

Everything We Need

MICHAEL T. RINGWOOD

I am honored to be with you today. Thank you for being here with us this morning. I entered BYU as a freshman in the fall of 1976. I remember vividly the first devotional of that semester, held on September 7, 1976. I cannot remember if I skipped my class before the devotional that morning, but I did arrive very early to make sure I had a good seat. The speaker was the prophet, President Spencer W. Kimball. I was excited to hear from him. I was beginning my first year at BYU, with a mission coming up for me sometime in 1977. I was anxious for the message that would bless me personally. I am positive that I prayed that his talk would touch me and provide needed guidance.

The university president was President Dallin H. Oaks. After he introduced the student body to President Kimball, he lowered the two microphones that were on the pulpit at that time, and President Kimball stood where—or very close to where—I am standing this morning. He had an additional microphone attached to his glasses

because of the very soft voice he had after surgery on his vocal cords. President Kimball began speaking about marriage and divorce—not the topic I was expecting. His message was a landmark message at the time and was later published as a pamphlet for use throughout the Church.¹ I still have my copy of that talk. I must admit, however, that, at the time, it was not the talk I wanted to hear. Marriage seemed so far into the future for me—and it was, by the way.

Looking back, I wish I had processed and reacted differently than I did. I should have been willing to receive whatever the prophet of God felt directed to teach me and applied that teaching in my life. This was the prophet of God, after all, and he was speaking to the world through the audience of BYU students.

Now, obviously, I am not the prophet, and I am not giving a message to the world. I am only speaking to you. Yet I have prayed and fasted to know what Heavenly Father would have you hear

Michael T. Ringwood, a General Authority Seventy of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, delivered this devotional address on January 14, 2020.

today. And because some of you may feel like I did back in 1976 at my first devotional, I pray for the Holy Ghost this morning to tailor this message to you personally, to meet your needs now and in the future.

What Would You Ask of the Prophet?

I would like to begin with a question I think you will find interesting: If President Russell M. Nelson was standing here this morning, and if he asked each of you what he could do for you, how would you respond? Would you have a list of favors? Would you ask him to put in a good word for you with some of your professors? Do you have questions that you would want him to answer? Or maybe you would just want a selfie with him. How would you respond?

In the Old Testament, a prophet of God asked that same question of a woman whose name we are not told. As the prophet Elisha went about fulfilling his prophetic duties, he often passed through a town called Shunem. Whenever Elisha passed by, this woman constrained him to stop and eat bread. After one of Elisha's visits, the woman turned to her husband and said:

I perceive that this is an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually.

Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick: and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither.²

Now, just as this woman had envisioned, the next time Elisha came, he stayed in the room. The account reads: "And it fell on a day, that he came thither, and he turned into the chamber, and lay there."³

The scriptures do not tell us how the woman felt as the prophet went into the little room that she had prepared just for him. But the scriptures do tell us how Elisha felt. He asked his servant to give the woman a message directly from him. It was, in effect, "What can I do for you?" Or, to be scripturally precise, "Thou hast been careful for us with all this care; what is to be done for thee?"⁴

Then the servant offered two options for the woman to consider: "Wouldest thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host?"⁵ Certainly these suggestions were within the rights of the prophet to make. He had already been of great help to both the king in Israel and the king in Judah. He had helped them obtain victory in war. Certainly the king and the captain would help Elisha in any way they could. So this woman could probably have negotiated anything she desired in response to the question "What is to be done for thee?"

This is the foundation for our question this morning: What would each of you ask for? How would you answer the prophet today?

I personally love the response she gave. She answered, "I dwell among mine own people."⁶ Or, as I interpret it, "I have everything I need; I am at home with family." Or perhaps, "We have plenty and to spare."

Does her answer surprise you? It did me. Whatever her motivation, her answer caused me to think about what my response would be. Do I know enough about God's plan? Am I secure enough in what God has given me and in my discipleship to His Son that I could say to the prophet, "I have everything I need"?

How about you? Do you have everything you need?

Precious Gifts

As I have pondered this question, I have been reminded of a few precious truths I would like to share with you this morning.

A verse from the Book of Mormon tells us that "all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things."⁷

A New Testament verse tells us "that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."⁸

These verses do not guarantee that nothing will go wrong in our lives. These verses do teach us that when hard, stressful, or unfair things happen in our lives, God's purposes for us will not be thwarted by others. Remember the words of Paul:

*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*⁹

I testify that because of the gifts Heavenly Father has given us, nothing can separate us from God's love. He has already provided us with everything we need. Paul's words powerfully affirm this truth:

*He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us **all** things?*¹⁰

So, you ask, what is the purpose of these gifts God freely gives us, and what are they?

If you are familiar with classical stories, myths, and legends, you will remember that when a hero undertakes a quest, a mentor often gives him or her gifts for the journey. These gifts could be special clothing, implements, food, healing medicine, or key information. Whatever the gifts may be, they are essential to the hero's success. They are the provisions to meet the challenges ahead—to pass the test that transforms the hero, giving him or her strength to overcome hard things and do the work he or she is destined to do. And, in many cases, the importance of the gifts is not fully understood until they are needed and used.

And so it is with us. Our Heavenly Father has provided us with great and marvelous gifts for our journey here in mortality—and for the greatest quest of all: to come unto our Savior and gain eternal life. These gifts help us navigate the tests and tribulations of life: distresses, persecutions, famines (both temporal and spiritual), injuries, and even death. Without them, we cannot succeed. Yet with them, we are transformed—strengthened and readied to return to the presence of our Eternal Father and to receive all that He has.

The Gift of the Light of Christ

The foundational gift, then—the gift that is given to all—is the Light of Christ. I love how Lehi explained this gift to Jacob. He taught that “men are instructed sufficiently that they know good from evil.”¹¹ Mormon taught that this gift

*is given unto you to judge, that ye may know good from evil; and the way to judge is as plain, that ye may know with a perfect knowledge, as the daylight is from the dark night.*¹²

No wonder Paul taught:

*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*¹³

I gain great comfort knowing that this gift comes first and comes to every child born on earth. It only makes sense that a loving Heavenly Father, who desperately wants us to return to Him, would first give us the ability to know right from wrong. I know that it is often difficult to explain how the Light of Christ works in a clear and easy fashion. I also know that if we try to talk ourselves out of something that seems good and right, we are definitely fighting against this great and fundamental gift—the Light of Christ.

The Gift of Agency

Enoch was taught by Heavenly Father the sequence of the gift of the Light of Christ and the gift of agency, which is also essential to our returning home to Heavenly Father:

*The Lord said unto Enoch: Behold these thy brethren; . . . I gave unto them their knowledge, in the day I created them; and in the Garden of Eden, gave I unto man his agency.*¹⁴

Does that scripture bring you comfort? It does for me. Heavenly Father gives us the ability to choose because He has given us the way to know which choices are right as plainly as knowing the difference from daylight and the dark night.

This gift of agency is a crucial part of Heavenly Father's plan for us to return home to Him. Forcing us to choose His way would not have worked, because it is in choosing Him and His ways that we become like Him. In that same message to Enoch, Heavenly Father taught:

*And unto thy brethren have I said, and also given commandment, that they should love one another, and that they should choose me, their Father.*¹⁵

I am grateful that He trusted us to use the gifts of the Light of Christ and agency so that we can choose Him for ourselves. The more we use these gifts, the more we appreciate their role in bringing us back to our heavenly home.

The Gift of Commandments

This gift of agency required that we receive another gift—one that we do not always consider a blessing. It is the gift of commandments. After Lehi taught Jacob that we are instructed sufficiently to know good from evil, Lehi’s very next phrase was “and the law is given.”¹⁶ Heavenly Father provides us with borders and boundaries that help us. If we exercise our agency righteously, we can navigate life’s straight and narrow path back home.

In 1831, Joseph Smith was taught in a revelation that we are “crowned . . . with commandments not a few.”¹⁷ I love viewing commandments as a precious gift from a loving Heavenly Father. Without commandments—without borders and boundaries—it would be difficult to know that we are exercising our agency wisely, and it would be difficult to know if the choices we are making will lead us back to Him.

The Gift of His Son

But even with commandments, because we have our agency, Heavenly Father knew we would falter, make unwise decisions, and even wander from the path back to Him. This reality results in the greatest gift a loving Heavenly Father could give: the gift of His Son! “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.”¹⁸ I love how President Gordon B. Hinckley described this gift in a poem when he wrote:

*The gift of Him who loved all men,
The Son of God, the Holy One.*¹⁹

It is this gift of Christ and His Atonement that Lehi described as the fruit of the tree of life. It is the gift of the Son of God that both nourishes and heals, for it allows us to overcome our poor choices and to repent and receive forgiveness so we are worthy to enter Heavenly Father’s presence again.

The Gift of Grace

Closely associated with the gift of Christ and His Atonement is the gift of grace. Heavenly Father knew that to dwell with Him eternally requires more than cleanliness. It requires that we be changed. Without grace, we would forever be aware of our shortcomings with no way to improve them. Because of the gift of grace, our hearts, desires, and nature can be made holy.

The Gift of the Holy Ghost

In order to benefit from the gifts of Christ and His Atonement and grace, we need another essential gift: the gift of the Holy Ghost. This gift allows us to know that Jesus is the Christ. It is a gift available to all God’s children to assist them in their search for truth, for the Holy Ghost teaches and testifies of all truth and offers direction. Without this vital and essential gift, we would never exercise the faith required to follow Christ and overcome our poor decisions. Without the Spirit, we could never find comfort amid the trials of life. Without this messenger of grace, we could never be sanctified.

Often we interpret the term “gift of the Holy Ghost” as a gift given to baptized and confirmed members of the Church. But the gift of the Holy Ghost given after baptism is, in fact, the promise that we can have the Holy Ghost with us always, based upon our striving to keep God’s commandments. Yet the Holy Ghost, or the influence of the Holy Ghost, is truly available to all Heavenly Father’s children as they seek to know Him and respond to the Light of Christ in exercising their agency.²⁰

The Gift of a Living Prophet

Indeed, now we can see that “all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth

all things.” Our Heavenly Father knew what we needed, and He gave us the gifts necessary to navigate the path that leads to our heavenly home. No wonder a woman who could recognize a prophet when she fed one answered his query about how he could repay her for her kindness with this answer: “I dwell among mine own people,” or, “I have all I need.”

Some here may be wondering, “Are these *all* the gifts I need to return to Heavenly Father? In these spiritually perilous times, don’t we face some challenges that are unique to us—challenges that require something more?”

The answer is yes. Which is why you need to hear the rest of the Shunammite woman’s story—the part that is critically important for you and me as Saints living in the latter days.

After the Shunammite woman gave her answer, she went away. But the prophet Elisha could not rest. He still wanted to know what more he could do for her. In response, his servant pointed out that she had no child and that her husband was old. So Elisha *called* for the woman to come back. Elisha then *promised* her a son, which she later delivered, just as the prophet had said. And I love how he said the promise to her:

About this season, according to the time of life, thou shalt embrace a son. . . .

And the woman conceived, and bare a son at that season that Elisha had said unto her, according to the time of life.²¹

But that is not the end of the story. After several years this son would die and then be brought back to life by the prophet Elisha, miraculously giving this woman’s son to her twice.²²

But even that is not the end of the story. After several more years, Elisha told this woman to flee into a different land because of a famine that was going to last seven years. She took her husband and son and fled, returning only after the famine had ended.²³

The prophet of the Lord knew what the Shunammite woman needed—needs she probably believed could not be addressed and future needs she couldn’t possibly anticipate. But because she

answered the *call* of a prophet and believed in his *promises*, her needs were met.

I testify that we do, in fact, have all the gifts we need, but only when our gifts include the gift of a living prophet. He is a prophet who calls us to act and then promises us the very blessings we need now, in these last days. Consider these calls and promises from the prophet of your day, President Russell M. Nelson:

He *called* us “to find a way to make an appointment regularly with the Lord—to be in His holy house—then keep that appointment with exactness and joy.”²⁴ And He *promised* “that the Lord will bring [about] the miracles He knows [we] need”²⁵ in our lives.

He *called* us “to transform [our] home [or apartment or bedroom] into a sanctuary of faith. . . . To remodel [our] home into a center of gospel learning.”²⁶ And He *promised* that “the influence of the adversary in [our lives] . . . will decrease.”²⁷

He *called* us to “do our best to restore the correct name of the Lord’s Church.”²⁸ And he *promised* that God “will pour down His power and blessings . . . , the likes of which we have never seen.”²⁹

These are only a few of his calls to us on behalf of the Lord. And with every call there are specific and glorious promises to all who obey. I invite you to search President Nelson’s teachings, especially from general conferences. Hear the Lord’s call to you. Obtain His promises. And then prepare to count the miracles and blessings that come as a result.

The Gift of Happiness

We have spoken about a few of the gifts that God has given to each of us: the Light of Christ, agency, commandments, the Savior and His Atonement, grace, the Holy Ghost, and our living prophet upon the earth today, President Russell M. Nelson. For me, knowing that Heavenly Father’s plan includes these precious gifts has enabled me to never give up, even when the odds have seemed insurmountable. These gifts give us an eternal perspective so that no matter what life throws at us, we have the strength and the confidence to overcome the world and to move forward with patience and with faith.

Now I know there are some sitting here this morning with concerns weighing heavily on you. Some are wondering how you will possibly do everything you see in your path as you seek to reach your goals in life. Some are dealing with heartache and pain from the loss of loved ones. Some are dealing with illness. Some are dealing with anxiety and depression. Others may be dealing with loneliness. No matter what your concern is, I bear witness that the precious gifts from Heavenly Father are still there for you, and they are enough to get you to the only destination that matters in the end.

As you keep your eyes on God’s work and glory—your “immortality and eternal life”³⁰—please remember one more of His many gifts from heaven: the gift of happiness. Heavenly Father does not just want us to return home. He wants us to find happiness in doing so.

One of Heavenly Father’s first commandments to Adam and Eve was to go and be happy. I believe the gifts God has given all His children will help us be happy. Heavenly Father taught us through a prophet of God about His desire for us to dwell with Him “in a state of never-ending happiness.”³¹ Not only did King Benjamin include this in his sermon for the people of his day, it was included for us to give us hope that happiness can come, no matter our circumstances or station in these latter days. The only requirement to obtain eternal happiness is to keep the commandments and endure in faithfulness to the end.³² As President Nelson has taught—which President Kevin J. Worthen quoted last week in his devotional—our happiness and joy “has little to do with the circumstances of our lives and everything to do with the focus of our lives.”³³

Perhaps using the Savior’s own words will help us understand this better. Jesus used the phrase “be of good cheer” three times as He walked the paths of His life.

The first time was to the man with palsy lying on a bed, when He said, “Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.”³⁴

The second time was when His disciples saw Jesus walking on the water, and they cried out in

fear. To them He simply said, “Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.”³⁵

The third time was during the Last Supper, when He said to His disciples, “Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”³⁶

Indeed, we have every reason to be of good cheer. Christ came to bring forgiveness and to help us have faith, which is the opposite of fear. He truly did overcome the world, allowing us to joyfully return home through the exercise of our gift of agency as we heed the gift of the Light of Christ in keeping our gift of commandments and partaking of the gift of the Atonement of Christ. And all of this comes because we have the gift of the Holy Ghost to testify to us of the reality and truth of Heavenly Father’s plan.

We truly do have everything we need. Of this I testify, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. See Spencer W. Kimball, “Marriage and Divorce,” BYU devotional address, 7 September 1976.
2. 2 Kings 4:9–10; see also verse 8.
3. 2 Kings 4:11.
4. 2 Kings 4:13.
5. 2 Kings 4:13.
6. 2 Kings 4:13.
7. 2 Nephi 2:24.
8. Romans 8:28.
9. Romans 8:35.
10. Romans 8:32; emphasis added.
11. 2 Nephi 2:5.
12. Moroni 7:15.
13. 1 Corinthians 10:13.
14. Moses 7:32.
15. Moses 7:33.
16. 2 Nephi 2:5.
17. D&C 59:4.
18. John 3:16.
19. Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Empty Tomb Bore Testimony,” *Ensign*, May 1988.
20. See 1 Nephi 10:17.
21. 2 Kings 4:16–17.
22. See 2 Kings 4:18–37.
23. See 2 Kings 8:1–3.

24. Russell M. Nelson, "Becoming Exemplary Latter-day Saints," *Ensign*, November 2018.
25. Nelson, "Becoming."
26. Nelson, "Becoming."
27. Nelson, "Becoming."
28. Russell M. Nelson, "The Correct Name of the Church," *Ensign*, November 2018.
29. Nelson, "The Correct Name."
30. Moses 1:39.
31. Mosiah 2:41.
32. See Mosiah 2:41.
33. Russell M. Nelson, "Joy and Spiritual Survival," *Ensign*, November 2016.
34. Matthew 9:2.
35. Matthew 14:27.
36. John 16:33.