

# *Seek Eternal Happiness*

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**M**y brothers and sisters, it is a real privilege to be here at BYU and have this choice opportunity to share with you for a few moments some of my feelings. I appreciate Sister Gardner singing something so appropriate and with such a theme as “Trust in the Lord.” I suppose if there was one message I had for you today, that would be a good one—to trust, in all things, in the Lord.

I am thankful, President Oaks, that you have attempted to make this a special occasion for me by indicating that my alma mater was Arizona State University. I can see that you have moved this ASU banner from the side over there to a special position right here in front of the podium. That is quite an honor. I don’t know how you moved those, but that is doing something.

## **Eternal Objectives**

I have been thinking this last week or so, brothers and sisters, about the objectives of the Lord as they pertain to this earth. I would like to share with you some of those objectives, at least in my mind, and also some that the devil has. Perhaps I could also share some ideas that I have in terms of happiness in life as it relates to these objectives.

I think of that great statement in Moses where the Lord said that his purpose, his glory, was “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). I think of President Lee saying on one occasion, “If there is anything in your life that does not conform to that objective, perhaps you’re out of order.” I think of that great statement in the Book of Mormon that Lehi left for all of us, indicating that “men are that they might have joy” (2 Nephi 2:25). I really believe with all of my heart that the Lord wants us to be happy: to have not only happiness in this life, but also, more important than that, to have eternal life, that gift that is the greatest of all gifts God can bestow upon men. I think also, as I think about some of the objectives that are controlling things on earth and about that great power that exists with the devil, about the definition the Lord gave us concerning his objectives. Listen to what he said in 2 Nephi. If you have your scriptures with you (and I hope many of you do), turn with me for one

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moment to 2 Nephi, chapter two. Let me read two verses:

*And because he [Satan] had fallen from heaven, and had become miserable forever, he sought also the misery of all mankind. . . .  
 . . . for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself. [2 Nephi 2:18, 27]*

Now, I have watched a lot of individuals in life in my few years, and I have seen some who really were miserable. I have seen some individuals who really were happy, from whom the joy of the gospel seemed to emanate and go to other men. I have wondered in my life what makes the difference.

### **Worldly Notions of Happiness**

I am going to suggest to you some ideas which are set forth throughout the land as being ways of obtaining happiness, the seeds of which were sown by the devil himself. Listen to a few of these sources of supposed happiness. I think of the one that the devil so cleverly chose, indicating that a man can really be happy only if he's making a lot of money. The Lord certainly has nothing against money (he has so indicated in the scriptures), but he has indicated that there is a proper purpose for the usage of money. I would suggest to you that, as you go about obtaining your education and later on beginning to look for an occupation, you will find the obtaining of riches, if done in the proper way and with the proper motive, can assist in helping man to be happy. But money is not the true source of happiness. I think of some statements I heard one time from a young couple who said, rather humorously, "Brother Cook, we don't have enough money for this new baby. In fact, now that he is ready to arrive tomorrow, we don't have enough money to buy a crib for him."

I said, "What are you going to do?"

He said, "Well, I guess we'll put him in the box the color TV came in." They were

telling on themselves, weren't they? I think of another young couple who one time said, I guess in a kidding way, that the reason some husbands are so henpecked is that they won't give their wives enough chicken feed. I think there's some truth in that, indicating, perhaps, improper usage of money. But the devil attempts to convince you that if you really want to be happy you must have a lot of money.

Another reputed source of happiness that the devil has attempted to sow in the minds of men is the belief that, if you want to be happy, you should seek for power, position, prestige. Supposedly, the only men who are really happy are those who have control, in a degree, over the lives of other men, which is surely a directive of the devil himself coming right from the preexistence—that desire to unrighteously control other men. The Lord has made some pretty powerful statements concerning those kinds of individuals who use authority unrighteously. I think of problems that now exist in our government and other governments because of that seed, sown cleverly by the devil to cause men to seek happiness, as it were, by having power and authority over others or by attempting to place themselves above other men in thinking, "I am greater than he," or, "Because of this position I merit this and this, and you don't because you don't have this type of position." I tell you that those things do not come of the Lord.

I think of one other great area that the devil seems to use quite effectively: he sows the seeds of physical indulgence. He tells us that we ought to do what we want to do. We ought to satisfy the needs of the flesh. He says, in the worldly terminology, "Let it all hang out. Do what you want to do. Do your own thing. It really doesn't matter. What really counts is that, if you just feel like doing it, do it." Once again, I suggest that some are fools in believing that happiness comes that way. I would suggest that these

great lessons were taught by the Savior himself. We don't have the time here this morning to review those temptations that were placed before him, but you ought to do that again. Read Matthew 4:1–11 and see how the devil cleverly placed these three temptations I have just described before the Master. Also, if I were you, I would look carefully to see how the Lord answered Satan as he was tempted.

### **Unhappiness Caused by Iniquity**

Again, if you have your scriptures, look for one moment with me in 3 Nephi, chapter six. Listen to what is said here, as the word of the Lord, about the cause of the problems of the people of Nephi, the reason for their lack of happiness, their not being a very happy people:

*Now the cause of this iniquity of the people was this — Satan had great power, unto the stirring up of the people to do all manner of iniquity, and to the puffing them up with pride, tempting them to seek for power, and authority, and riches, and the vain things of the world. [3 Nephi 6:15]*

I suggest to you that that is not the pattern the Lord has given us for being happy.

### **Guidelines for Eternal Happiness**

Let me tell you a few things I've learned about being happy. What you want to do, my young friends, is to find ways of discouraging discouragement. Find ways of discouraging the devil so that you might truly be happy. I would suggest that one of the cardinal principles when we begin to ask, "How do we become happy?" is to realize that happiness in the Lord's way is not something found in the short run. There is happiness in the earth, and the Lord tells us that, unless body and spirit are "inseparably connected," we cannot "receive a fullness of joy" (D&C 93:33–34). He indicates further: "Wherefore, fear not even unto death; for in this world your joy is not full, but in me your joy is full. . . . And seek

the face of the Lord always, that in patience ye may possess your souls, and ye shall have eternal life" (D&C 101:36, 38).

Let me tell you a story of something that happened in my life in the last few months which illustrates, to a degree, the difficulty men sometimes have in looking for short-run pleasures versus long-run joys. (Sometimes long-run means only a few hours in contrast to the moment.)

This last Thanksgiving there was quite a snowstorm here in Utah. I don't know how much snow fell in Provo, but there was a lot where I live in Bountiful. I as an individual don't especially enjoy the snow—particularly when it's in my driveway. That doesn't impress me at all. That morning I looked out the window and saw about a foot of snow in our driveway. I gathered up two of my boys, Troy and Travis, who were seven and five, and convinced these boys how happy they were going to be to help their dad shovel all that snow. As you know, that takes some doing, but you can make work fun because that does happen to be one of the real sources of joy: employment, a good job, doing something of worth. I took them outside with me and we shoveled the entire walk.

After we finished we were cold, and I was ready to go in. But I saw a teaching moment, and so I said to these two boys, "I wonder if we shouldn't go shovel Phil's walk." (Phil is our neighbor next door.)

I was pleased as one boy said, "That sounds good, Dad." The other boy said, "I'm cold."

I looked again for that moment to teach and said, "I wonder how Phil would feel as he awakened this morning if he opened his door and saw his entire walk all finished." Then the other boy caught the spirit of it and said, "Well, I think, Dad, that he would really be happy, wouldn't he?"

I took that as the moment to say, "Well, what do you think, Troy, that Heavenly Father would have us do?"

He said, “Well, I think we had better shovel the walk.” We went over and we shoveled the entire walk. By that time we were tired, and the youngest boy said, “Let’s ring the doorbell now and tell Phil what we’ve done.” He was going for some short-run pleasure, wasn’t he? Again there was a great teaching moment as I was able to say, “No, Travis, I think it would be best if we didn’t tell him and left it a surprise. Heavenly Father likes us to do things anonymously.” I had to tell him what that meant—that we do things without anyone’s knowing that we’re doing them. The next thing I knew my other boy had caught the spirit of it and said, “Well, what about the Jackmans’ walk?” Before we finished that morning we had done three other walks. There was great joy later in the day as we had some phone calls come to the house. These boys saw the joy that comes to the heart of one who was attempting to do good anonymously and thereafter was found out.

I suggest to you again that real pleasure—real joy, I guess, is the best word—comes many times in the long run in terms of time on the earth, sometimes in the long run in terms of the eternities. I don’t know of any source of happiness that is any greater than this one—faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, a standard that will not change, the real rock of our salvation that we can center our entire faith in. I bear my witness to you, my brothers and sisters, that Jesus Christ is that standard. If we put our faith and our trust in him, we will have joy both in this life and in the life to come.

I think sometimes of others who look for happiness elsewhere. I think of the full-time missionaries. I remember an elder who said to me one time, when I was touring a mission down in South America, “Brother Cook, when is this happiest two years of my life going to be over?” Having been there only about three weeks, he was suffering a little bit from looking through those short lenses instead of the long lenses of eternity to see real happiness. The

other, more distant source of happiness comes from tribulation, doesn’t it? From having to really stick it out, to do things when you don’t feel like doing them, to get up in the morning when you’d rather stay in bed, to discipline yourself to learn—which is what many of you are doing now. It hurts, doesn’t it? But I suggest that is one source of being truly happy in the long run: learning, growing, becoming involved, developing your talents and even your character.

I have been challenged this last couple of months, since my wife and I have known we were going to Montevideo, Uruguay, to preside over the mission there. I speak Spanish, but it has been only missionary Spanish. I have been doing my best to come up with some real live Spanish, and I say that respectfully because it is a lot easier than what my family is going through. I have had to discipline myself to learn three or four thousand additional vocabulary words so that I can comfortably converse with heads of nations, cabinet members, and others in their native tongue. It has taken discipline. It has been hard, but I bear my testimony that there is great satisfaction that comes from knowing you’re winning, improving, and becoming better.

I mentioned tribulation earlier. I’ve found that is a great source of happiness. I don’t have time to talk to you very much about it today except to say it is a source of happiness if taken in the right spirit. When you have a moment, read in Alma 62:41. It is a time in history in the Book of Mormon when there had been great wars occurring. This passage shows how some individuals took tribulation. It caused them to harden their hearts before the Lord. Other individuals, facing exactly the same kinds of problems, softened their hearts before the Lord and were truly happy. They had the same problems, but they took them in a different spirit.

I would suggest one other great source of happiness of the many I know of—your family.

I am pleased to know that the First Presidency—Presidents McKay, Brown, and Tanner—quoted the Lord in a piece of written material that went out to the Church a few years ago. They said this, and because they said it I feel free to quote them: “That there is great joy and rejoicing in your posterity, giving one of the great purposes of life—joy and rejoicing in your children” (Policy letter, 14 April 1969). I don’t know of anything that has brought me more joy than being married and having a lovely wife who holds the same objectives I do and having children who are striving to learn the truth. A family brings to a man great joy.

I think of one of my boys when I was first called as a General Authority. He was a very young boy, seven, and stood up to bear his testimony in sacrament meeting. I was gone for a stake conference, but he stood up to bear his testimony about what had happened to the Cook family in those last few weeks. He had forgotten a little bit what a General Authority is; he couldn’t even remember the word. All he could say as he bore his testimony was, “My dad has been called to be a . . . , to be a . . . , to be one of those men who knows about Jesus.” He couldn’t remember the term, but he knew the feeling.

In closing, let me read to you these words from President McKay. I have carried them in my scriptures for some time because they truly impressed me. President McKay said:

*That man is truly great who is most Christlike. What you sincerely think in your heart of Jesus Christ will determine what you are and will largely*

*determine what your acts will be. By choosing Jesus Christ as our ideal, we create within ourselves a desire to be like him and to have fellowship with him. If you think about him long enough, you’ll begin to act like him. And if you act like him long enough, you will truly become like him.*

I bear my testimony, my brothers and sisters, once again that the design of this life, our very existence here on this earth, is calculated by the Lord to make us happy if we will but follow the way he has prescribed. I thrilled to see and listen to both President Kimball and President Lee when they were set in position as Presidents of the Church. They were both asked, “What counsel do you have for the Latter-day Saints?” I think some people felt they were going to hear some great new statement. But they heard the word of the Lord through a living prophet saying nothing more than this: “I would counsel the Latter-day Saints to keep the commandments.”

I bear my testimony that by keeping the commandments, by truly following that straight and narrow path that has been marked out by the Lord, we will be happy here and in the life to come. May you always make your choices with the long run in view. May you seek after happiness by following the Lord. I bear my testimony, last of all, that this is the true church of Jesus Christ, that it is the only true church on the face of the whole land, that there is a man today by the name of Spencer W. Kimball who is a prophet of God. I bear that witness of a surety that goes beyond words, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.