

The Streams of Your Life

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This joyous season that brings us Thanksgiving and Christmas is the best time of the year when we think of families, loved ones everywhere, and things of the heart.

I have prayed for divine guidance that these few precious moments might be beneficial to all. I am mindful of my responsibility as well as my desire to encourage you in your own *personal lives* to follow the course of our Savior unto salvation.

Spreading the Word

It is not possible here to explore or examine the vast realm of revealed gospel knowledge about our mortal existence available to you at this unusual university. And so, on this day, I bring you not an argument or a doubt, but a witness of heaven-sent revelations that this is the church of Jesus Christ, restored to the earth in these latter days; that God our Heavenly Father lives and that he loves each of us—his children; that Jesus *is* the Christ, the son of the living God, our Savior.

The heavenly event related by young Joseph, then only four or five years *younger* than most of you, after he came out of a grove of trees—which we appropriately refer to as the “Sacred Grove”—*is true*. I bear this witness

and testimony to you. Joseph Smith was directed, after scripture study and prayer, to pray for guidance; and he did see and communicate with God the Father and his son Jesus Christ. This church is led today by his prophet, upon whom the Almighty has bestowed the greatest gifts that mortal man is capable of receiving, even our prophet Ezra Taft Benson. I am a witness to the bestowal of the authority and the gifts upon President Benson.

A few days ago, a most unusual news article about the Mormons appeared in the Sunday magazine section of the *London Times*, one of the most influential newspapers in the world with one of the widest circulations in the world—one million, three hundred thousand copies (ten times the circulation of Utah’s largest newspaper!). As I studied this rather remarkable article, because it is so favorable and positive about us, I reflected upon the promise and direction our Lord gave twenty-six-year-old Joseph Smith at the Johnson

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farmhouse in November 1831. Joseph was instructed to translate the Book of Mormon and promised he would be given the “power to lay the foundation of this church, and to bring it forth out of obscurity and out of darkness, the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth” (D&C 1:30).

In my lifetime I have been permitted to witness events, to see and feel divine influences of the Lord in his providence, revealing his gospel by the power of the Holy Ghost. Imagine the stretch of events from the humble but heavenly directed proceedings of the restoration of the gospel to this publication in the *London Times*! We had nothing directly to do with the article, but the press and the British Broadcasting Corporation were conscious of and involved this past summer in our 150th anniversary celebration of our first missionaries arriving in Great Britain. The interest developed by writers for the *London Times* resulted in this most complimentary article about our growth and message, and it was written by a nonmember. Well, unusual things are happening all over the world to bring the message of the Restoration to every nation and every people, to tell everyone of the divine Sonship of the Lord Jesus.

*That faith also might increase in the earth;
That mine everlasting covenant might be estab-
lished;*

*That the fulness of my gospel might be pro-
claimed by the weak and the simple unto the ends of
the world, and before kings and rulers. [D&C
1:21–23]*

You who attend this university have such unusual opportunities and blessings available to you. Every facet of your lives should be enriched by what you do, how you govern your lives, and what you learn while here. I urge you to take full advantage of every uplifting aspect of university life—spiritually, academically, socially, and physically—to feed your souls as well as your minds.

Streams, Clear and Pure

Someone has likened each of our lives to a mighty river as it flows to the sea. It is the product of many streams—some large, some small—even little brooks, created by the melting snow high in the mountains. I thank God for the streams, clear and pure, that have influenced my life; for noble parents who taught me the goodness of life, of honor and virtue, and who taught me to love the Lord; for my widowed mother who, like the Prophet Joseph Smith, taught correct principles with understanding and patience; for the priesthood and for the activities of Scouting; for the desire I had to go to college; and for the blessing of finding my sweetheart (I knew when I first saw her that she would be my eternal companion, if I could only convince her to feel the same way I did.); for the blessing of our three children and their posterity, three of whom are here today. My gratitude for the many, many streams and rivers that have affected my life goes on and on. I’m so grateful!

Each stream has a beginning, a source from which it springs. Yours has emerged and developed from sources such as parents, home, family training, early schooling, and the many, many people who have touched your lives. Soon you will be moving out into the world on your own with the necessity and hoped-for ability to make your own way. You are at junctions in your lives, or nearing them, where your stream may take you on to great heights or not so high, to joy and happiness or regret and disappointment. I urge you to use your time wisely, to stretch your intellect and expand your horizons, that you may be prepared to fulfill your personal role in the restored Church and kingdom and to be all that you can be, using correct principles to contain the waters within the banks of your own personal stream as it flows on a true course toward the high reward of eternal life.

You might say at this point, “Oh, we hear that from you brethren all the time!” So, maybe

you do. But we who love you will continue to encourage each of you to determine where you are on the ladder as you climb step by step upward through this testing period, because we, too, have been there.

The Savior taught in the Sermon on the Mount: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33).

I received a letter this past week from a young father who, with his wife and two children, joined the Church four months ago. He had attended a regional conference of eight stakes that we held in Arizona last month. He wrote: “At the conference I learned of love of God and for my fellowmen. I learned that spiritual acts and a ‘help-thy-neighbor’ attitude will be more valuable than all the riches of the world. I learned to not just wish for higher income *but to work* to earn enough for our needs. Some of the time and effort I would normally spend just making more money will go to reading the scriptures and teaching my family the gospel at family home evenings. I realized what I received through. . . baptism might be wasted by not making the proper decisions and effort to earn the blessings of the celestial kingdom.”

I was impressed by this new member and his family and with the fact that after only four months of participation, their “precious faith” was already increasing that they might receive the “precious promises” as declared by the Apostle Peter.

“This Is Life Eternal”

Several years ago I sat in a little white room in the Los Angeles Temple—a simple, little room with no fancy adornments on the walls. My wife, Ruby, was there by my side. We had one son and his wife there along with our daughter and her new husband. Our other son was kneeling at the altar holding the hand of the young lady he was about to be sealed to.

As I looked around the room, I knew the great moment of my life was there, *then*, because all I had that was really important—remember, *really important*—was in that room. The bishops and stake presidents had found each member of my family worthy to be in that room.

It is not the number of cars you own or the size of your bank account or the number of cattle you have in the hills, but the eternal values that count. You remember the Lord said something about moth and rust getting through to our worldly possessions (see Matthew 6:20). I knew that the greatest moment in my life was having all of our family in that little white sealing room in the Los Angeles Temple. Each of our children and their companions had participated in the sacred ordinances and ceremonies that pertain to salvation and exaltation in the kingdom of God.

One of the greatest blessings of life is to realize what is truly important in our lives and then work toward that end.

Our Lord and Savior’s prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane that last evening for the souls of all mankind, taking their sins and sufferings upon himself, clearly shows the need for us to know, respect, love, and obey our Eternal Father when he emphasized: “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent” (John 17:3).

Living the Ten Commandments

Some years ago, Cecil B. DeMille, producer of the epic film *The Ten Commandments*, gave an address in which he discussed the pressing need for making that great film. Many today in this so-called “modern” and materialistic society think these commandments a bit archaic. But our Lord God revealed to Moses on Mt. Sinai the great governing principles we all are subject to and by which man will be judged. Moses received these commandments twice—

on each occasion written by the finger of the Lord on tablets of stone.

The first commandment:

I AM THE LORD THY GOD. THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME.

We do not bow before giant birds of carved granite or wooden idols with stone eyes.

But we have other gods competing with God.

We may never have bowed before a calf of gold, but we may still worship gold. . . .

Is there a man or a woman who can honestly say that he has never put his ambitions or his vanity above God? Or worshipped flesh more than God? Or worshipped the blue-white glisten of a fine diamond, or the earthy beat of rock and roll, or even worshipped himself above the worship of God? . . .

These . . . can . . . enslave us and betray us into modern idolatry.

THOU SHALT NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD THY GOD IN VAIN.

When I was a boy I thought that referred only to profanity—but far worse than profanity is the use of the Name of God for personal worldly gain, for ambition, for intolerance, for selfish power over other men, or as a righteous cloak for unrighteous deed.

*We take the Name of God in vain whenever we misuse the power of God or whenever we say to Him, “Not Thy will, but mine be done.” [Cecil B. DeMille, quoted in “The Ten Commandments,” *Deseret News*, 23 February 1957, Church News section, p. 16]*

President Kimball told the story about being in the hospital after one of his operations. He was lying on a gurney that was being wheeled onto an elevator. The floor of the elevator was not flush with the corridor floor, and as the cart moved into the elevator, there was a big bump. President Kimball, just coming out of the anesthetic, heard the orderly take the Lord’s name in vain. This great man said to the orderly, “Oh! Don’t say that! He is my best friend.” The young man apologized and promised to never do it again.

And now to the next commandment:

REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY, TO KEEP IT HOLY fares none too well in the head-long rush of modern living.

Mankind has coined countless . . . slogans about the value of time, but this Commandment reminds us that time belongs to God and that some of it should be set aside for Him.

The vital and essential heart of this Commandment is that we cannot remain close to God unless we set aside periods of time as God’s time—periods of rest from the affairs of the world and the body to seek true communion with the Spirit of Truth, in meditation, in prayer. [Cecil B. DeMille, “The Ten Commandments”]

Students should organize their time so that most studying can be done on weekdays, leaving the Sabbath for worshipful activities. The Lord said, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.”

And so it is with all the commandments. Each of God’s laws is essential, but particularly today they are vital in our somewhat confused society. The Lord commanded, “Neither shalt thou commit adultery,” and added in modern revelation, “nor anything like unto it” (see D&C 59:6). The commandments are basic to the gospel and the plan of salvation and are as true and valid and real as the day they were cut into tablets of stone by the finger of God.

Our living the law of the Ten Commandments is only the beginning—or the foothills—in our climb toward perfection. The Savior told the rich young man who was keeping the basic commandments to sell all his possessions and follow the Master, suggesting he should move up to a higher plane in his quest for eternal life.

Joseph Smith declared, “I teach the people correct principles and they govern themselves” (quoted by John Taylor, *JD* 10:57–58). You students have been taught, hopefully, in your homes or through religious associations, correct principles. You also have the unique opportunity to be taught correct principles while here at this university. I hope you learn

your lessons well that your streams may become mighty rivers of pure, clear water as they flow into the sea.

The Loaf of God

A willingness to serve in the kingdom when and wherever called demonstrates a life of faith and goodness, and is one of those streams in our lives that can so bless not only others but ourselves as well. I was impressed with the remarks of a stake president at a recent stake conference as he was released from his assignment. His remarks were of thankfulness for the opportunity to serve his stake and for the way the people served each other. He said:

My service has been out . . . for all to see. But think of the many auxiliary and other leaders and individual members of the Church who have at the same time quietly done their duty and been faithful to the Lord. Some of the greatest service rendered while I have been your president has been done silently out of great sacrifice by individual members. Theirs is the widow's mite. Theirs is the blessing of true service.

The president remembered his ancestry, his parents, his children, his business partner, his professional secretaries, members of his high council, stake clerks, and secretaries. And then he stated: "I would not have been able to serve a single week without the help, love, and support of my dear wife."

In tribute to the bishops, branch presidents, and other leaders, he said, "They serve where the tire hits the road. They have been faithful and loyal to me, as well as to the Lord." The president expressed appreciation for his counselors, and for one in particular who declared to him, "You may not wear the hair shirt"—meaning the stake president was never to feel guilty. He had been called by the Lord and was not to feel guilty for difficult decisions that only he could make.

He told of looking in the mirror the day after October general conference and seeing in his mind's eye the hands of God, kneading the bread dough of his kingdom, and folding him (the stake president) back into the general loaf of the kingdom of God. "Mine," he said, "was a time to rise for a moment, but now I would become part of the general membership again, as a brother in the gospel of Jesus Christ. And so other lives will now be blessed and raised, for the good of the loaf of God."

What a wonderful attitude!—a stake president demonstrating and teaching how we believe and pray and study the scriptures, earn our livelihood, and serve our God with love. His life's stream is right on course.

How Is It With Thee?

The Lord wants and needs all of you to be strong, to be believers, to be examples of goodness to all the world. You can become mighty rivers, flowing with truth. Mediocrity and weaklings come with little effort. The world has an abundance of them.

I would urge you to use your time wisely. Don't waste it on frivolous pursuits. As Ted Koppel, a national newscaster, told the graduates of Duke University last spring:

[We] can partake of [TV's] daily banquet without drawing on any intellectual resources; without either physical or moral discipline . . .

. . . In the place of Truth we have discovered facts; for moral absolutes we have substituted moral ambiguity. We now communicate with everyone . . . and say absolutely nothing. [Commencement speech given by Ted Koppel at Duke University on Sunday, 10 May 1987, pp. 5–6]

I admonish you to live so you can ask for the personal revelation you are entitled to. Someone has written, "Souls are not saved in bundles—they are saved individually. The Spirit says, 'How is it with thee—thee personally?'"

How *are* things with *you* personally? How are *you* doing?

To help evaluate how you are doing, I will pose some questions to give you a greater understanding of exactly who you are and what your potential may be, and then respond with answers from the scriptures, which hold and bear record of truth.

Who Are You?

You are a literal spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents.

Genesis 1:27: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female.”

Romans 8:16: Paul said, “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.”

Where Did You Come From?

Your spirit body came from your heavenly parents. Your spirit lived in the presence of celestial beings, whose exalted glory is like unto the sun in comparison with the moon and stars.

Ecclesiastes 12:7: “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.”

Why Are You Here?

You are here because you kept your first estate. You are here to be proved and tested, to show you can keep your second estate by making right choices and being faithful to them.

Abraham 3:25–26: “And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them.”

“And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon; and they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate; and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever.”

D&C 98:11, 15: “And I give unto you a commandment, that ye shall . . . live by every word which proceedeth forth out of the mouth of God.”

“For I have decreed in my heart, saith the Lord, that I will prove you in all things, whether you will abide in my covenant, even unto death, that you may be found worthy.”

You are here to develop the gifts and talents to which you were born heir. You will also have the opportunity to gain additional talents.

D&C 82:18: “And all this for the benefit of the church of the living God, that every man may improve upon his talent, that every man may gain other talents, yea, even an hundred fold, to be cast into the Lord’s storehouse, to become the common property of the whole church.”

You are here to sow good works and lay up treasures in heaven.

D&C 11:7: “Seek not for riches but for wisdom; and, behold, the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto you, and then shall you be made rich. Behold, he that hath eternal life is rich.”

You are here to meet the requirements and complete the ordinances to become an heir of celestial glory.

D&C 124:38–39: “For this cause I commanded Moses that he should build a tabernacle, that they should bear it with them in the wilderness, and to build a house in the land of promise, that those ordinances might be revealed which had been hid from before the world was.”

“Therefore, verily I say unto you, that your anointings, and your washings, and your baptisms for the dead, and your solemn assemblies . . . are ordained by the ordinance of my holy house, which my people are always commanded to build unto my holy name.”

To become an *heir of celestial glory* there are requirements that must be met. You are to be sealed to your companion for time and all eternity. You are to work out your exaltation and

be of assistance to others. You are to learn to use the body to accomplish spiritual objectives and to obey the law of procreation. You are to strive for perfection and receive a fullness of joy.

With your understanding of truth:

You have power to do many things of your own free will and choice and to glorify his holy name (D&C 58:26–27).

You have the power of prayer (see D&C 93:49).

You have power over Satan (D&C 10:5).

You have the power of forgiveness (D&C 82:1).

You have the power of the Holy Ghost (2 Nephi 33:1).

It is within your power to discipline all your appetites and inclinations. (D&C 50:35)

You have the power to choose your destiny; to inherit the celestial or the terrestrial or the telestial kingdom (D&C 58:28, 88:22–24).

[Adapted from Thomas C. Byrne, *Discover Your Divine Self-Esteem* (Salt Lake City: Hawkes Publishing, Inc., 1985), pp. 100–121]

I pray that God will bless you to rise to the heights that can be yours, that you will magnify the opportunities that come into your lives. May each of you be blessed. May the streams of your lives lead you toward the ultimate goal of life everlasting in the celestial kingdom of God our Heavenly Father. We love you and leave our blessings, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.