennial Star,* November 14, 1887, 730–31.
13. *Deseret Weekly,* November 14, 1891, 660.
14. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 337.
15. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* December 21, 1869, 2.
16. *Deseret Weekly,* October 22, 1892, 548.
17. *Millennial Star,* May 28, 1894, 338–39.
18. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 339–41.
19. *Millennial Star,* May 7, 1893, 305. President Woodruff gave these instructions to help the Saints prepare to attend the dedication of the Salt Lake Temple.
20. In *Messages of the First Presidency,* 3:242–44. President Woodruff gave these instructions to help the Saints prepare to attend the dedication of the Salt Lake Temple.
21. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 335, 337–38.

The Salt Lake Temple, dedicated by President Wilford Woodruff on April 6, 1893.

Temple Work: Becoming Saviors on Mount Zion

We hold the keys of salvation for our ancestors who have died without the gospel.

From the Life of Wilford Woodruff

In October 1841, soon after returning to Nauvoo from a mission in England, Elder Wilford Woodruff attended a meeting in which the Prophet Joseph Smith taught the doctrine of the redemption of the dead. This was the first time Elder Woodruff heard that living members of the Church could receive saving ordinances in behalf of their ancestors who had passed away. He said: "It was like a shaft of light from the throne of God to our hearts. It opened a field wide as eternity to our minds."[1] He also commented: "It appeared to me that the God who revealed that principle unto man was wise, just and true, possessed both the best of attributes and good sense and knowledge. I felt he was consistent with both love, mercy, justice and judgment, and I felt to love the Lord more than ever before in my life. . . . I felt to say hallelujah when the revelation came forth revealing to us baptism for the dead. I felt that we had a right to rejoice in the blessings of Heaven."[2]

Upon hearing this doctrine, Elder Woodruff thought of his mother. "The first thing that entered into my mind," he said, "was that I had a mother in the spirit world. She died when I was 14 months old. I never knew [my] mother. I thought to myself, Have I power to go forth and seal my mother to my father? The word was, yes."[3] He later spoke of the time when he finally had the opportunity to have his mother sealed to his father: "She will have a part in the first resurrection; and this alone would pay me for all the labors of my life."[4] He also testified of the joy he felt as he

performed temple ordinances for other deceased family members: "I have had the blessing and privilege of redeeming in the Temple of our God some four thousand of my father's and my mother's kindred. I speak of this because it is one of our blessings, the fullness and glory of which we will never know until the veil is opened."[5]

While serving as President of the Church, Wilford Woodruff dedicated the Salt Lake Temple. On that occasion he pleaded with the Lord to help the Saints in their efforts to redeem the dead: "Wilt thou . . . permit holy messengers to visit us within these sacred walls and make known unto us with regard to the work we should perform in behalf of our dead. And, as thou hast inclined the hearts of many who have not yet entered into covenant with thee to search out their progenitors, and in so doing they have traced the ancestry of many of thy Saints, we pray thee that thou wilt increase this desire in their bosoms, that they may in this way aid in the accomplishment of thy work. Bless them, we pray thee, in their labors, that they may not fall into errors in preparing their genealogies; and furthermore, we ask thee to open before them new avenues of information, and place in their hands the records of the past, that their work may not only be correct but complete also."[6]

Teachings of Wilford Woodruff

Heavenly Father is merciful to all His children and does not condemn those who die without having the opportunity to receive the gospel.

If the dead have not heard the Gospel, the Lord is not going to send them to hell because they have not received it. The Lord is the Father of all. He is merciful to all. . . . Millions of people have been born in the flesh, have lived and have gone to the grave, who never saw the face of a prophet in their lives; never saw a man that was called of God and had power to administer in one of the ordinances of the House of God. Will God condemn them because they did not receive the Gospel? Not at all.[7]

The Winter Quarters Nebraska Temple, built where many Latter-day Saints camped in the winter of 1846–47 before their trek to the Salt Lake Valley.

God is no respecter of persons; he will not give privileges to one generation and withhold them from another; and the whole human family, from father Adam down to our day, have got to have the privilege, somewhere, of hearing the gospel of Christ; and the generations that have passed and gone without hearing that gospel in its fulness, power and glory, will never be held responsible by God for not obeying it. Neither will he bring them under condemnation for rejecting a law they never saw or understood; and if they live up to the light they had they are justified so far, and they have to be preached to in the spirit world.[8]

We become saviors on Mount Zion as we build temples and receive saving ordinances in behalf of the dead.

Many of our progenitors, now in the spirit world, never saw the face of an apostle, prophet or inspired man, and they are

shut up in prison. Joseph Smith, Heber Kimball, George A. Smith and thousands of the elders of Israel may preach to those spirits, and they may receive the testimonies which the elders bear; but the elders will not baptize believers there; there is no baptism in the spirit world any more than there is any marrying and giving in marriage.[9]

Some person or persons dwelling in the flesh must attend to this part of the work for them; for it takes just as much to save a dead man who never received the Gospel as a living man. And all those who have passed away without the Gospel have the right to expect somebody in the flesh to perform this work for them.[10]

It is our duty to rise up and build these Temples. I look upon this portion of our ministry as a mission of as much importance as preaching to the living; the dead will hear the voice of the servants of God in the spirit-world, and they cannot come forth in the morning of the [first] resurrection, unless certain ordinances are performed, for and in their behalf, in Temples built to the name of God. . . . Somebody has got to redeem them, by performing such ordinances for them in the flesh as they cannot attend to themselves in the spirit, and in order that this work may be done, we must have temples in which to do it; and what I wish to say to you, my brethren and sisters, is that the God of heaven requires us to rise up and build them, that the work of redemption may be hastened. Our reward will meet us when we go behind the veil. . . .

. . . I do not wonder at President [Brigham] Young saying he felt moved upon to call upon the Latter-day Saints to hurry up the building of these Temples. He felt the importance of the work; but now he has gone, it rests with us to continue it, and God will bless our labors and we will have joy therein. This is a preparation necessary for the second advent of the Savior; and when we shall have built the Temples now contemplated, we will then begin to see the necessity of building others, for in proportion to the diligence of our labors in this direction, will we comprehend the extent of the work to be done, and the present is only a beginning. When the Savior comes, a thousand years will be devoted to this work of redemption; and Temples will appear all

over this land of Joseph,—North and South America—and also in Europe and elsewhere; and all the descendants of Shem, Ham and Japheth who received not the gospel in the flesh, must be officiated for in the Temples of God before the Savior can present the kingdom to the Father, saying, "It is finished."[11]

You have had laid before you . . . some things pertaining to the redemption of our dead, and some things in regard to the building of temples. These, brethren and sisters, are important works. They are works which we do for others that they cannot do for themselves. This is what Jesus Christ did when He laid down His life for our redemption, because we could not redeem ourselves. We have fathers and mothers and kindred in the spirit world, and we have a work to perform in their behalf. As an individual I have had great interest in this work of redeeming the dead, and so have my brethren and sisters. This is a labor we must continue as far as we have opportunity. . . . This is a work that rests upon the Latter-day Saints. Do what you can in this respect, so that when you pass to the other side of the veil your fathers, mothers, relatives and friends will bless you for what you have done, and inasmuch as you have been instruments in the hands of God in procuring their redemption, you will be recognized as Saviors upon Mount Zion in fulfillment of prophecy [see Obadiah 1:21].[12]

We are blessed with power and authority, holding the Holy Priesthood by the commandment of God, to stand upon the earth and redeem both the living and the dead. If we did not do it, we should be damned and cut off from the earth, and the God of Israel would raise up a people who would do it.[13]

Brethren and sisters, lay these things to heart. Let us go on with our records, fill them up righteously before the Lord, and carry out this principle, and the blessings of God will attend us, and those who are redeemed will bless us in days to come. I pray God that as a people our eyes may be opened to see, our ears to hear, and our hearts to understand the great and mighty work that rests upon our shoulders, and that the God of heaven requires at our hands. Great and glorious are these principles which God has revealed to us concerning the redemption of our dead.[14]

The St. George Utah Temple, where President Wilford Woodruff served as temple president.

The dead are anxious for us to receive ordinances in their behalf, and God Himself watches temple work with great interest.

We have a great work before us in the redemption of our dead. The course that we are pursuing is being watched with interest by all heaven.[15]

Our forefathers are looking to us to attend to this work. They are watching over us with great anxiety, and are desirous that we should finish these temples and attend to certain ordinances for them, so that in the morning of the resurrection they can come forth and enjoy the same blessings that we enjoy.[16]

"All who have died without a knowledge of this Gospel, who would have received it if they had been permitted to tarry, shall be heirs of the celestial kingdom of God; also all that shall die henceforth without a knowledge of it, who would have received it with all their hearts, shall be heirs of that kingdom, for I, the Lord, will judge all men according to their works, according to the desire of their hearts." [D&C 137:7–9.] So it will be with your

fathers. There will be very few, if any, who will not accept the Gospel. . . . The fathers of this people will embrace the Gospel.[17]

President Young has said to us, and it is verily so, if the dead could they would speak in language loud as ten thousand thunders, calling upon the servants of God to rise up and build Temples, magnify their calling and redeem their dead.[18]

If [we] knew and understood the feelings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and those of his brethren associated with him, and the feelings of the millions of the human family who are shut up in their prison houses, we would not tire. . . . We would labor for the redemption of our dead.[19]

The eyes of the heavens are over us; the eyes of God himself, the eyes of every Prophet and Apostle in the spirit world, are watching you, watching this Priesthood, to see what they are doing and what they are going to do. It is of far more importance than we realize and comprehend. Let us awake to the ordinances of the House of God and do our duty, that we may be justified.[20]

When we meet our ancestors in the spirit world, it will be a time of either joy or regret, depending on the work we have done for them here.

You have had power to . . . redeem your dead. A great many of you have done this, and I hope all of you will continue as long as you have any dead to redeem. Never cease that work while you have the power to enter into the Temple. . . . I have had some thousands redeemed here. I have had baptisms, ordinations, washings and anointings, endowments and sealings for them, the same as if they were standing in the flesh themselves. I shall go and meet them on the other side of the veil. You will go and meet your relatives.[21]

When I lay my body in the tomb and my spirit goes into the spirit world, I shall rejoice and have glory with them in the morning of the resurrection, inasmuch as they receive these principles. "Well," perhaps you may say, "what if these people whom you have been baptized for do not receive the Gospel?"

That will be their fault, not mine. This is a duty that rests upon all Israel, that they shall attend to this work, as far as they have the opportunity here on the earth.[22]

How would I feel, after living as long as I have, with the privileges I have had of going into these temples, to go into the spirit world without having done this work? I meet my father's house, I meet my mother's house, I meet my progenitors, and they are shut up in prison; I held the keys of their salvation, and yet did nothing for them; what would be my feelings, or what would be their feelings toward me?[23]

I do not want to go into the spirit world and meet with my progenitors who never heard the Gospel in their day and generation, and have them tell me, "You held in your hand the power to go forth and redeem me, and you have not done it." I do not want to meet that. I do not want the Latter-day Saints to meet it. I think we are doing pretty well. We have four temples reared in these valleys of the mountains [in 1897], and they are fairly well occupied by the Latter-day Saints. But we want to continue this until we have redeemed all within our power to redeem. If we will carry this principle out, we will have the blessing of it. It will be with us in the morning of the resurrection, when our fathers and mothers and our progenitors come up with us because we have redeemed them.[24]

If we do not do what is required of us in this thing, we are under condemnation. If we do attend to this, then when we come to meet our friends in the celestial kingdom, they will say, "You have been our saviors, because you had power to do it. You have attended to these ordinances that God has required."[25]

We have been called as Saviors upon Mount Zion, while the kingdom has been the Lord's. These are glorious principles. To be saved ourselves, and to save our fellowmen, what a glorious thing! What is gold and silver; what are the riches of this world? They all perish with the using. We pass away and leave them. But if we have eternal life, if we keep the faith and overcome, we shall rejoice when we go upon the other side of the veil. I rejoice in all these things. There is hardly any principle the Lord has revealed that I have rejoiced more in than in the redemption

of our dead; that we will have our fathers, our mothers, our wives and our children with us in the family organization, in the morning of the first resurrection and in the Celestial Kingdom. These are grand principles. They are worth every sacrifice.[26]

Suggestions for Study and Teaching

Consider these ideas as you study the chapter or as you prepare to teach. For additional help, see pages v–ix.

- How did Wilford Woodruff feel when he first heard the doctrine of the redemption of the dead? What was his first thought? (See page 185.) What can we learn from these responses?
- President Woodruff said that temple work for the dead is as important as missionary work for the living (page 188). Ponder or discuss the significance of this statement. What experiences have shown you the connection between temple work and missionary work?
- President Woodruff said that when we receive ordinances in behalf of the dead, we do a work that others "cannot do for themselves" (page 189). How does this understanding influence your feelings about temple work?
- Review the section that begins on page 190. According to President Woodruff, how do our ancestors feel about temple work? How does God the Father regard the work? How do you feel as you read these statements?
- Review the final section of the chapter, beginning on page 191. Consider how you might feel when you meet your ancestors in the spirit world.
- How can we make time for temple and family history work? What resources does the Church provide to guide and assist us?
- How can participation in temple and family history work strengthen our families? What can we do to help the youth of the Church find joy in their responsibility to redeem the dead?

Related Scriptures: 1 Corinthians 15:29; D&C 128; 138

Notes

1. *Deseret Weekly,* December 25, 1897, 34.
2. *Deseret News,* May 27, 1857, 91.
3. *Deseret Weekly,* December 25, 1897, 34.
4. *Deseret Weekly,* February 24, 1894, 288.
5. *Deseret Weekly,* February 24, 1894, 288.
6. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* sel. G. Homer Durham (1946), 341.
7. *Deseret Weekly,* April 19, 1890, 562.
8. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 149.
9. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* May 2, 1876, 4.
10. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* May 14, 1878, 1.
11. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* March 26, 1878, 1.
12. *Millennial Star,* November 21, 1887, 742–43.
13. *Millennial Star,* May 21, 1894, 324.
14. *Millennial Star,* May 28, 1894, 341.
15. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* October 18, 1881, 1.
16. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 150.
17. *Millennial Star,* May 28, 1894, 339–40.
18. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* March 26, 1878, 1.
19. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* October 26, 1880, 1.
20. In Conference Report, October 1897, 47.
21. *Deseret Weekly,* August 6, 1892, 193.
22. *Deseret Weekly,* April 25, 1891, 555.
23. *Millennial Star,* May 14, 1896, 309.
24. *Deseret Weekly,* December 25, 1897, 34.
25. In Conference Report, October 1897, 47.
26. *Deseret Weekly,* August 30, 1890, 308.

Following the Living Prophet

As we obey the word of the Lord revealed to the living prophet, we will find safety and happiness in this world and exaltation in the world to come.

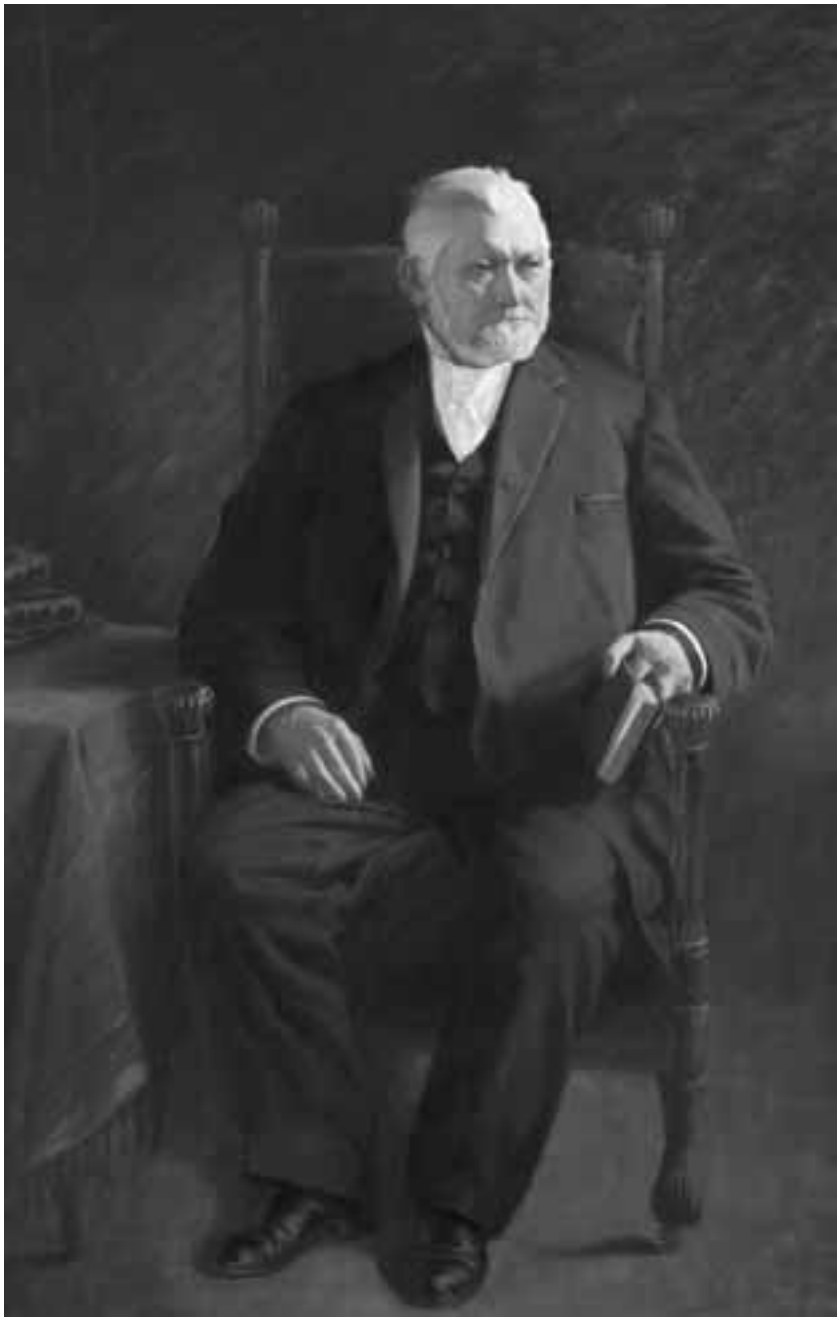
From the Life of Wilford Woodruff

Elder Wilford Woodruff was at home one afternoon when he received word that President Brigham Young wanted to see him at the Church Historian's Office. Upon receiving this request from the President of the Church, Elder Woodruff "immediately went to the office,"[1] where he was then serving as Assistant Church Historian. He later recorded in his journal:

"President Young said to me as I came in, 'Have you a team [of horses]?' I told him I had a pair of small ponies. He asked if I could spare them. I hesitated a moment and said, 'Yes sir, I can do anything that is wanted.' He then said, 'I have a good pair of horses that I want to let you have, as you are laboring here.' I was taken quite surprised. It came very unexpected to me. I accepted the horses and was thankful, though perhaps I did not say it at the time."[2]

When Elder Woodruff agreed to give up his ponies, he simply chose to obey President Young's instructions; he did not expect a reward for his deed. However, he knew of the blessings that come from following the living prophet. A few months earlier he had declared, "The Lord will open the mind of Brother Brigham and lead him into many principles that pertain to the salvation of this people, and we cannot close up our minds and say that we will go so far and no farther; this we cannot do without jeopardising our standing before God."[3]

This declaration was consistent with his unswerving loyalty to the Presidents of the Church when he served as a member of the



Wilford Woodruff served as President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from April 7, 1889, to September 2, 1898.

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. When he became the President of the Church himself, he testified of his divine calling and assured the Saints that they would always be led by a living prophet. He said:

"When the Lord gave the keys of the kingdom of God, the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood, of the apostleship, and sealed them upon the head of Joseph Smith, He sealed them upon his head to stay here upon the earth until the coming of the Son of Man. Well might Brigham Young say, 'The keys of the kingdom of God are here.' They were with him to the day of his death. They then rested upon the head of another man—President John Taylor. He held those keys to the hour of his death. They then fell by turn, or in the providence of God, upon Wilford Woodruff.

"I say to the Latter-day Saints the keys of the kingdom of God are here, and they are going to stay here, too, until the coming of the Son of Man. Let all Israel understand that. They may not rest upon my head but a short time, but they will then rest on the head of another apostle, and another after him, and so continue until the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in the clouds of heaven."[4]

Teachings of Wilford Woodruff

From the days of Adam, the Lord has raised up prophets to govern His Church and warn the inhabitants of the earth.

God has led this Church from the beginning, by prophets and inspired men. He will lead this Church until the scene is wound up.[5]

God never had a church or a people, in any age of the world, that were governed and controlled except by revelation. The living oracles of God were among them—those who held the keys of the kingdom, and they had to receive revelation to assist them in all their work.[6]

The Lord has never sent judgments upon any generation which we have any knowledge of until he has raised up prophets

and inspired men to warn the inhabitants of the earth. This is the course the Lord has dealt with all men from the days of Father Adam to the present time.[7]

Through living prophets, the Lord reveals His will for the Church and leads us on the path to eternal life.

The Lord has taught us . . . that it matters not whether he speaks from heaven by his own voice, or by the ministration of angels, or by the mouth of his servants when they are moved upon by the Holy Ghost, it is all the same the mind and will of God [see D&C 1:38].[8]

The law of God is in the mouths of those who are set to lead us.[9]

If we had before us every revelation which God ever gave to man; if we had the Book of Enoch; if we had the untranslated plates before us in the English language; if we had the records of the Revelator St. John which are sealed up, and all other revelations, and they were piled up here a hundred feet high, the church and kingdom of God could not grow, in this or any other age of the world, without the living oracles of God.[10]

We have revelation with us. True, the leaders of this Church since the death of the Prophet Joseph Smith have not [published] many revelations. Joseph Smith brought forth the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, and it is a grand volume of revelation—one of the most glorious records ever given of God to man on the earth. But I want to say that Brother Brigham Young did not live without revelation. He always had revelation with him. He could not labor without it; he could not preach or do the will of God without it. Nor can any man that occupies that position. The Lord would permit no man to stand at the head of this Church unless he was governed and controlled by revelation. We are feeble instruments—weak worms of the dust; but God has chosen the weak things of the earth to confound the wise, and to build up His Zion, and He gives us revelation and makes known unto us His mind and will.[11]

It is different with us than with the world; we have a main channel through which to receive our light, knowledge and

blessings. . . . You may take the smartest men that talent and learning ever made and put them in the church of God, and they never can get ahead of their leader. Their wisdom would be turned into folly. Why? Because they are not called to lead. If a man has never learned a letter of a book, if the Lord calls upon him to lead the church and kingdom of God, he will give him power to do it. We have had these lessons laid before us day after day, calling upon us to be united, and our hearts to become as the heart of one man, that our prayers and works may be centered to one point in carrying out the counsel of our head.

The Lord will lead [the President of the Church] where he wants him to go. We know God is with him, and has led him all the time. . . . It requires [the prophet] to tell us what is right and what is wrong in many things, because that is his place and calling. . . . A perfect channel exists between the Lord and him, through which he obtains wisdom, which is diffused through other channels to the people. That we know. We have got to learn to bring this knowledge into practice.[12]

The Lord will never permit me or any other man who stands as President of this Church to lead you astray. It is not in the programme. It is not in the mind of God. If I were to attempt that, the Lord would remove me out of my place.[13]

I hope we may all pursue the course laid down for us by the servants of the Lord, for if we do this I know that we shall be safe in this world, and secure happiness and exaltation in the world to come. . . . If we are faithful they will lead us in the way of life, and in as much as we have faith to believe in their instructions, in the teachings of the Holy Spirit through them, we are always in the safe path, and shall be sure of our reward.[14]

We sustain the living prophet and other Church leaders by praying for them and following their counsel.

I and other men, the apostles, and all who are called to officiate in the name of the Lord need the faith and prayers of the Latter-day Saints.[15]

When we raise our hands in a sustaining vote, we pledge to "sustain the Presidency of this Church by [our] faith, works, and prayers."

While I live I want to be true and faithful to my God and to the Saints. One of the greatest blessings of God to me has been the fact that myself and counselors live in the hearts of the Latter-day Saints, and I have felt to be humbled in the dust before the Lord for this. We know that you pray for us. We know that you have respect for us. And we live upon this principle. . . . The Lord has "chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; . . . and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are." [See 1 Corinthians 1:27–28.] We feel our weaknesses. I wish myself that I were a better man than I am. Of course, I have endeavored to do about the best I could in my weak way. I still wish to do so. But I am dependent upon the Lord and upon the prayers of the Saints, the same as my brethren.[16]

I hope my brethren and sisters will feel in their hearts to sustain the Presidency of this Church by their faith, works, and prayers, and not suffer them to carry all the load, while we hide ourselves in the rear. If we should do this we are not worthy, we are not worthy of our position as Elders in Israel, and fathers and

mothers in Israel. Let each one bear their share; and if we will correct our own follies, and set in order our own houses, and do that which is right, we shall then do some good, and help to lift the load that rests upon those that lead. . . . It is grievous to [the President of the Church] when he sees the people reckless in pursuing their own course leading them to destruction; when they are not willing to take his counsel and abide the doctrines he teaches; but when he sees the people willing to obey wholesome counsel, and endeavor to sanctify themselves before the Lord, he feels strengthened and sustained.[17]

We must not treat lightly the counsel from the President of the Church.

When the Lord inspires men and sends them to any generation, he holds that generation responsible for the manner in which they receive the testimony of his servants.[18]

It is necessary that all the members of the Church should exercise their powers of reason and reflection, and thoroughly understand why they take the course which God points out. Intelligent obedience on the part of His Saints is desired by our Father in Heaven. He has given us our agency to think and act for ourselves, on our own volition, to obtain a testimony for ourselves from Him concerning the truth of the principles which He teaches, and then be firm and unshaken in the performance of all which is necessary for salvation.[19]

It is our privilege so to live as to have the Spirit of God to bear record of the truth of any revelation that comes from God through the mouth of His prophet who leads His people, and it has ever been a key with me that when the prophet who leads presents a doctrine or principle or says "thus saith the Lord" I make it a point to receive it even if it comes in contact with my tradition or views, being well satisfied that the Lord would reveal the truth unto His prophet whom He has called to lead His Church before He would unto me. And the word of the Lord through the prophet is the end of the Law unto me.[20]

I want to say to my brethren and sisters that [the President of the Church] is our leader, he is our law-giver in the Church and

Kingdom of God. He is called to this office; it is his prerogative to tell this people what to do, and it is our duty to obey the counsel that he has given to-day to the sisters and the brethren. We, as a people, should not treat lightly this counsel, for I will tell you in the name of the Lord, and I have watched it from the time I became a member of this Church, there is no man who undertakes to run counter to the counsel of the legally authorized leader of this people that ever prospers, and no such man ever will prosper.[21]

According to the ancient practice we learn that [shepherds] always went forward and prepared the way, so that there could be no danger in advance but what the shepherd would learn of in time to save the sheep. If [the sheep] are allowed to run by the shepherd, the wolves are apt to catch them and destroy them, and the very moment that men in this kingdom attempt to run ahead or cross the path of their leaders, no matter in what respect, the moment they do this they are in danger of being injured by the wolves.

This is a subject upon which I have thought a great deal, and I have gained a little useful knowledge during my experience by watching the conduct of men, and I have never in my life known it to fail, that when men went contrary to the counsel of their leaders, . . . they always became entangled and suffered a loss by so doing.

Now whatever I might have obtained in the shape of learning, by searching and study respecting the arts and sciences of men, whatever principles I may have imbibed during my scientific researches, yet if the prophet of God should tell me that a certain principle, or theory which I might have learned was not true, I do not care what my ideas might have been, I should consider it my duty, at the suggestion of my file leader to abandon that principle or theory. . . .

I have seen men in the days of Joseph bring up principles, and read and teach, and advocate theories when the prophet would say "it is not right to do so, they are not true." Those men would still argue, maintain their position, and they would write in defence of their theories when the prophet condemned them, and

they would say "we have no faith in your theory, nor in the system you present."

The very moment a man does that he crosses the path of the servant of God who is set to lead the way to life and salvation. This is one thing that the Elders should carefully avoid. The fact is there are a great many things taught in the building up of this kingdom which seem strange to us, being contrary to our traditions, and are calculated to try men. Brother Joseph used a great many methods of testing the integrity of men, and he taught a great many things which in consequence of tradition required prayer, faith and a testimony from the Lord before they could be believed by many of the Saints. . . .

With regard to crossing the path of any man who may be appointed to lead us, I will say we never should do it, and I do not care what our feelings and views may be upon the subject as far as our traditions and education are concerned.

If God has anything to reveal, he will reveal it to that man who stands at the head. . . . There is no other plan, no other system by which to guide and govern men in this kingdom, only that which has been established by the revelations of God in the order of His church and kingdom, and that is for the head to lead, counsel and govern in all dispensations in which the will of God is revealed to man.[22]

Suggestions for Study and Teaching

Consider these ideas as you study the chapter or as you prepare to teach. For additional help, see pages v–ix.

- What principles can we learn from the story on page 195?
- What are the responsibilities of prophets? (See pages 197–99.) How does the current President of the Church fulfill these responsibilities?
- Review the third full paragraph on page 198. Why is it more important to be led by a living prophet than to have the records of ancient prophets?

- Review the second full paragraph on page 199. How does this assurance help you?
- What can we do to sustain and support the President of the Church? (See pages 199–201.) Consider what you do personally to sustain the living prophet.
- What counsel have we received from the current President of the Church? What have you done to follow that counsel? What blessings have you received as a result of your obedience?
- What warnings did President Woodruff give to those who reject or ignore the words of the living prophet? (See pages 201–3.)
- Read the second full paragraph on page 201. What do you learn from the phrase "intelligent obedience"?
- How can we teach children to sustain the President of the Church?

Related Scriptures: Amos 3:7; Matthew 10:41; 1 Thessalonians 5:25; Mosiah 2:7–9; D&C 21:4–7; 28:6–7; 43:1–3; 107:22

Notes

1. Journal of Wilford Woodruff, August 26, 1857, Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
2. Journal of Wilford Woodruff, August 26, 1857.
3. *Deseret News,* May 27, 1857, 91; from a discourse given on April 9, 1857.
4. *Millennial Star,* September 2, 1889, 547.
5. *Deseret Weekly,* September 5, 1891, 324.
6. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* sel. G. Homer Durham (1946), 53–54.
7. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 223.
8. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* March 26, 1878, 1.
9. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 56.
10. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 53.
11. *Millennial Star,* March 5, 1896, 148.
12. *Deseret News,* December 16, 1857, 324–25.
13. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 212.
14. *Deseret News,* May 27, 1857, 91.
15. *Millennial Star,* September 2, 1889, 547–48.
16. *Deseret Weekly,* September 5, 1891, 324.
17. *Deseret News,* March 21, 1855, 11.
18. *Deseret News,* July 1, 1863, 1.
19. "An Epistle to the Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," *Millennial Star,* November 14, 1887, 724.
20. Journal of Wilford Woodruff, January 27, 1860.
21. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* September 20, 1870, 2.
22. *Deseret News,* May 27, 1857, 91.

Agency: Choosing Life or Death

Now is the time for us to choose between good and evil, for our actions bring consequences in this life and in the eternities.

From the Life of Wilford Woodruff

President Wilford Woodruff testified that salvation comes "by and through the blood of Jesus Christ," and he also emphasized that the fulness of salvation comes "through obedience to the Gospel."[1] With this understanding, he taught that "we all have our agency to choose the good and refuse the evil, or to choose the evil and refuse the good"[2] and that God "will hold [us] accountable for the use of this agency."[3] He urged the Saints to make righteous decisions, reminding them of the difference between "a few short years of earthly pleasure" and "a long eternity of light, truth, blessings, and knowledge which the Lord will bestow upon every man who keeps his law."[4]

John Benbow

Like all of us, President Woodruff had countless opportunities to exercise the gift of agency. One such opportunity came in Herefordshire, England, at the home of John Benbow (see page 91 in this book). "John Benbow was a noble man," recalled President Woodruff. "He was like an English lord; as rich a man, I suppose, as ever came into the Church. He had not been baptized a month, I do not think, when he came into a little sitting room with his wife, and he probably spent three quarters of an hour in telling me that he had been reading in the New Testament how in the days of the Apostles

Photograph of the farmhouse once owned by John Benbow.

they sold all their possessions and laid them at the Apostles' feet [see Acts 4:31–37], and he said he felt it was his duty to fulfil that law and he wanted to do it. I listened to him patiently and when he got through it took me perhaps half an hour to tell him the difference between our position to-day and the position of the Apostles in that day. I gave him to understand that God had not sent me to England to take care of his gold, his horses, his cows and his property; He had sent me there to preach the Gospel. I told him, however, that the Lord would accept of his sacrifice, and that whenever he could do good, he should do it; he should assist the poor, help publish the Book of Mormon, etc."

Recounting this experience, President Woodruff commented on the far-reaching influence of his decision to politely refuse Brother Benbow's offer:

"Now, what would have been the result if I had taken the other course, and said, 'Yes give me your property and I will take care of it'? Why, he would probably have apostatized. Not only that, but there would have been one foolish Apostle, who would

have been a suitable candidate for apostasy also. But was that any temptation to me? No, it was not. It would not have been to any Elder who had enough of the Spirit of God to know the difference between a hundred thousand pounds of money and a part in the first resurrection, with power to pass by the angels and the gods to exaltation and glory, and stand in the presence of God and the Lamb forever and forever."[5]

Teachings of Wilford Woodruff

Because God has given us agency, we are responsible for our actions.

God has given unto all of his children of this dispensation, as he gave unto all of his children of previous dispensations, individual agency. This agency has always been the heritage of man under the rule and government of God. [We] possessed it in the heaven of heavens before the world was, and the Lord maintained and defended it there against the aggression of Lucifer and those that took sides with him, to the overthrow of Lucifer and one-third part of the heavenly hosts [see Revelation 12:1–9; D&C 29:36–37; Moses 4:1–4]. By virtue of this agency you and I and all mankind are made responsible beings, responsible for the course we pursue, the lives we live, the deeds we do in the body.[6]

It is part of the divine economy not to force any man to heaven, not to coerce the mind but to leave it free to act for itself. [God] lays before His creature man the everlasting gospel, the principles of life and salvation, and then leaves him to choose for himself or to reject for himself, with the definite understanding that he becomes responsible to Him for the results of his acts.[7]

Our decisions to do good or evil bring consequences in this life and in the eternities.

All will get what they labor for. Whatsoever we sow, whether good or evil, of that we will reap the fruit [see Galatians 6:7; D&C 6:33].[8]

The Lord has commanded us, and we have got to obey his commandments if we [are to] receive the blessings of obedience.[9]

The nearer we adhere to the commandments of God, the more confident we shall become that God is our friend and that He is watching over us and that His Son Jesus is our advocate with the Father, that He is in the midst of this people, and that He will contend for the rights of His Saints, and will ward off every weapon that is formed against Zion.[10]

We should impress upon the minds of our children the evil consequences of committing sin or breaking any of the laws of God; they should be made to understand that by doing wrong they will inherit sorrow and tribulation which they can easily escape by doing right, and they should learn this principle by precept without learning sorrow and affliction by experience from doing wrong.[11]

I have never committed a sin in this Church and kingdom but what it has cost me a thousand times more than it was worth. We cannot sin with impunity; we cannot neglect any counsel with impunity, but what it will bring sorrow.[12]

Brethren and sisters, seek after God; call upon him in your secret places, and do not turn away from righteousness and truth; there is nothing to be gained by doing that, but everything to lose.[13]

Those persons who will not walk according to the light they have, must sooner or later inherit sore afflictions to themselves; they do not have joy and happiness and salvation like that person who obeys the commandments of God and constantly does that which is right. The wicked are always in fear. There is no inducement for a man or a woman to commit sin, it is not a paying business. It is better for us to serve the Lord, for those who serve the Lord morning, noon and night are happy whether they be rich or poor.[14]

Ask any people, nations, kingdoms, or generations of men the question, and they will tell you they are seeking for happiness, but how are they seeking for it? Take the greatest portion of mankind as an example, and how are they seeking for happiness? By serving the devil as fast as they can, and almost the last

being or thing that the children of men worship, and the last being whose laws they want to keep are the laws of the God of heaven. They will not worship God nor honor his name, nor keep his laws, but blaspheme his name, from day to day, and nearly all the world [is] seeking for happiness by committing sins, breaking the law of God, and blaspheming his name and rejecting the only source whence happiness flows.

If we really understood that we could not obtain happiness by walking in the paths of sin and breaking the laws of God, we should then see the folly of it, every man and every woman would see that to obtain happiness we should go to work and perform the works of righteousness, and do the will of our Father in Heaven, for we shall receive at his hand all the happiness, blessing, glory, salvation, exaltation, and eternal lives, that we ever do receive either in time or eternity.[15]

Let us be faithful and adorn ourselves with the graces of the gospel. There is nothing gained by doing wrong. Lying, stealing, blaspheming, drunkenness, backbiting, and denying the Lord Jesus Christ bring sorrow and remorse; they debase man who is organized in the image of God; but to do right, to obey the commandments of God, to be charitable and kind, brings joy and peace and the Holy Ghost, and an eventual exaltation in our Father's kingdom.[16]

We will be eternally rewarded according to the law we choose to keep during our short time on the earth.

Bless your souls, our lives here are only a few days in duration, but on the other side of the veil we shall live eternally, we shall live and exist just as long as our Creator will exist, and our eternal destiny depends upon the manner in which we spend our short lives here in the flesh.[17]

When we can really understand that our future destiny—future happiness, exaltation and glory, or our future misery, debasement and sorrow, all depend upon the little time we spend in this world, I can say that it is not to the advantage of any man under the heavens to spend his time in doing wrong. . . . If a man ever

obtains any blessings from any quarter, he has got to obtain them from the Lord, for the devil has no disposition to bless, and will not bless the children of men; but he labors to lead them astray from the paths of righteousness and truth.[18]

The God of heaven, who created this earth and placed his children upon it, gave unto them a law whereby they might be exalted and saved in a kingdom of glory. For there is a law given unto all kingdoms, and all things are governed by law throughout the whole universe. Whatever law anyone keeps, he is preserved by that law, and he receives whatever reward that law guarantees unto him [see D&C 130:20–21]. It is the will of God that all his children should obey the highest law, that they may receive the highest glory that is ordained for all immortal beings. But God has given all his children an agency, to choose what law they will keep.[19]

No man will receive a celestial glory unless he abides a celestial law; no man will receive a terrestrial glory unless he abides a terrestrial law, and no man will receive a telestial glory unless he abides a telestial law [see D&C 88:19–33]. There is a great difference between the light of the sun at noonday and the glimmer of the stars at night, but that difference is no greater than the difference of the glory in the several portions of the kingdom of God.[20]

The Lord has revealed unto us the celestial law, that is, he has given unto us the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and has given us a knowledge of the principles of eternal life. . . .

If we were to go into the celestial world we would then be actuated by the spirit that predominates there, and have continually with us those principles by which we should be governed. We have got to possess the same spirit and principles in this world, and we have got to abide a celestial law here, and be united upon the principle that unites the people of God who dwell in his presence, in order to get the same glory that they enjoy.

These are the principles that are taught us from day to day, and we must learn to carry them out, and we must lay aside our selfishness and all false principles.[21]

"Those who serve the Lord morning, noon and night are happy whether they be rich or poor."

It will pay men to do right, and men will sorrow and bitterly regret taking any course in this or any other generation against God or his work. . . . If a man does right, is valiant in the testimony of Jesus Christ, obeys the gospel, and keeps his covenants, when he passes to the other side of the veil he has an entrance into the presence of God and the Lamb; having kept celestial law he enters into celestial glory, he is preserved by that law, and he participates in that glory through the endless ages of eternity. It pays any man under heaven to obey and be faithful to the law of God the few days he spends in the flesh.[22]

We may just as well search our own hearts, and at once resolve that we will do the works of righteousness, honor our Father in Heaven, do our duty to God and man, take hold and build up the kingdom of God, and we will then understand that in order to obtain happiness and satisfy the immortal soul in a fulness of glory that man must abide a celestial law and be quickened by a portion of the celestial Spirit of God; and we will also understand that to commit sin, break the law of God and blaspheme his name, will bring sorrow and misery and it will bring death both temporally and spiritually. If we walk in the paths of unrighteousness, we grieve the Holy Spirit and grieve our brethren and injure ourselves.[23]

The way of life is pointed out and if we neglect to walk therein, there is nothing but death [that] stares us in the face. Let us stop and reflect a moment—let us see whether it is best for us to receive life or death. . . . You have heard plain truths, and they have been dictated by the power of the Holy Ghost and by the testimony of Jesus Christ, and now is the time for you to decide whom ye will serve.[24]

Your future blessings, your future exaltation and glory, worlds without end, will depend upon the course you pursue here. The way is clear before you that leads to life eternal. . . . It now remains for you to walk therein.[25]

God places salvation within our reach, providing simple principles of conduct and giving us strength to fulfill them.

There lies within your reach salvation, eternal life and a part in the first resurrection; in fact, all the blessings God has promised to any people that has ever been in the flesh, are held out to you and are within your reach inasmuch as you do your duty.[26]

The Latter-day Saints have every encouragement; their pathway is plain and inviting before them.[27]

There is but one right road, and it is a straightforward one; and the principles and rules that govern you in that path are simple and easy to be understood. This is the path for us to walk in, and I consider that we are greatly blessed in having learned the true way.[28]

Now whatever the Lord requires at our hands, he does not require anything of us that we can not perform. We can obey his commandments according to the position that we occupy and the means that we have in our possession. There is no man or woman so poor but what he or she can obey the gospel; they can go forth and be baptized for the remission of their sins, and if they keep the commandments of the Lord he will put into their hands power and means to fulfill that which is required of them.[29]

I pray that we may pursue that course that when we get on the other side of the veil we shall be satisfied with our record. We will find our history and our record there in the great library of the celestial kingdom of our God, and we will know what we have been doing in this life. If we do anything that is wrong we will be sorry for it. We should repent of wrong and try to do better. I pray that the Spirit of God may be with us to guide and direct us in our labors until we get through here, then when we pass away we may be received in the kingdom of God. We shall rejoice if we do right; for our eyes have not seen, our ears have not heard, and it has never entered into the hearts of the children of men the glory that lies before the sons and daughters of Adam. It is hidden from our eyes to-day, and will never be open to us until we enter into the presence of God and the Lamb.[30]

There is no man or woman who has ever lived on the earth and kept the commandments of God who will be ashamed of, or sorry for it, when they go into the presence of God.[31]

Suggestions for Study and Teaching

Consider these ideas as you study the chapter or as you prepare to teach. For additional help, see pages v–ix.

- Review the story on pages 205–7. What principles guided Elder Woodruff's decision in his response to Brother Benbow?
- Read the second full paragraph on page 207. Why is it against God's nature to "force any man to heaven" or "coerce the mind"? What does our Heavenly Father do to encourage us to choose the path leading to eternal life?
- President Woodruff said, "All will get what they labor for" (page 207). What does this mean to you? How might this statement influence the decisions we make?
- According to President Woodruff, what are some blessings that come in this life when we keep the commandments? What are some consequences that come in this life when we choose not to keep the commandments? (See pages 208–9.)
- Review the fourth and fifth paragraphs on page 208. What are the costs of sin?
- How do our daily decisions affect our eternal destiny? (See pages 209–10, 212.) Why is it important to remember that this life is short compared to the eternities?
- What would you say to a family member or friend who seeks happiness without keeping the commandments? What experiences could you share to help that person?
- Why do you think people sometimes feel that salvation is beyond their reach? As you study President Woodruff's teachings on pages 213–14, which statements do you think would be especially reassuring for people who feel this way?
- What can parents do to respect their children's agency but still help their children make righteous decisions?

Related Scriptures: Joshua 24:15; Isaiah 64:4; Colossians 3:24–25; 1 Nephi 3:7; 2 Nephi 2:25–30; Alma 7:14–25; 41:10; Helaman 14:30–31; D&C 130:20–21

Notes

1. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* June 13, 1882, 1.
2. "Sayings and Writings of Prest. Woodruff," *Contributor,* July 1894, 538.
3. *Deseret Weekly,* October 26, 1889, 561.
4. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* sel. G. Homer Durham (1946), 278–79.
5. *Millennial Star,* November 28, 1895, 754–55.
6. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 8–9.
7. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* May 9, 1882, 1.
8. *Millennial Star,* September 2, 1889, 548.
9. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* May 2, 1876, 4.
10. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* July 26, 1881, 1.
11. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 105.
12. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* December 14, 1880, 1.
13. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 262.
14. *Deseret News,* February 22, 1865, 162.
15. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 259–60.
16. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 23.
17. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 244.
18. *Deseret News,* February 22, 1865, 162.
19. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 10.
20. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* January 12, 1875, 1.
21. *Deseret News,* January 6, 1858, 350.
22. *Deseret News,* December 23, 1874, 741.
23. *Deseret News,* February 4, 1857, 879.
24. In *Journal of Discourses,* 9:222.
25. "Y. M. M. I. A. Annual Conference," *Contributor,* August 1895, 638.
26. *Contributor,* August 1895, 638.
27. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* July 26, 1881, 1.
28. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 307.
29. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* May 2, 1876, 4.
30. *Millennial Star,* May 14, 1896, 311.
31. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* May 20, 1873, 1.

Like the early Latter-day Saints, we all face trials. President Woodruff taught that God allows His Saints to be tested "so that they may prove their integrity and know the character of the foundation upon which they build."

CHAPTER 21

Faithfully Enduring Trials and Opposition

If we are faithful and obedient in times of trial, the Lord will strengthen us and use adversity to help us prepare for celestial glory.

From the Life of Wilford Woodruff

"We are safe as long as we do our duty," taught President Wilford Woodruff. "No matter what trials or tribulations we may be called to go through, the hand of God will be with us and sustain us."[1] In teaching this principle, President Woodruff spoke from experience. He endured religious and political persecution, mob violence, opposition to missionary work, illness, deaths of family members and friends, and the everyday trials of life. But he responded to such adversity with faith rather than despair, trusting the Lord's promises and finding strength in his own testimony of the gospel.

In November 1835, when Wilford Woodruff was serving a mission in the southern part of the United States, he and his traveling companions received the Lord's guidance in a time of trial. He wrote: "While travelling in the night, . . . a tremendous storm of wind and rain overtook us. We came to a creek which had swollen to such an extent by the rain, that we could not cross without swimming our horses. . . . We undertook to head the stream, to ford it; but in the attempt, in the midst of the darkness and the raging of the wind and rain, we were lost in the thick woods, amidst the rain, wind, creeks and fallen treetops. We crossed streams nearly twenty times. . . . But the Lord was merciful unto us in the midst of our troubles, for while we were groping in the dark, running the risk of killing both ourselves and [our] animals, by riding off precipitous bluffs, a bright light

suddenly shone round about us, and revealed our perilous situation, as we were upon the edge of a deep gulf. The light continued with us until we found a house, and learned the right road."[2]

Commenting on this experience, President Woodruff said, "We then went on our way rejoicing, though the darkness returned and the rain continued."[3] This statement exemplifies his approach to the difficulties of life. He always went on his way, rejoicing in the Lord's blessings even when some trials persisted.

Teachings of Wilford Woodruff

Trials and opposition give us experience and help us prepare for celestial glory.

It has no doubt been a marvel many times, in the minds of men and women, why God ever placed men and women in such a world as this, why he causes his children to pass through sorrow and affliction here in the body. The Lord has revealed something to us concerning this matter, and we have learned enough about it to know that this thing is necessary.[4]

It appears plain that it is God's purpose to suffer His Saints to be thoroughly tried and tested, so that they may prove their integrity and know the character of the foundation upon which they build.[5]

While we sometimes feel and have felt in days that are past and gone, to complain because we meet with oppression, persecution, and affliction, yet I wish to say to my brethren and sisters that these things are the heritage of the Saints of God. . . . I have never read of the people of God in any dispensation passing through life, as the sectarian world would say, on flowery beds of ease, without opposition of any kind. . . . We have been called to pass through trials many times, and I do not think we should complain, because if we had no trials we should hardly feel at home in the other world in the company of the Prophets and Apostles who were sawn asunder, crucified, etc., for the word of God and testimony of Jesus Christ.[6]

It is impossible . . . for the Saints of God to inherit a celestial kingdom without their being tried as to whether they will abide in the covenants of the Lord or not.[7]

Jesus . . . descended below all things that he might rise above all things and comprehend all things. No man descended lower than the Savior of the world. Born in a stable, cradled in a manger, he travelled from there to the cross through suffering mingled with blood to a throne of grace; and in all his life there was nothing of an earthly nature that seemed to be worth possessing. His whole life was passed in poverty, suffering, pain, affliction, labor, prayer, mourning and sorrow until he gave up the ghost on the cross. Still he was God's firstborn son and the Redeemer of the world. The question might be asked why the Lord suffered his Son to come here and to live and die as he did. When we get into the spirit world, and the veil is withdrawn we shall then perhaps understand the whys and wherefores of all these things.

In the dispensations and providences of God to man it seems that we are born to suffer pain, affliction, sorrows and trials; this is what God has decreed that the human family shall pass through; and if we make a right use of this probation, the experience it brings will eventually prove a great blessing to us, and when we receive immortality and eternal life, exaltation, kingdoms, thrones, principalities and powers with all the blessings of the fulness of the gospel of Christ, we shall understand and comprehend why we were called to pass through a continual warfare during the few years we spent in the flesh.[8]

What is anything we can do or suffer, to be compared with the multiplicity of kingdoms, thrones, and principalities that God has revealed to us?[9]

In the war between darkness and light,
the Lord and His people will triumph.

Opposition to God and His Christ, opposition to light and truth has existed since the beginning to the present day. This is the warfare that commenced in heaven, that has existed through all time, and that will continue until the winding up scene, until He reigns whose right it is to reign, when He shall come in clouds of glory to reward every man according to the deeds done in the body.[10]

The spirit of warfare that is manifested in these days has existed in all ages when the priesthood was upon the earth. There was

always a war between light and darkness, God and the devil, saint and sinner, correct principles and false doctrines. We ourselves have a warfare with the evil propensities of our nature.[11]

There are two powers on the earth and in the midst of the inhabitants of the earth—the power of God and the power of the devil. In our history we have had some very peculiar experiences. When God has had a people on the earth, it matters not in what age, Lucifer, the son of the morning, and the millions of fallen spirits that were cast out of heaven, have warred against God, against Christ, against the work of God, and against the people of God. And they are not backward in doing it in our day and generation. Whenever the Lord set His hand to perform any work, those powers labored to overthrow it.[12]

We have not only to fight the powers of darkness, the invisible forces that surround us, but we have to war with a great many outward circumstances and to contend with a great many difficulties that we must of necessity meet, and the more of this we have to meet the more we should be stimulated to action, and to labor with all our power before the Lord for the establishment of righteousness and truth and the building up of the work of God, and to see that his name is honored upon the earth.[13]

The devil knew when the angel delivered [the Book of Mormon] to Joseph Smith that it was the foundation of a system that would overthrow his kingdom. The drivings, etc., that this people have passed through [have] not been because they have been breakers of the law—because they have been more wicked than others, but because they were laying the foundation of the kingdom of God that would grow, and increase, . . . and prepare the way for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ who is king of kings and Lord of Lords, who will come and reign over the whole earth, and all other kingdoms, and presidents and governors, and their subjects will be obliged to acknowledge that Jesus is the Christ. The latter-day work which we represent will bind the power of the devil which has held sway among the children of men. . . . Then it is not strange that the devil should become mad, and stir up the wicked to make war against it. The Lord will inspire His servants and give them ability to maintain this kingdom

"Born in a stable, cradled in a manger, [Jesus Christ] travelled from there to the cross through suffering mingled with blood to a throne of grace."

upon the earth. He is at the helm. I would not give much for it if He was not the author of it—it could not stand without Him against the great power which is waged against it.[14]

It is for us to wake up to a sense of our duty, and call upon the Lord in humility, and live near to Him; and our eyes will be opened, as in the case of the young man, the servant of the ancient Prophet Elisha, and we will see that there are more for us than against us [see 2 Kings 6:8–17]; and that the element of opposition tends only to hasten the fulfillment of the purposes of God. Put your trust in God and rely on His promises, living up to the light and knowledge you possess; and all will be well with you whether living or dying.[15]

The Lord watches over us in times of trial, strengthening us according to our faith, humility, and obedience.

Certainly we have never passed through more than the Savior did, nor as much. But He through all His life remained true and faithful to His Father and to His calling as the Savior of the world. He prayed a great deal, and He mourned before the Lord

over the sins of the world. To-day He is in our midst. He is our Advocate with the Father. [See D&C 29:5.] He is watching over us, and He will do all that He can for our salvation.[16]

We have been persecuted, we have been afflicted, and we have passed through serious trials in our day; but the Lord has carried us through all these things.[17]

Calamities and troubles are increasing in the earth, and there is a meaning to these things. Remember this, and reflect upon these matters. If you do your duty, and I do my duty, we'll have protection, and shall pass through the afflictions in peace and in safety.[18]

It takes independence of mind, honesty of heart, faith in God and firmness of character to live the life of a Latter-day Saint, in the face of a frowning world, and in the midst of trials and troubles and persecution.[19]

Daniel was prepared to enter the den of lions; the three Hebrew children [Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego] were not afraid of the fate that awaited them; the Apostles were valiant for the truth and shrank not from death for its sake, and why could those men and others under similar circumstances stand by their convictions without flinching? Because, in the first place, they had the truth and they knew it for themselves; and in the second place, the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, sustained them as that power alone can in all the trying scenes through which the people of God are called to pass. And this is so to-day.[20]

I have often thought that I never saw this people more happy than in their seasons of greatest poverty, drivings and afflictions, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. The Spirit of God has been with them, and in their humility and sufferings, the Holy Ghost, the Comforter has been their constant companion, and they have been filled with joy and consolation, and have rejoiced before the Lord for all these things. They would not have felt so if they had not been trying to keep the commandments of the Lord.[21]

There is need for us to repent and humble ourselves before the Lord our God, that we may have and enjoy more of the Holy Spirit to prepare us for that which lies before us.[22]

I want to bear my testimony to the Latter-day Saints. God is with this people. He is shaping our course, and will continue to do so if we will only hearken to His voice, and He will continue to give unto us sufficient grace to withstand the day of trial and trouble. The Lord has been merciful to His people in every age of the world; but as Christ suffered, as the Apostles suffered—some of them even unto death—for the testimony of Jesus, so have the Latter-day Saints suffered, and some of them have also sealed their testimony with their life's blood. They have been called upon to pass through sore afflictions for the Gospel's sake, but we have never been required to endure more than we were able to bear, and never shall so long as we follow the counsels of heaven.[23]

The hand of God is stretched out for the salvation of this people, and however dark the clouds may appear; however strong persecution, oppression and opposition may become to this work, the Lord has, from its commencement, until to-day watched over its interests, and has sustained and preserved it, and he will continue to do so until its consummation; until Zion arises and puts on her beautiful garments, and all the great events of the last days are accomplished.[24]

Suggestions for Study and Teaching

Consider these ideas as you study the chapter or as you prepare to teach. For additional help, see pages v–ix.

- Read the story on pages 217–18. What do you learn from this story?
- Many people wonder why God allows His children to "pass through sorrow and affliction" (page 218). How did President Woodruff answer this question? (See pages 218–19.)
- Why was it necessary for Jesus to suffer? (See page 219; see also Alma 7:11–12; D&C 88:6.) How did He respond to opposition? (See pages 221–22.) How can we follow His example?
- President Woodruff taught that the war between light and darkness "has existed through all time" (page 219). How do you see this war continuing today? What can we do to defend ourselves and our families in this war? (See pages 220–22.)

- In what ways have you been "stimulated to action" (page 220) as a result of trials?
- Study 2 Kings 6:8–17. What impresses you about this story? What did President Woodruff teach when he referred to this account? (See page 221.)
- In what ways does the Lord help us meet our trials? (See pages 222–23; see also Mosiah 24:13–16.) What must we do in order to receive the comfort and strength the Lord offers? How has the Lord helped you endure adversity?

Related Scriptures: 2 Nephi 2:11–24; Alma 36:3; D&C 58:2–5; 101:1–5; 121:7–8, 29; 122:5–9

Notes

1. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* sel. G. Homer Durham (1946), 212.
2. "History of Wilford Woodruff (From His Own Pen)," *Millennial Star,* April 15, 1865, 231.
3. "My First Mission Continued," *Juvenile Instructor,* June 15, 1867, 91.
4. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* July 20, 1875, 1.
5. "Epistle," *Woman's Exponent,* April 15, 1888, 174.
6. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* January 15, 1883, 1.
7. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 263.
8. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* July 20, 1875, 1.
9. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 85.
10. *Deseret Weekly,* September 21, 1889, 394.
11. *Deseret News,* September 26, 1860, 234.
12. *Deseret Evening News,* October 17, 1896, 9.
13. *Deseret News,* March 4, 1857, 411.
14. *Deseret News,* February 22, 1865, 163.
15. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* March 20, 1883, 1.
16. *Millennial Star,* March 5, 1896, 150.
17. *Deseret Weekly,* April 25, 1891, 555.
18. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 230.
19. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* January 31, 1882, 2.
20. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* June 13, 1882, 1.
21. *Deseret News,* February 22, 1865, 162.
22. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* January 12, 1875, 1.
23. *Salt Lake Herald Church and Farm,* June 15, 1895, 386.
24. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* March 4, 1873, 3.

Temporal and Spiritual Labor, "Hand in Hand Together"

In our efforts to strengthen our families and build up the kingdom of God on the earth, we must labor both temporally and spiritually.

From the Life of Wilford Woodruff

In the early days of the Church, prophets and apostles frequently exhorted the people to do their part in building up the kingdom of God. This effort required both spiritual and temporal labor. In addition to such pursuits as praying, studying the scriptures, and sharing the gospel, the Saints built homes and cities, established public schools, cultivated and irrigated the hard soil, and hauled granite from the mountains to build the Salt Lake Temple. In 1857, ten years after the Latter-day Saint pioneers first entered the Salt Lake Valley, Elder Wilford Woodruff said: "If we go to work and build up the kingdom of God instead of ourselves, it is no matter in what shape we do it, whether it is in building a canal, or in building a temple, preaching the gospel, cultivating the earth, or anything else. . . . We will find the Lord will help us and sustain us, and nerve us with his power, and will assist us in everything we have to do."[1]

Those who were acquainted with President Woodruff knew that he did not merely talk about the value of hard work—he applied the principle in his life. In addition to magnifying his callings in the priesthood, he was diligent in temporal labors, even in his old age. Latter-day Saint historian Andrew Jenson recorded: "His industry was so conspicuous a part of his being that when, at the age of ninety years, one of his grandsons excelled him a very little in hoeing some vegetables in the garden, he said with

"Every one should make it a matter of pride to be a producer, and not a consumer alone."

apparent humiliation: 'Well, it is the first time in my life that one of my children has ever outdone me in hoeing.' "[2]

A contemporary of President Woodruff observed: "He loved work, not alone for its own sake, but because it was associated with divine command. Nor was it to him merely a means of getting on in the world, of adding conveniences and comfort to his own life as well as to those dependent upon him; to him it was a blessing, a privilege, an opportunity which he always availed himself of whenever his calling would permit. . . . To sweat, was a divine command as much so as to pray; and in his life he exemplified in the highest degree that simple Christian life that makes for the physical, mental, and moral well-being of man. He believed sincerely in the moral supremacy of manual toil. He loved it and enjoyed it."[3]

Teachings of Wilford Woodruff

As we build up the kingdom of God, we have temporal duties to perform.

Our President [Brigham Young] has frequently told us that we cannot separate the temporal from the spiritual, but they must go hand in hand together, and so it is and so must we act in reference to building up the church and kingdom of God.[4]

Some of the people have had the idea that the Presidency of this Church and the Twelve Apostles should have nothing to do with temporal matters. Well, we would be in a bad fix if we did not deal in temporal matters.[5]

We are building up the literal kingdom of God on the earth, and we have temporal duties to perform. We inhabit temporal bodies, we eat temporal food, we build temporal houses, we raise temporal cattle and temporal wheat; we contend with temporal weeds, and with temporal enemies in our soil, and these things naturally give rise to the necessity of attending to and performing many duties of a temporal and arduous nature, and they, of course, are embraced in our religion.[6]

We can't build up Zion sitting on a hemlock slab singing ourselves away to everlasting bliss; we have to cultivate the earth, to

take the rocks and elements out of the mountains and rear temples to the Most High God; and this temporal work is demanded at our hands by the God of heaven, as much as he required Christ to die to redeem the world, or as much as the Savior required Peter, James and John to go and preach the gospel to the nations of the earth. This is the great dispensation in which the Zion of God must be built up, and we as Latter-day Saints have it to build.[7]

In temporal matters, we should welcome the counsel of the Lord and His servants.

From the commencement of this work to the present day the labor has been harder with the servants of God to get the people prepared in their hearts to let the Lord govern and control them in their temporal labor and means than in regard to matters pertaining to their eternal salvation. . . .

There is something strange about this, but I think, probably, it is in consequence of the position that we occupy. There is a veil between man and eternal things; if that veil was taken away and we were able to see eternal things as they are before the Lord no man would be tried with regard to gold, silver or this world's goods, and no man, on their account, would be unwilling to let the Lord control him. But here we have an agency, and we are in a probation, and there is a veil between us and eternal things, between us and our Heavenly Father and the spirit world; and this for a wise and proper purpose in the Lord our God, to prove whether the children of men will abide in his law or not in the situation in which they are placed here. Latter-day Saints, reflect upon these things. We have been willing, with every feeling of our hearts, that Joseph Smith, President Young and the leaders of the people should guide and direct us in regard to our eternal interests; and the blessings sealed upon us by their authority reach the other side of the veil and are in force after death, and they affect our destiny to the endless ages of eternity.

Men, in the days of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and of Jesus and the Apostles, had blessings sealed upon them, kingdoms, thrones, principalities and powers, with all the blessings of the

New and Everlasting Covenant. The question may be asked, are these eternal blessings of interest to us? They are, or should be. Are these blessings worth our earthly wealth, whether we have little or much? Is salvation, is eternal life worth a yoke of cattle, a house, a hundred acres of land, or anything that we possess here in the flesh? If it is we certainly ought to be as ready to permit the Lord to govern and control us in all our temporal labors as we are in our spiritual labors.

Again, when a man dies he can not take his cattle, horses, houses or lands with him; he goes to the grave—the resting place of all flesh. No man escapes it, the law of death rests upon all. In Adam all die, while in Christ all are made alive [see 1 Corinthians 15:22]. We all understand that death has passed upon all men, but . . . none of us know when our turn will come, though we know it will not be a great while before we shall be called to follow the generations who have preceded us. When we reflect upon these things I think we all should be willing to let the Lord guide us in temporal matters.[8]

Gospel living includes spiritual and temporal education combined with honest labor.

There is a proverb or saying which I have heard a good many times in my life, and which I think bears a great deal of weight, and that is, "truth is mighty and will prevail." I think this has been manifested in every capacity in which truth has been used whether applied temporally or spiritually; whether applied in the capacity of nations or families or individuals; whether applied to the world or to the Kingdom of God.[9]

The building up of the Zion of God in these latter days includes, I may say of a truth, every branch of business, both temporal and spiritual, in which we are engaged. We can not touch upon any subject which is lawful and legal in the sight of God and man that is not embraced in our religion. The gospel of Jesus Christ which we have embraced, and which we preach, includes all truth, and every lawful calling and occupation of man.[10]

"The subject of the proper education of the youth of Zion is one of the greatest importance."

Our children should not be neglected; they should receive a proper education in both spiritual and temporal things. That is the best legacy any parents can leave to their children.[11]

As the taste for what may be called book-learning increases, manual labor should not be neglected. The education of the mind and the education of the body should go hand in hand. A skillful brain should be joined with a skillful hand. Manual labor should be dignified among us and always be made honorable. The tendency, which is too common in these days, for young men to get a smattering of education and then think themselves unsuited for mechanical or other laborious pursuits is one that should not be allowed to grow among us. . . . Every one should make it a matter of pride to be a producer, and not a consumer alone. Our children should be taught to sustain themselves by their own industry and skill, and not only do this, but to help sustain others, and that to do this by honest toil is one of the most honorable means which God has furnished to His children here on the earth. The subject of the proper education of the youth of Zion is one of the greatest importance.[12]

In our financial endeavors, we should provide for our families, obey the law of tithing, be generous with our means, and avoid debt.

So far as our temporal matters are concerned, we have got to go to work and provide for ourselves.[13]

As for riches and wealth, I do not want them if they will damn me. I would like to have enough to clothe, shoe and feed my [family], and to make them comfortable, if I can get it honestly before the Lord; but I would rather myself and them all be in poverty than to have wealth and be destroyed. Riches are dangerous unless we can use them so as not to destroy us; if we cannot use them to the glory of God and for the building up of his kingdom, we are better without them.[14]

Some of the people have looked upon the law of tithing as a kind of tax and burthen laid upon them, but who is it for? Our tithing, our labor, and all that we do in the kingdom of God, who is it all for? . . . Our tithing, our labor, our works are not for the exaltation of the Almighty, but they are for us. . . . Let us understand this as it is and we shall do well. In paying our tithing, in obeying every law that is given to exalt us and to do us good, it is all for our individual benefit and the benefit of our children, and it is not of any particular benefit to the Lord, only as he is pleased in the faithfulness of his children and desires to see them walk in the path which leads to salvation and eternal life.[15]

We have only to look around us to satisfy ourselves . . . that those who are generous in contributing to God's work are favored of the Lord. This was the experience of ancient Israel, and it is our experience. Yet in regard to voluntary donations there is too much carelessness, notwithstanding all the precious promises connected therewith. The Saints should be reminded of the obligation which rests upon them. Our children, also, should be taught this duty, that it may become a fixed habit with them to punctually attend to these matters. Those who have strictly observed these requirements can testify to the great pleasure and many rewards they have received from their observance.

Tithing is a "law that is given to exalt us and to do us good."

This law of liberality appears to be one of the safeguards which the Lord has adopted to avert from this people the evil consequences which follow the possession of wealth. He has told us that the riches of the earth are His to give; but He has warned us to beware of pride, lest we become as the Nephites of old [see D&C 38:39]. We know the ruin it wrought for them, and we should spare no precaution to prevent wealth having a disastrous effect upon us. Many can endure poverty and be humble, and live near the Lord, [but] cannot bear riches. They become lifted up in pride and become covetous, and forget their God. Those, however, who remember constantly the teachings of the Lord concerning the earth and its inhabitants, and who contribute of the means which the Lord gives them to assist the poor and help carry forward the work of God, exercise a check upon themselves and give Satan less power to lead them astray.[16]

We feel led to caution the Latter-day Saints against forming the bad habit of incurring debt and taking upon themselves obligations which frequently burden them heavier than they can

bear, and lead to the loss of their homes and other possessions. We know it is the fashion of the age to use credit to the utmost limit. . . . This is a great evil and one that we, as a people and as individuals, should carefully shun. Our business should be done, as much as possible, on the principle of paying for that which we purchase, and our needs should be brought within the limit of our resources. The disposition to speculate and to take chances upon ventures of one kind and another should be repressed. . . . Be content with moderate gains, and be not misled by illusory hopes of acquiring wealth. Remember the saying of the wise man: "But he that hasteth to get rich shall not be innocent." [See Proverbs 28:20.] Let our children also be taught habits of economy, and not to indulge in tastes which they cannot gratify without running in debt.[17]

In all our pursuits, we must seek first the kingdom of God.

There is a very general desire manifested by this people to get rich, and to labor for self rather than for the kingdom of God. But what will it profit you or me to give up praying and to go to and get rich? What will it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Not much. What will a man give in exchange for his soul when he gets [to] the other side of the veil? [See Mark 8:36–37.]

I marvel very much at the little interest manifested by the inhabitants of the earth generally in their future state. There is not a person here today but what is going to live on the other side of the veil as long as his Creator—to the endless ages of eternity, and the eternal destiny of every individual depends upon the manner in which the few short years of the life in the flesh are spent. I ask in the name of the Lord, what is popularity to you or me? What is gold or silver, or this world's goods to any of us, any further than to enable us to obtain what we need to eat, drink and wear, and to build up the kingdom of God. And for us to stop praying and to become crazy after the riches of the world is the very height of foolishness and folly.

To see the way that some people act, you might suppose that they are going to live here eternally, and that their eternal destiny

depends upon the number of dollars they have. I sometimes ask the Latter-day Saints, how much we had when we came here? How much did we bring, and where did it come from? . . . I do not think that any of us were born on horseback or in a carriage, or that we brought railroad scrip and cattle and houses with us, but we were born naked as Job, and I think that we shall leave here as naked as he did [see Job 1:20–21]. Then with regard to this world's goods what do they amount to with us, that they should induce us to lose salvation for them? I say rather than that let me be poor all the days of my life; if riches are going to damn me and take from me the glory I have in prospect through keeping the commandments of God, I pray God that I may never possess them.

God holds the riches of this world in his hands: the gold and silver, the cattle and the earth are his, and he gives to whom he will give. When Christ was upon the mount, Lucifer, the devil, showed him all the glory of the world and offered to give it to him if he would fall down and worship him [see Matthew 4:8–9]. But do you know that that poor devil did not own a single foot of land in the whole world, and that he had not even a body, or tabernacle? The earth is the footstool of the Lord, and if we ever have any of it for our own the Lord will give it to us; and we ought to be just as faithful to our religion if we had ten thousand million dollars as if we had not any at all. Eternal life is what we are or ought to be after, and that, whatever our circumstances and condition in life may be, should be our first object. . . .

. . . I have been talking about getting riches. I do not find fault with riches. The gold and silver are the Lord's. We want houses [built] and we must cultivate the earth. This is all right. I do not find fault with a man getting rich. I find fault with our selling the kingdom of God, our birthright, selling the gospel and depriving ourselves of eternal life for the sake of gratifying the lusts of the flesh, the pride of life and the fashions of the world, and setting our hearts upon these things.[18]

I refer to the words of Jesus Christ which he spoke to his followers: "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and

all other things shall be added unto you." [See Matthew 6:33.] I will tell you, brethren and sisters, we may try it all the days of our lives, we may try every path and every principle in this world and we as Saints cannot prosper upon any other mode of proceeding than by first seeking the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness; when we do this there is no blessing, there is no good, no exaltation, gift, grace, desire, or anything that a good man can wish that is profitable, and good for time and for eternity, but will be given unto us.

A great many people have tried to seek for happiness independent of first seeking the kingdom of heaven, . . . but they have always found it an uphill business, and so shall we if we try it.[19]

Our aim is high. We are aiming for a place in the celestial kingdom of God, to obtain eternal life, the greatest of all the gifts of God to man. All the honor, glory and wealth of this world should sink into insignificance in our minds in comparison with an inheritance in the presence of God and the Lamb, with all the prophets, apostles and saints, including our father's house. While one is fleeting and soon passeth away, the other endureth forever.[20]

Suggestions for Study and Teaching

Consider these ideas as you study the chapter or as you prepare to teach. For additional help, see pages v–ix.

- What did President Wilford Woodruff do to follow the principles presented in this chapter? (See pages 225, 227.)
- Why is it that we "cannot separate the temporal from the spiritual"? (See pages 227–28; see also D&C 29:34–35.) How can we apply this truth in our daily lives? in our Church service?
- President Woodruff observed that many people do not follow the Lord's counsel in temporal matters. Why do you think this is so? (See pages 228–29.) What counsel has the current President of the Church given about temporal matters?
- Review the second paragraph on page 230. What are some benefits of manual labor? What do you think it means to "be a producer, and not a consumer alone"?

- What warnings did President Woodruff give about money? (See pages 231–35.) What counsel did he give about debt and credit? What can we do to maintain a proper perspective?
- In what ways are tithes and offerings "for our individual benefit and the benefit of our children"? (See page 231.)
- What does the Savior's teaching in Matthew 6:33 mean to you? (See also pages 233–35.)
- Scan the chapter, looking for principles that parents should teach their children. What are some specific things parents can do with their children to teach these principles? What experiences have you had in learning and teaching these principles?

Related Scriptures: Malachi 3:8–11; Matthew 6:19–21; James 2:14–26; Jacob 2:12–19; D&C 42:42; 58:26–28

Notes

1. *Deseret News,* March 4, 1857, 411.
2. *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia,* 4 vols. (1901–36), 1:26.
3. J. M. Tanner, "Character Sketch," in Matthias F. Cowley, *Wilford Woodruff: History of His Life and Labors as Recorded in His Daily Journals* (1964), 644–45.
4. *Deseret News,* July 30, 1862, 33.
5. *Deseret Weekly,* August 25, 1894, 289.
6. *Deseret News,* May 22, 1872, 216.
7. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* sel. G. Homer Durham (1946), 164–65.
8. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* June 23, 1874, 1.
9. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* January 22, 1884, 1.
10. *Deseret News,* May 22, 1872, 216.
11. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 267.
12. "An Epistle to the Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," *Millennial Star,* November 14, 1887, 733.
13. *Deseret Weekly,* August 25, 1894, 290.
14. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 173–74.
15. *Deseret News,* February 4, 1857, 379.
16. *Millennial Star,* November 14, 1887, 727.
17. *Millennial Star,* November 14, 1887, 728–29.
18. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* February 29, 1876, 1.
19. *Deseret News,* March 4, 1857, 410.
20. "Epistle," *Contributor,* April 1887, 237.

CHAPTER 23

"Of One Heart and Mind"

When we are united in the gospel, we are prepared to receive the richest blessings of heaven.

From the Life of Wilford Woodruff

President Wilford Woodruff loved the fellowship of other Church members. Many of his journal entries included words of gratitude for the "spirit of union and love" that was present in Church meetings.[1] After one such meeting, he recorded that two of the speakers had to leave to meet another engagement. They had a difficult time getting to their appointment because "they could scarcely get out of the house, so many wish[ed] to shake hands with them." Of the same meeting, he wrote: "The Spirit of the Lord was with us. Love and union pervaded the congregation. I was made glad with the scene of beholding so many Saints united in the new and everlasting covenant."[2]

President Woodruff hoped to see this spirit of unity extend from Church meetings to all aspects of life. Through his public sermons and his everyday example, he encouraged the Saints to be unified in their homes, in their Church responsibilities, and in their temporal labors. Matthias F. Cowley wrote: "To his mind there was no place in the Church for contentions, misgivings, and opposition. The work was of God—that was enough. There were the properly appointed authorities. Upon them the responsibilities of the kingdom had been placed. He was not therefore concerned about what others thought was a lack of wisdom in them. He was not avaricious [greedy]; and financial reverses, to his mind, could never thwart the purposes of God; and he was not troubled about how much of this world's goods came to his possession. A glorious message had been given to the earth, and he wanted every

Emphasizing the need for unity, President Wilford Woodruff compared Church and family government to "the vine with its limbs, its branches and its twigs."

one to know its value to the human family and to understand the blessings of salvation to those who yielded obedience.

"Wilford Woodruff always felt out of place in the midst of contention. He shunned it, and never cared for the association of those who were given to fault-finding, criticisms, and personal griefs. He never saw the necessity for them. It was never hard for him to agree with his brethren. He was never unreasonable in his demands, never had private ends to foster, and never hesitated when there was something important to be done. He was loyal to the Prophet, true to his brethren."[3]

Teachings of Wilford Woodruff

Unity prevails among the members of the Godhead and in the celestial kingdom.

The Savior said to His Apostles anciently, and to the Apostles in our day: "I say unto you, be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine." [D&C 38:27.] "I and my Father are one." [John 10:30.] There is a principle connected with this that I think is very important to us as a people and as a Church here on the earth. With all the divisions, and all the discontent, and the quarrelings and opposition among the powers on earth, or that have been revealed from heaven, I have never heard that it has ever been revealed to the children of men that there was any division between God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost. They are one. They always have been one. They always will be one, from eternity unto eternity. Our Heavenly Father stands at the head, being the Author of the salvation of the children of men, and having created and peopled the world and given laws to the inhabitants of the earth.[4]

Jesus was one with the Father. Says He: "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." [John 6:38.] This union was never broken between the Father and the Son. The first revelation given to Joseph Smith was that of the Father and the Son. The heavens were opened, and the Father, with His Son, appeared to Joseph, in answer to his

prayer, and He pointed to His Son and said, "This is my beloved Son; hear ye him." [See Joseph Smith—History 1:17.][5]

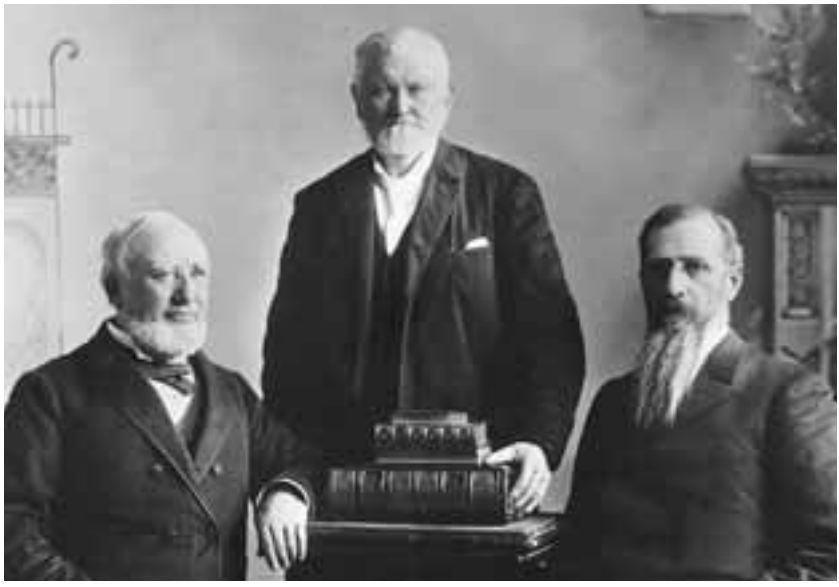
There is a celestial kingdom, a terrestrial kingdom, and a telestial kingdom. There is a glory of the sun, a glory of the moon, and a glory of the stars; and as one star differs from another star in glory, so also is the resurrection of the dead [see 1 Corinthians 15:41–42]. In the celestial Kingdom of God there is oneness, there is union.[6]

Who, to use a comparison, expects to have a forty-acre lot alone in the kingdom of God, or in heaven, when we get there? None need expect it, for in that kingdom, in heaven or upon earth, we shall find unity, and the Lord requires at our hands that we unite together, according to the principles of his celestial law.[7]

Prophets must be unified with the members of the Godhead, and all members of the Church should seek that same unity.

In reading the history of the dealings of God with men, from the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the Doctrine and Covenants, we can see that, from the days of Father Adam, the Lord has raised up a class of men, in every dispensation, upon whom He has bestowed His Priesthood, and unto whom He has given power and authority to do His work upon the face of the earth among the children of men. And these men have been in possession of principles of union with God, with the Son of God and with the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost was given to Father Adam; he was filled with it when, in his last days, he blessed those of his sons who were High Priests and the residue of his posterity [see D&C 107:53–56].

Father Adam, Enoch, Moses, Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all those old patriarchs and prophets were obliged to have communion with God. They were under the necessity of seeking unto the Lord, for unless they had this communion they were not qualified to do their duty. They were dependent upon the Lord for revelation, for light, and for instruction to have power



The First Presidency in 1894.
From left to right, President George Q. Cannon, First Counselor;
President Wilford Woodruff; and President Joseph F. Smith, Second Counselor.

to carry out the commandments of God. This union that the Lord required of the ancient patriarchs and prophets, and which Jesus required of His Apostles, was required of Joseph Smith and his brethren. It has been required of all Saints of God from the foundation of the world till today.[8]

I realize that the Presidency of this church stand between this people and the Lord, for they are the head, and I realize that God reveals to them his will, and therefore we should look unto them for light and for information. The head may be full of light, of inspiration, revelation and of the mind and will of God, but if those officers who stand next to them, and if we ourselves are asleep in relation to our duties, and are not in a fit state to receive that light, do you not see that the river is dammed up at the head? There is no current or medium whereby the light may flow to the limbs and branches of the body.

I realize that it is the duty, not only of us who hold the priesthood but of this people generally, to present ourselves in humility and faith before the Lord that we may obtain the blessings which are in readiness for us, and we can obtain all the light, the knowledge, the faith, the intelligence and power which is necessary for our salvation by humility, obedience and submission to the will of God. We should attend to this in order that our minds may be prepared and our bodies become fit subjects for the reception of the Holy Ghost, so that the Spirit of God may flow freely through the whole body from the head to the foot. Then when this is the case we will all see alike, feel alike, and be alike, and become one as far as the gospel and kingdom of God is concerned, as the Father and Son are one, and then this people will begin to see the position and relationship which we bear towards each other and towards God, and we shall feel the importance of attending to our duties and we will willingly step forward and improve our time, make good use of our talents and obtain the blessings that the Lord has for us to enjoy; but do you not see that if the people are asleep and slothful and not living up to their privileges, and the Spirit of God begins to flow from the head to the body that it soon becomes obstructed and dammed up?

We may trace this principle through the church and kingdom of God, and you may carry it into the family government. . . . It is like the vine with its limbs, its branches and its twigs [see John 15:1–11]. This is a very good figure to teach us the principle of righteousness.

In order for us to be prepared to do the will of God and be in a position to build up his kingdom upon the earth, and to carry out his purposes, we must not only become united and act as the heart of one man, but we must obtain the Holy Spirit of God and the mind and will of God concerning us, and be governed and controlled by it in all of our movements and acts in order to be safe and secure unto ourselves salvation.[9]

Unity brings strength.

I do not think it requires a great deal of argument to prove to us that union is strength, and that a united people have power which a divided people do not possess.[10]

We should be united and stand together in the midst of the opposition that we will have to meet.[11]

It is not ordained for the wicked to have power to bring to pass evil upon us, if we are united.[12]

Babylon may divide; the inhabitants of the earth may have all the division they wish for; but they will receive the results of that disunion, and have done all the way through. City after city, nation after nation has been destroyed by the judgments of the Almighty whenever it has become ripened in iniquity, as in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, of Babylon, Nineveh, Tyre and Sidon, and a great many other ancient cities and countries. But the Saints of God cannot prosper unless they are united.[13]

As the church becomes more numerous, and the kingdom of God is becoming more fully established, the importance of union among its members is still more manifest. It is absolutely necessary that not only a professed union, but a cementing of heart and soul should dwell with all presidents, councils, and branches of the church of Christ, in order to accomplish the designs of God in the building up of Zion, or in obtaining those blessings which it is their privilege to enjoy; for, be assured, ye Saints of the Most High, that the heavens will be stayed over the heads of any presidency, quorum, council, or branch who are divided in heart, sentiment and feeling, and so will they remain, and the blessings be withheld until the evil is removed; for the Lord will never pour out the richest blessings of heaven, and the priesthood and gifts of the gospel, [except] upon the principle of that union which the celestial law of God requires. . . . By the united efforts, alone, of the Saints of God, in this last dispensation, the building up of Zion will be effected, and the kingdom of God on earth, be prepared for a union with the kingdom of God in heaven; and thus shall the chain which has bound together in one

the hosts of heaven, extend and grasp in its circumference all who have been obedient to the mandates of God.[14]

We should be united in our doctrine, in our labor in God's kingdom, and in our love for one another.

Doctrine

I always rejoice in seeing my fellow men come to a knowledge of the truth by obedience to the gospel as taught by the servants of the Lord. When men have gone forth in the waters of baptism and received the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, they receive the same truth, the same light as we have received, and thus we become of one heart and one mind, and follow out the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, which attend His gospel. In preaching the gospel and administering the ordinances of the Lord's house, the spirit of inspiration of Heaven accompanies those who officiate, that it will remain ever with them, if faithful, in all the duties of life.

When I hear the brethren speak of the dealings of God with the present generation, I perceive that their minds all run together; the record which they bear is one; they all agree in their testimony; they are one in stating that the work of the Lord our God will prevail over all its enemies.[15]

There is one particular feature connected with the preaching of the gospel: You may send out a thousand elders and they will all teach the same doctrines; they will all labor for the building up of the same Church, they will be united; for their faith, their doctrines, and the organization of the Church have all been made known unto them by the revelations of God: hence they will see eye to eye in regard to the principles of the gospel. . . . Our union and oneness of sentiment constitutes one of the prominent beauties of the organization of the kingdom of God.[16]

Labor in God's kingdom

We have to build up this kingdom by union and faithfully following those men set to lead us, or else we will be scattered; the blessings of God will be taken from us if we take any other course.[17]

It is my duty to have fellowship with God, as weak an instrument as I am in the hands of God. It is my duty to have power with God. And when I have this, then my counselors should stand by me and with me. We should be of one heart and mind in all matters, temporal and spiritual, that come before us in the labor of the Church and kingdom of God. And I am thankful to say that this has been the case since I have been called to this position, or since the organization of [this] Presidency of the Church. Standing connected with us here are the Twelve Apostles. It is their duty to be of one heart and one mind. They have no right to be otherwise. They cannot be otherwise and prosper before God. They should be one with us, and we one with them. They have their rights; they have their agency. But when the Presidency of the Church say unto any of them, "This is the word of the Lord," or, "This is right," they should take hold and work with us. The law of God requires this union at our hands. It is the duty of the seventies, also, to be united with the Twelve Apostles. The seventies are called upon by the apostles to go forth and labor in the vineyard of the Lord, and they work together. So, brethren and sisters, with every organization in this Church. There should be union. There should be no discord, no disunion. If there is, the Lord is not pleased with it, and we are hindered in our work.[18]

Everywhere upon the face of the earth we can see what the effect of disunion is. The more that nations, communities, families, or bodies of people in any capacity under heaven, are divided, the less power they possess to carry out any purpose or principle imaginable; and the more union they possess, whether in a legislative or any other capacity, the more power they have to accomplish what they desire. We can see that the people of the world are becoming more and more divided every day, and the evils resulting therefrom are everywhere apparent. We are called to build up Zion, and we can not build it up unless we are united; and in that union we have got to carry out the commandments of God unto us; and we have got to obey those who are set to lead and guide the affairs of the Kingdom of God. . . .

. . . The principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ which have been revealed in our day are the power of God unto salvation to all that believe, both Jew and gentile, in this age of the world as well as any other; and inasmuch as we will be united in carrying out the counsel we have received, we can overcome every evil that lies in our path, build up the Zion of God, and place ourselves in a position that we may be saved therein.[19]

Love for one another

Be kind to one another. Do not find fault with one another. . . . Bear one another up.[20]

There should not be a selfish feeling on the part of any portion of a family,—"I do not care what becomes of this, that or the other if I can only get what I want myself." This is selfishness, it produces disunion and is inconsistent with the profession of a saint of God. We should labor, each and every one of us, to put such feelings from our hearts, and then we, in our family organizations, should strive to promote the general interest of the members thereof.[21]

If our religion does not lead us to love our God and our fellowman and to deal justly and uprightly with all men, then our profession of it is vain. The apostle says:

"If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" [1 John 4:20.]

We can best exemplify our love for our God by living our religion. It is vain to profess a love for God while speaking evil of or doing wrong to His children. The sacred covenants we have made with Him strictly impose upon us the duties we owe to one another; and the great office of religion is to teach us how to perform those duties so as to produce the greatest happiness for ourselves and for our fellow-beings. When the obligations of our religion are observed, no words are spoken or acts are committed that would injure a neighbor. If the Latter-day Saints lived as they should do, and as their religion teaches them to do, there would be no feeling in any breast but that of brotherly and

sisterly affection and love. Backbiting and evil-speaking would have no existence among us; but peace and love and good will would reign in all our hearts and habitations and settlements. We would be the happiest people on the face of the earth, and the blessing and peace of heaven would rest upon us and upon all that belongs to us.

If there be unhappiness and heartburnings and quarrelings and hatreds among us, they exist because we do not observe the religion which we profess. They are not its fruits. Where these evils exist there is a crying necessity for repentance. . . .

As Latter-day Saints, it is our general custom to partake of the sacrament once a week. If the teachings of our Lord, in remembrance of whom we observe this sacred ordinance, be regarded, no one who has trespassed can be permitted to share in it until he has made reconciliations. It is the express commandment of the Lord Jesus that no one shall be permitted to partake of His flesh and blood unworthily [see 3 Nephi 18:28–32]. A more perfect system to prevent the existence of improper feelings and wrongs among brethren and sisters can not be imagined. If the Saints do their duty, difficulties do not remain unsettled beyond the Lord's day when they assemble to eat and drink in remembrance of Him.[22]

I would exhort all the Saints, that we unitedly observe the sayings of our Lord as recorded in the 12th, 13th, and 14th verses of the [15th chapter] of John—if we love one another as Christ has loved us, we can easily settle all difficulties that may arise in our midst, forgive one another, and be filled with mercy, and light, love, joy, union, peace, and fellowship will be the stability of our times, which will be much better in the sight of God, angels, and men, than long pettyfogging over the faults of our brethren.[23]

We should be of one heart and of one mind, and not permit anything of a temporal or spiritual nature to separate us from the love of God and man.[24]

Suggestions for Study and Teaching

Consider these ideas as you study the chapter or as you prepare to teach. For additional help, see pages v–ix.

- Review the first paragraph on page 237. What similar experiences have you had?
- In what ways are Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost "one"? (See pages 239–40.)
- In what ways are prophets unified with the members of the Godhead? (See pages 240–41.) How can we all achieve such unity? (See pages 241–42.)
- Review pages 240–42, looking for President Woodruff's comments about a 40-acre lot, a river, and a vine. What can we learn from these analogies?
- Read the first paragraph on page 243. What experiences have shown you that "union is strength"?
- Think about or discuss the different backgrounds, characteristics, interests, talents, and duties of members in your ward, branch, or family. How do you think such individuals can be unified for good?
- What are some blessings we receive when we are unified for good in our homes? in our Church organizations? What are some consequences of disunity at home and at church?
- What resources does the Church provide to help us be unified in the doctrine we teach? What can we do to ensure that our teaching is unified with the teachings of latter-day prophets?
- Why is it impossible to say that we love God but that we hate our brother? (See page 246.)
- Study the second full paragraph on page 247. How does the sacrament help us be unified?

Related Scriptures: Psalm 133:1; Mosiah 18:21; 3 Nephi 11:28–29

Notes

1. Journal of Wilford Woodruff, June 21, 1840, Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; see also Journal of Wilford Woodruff, April 2, 1841; April 5, 1841; February 16, 1845; July 20, 1845; August 31, 1845; March 26, 1847.
2. Journal of Wilford Woodruff, February 16, 1845.
3. *Wilford Woodruff: History of His Life and Labors as Recorded in His Daily Journals* (1964), 70.
4. *Deseret Weekly,* August 30, 1890, 305.
5. *Deseret Weekly,* August 30, 1890, 305–6.
6. *Deseret Weekly,* August 30, 1890, 305.
7. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* sel. G. Homer Durham (1946), 83.
8. *Deseret Weekly,* August 30, 1890, 305.
9. *Deseret News,* February 4, 1857, 379.
10. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 172.
11. *Deseret Weekly,* March 23, 1889, 391.
12. *Deseret Weekly,* June 22, 1889, 824.
13. *Deseret Weekly,* August 30, 1890, 305.
14. "Union," *Millennial Star,* November 15, 1845, 168.
15. *Deseret News,* June 26, 1861, 130.
16. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 135.
17. *Deseret News,* May 13, 1857, 76.
18. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 89.
19. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* May 25, 1867, 3.
20. *Deseret Weekly,* October 22, 1892, 548.
21. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* September 20, 1870, 2.
22. "An Epistle to the Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," *Millennial Star,* November 14, 1887, 729–30.
23. "To the Officers and Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the British Islands," *Millennial Star,* February 1845, 142.
24. *Salt Lake Herald Church and Farm,* June 15, 1895, 385.

Preparing for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ

As we anticipate the Savior's return to reign on the earth, we must prepare ourselves individually, as families, and as a people.

From the Life of Wilford Woodruff

In a general conference address in April 1950, Elder Richard L. Evans of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said: "I recall a reported statement, attributed, as I remember it, to President Wilford Woodruff. Some of the brethren of his time are said to have approached him . . . and to have inquired of him as to when he felt the end would be—when would be the coming of the Master? These, I think, are not his exact words, but they convey the spirit of his reported reply: 'I would live as if it were to be tomorrow—but I am still planting cherry trees!' "[1]

Although these may not have been President Woodruff's exact words, they do reflect his feelings about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. He acknowledged: "I do not think anyone can tell the hour of the coming of the Son of Man. . . . We need not look for the time of that event to be made known."[2] However, he looked forward to the Savior's return to reign on the earth. With a testimony that the Church had been established in the last days, he taught the Saints with great urgency, exhorting them to prepare for the Savior's Second Coming. "The signs in both heaven and earth all indicate the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ," he said. "When my mind, under the influence of the Spirit of God, is open to comprehend these things I many times marvel and wonder, not only at the world but also at ourselves, that we are not more anxious and diligent in preparing ourselves and our families for the events now at our doors, for though the

*"The Lord Jesus Christ is coming to reign on earth. . . .
The Lord will not delay his coming."*

heavens and the earth pass away, not one jot or tittle of the word of the Lord will go unfulfilled."[3]

Teachings of Wilford Woodruff

We are in the last days, and we should watch for the signs of the Savior's Second Coming.

I will say to the Latter-day Saints, as an elder in Israel and as an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are approaching some of the most tremendous judgments God ever poured out upon the world. You watch the signs of the times, the sign of the coming of the Son of Man. They are beginning to be manifest both in heaven and on earth. . . . We are approaching these things. All that the Latter-day Saints have to do is to be quiet, careful and wise before the Lord, watch the signs of the times, and be true and faithful; and when you get through you will understand many things that you do not today. . . . We are in the last dispensation and fulness of time. It is a great day, and the eyes of all the heavens are over us, and the eyes of God himself and all the

patriarchs and prophets. They are watching over you with feelings of deep interest, for your welfare; and our prophets who were slain, and sealed their testimony with their blood, are mingling with the Gods, pleading for their brethren. Therefore, let us be faithful, and leave events in the hands of God, and he will take care of us if we do our duty.[4]

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 [see Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:38–40], and if they had the Spirit of God they could see and understand them.[5]

We can learn about the signs of the Second Coming by studying the scriptures.

If the world wants to know what is coming to pass, let them read the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the Doctrine and Covenants; let them read [the] revelations of St. John. As God lives they will come to pass. Not one of them will fall unfulfilled. And the hand of God is beginning to be manifest in the earth. Judgment is at the door; calamity awaits the nations of the earth; but we ourselves should be prepared to stand in holy places while the judgments of God are manifest in the earth.[6]

We are told in the 24th chapter of Matthew, that Jesus, on a certain occasion, taught his disciples many things concerning his gospel, the temple, the Jews, his second coming and the end of the world; and they asked him—Master, what shall be the sign of these things? The Savior answered them, but in a very brief manner. As my mind runs a little in that channel I feel disposed to read a portion of the word of the Lord unto us, which explains this matter more fully than the Savior explained it to his disciples. That portion of the word of the Lord which I shall read, is a revelation given to the Latter-day Saints, March 7, 1831. [After making this statement, Elder Woodruff read the revelation that is now section 45 in the Doctrine and Covenants.] . . .

We are living in a late age, although it is true there are a great many vast and important events to transpire in these days. 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. If we, as Latter-day Saints, want anything to stir us up, let us read the Bible, Book of Mormon and the Book of Doctrine and Covenants; they contain enough to edify and instruct us in the things of God. Treasure up the revelations of God and the gospel of Christ contained therein.[7]

You will find numerous predictions in regard to his coming, such as—"I come quickly," "I come at an hour ye think not," "My coming is at the door," "I come as a thief in the night," "I come in an hour when you are not looking for me," and "Blessed is he who is looking for the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." I say that throughout the whole of the Scriptures—the Old and New Testament, the Book of Mormon and the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, the second coming of the Lord is frequently referred to; and has the Lord promised these things without intending to fulfil them? No, he has not, they will be fulfilled.[8]

As the Lord's covenant people, we are responsible to prepare the way for His Second Coming.

I want to ask who are looking for the fulfillment of these events, and who upon the earth are preparing themselves for the fulfillment of the word of the Lord through the mouths of prophets, patriarchs and apostles for the last six thousand years? Nobody that I have any knowledge of, [except] the Latter-day Saints, and I for one feel that we are not half so much awake as we ought to be, and not half as well prepared as we ought to be for the tremendous events which are coming upon the earth in quick succession in these latter days. Who can the Lord expect to prepare for his second coming but his Saints? None.[9]

The Lord has a great work ahead and he is preparing a people to do it before his coming. Now the question arises here,

brethren and sisters, are we prepared in our hearts? Do we realize these things? As a people do we realize our responsibilities before the Lord? The Lord has raised up a kingdom of priests here in the last days to establish his church and kingdom, and to prepare the way for the second coming of the Son of Man, and the God of heaven has put into the hands of his servants the keys of the kingdom, and he has said—"Whatever I have decreed in these my servants shall be fulfilled, for to them is given power to bind and to seal both on the earth and in heaven, against the day of the wrath of Almighty God, which is to be poured out upon the world." [See D&C 1:7–9.]

I think, many times, that we, as elders of Israel and as Latter-day Saints, come far short of realizing our position before the Lord. The work required at our hands is great and mighty; it is the work of Almighty God. We are held responsible for presenting the gospel of Christ to all the nations of the earth. . . . We are held responsible for all this and for building temples to the Most High, wherein we can enter and attend to ordinances for the salvation of our dead. . . .

. . . How much has the Lord plead with the nations of the earth to give them celestial glory, honor, immortality and eternal life? He has plead with them for the last six thousand years, and has raised up his servants from time to time and called upon the inhabitants of the world to prepare themselves for the great day of his second advent and coming, which is at hand. He is calling upon them loudly to-day; and, as I have said to some of my brethren lately, the Lord now wants to know whether the Latter-day Saints are willing to work with him or not. It is a day of decision.[10]

Before Christ comes a people have got to be prepared by being sanctified before the Lord. Temples have got to be built; Zion has got to be built up; there must be a place of safety for the people of God while his judgments are abroad in the earth, for the judgments of God will visit the earth, there is no mistake about that; the revelations are full of promises to this effect, and as the Lord has declared it, he will not fail in keeping his word.[11]

I think we do not realize the magnitude of this work. It is a hard matter for us to comprehend the responsibility that we are under to God, to the heavens, to the dead, as well as the living of our fellow men.

Now, when I look at these things, I also look at what there is before us. The organizations, which have been established in this Church from the beginning, are all helps and governments, and are associated together to carry out this great work. The eyes of the heavens are over us. The Son of God and all the Prophets and Patriarchs that have lived upon the earth are watching over this great work—this great organization preparing for the coming of the Son of Man.[12]

We must prepare ourselves individually for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

We are living in an important age. The prophecies relating to our time are rolling in upon us; are we prepared to meet them?[13]

The Savior . . . compared the kingdom of God unto ten virgins, which took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom [see Matthew 25:1]. "And five of them were wise and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them; But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you; but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterwards came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not." [Matthew 25:2–12.] Now, those who have got oil in their lamps, are men who live their religion, pay their tithing, pay their debts, keep the commandments of God, and do not blaspheme his name; men and

women who walk in the light of the Lord; men and women who will not sell their birthright for a mess of pottage or for a little gold or silver; these are those that will be valiant in the testimony of Jesus Christ.

This is the way I feel to-day. I feel to warn my brethren and sisters, the Latter-day Saints, to live their religion, to trim their lamps, because as the Lord lives his word will be fulfilled. The coming of Jesus is nigh at the door. . . . The man that is righteous cannot save the wicked. We have got to live our own righteousness, that is keep the commandments of God.[14]

The parable of the ten virgins is intended to represent the second coming of the Son of man, the coming of the Bridegroom to meet the bride, the church, the Lamb's wife, in the last days; and I expect that the Saviour was about right when he said, in reference to the members of the church, that five of them were wise and five were foolish; for when the Lord of heaven comes in power and great glory to reward every man according to the deeds done in the body, if he finds one-half of those professing to be members of his church prepared for salvation, it will be as many as can be expected judging by the course that many are pursuing.[15]

The word of the Lord to me is that it is time for Zion to rise and let her light shine; and the testimony of the Spirit of God to me is that this whole kingdom, this great kingdom of priests . . . who have borne the priesthood, have thoroughly fulfilled one part of the parable of the ten virgins. What is that? Why, that while the Bridegroom has tarried we have all slumbered and slept; as a church and kingdom we have slumbered and slept, and the word of the Lord to me is that we have slept long enough; and we have the privilege now of rising and trimming our lamps and putting oil in our vessels. This is the word of the Lord to me.[16]

Now the question is, how can we keep oil in our lamps? By keeping the commandments of God, remembering our prayers, do[ing] as we are told by the revelations of Jesus Christ, and otherwise assisting in building up Zion. When we are laboring for the kingdom of God, we will have oil in our lamps, our light

"When we are laboring for the kingdom of God, we will have oil in our lamps, our light will shine and we will feel the testimony of the Spirit of God."

will shine and we will feel the testimony of the Spirit of God. On the other hand, if we set our hearts upon the things of the world and seek for the honors of men, we shall walk in the dark and not in the light. If we do not value our priesthood, and the work of this priesthood, the building up of the kingdom of God, the rearing of temples, the redeeming of our dead, and the carrying out of the great work unto which we have been ordained by the God of Israel—if we do not feel that these things are more valuable to us than the things of the world, we will have no oil in our lamps, no light, and we shall fail to be present at the marriage supper of the Lamb.[17]

Who is going to be prepared for the coming of the Messiah? [Those] who enjoy the Holy Ghost and live under the inspiration of the Almighty, who abide in Jesus Christ and bring forth fruit to the honor and glory of God. No other people will be.[18]

I pray that we may live in such a manner as not to be among the foolish virgins, but understand the signs of the times, do our duty, maintain our integrity, overcome the world, and be prepared to receive our Redeemer when he comes, with joy, and not in grief and shame.[19]

Trust in God. Do your duty. Remember your prayers. Get faith in the Lord, and take hold and build up Zion. All will be right. The Lord is going to visit his people, and he is going to cut his work short in righteousness, lest no flesh should be saved [see D&C 84:97; Matthew 24:22]. I say to you, watch the signs of the times, and prepare yourselves for that which is to come.[20]

Suggestions for Study and Teaching

Consider these ideas as you study the chapter or as you prepare to teach. For additional help, see pages v–ix.

- Review the first paragraph on page 250. What lessons do you learn from the statement Elder Evans attributed to President Woodruff?
- How can we learn about the signs of the Savior's Second Coming? (See pages 252–53.)

- What are the purposes of the signs of the Second Coming? (See pages 251–53; see also D&C 45:34–39.) What evidence do you see that some of these signs are being fulfilled? How can we remain "quiet, careful and wise before the Lord," even when some of these signs include tragedy?
- Review President Woodruff's teachings about the Church's role in preparing the way for the Second Coming (pages 253–55). How can we participate in this work?
- Why should we be concerned about our own preparedness rather than about the exact timing of the Second Coming? In what ways can we help our families prepare? How can we "stand in holy places while the judgments of God are manifest in the earth"? (page 252).
- In the parable of the ten virgins, who are represented by the wise and foolish virgins? by the bridegroom? by the bride? What is represented by the marriage supper? by the oil in the lamps? As we prepare for the Second Coming, what can we do to "keep oil in our lamps"? (See pages 255–56, 258; see also D&C 45:56–57.)

Related Scriptures: D&C 45:15–75; Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:21–55

Notes

1. In Conference Report, April 1950, 105.
2. *Deseret Weekly,* October 11, 1890, 517.
3. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* February 4, 1873, 2.
4. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* sel. G. Homer Durham (1946), 211–12.
5. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* May 20, 1873, 1.
6. *Millennial Star,* May 30, 1895, 355.
7. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* February 4, 1873, 2.
8. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* May 2, 1876, 4.
9. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* February 4, 1873, 2.
10. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* February 29, 1876, 1.
11. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* May 2, 1876, 4.
12. *Deseret Weekly,* February 24, 1894, 286.
13. *Deseret News,* December 16, 1857, 325.
14. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* July 6, 1880, 1.
15. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* February 29, 1876, 1.
16. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* December 28, 1875, 1.
17. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 124–25.
18. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly,* February 4, 1873, 2.
19. *Deseret News,* March 21, 1855, 11.
20. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 252.

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