

The Heart and a Willing Mind

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Diane and I are thrilled to be in Provo, where we met 39 years ago. We are always edified by the spirit of BYU. Thank you for your kindness and gracious hospitality and for what you will teach us during our brief time with you.

We love and respect President Samuelson, a valued colleague and friend, and his dear Sharon. As we consider the intellectual, leadership, and (most important) spiritual abilities of President Samuelson and those who administratively assist him, we know you are extraordinarily well led at this university. We love BYU. It is a lustrous jewel in the crown of the Church.

I wish to offer a brief insight into my life experience to provide some personal context for the subject I will address today. I was born in Hawaii when it was a territory of the United States, 10 years before statehood. Raised in the islands in a multicultural environment, I left for higher education on this campus and then for a mission to England. After marriage to a Canadian girl and our graduations here at this university, we returned to Hawaii to raise our family.

My father first went to Hawaii in 1940 as a young missionary for the Church. He was there when the December 7, 1941, attack on

Pearl Harbor violently thrust the U.S. into war. He served three years as a missionary, went home to Salt Lake City, and joined the army. After boot camp and officer candidate school, he married my mother in the Salt Lake Temple, and they were stationed in Hawaii. They spent the remainder of the war on Oahu in a tiny cottage with the windows painted black so no light would shine through as a protection against enemy bombers. In 1945 they returned to Salt Lake City, stayed nine months, and then returned to Hawaii as a permanent home. My mother passed away in 2001, and my father died last year—both in Hawaii. When my father died, it had been nearly 70 years since he first arrived in the islands. I treasure my upbringing in culturally diverse Hawaii; it has significantly influenced my perspective of the equality of God's children.

Ten years ago, after receiving my call as a General Authority, my wife, Diane, and I were assigned to the Asia North Area, which then comprised the countries of Japan and South

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Korea and included doing humanitarian work in North Korea. We lived in Tokyo and stayed three years in that assignment. After two years at Church headquarters, we then were sent to the Church's Asia Area, which encompasses 25 countries and territories and over one-half the world's population. After four years of living in Hong Kong, we have now been back at Church headquarters for nearly a year and a half. In my current assignment we assist the Quorum of the Twelve in supervising the Church throughout the world.

With this growing perspective of the people of the world, heightened by the fundamental purpose of my ecclesiastical responsibilities, I have spent much time pondering how the gospel is established in an individual life, in a family, in a country, and, indeed, throughout the world. The words of the Lord to the Prophet Joseph Smith often come to my mind: "Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great" (D&C 64:33).

The Lord, of course, understands the process of developing a testimony and the combined force of sincere and righteous people necessary to build His Church in any area of the world.

There are two ways the Church grows: (1) by converts, of which there are hundreds of thousands each year; and (2) multigenerationally, with children following the example of member parents. Both are essential to the future of the Lord's kingdom and complement one another, as the conversion of today is the multigenerational growth of tomorrow.

In this audience we have first generation members of the Church and also second generation, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, and even those who represent the seventh generation of Church membership in this dispensation. For each of you first generation members there is a unique and significant story of how you came to your current place of spiritual understanding and commitment. For the rest of us, we

have been blessed by the courage and humility of righteous ancestors who established a pattern for us to follow.

To exemplify the doctrine that "out of small things proceedeth that which is great" (D&C 64:33), I tell you the story of Masako Kato. In 1951, when Masako was in her early twenties, she met the missionaries in her hometown of Yokohama, Japan, when she attended an English conversation class being taught by them. When the missionaries began to speak of spiritual things, she felt something and allowed them to begin teaching her about the Church and the restored gospel. During this time both Masako's older sister and mother died—within 30 days of each another. She was emotionally devastated but still attended the little branch of our church in the area, even the week after her mother passed away. When the opening hymn was sung, the power of the Spirit brought her to tears, and she understood for the first time the eternal nature of life.

Masako wanted to be baptized, but her father would not give his permission. Although she was of legal age, her respect for her father caused her not to proceed. However, she continued to attend church and participate like a member.

The missionaries suggested it would be good for her to share the glorious message she had come to know. Seemingly unafraid, even though the Church had little presence in Japan in 1951, she invited co-workers and even bosses at her company to come to church with her. A few came to some social activities, but one, Shozo Suzuki, a very new employee of the company, came to Sunday meetings. He had a good feeling about what he heard and consented after a time to receive the missionary discussions. Masako also joined him for her second time through the lessons. After several months Shozo accepted the challenge to be baptized. Masako again went to her father to seek permission, which he then gave because of the devotion he had witnessed in her. On August 4,

1952, Shozo and Masako were baptized in the same service.

One day a few months later, a young missionary approached Shozo and Masako and suggested they consider marriage—to each other! This surprised them, especially Shozo, as he had a nonmember girlfriend. However, it prompted him to think about Masako, the person who had introduced him to the gospel, in a different way than ever before. On April 29, 1953, they were married in a civil hall in Tokyo by the mission president. In 1965 they went to the Hawaii Temple to be sealed, as there was no temple in Japan until 1980.

Brother and Sister Suzuki were blessed with nine children—six daughters and three sons. Seven of their children served full-time missions for the Church. Of the nine, eight married, all in the temple, and seven of their spouses served full-time missions. The Suzukis had 35 grandchildren, with all eight years of age or older having been baptized members of the Church. Brother Suzuki has served as a branch president, district president, mission president, Japan Missionary Training Center president, regional representative, and a patriarch in three stakes. With the singular beginning of diminutive Masako, there are now 54 righteous members of the Suzuki family. Indeed, “out of small things proceedeth that which is great” (D&C 64:33).

This same miracle is found everywhere in the world where the Church is established. It has happened, or will happen, in your own family.

How does it happen? That question is answered in a companion verse to the one previously read: “Behold, the Lord requireth the *heart* and a *willing mind*; and the willing and obedient shall eat the good of the land of Zion in these last days” (D&C 64:34; emphasis added).

This doctrine is powerfully affirmed in the experience of Jesus with the Pharisee who was a lawyer. The Pharisee asked Him:

Master, which is the great commandment in the law?

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

This is the first and great commandment.
[Matthew 22:36–38]

So, from these and other prophetic words, we understand that both the *heart* and the *mind* must be fully engaged in this holy process. The conversion of our soul and the ongoing refinement of our life, as we adopt the attributes of godliness, is our earthly mission and is rewarded with “eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God” (D&C 14:7).

The heart is symbolic of love and commitment. Love is the most powerful motivator of all. We will make sacrifices and bear burdens for those we love that we would not endure for any other reason—not for money, not for recognition, not for power. If love does not exist, our commitment will surely wane.

If we love the Lord with all our heart, we are willing to give Him everything we possess. Elder Neal A. Maxwell said, on this very campus:

The submission of one’s will is really the only uniquely personal thing we have to place on God’s altar. . . . The many other things we give to God, however nice that may be of us, are actually things He has already given us, and He has loaned them to us. But when we begin to submit ourselves by letting our wills be swallowed up in God’s will, then we are really giving something to Him. . . . There is a part of us that is ultimately sovereign, the mind and heart, where we really do decide which way to go and what to do. And when we submit to His will, then we’ve really given Him the one thing He asks of us. [“Sharing Insights from My Life,” BYU devotional address, 12 January 1999]

Having a “willing mind” connotes giving our best effort, using our finest thinking,

and seeking God’s wisdom. It suggests that our most devoted lifetime study should be of things that are eternal in nature. It says to me that there must be an inextricable relationship between hearing the word of God and obeying it.

The first word in the Doctrine and Covenants is *hearken*. It appears repeatedly in this book of scripture, which is a compilation of “the doctrines, covenants, and commandments given in this dispensation” (D&C 1, preface). The meaning of the word is even specifically given in section 42: “Again I say unto you, hearken and hear and obey the law which I shall give unto you” (D&C 42:2).

In the same chapter as the sacred verse that was a catalyst to the boy Joseph Smith before his profound experience in the Sacred Grove, the Apostle James said, “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” (James 1:22).

Some of us “hear” selectively and “do” when it is convenient. One whose “heart” and “mind” are given to the Lord is consistent; whether the burden is light or heavy makes no difference.

I suggest five essential ways one can genuinely seek to give their heart and mind to the Lord.

1. Gain and Constantly Nurture Your Own Testimony

A Latter-day Saint’s testimony should include a knowledge of and love for God the Eternal Father; Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son; and the Holy Ghost. It would know of the glorious gospel plan and the centrality of the Savior and His Atonement. It would have an understanding of the “marvelous work and [the] wonder” (2 Nephi 27:26) of the restoration of the Lord’s Church in this last dispensation and the role of apostles and prophets from Joseph Smith to Thomas S. Monson.

If you do not feel the power and security that this knowledge brings, I ask you to study

the exhortation of Moroni, often quoted by the full-time missionaries of the Church, but not always followed by investigators. We read:

And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost. [Moroni 10:4]

Take note that there are three essential requirements: faith in Christ, a sincere heart, and real intent. Perhaps the least understood of these is “real intent.” In concert with the other conditions to receiving an answer, real intent means you are willing to do as directed. Consequently, if you are praying without a firm commitment to follow, it is unlikely that direction will come.

2. Honor Priesthood Ordinances and Covenants

To help us progress, God asks us to perform priesthood ordinances. Ordinances are sacred ceremonies in which we make commitments to Him, and He confers upon us the potential to receive the blessings of eternity. As covenant children, we have all that is required for eternal success if we are true to our promises. Prepare for the ordinances yet to be performed in your life and be guided in your life decisions by the covenants you have made. When you are evaluating alternatives, ask yourself, “Is this choice consistent with my covenants?”

Elder D. Todd Christofferson said:

The importance of having a sense of the sacred is simply this — if one does not appreciate holy things, he will lose them. Absent a feeling of reverence, he will grow increasingly casual in attitude and lax in conduct. He will drift from the moorings that his covenants with God could provide. His feeling of accountability to God will diminish and then

be forgotten. Thereafter, he will care only about his own comfort and satisfying his uncontrolled appetites. Finally, he will come to despise sacred things, even God, and then he will despise himself. ["A Sense of the Sacred," fireside address, 7 November 2004]

Please follow the rallying cry of the early pioneers as they were organizing themselves for the treacherous journey westward: "And this shall be our covenant—that we will walk in all the ordinances of the Lord" (D&C 136:4).

When we live by covenant and not convenience, our lives are directed toward our heavenly home.

3. Root Out Duplicity

Duplicity is acting one way in public and another way in private. The purpose of our deception is to hide our sins; but, as Jonah learned when he fled to Joppa, you cannot hide from God. Even to others, our deceit will be found out in time, and the damage caused to those closest to us may be irreversible.

One way to test whether we have "an eye single to the glory of God" (D&C 4:5) or a secondary eye to the evil of the world is to evaluate how we act when we are alone. What sites do we visit on the Internet? What television programs or DVDs do we watch? What kind of books and magazines do we read? Would we be comfortable in the same activities if others were watching?

James taught, "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways" (James 1:8). Our deceit will affect every facet of our life, impairing our ability to progress in earthly and eternal relationships.

4. Continually Study the Doctrine

President Boyd K. Packer has said, "The study of the doctrines of the gospel will improve behavior quicker than a study of behavior will improve behavior" ("Little Children," *Ensign*, November 1986, 17). When

we know the commandments of God from the writings of the prophets and "liken all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning" (1 Nephi 19:23), it will change the way we think and act.

Studying and following the counsel of living prophets is vital. Having prophets of God on earth has become so commonplace for us in this Church that their profound importance and role is often woefully underappreciated.

In general conference in April 1997, President Henry B. Eyring stated:

Looking for the path to safety in the counsel of prophets makes sense to those with strong faith. When a prophet speaks, those with little faith may think that they hear only a wise man giving good advice. Then if his counsel seems comfortable and reasonable, squaring with what they want to do, they take it. If it does not, they consider it either faulty advice or they see their circumstances as justifying their being an exception to the counsel. . . .

Another fallacy is to believe that the choice to accept or not accept the counsel of prophets is no more than deciding whether to accept good advice and gain its benefits or to stay where we are. But the choice not to take prophetic counsel changes the very ground upon which we stand. It becomes more dangerous. ["Finding Safety in Counsel," *Ensign*, May 1997, 25]

5. Establish a Life of Service

The Lord simply stated, "If thou lovest me thou shalt serve me" (D&C 42:29). Still in my twenties, I was called to be the bishop of an 850-member ward. Two weeks prior, I, with a partner, founded a company that had just hired and was responsible for several new employees. At the time my wife and I had three active children, ages one to seven. The daunting responsibilities to properly care for my young family, to care for the Saints entrusted to my stewardship, and to create a viable business seemed impossible.

As I now reflect on the events of the ensuing years, I am convinced that service to others—most important, that to my family—has been one of the great blessings of my life. Without the continual humility and life perspective that service engenders, the allure of the world could easily have entrapped me.

Serving others emulates the ultimate act of service offered to each of us by the Redeemer of the world. It is a way for us to make partial payment for the opportunity of salvation that comes only through Jesus Christ.

When I was young, we lived adjacent to the Honolulu Hawaii Stake Tabernacle, a magnificent facility completed in 1941. In September 1954, a major meeting was held there. I was five and my brother was nine. Our mother had just returned from the hospital after giving birth to my parents' third child, a sister, so my mother was unable to attend the meeting. Our father had gone to the meeting early because of administrative responsibilities and was to sit on the stand. My brother and I walked down the lane on which we lived and over a small bridge leading to the tabernacle. We sat on about the tenth row in the large chapel. Presiding and speaking at the meeting was David O. McKay, then the president of the Church. I do not recall specifically anything he said, but I vividly remember what I saw and what I felt. President McKay was dressed in a cream-colored suit, and with his wavy white hair he looked quite regal. In the tradition of the islands, he wore a triple-thick, red-carnation lei. As he spoke, I felt something quite intense and very personal. I later understood that I was feeling the influence of the Holy Spirit. We sang the closing hymn; it is one that is still in our hymnbook, but we do not sing it as often in the Church now. "Who's on the Lord's side? Who? Now is the time to show. We ask it fearlessly: Who's on the Lord's side? Who?" (*Hymns*, 1985, no. 260). With those words being sung by 2,000 people, but seemingly just for me, I wanted to stand and say, "I am!"

Are you "on the Lord's side"? Does He have your heart and willing mind?

Four weeks ago, Diane and I stood on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, not far from Tiberias. In my mind I could see Peter and six other disciples out fishing. The scriptures say they caught nothing all night. In the morning, the resurrected Jesus stood on the shore, but at first the disciples did not recognize Him. He asked if they had caught any fish. They said no. Jesus said, "Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find." They did so and caught so many fish they could not draw in their net. Peter then understood who it was on the shore, and he jumped into the water and swam to shore. The other disciples came to shore in a small ship, dragging the net of fishes. They began to cook the fish and eat them with bread. Then Jesus asked Peter what I believe is one of the most important questions in all scripture: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" Perhaps He was referring to the fish and the bread, or some other earthly circumstance, but what the Savior was really saying was, "Peter, do you love me more than you love the things of the world?" (See John 21:1–17.)

Do you love the Lord more than the world? Does He have your heart and willing mind?

My dear young friends, during this critical time of higher education and transition from youth to adulthood, it is profoundly important that you establish a foundation of loyalty to the Lord. Your very future, your family's future, and the future of the Church depend on it. I testify that "the great plan of happiness" (Alma 42:8) is real. I witness of God, our Heavenly Father, whose plan it is, and of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, who is central to the plan. I testify of apostles and prophets, whom I know and love and gladly follow. With all my heart and all my mind I witness of these truths. They have made all the difference in my life.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.