

Keep His Commandments

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Though my name is Japanese, and my roots are from Japan, I was born and reared in Hawaii. We have Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi from Japan among the General Authorities. He is the *real* Japanese General Authority, and I am the imitation one.

I recently celebrated my forty-fifth anniversary as a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. When I was baptized as a young man of seventeen, I did not have a knowledge of the gospel, but I knew for a surety that the Prophet Joseph Smith had seen the Father and the Son in a grove of trees in upstate New York. The missionaries taught me that story, and I gained a testimony of its truthfulness.

There Is a Law

May I share with you tonight my testimony of how the multitude of blessings from our Father in Heaven through his Son Jesus Christ are available to us all as we obey and keep his commandments.

In latter-day revelations we find,

Whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection.

And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and

obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come. [D&C 130:18–19]

To illustrate this point, I am reminded of an experience in Hawaii while I was serving in a bishopric there. I was assigned to the MIA, and at one time we needed a new president for the YWMIA and a new superintendent for the YMMIA. As we met together to consider who should fill the positions, the bishop asked that we kneel in prayer. He petitioned the Lord, seeking inspiration and revelation for this couple.

After the amen was said, the bishop asked the first counselor if he had any promptings, and he named a serviceman and his wife. The husband was a priest in the Aaronic Priesthood and was not as active as he should be because he had a smoking habit. The bishop asked for my recommendation, and similarly the name of this couple had come very strongly to my mind. The bishop had received the same impression.

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We immediately called the couple to the bishop's office and he stated to the couple that the Lord had called them to be the superintendent and president of the ward MIA. The brother immediately put up his hands and said, "Bishop, thank you for your consideration, but I cannot accept the calling because I have a smoking habit."

The bishop reminded the brother that the calling was without the cigarette. Then the brother started to tell of his long battle with this habit. For the previous six years he had been trying to overcome this smoking habit. (This was during the Korean War in 1954.) He would abstain from smoking for six months and then would go out on duty aboard ship. In the quiet and lonely hours on deck, he'd be standing in the fantail of the ship, and from the opposite side would come a sailor who would light up a cigarette. That smoke would drift toward his nose, and the temptation was all too great for him to not ask for a puff. After the puff he would feel guilty for breaking his long abstinence.

This wise bishop, inspired by the Lord, asked his brother if he loved his wife who sat next to him, and the brother was quick to answer yes. "Even to the point of defending her honor with your life if necessary?" he was asked. Without hesitation he quickly said yes again. Then the bishop said to him, "Do you feel the same about your two beautiful teenage daughters?" And again he answered yes. The bishop then shocked us all by calling this man a big liar. The brother immediately stood up, flexed his big arms and fists, and said, "Nobody calls me a liar in front of my wife. If you weren't my bishop you'd be lying on the floor right now."

The bishop asked the brother, "Are you really good and mad?" And he replied, "Sure I am." Then this wise bishop said, "Please, listen carefully to what I will tell you." Then he told this serviceman that in one breath he was saying he loved his wife and his daughters so

much that he would even defend their honor with his life; yet in another breath he said he could not accept a call from the Lord because a cigarette habit was hampering his progress in this life to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and be ordained an elder so he could be sealed to his wife and daughters for time and all eternity in the temple. The bishop said to him, "What if you went to sea duty and your ship was sunk and you died without being sealed to your wife and daughters? And then your dear wife remarried a good man who took her and your daughters to the temple to be sealed to him. What would become of you in the next world? You should go home today, gather your family together, pray about this, and ask the Lord for direction and help."

The couple left the bishop's office and returned to their Sunday School class. Before the class period was over, this brother came to me and said that he and his wife would like to see the bishop again. As we sat in the office he told the bishop, "I have no desire to smoke again and will accept the calling." He further asked for a blessing to help him to have faith, overcome his habit, and accomplish his goal. We gave him a blessing.

They served valiantly as a husband and wife team in leading the ward MIA and did a fine job. He was later recommended to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and was ordained an elder. The bishopric and many members of the ward were at the Hawaii Temple to witness the sealing of the husband and wife and their two beautiful daughters. There were many happy tears shed that day.

The Lord says, "There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated—And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated" (D&C 130:20–21).

This serviceman and his family moved from our ward to the naval housing area in the Pearl Harbor Stake. He was called as the

second counselor in that stake's YMMIA presidency; still later he was transferred to the Bremerton, Washington, shipyard. One day as I looked at the *Church News* where they used to publish the pictures of new bishoprics, I saw this brother sitting with a smile on his face and his counselors seated next to him. He had been called as a new bishop! This was about three years after that Sunday when the bishop had talked to him. Surely the Lord is no respecter of persons and will bless all who will order their lives in conformity with gospel principles.

The Lord also said, "And again, I say unto you, I give unto you a new commandment, that you may understand my will concerning you. Or, in other words, I give unto you directions how you may act before me, that it may turn to you for your salvation" (D&C 82:8–9).

Then he said, "I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise" (D&C 82:10).

Brothers and sisters, let us follow the example of our Savior and Redeemer, who always was obedient to the will of his Father in Heaven.

The Straight and Narrow Path

In his book *The Promised Messiah*, Elder Bruce R. McConkie said that

Christ came to reveal his Father to mankind. There is no better way to envision who and what the Father is than to come to know his Son. The Son is in all respects as the Father. They look alike; each is in the express image of the person of the other. Their thoughts are the same; they speak forth the same eternal truths; and every deed done by one is the same thing the other would do under the same circumstances. [The Promised Messiah: The First Coming of Christ (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1978), pp. 17–18]

Jesus said, "He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me"

And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me" (John 12:44–45).

Also, "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:6–7, 9).

The Savior, though he was without sin, set the pattern that we might follow, as he was baptized to take away the sins of the world.

Nephi, the great Book of Mormon prophet, tells us:

And now, if the Lamb of God, he being holy, should have need to be baptized by water, to fulfil all righteousness, O then, how much more need have we, being unholy, to be baptized, yea, even by water!

And now, I would ask of you, my beloved brethren, wherein the Lamb of God did fulfil all righteousness in being baptized by water?

Know ye not that he was holy? But notwithstanding he being holy, he showeth unto the children of men that, according to the flesh he humbleth himself before the Father, and witnesseth unto the Father that he would be obedient unto him in keeping his commandments. [2 Nephi 31:5–7]

The Savior showed mankind the way, the straight and narrow path, by which we should enter the gate, and we are promised if we endure to the end and keep the commandments after baptism, we can gain eternal life.

The Lord knew that earthly experience does not come easily, but by hard work and long-suffering. He himself became the author of the plan of salvation through obedience. The sufferings of our Savior were part of his education. The Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, said, "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Hebrews 5:8–9).

President Spencer W. Kimball, who suffered many tribulations during the course of his life, said, “Suffering can make saints of people as they learn patience, long-suffering, and self-mastery” (TSWK, p. 168). President Kimball quotes Elder James E. Talmage, who states, “No pang that is suffered by man or woman upon the earth will be without its compensating effect . . . if it be met with patience” (*Tragedy or Destiny* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1961], p. 6).

President Kimball further says, “On the other hand, these things can crush us with their mighty impact if we yield to weakness, complaining and criticism.” He quotes Orson F. Whitney, who said:

No pain that we suffer, no trial that we experience is wasted. It ministers to . . . the development of such qualities as patience, faith, fortitude and humility. All that we suffer and all that we endure, especially when we endure it patiently, builds up our characters, purifies our hearts, expands our souls, and makes us more tender and charitable, more worthy to be called the children of God . . . and it is through sorrow and suffering, toil and tribulation, that we gain the education that we come here to acquire and which will make us more like our Father and Mother in heaven. [Tragedy or Destiny, p. 6]

The Prophet Joseph Smith had gone through many trials and tribulations in his life and pleaded with the Lord for the suffering Saints in his day. The Lord said to him,

*My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment;
And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes.
Thy friends do stand by thee, and they shall hail thee again with warm hearts and friendly hands.* [D&C 121:7–9]

We find in the Doctrine and Covenants, section 42, verses 45, 46, and 47:

Thou shalt live together in love, insomuch that thou shalt weep for the loss of them that die, and more especially for those that have not hope of a glorious resurrection.

And it shall come to pass that those that die in me shall not taste of death, for it shall be sweet unto them;

And they that die not in me, wo unto them, for their death is bitter.

“Forgive One Another”

The Lord gave us many challenges by way of commandments, as he so instructed us through his apostles of old.

If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.

These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. [John 15:10–12, 15]

Again in latter-day revelation, the Lord spoke through the Prophet Joseph in yet another commandment regarding our responsibilities to share the gospel with others.

That every man, both elder, priest, teacher, and also member, go to with his might, with the labor of his hands, to prepare and accomplish the things which I have commanded.

And let your preaching be the warning voice, every man, to his neighbor, in mildness and in meekness. [D&C 38:40–41]

The Lord is saying that when we see someone fall into sin, we must be kind and fellowship that person back into activity with the pure love of Christ, in meekness and using mild tones.

Paul, in speaking to the Galatians, teaches us, “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Galatians 6:1).

The Savior, again regarding sin and forgiveness, gave us this—revelation through the Prophet Joseph Smith.

Nevertheless, he has sinned, but verily I say unto you, I, the Lord, forgive sins unto those who confess their sins before me and ask forgiveness, who have not sinned unto death.

My disciples, in days of old, sought occasion against one another and forgave not one another in their hearts; and for this evil they were afflicted and sorely chastened. [D&C 64:7–8]

When someone crosses our path it’s easy, brothers and sisters, for us to say to him, “Forget it, you’re forgiven.” But when we are reminded of that incident, we sometimes do not remember what we have said and continue to talk about the problem. The Lord reminds us of our responsibility and why we should forgive and forget.

Wherefore, I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one another; for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin. [D&C 64:9]

Brothers and sisters, I once went into a business partnership with a man who was very astute. I thought because he was a member of the Church he was going to take care of me and teach me as his junior partner. I was so grateful that he was willing to share with me that opportunity of being in business with him. But

after three months of work, I found that I was doing most of the work (his participation was very small), and the business was not as he said it was going to be. It was a very sad experience for me, and I became very sour. After a few more months I hardly had any income, so I finally had to dissolve the partnership.

For about a year after that, I had a bitter feeling within myself. It was not easy for me whenever anyone asked me about this man. I was not complimentary concerning him. After a year of cankering my soul with bitterness, the good Lord blessed me with understanding, and I realized that I must change. Every time someone would ask me about him I’d say, “He’s such an astute business man you have to be careful. He’s great. He’s tremendously *akamai*, as we say in Hawaii—that is, smart. I would say nothing but the best I could think about him. Soon, brothers and sisters, this good word got back to him. In the past he avoided me; now he would call my name from afar and say “Adney, how’s everything?” We became friends. He started sending me Christmas cards of his family in color. I remembered that verse, “Wherefore, I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one another; for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin” (D&C 64:9).

The Lord gave us the tenth verse of that scripture, the law of forgiveness, when he said, “I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men” (D&C 64:10). I think you and I must do this, brothers and sisters. It’s not easy, I’m sure. We have recently seen the great disaster of the seven astronauts, and now, through an extensive investigation, they are trying to find out what happened. It’s hard when we face a disaster like this, but we must not place blame because the Lord has said, “I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men” (D&C 64:10).

Hate the Sin But Love the Sinner

There is a great parable in the story of the prodigal son that the Lord gave us for several reasons. I think there's a great story behind it, and I'd like to go over that parable with you tonight and try to glean out some of the points that I think are very important.

*And he said, A certain man had two sons:
And the younger of them said to his father,
Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.
And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.
And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.
And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.
And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.
And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!
I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,
And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.
And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.
And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.
But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:
And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:*

For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing.

And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.

And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.

The brother was very angry and would not go in the house. Therefore, the father came out and talked to him. And the older brother said:

Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:

But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.

It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad, for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found. [Luke 15:11–27, 29–32]

This parable teaches us several important lessons. First, brothers and sisters, it counsels us to forgive one another, that we should not look on the weak points of the person who has fallen.

You who are here and have left parents behind to come to this great institution to study and learn and to get an education must remember that you have parents who love you very much. The joy of the father is obvious as he welcomes his son home. I'm sure your parents feel the same, no matter what you do in this life.

I hope that we will always remember the love of our mothers and fathers. They would do anything and everything for us. We who are

now members of this Church and kingdom of God, under the restored principles that have been given to us by the Prophet Joseph, have certain things we must do. We must obey and keep the commandments. It's not easy to walk the straight and narrow path. It's a challenge with the world filled with pornography and all the wiles of the devil. But we should always remember that we have loving parents who are our best friends. Let's confide in them. Let's take our innermost feelings to them, share our thoughts with them, and be unafraid. Sister Komatsu and I have four children, and we know that whatever they do in this life, they are still our children. As the Lord said, I must forgive; I must love.

When you're far away from home, and I met some of you tonight who are very far from home—from South Africa, and many states in the United States—you are assigned to a ward with a bishop and a stake president. When you're in a dire situation and your parents are not available and you need an answer, you have a bishop. We never set our parents aside for the bishop, but when they're not available, we should go to our bishop. I was a bishop once, and you know a bishop cannot tell a lie—for if he did, the Lord would know it, and he would not be a bishop for long.

After the bishop has talked to you, perhaps you're still not quite satisfied with what he has told you; then see the stake president. I hope that you will always remember that you must keep the law; you must obey the commandments. We are told that if we endure to the end, the Lord will bless us with eternal life.

President Harold B. Lee had lost his wife and then, while he was at a stake conference in Hawaii, received a call from the doctor attending his daughter, saying, "President, if you don't come home right away, I don't think your daughter will be alive when you arrive. Please make every effort to come quickly."

President Lee begged the doctor to try to keep her alive until he could complete his

assignment and return home. He had only two daughters, and she was very dear to him. He prayed all night long, petitioning to the Lord, "Please, please, Lord, keep her alive until I can come home." But in the wee hours of the morning he received a call from the doctor who said, "I'm very sorry, President, but your loving daughter has passed away."

President Lee felt very lonely and sad, yet there was a special witness from the Lord. Searching for solace, he turned to section 58 of the Doctrine and Covenants:

For verily I say unto you, blessed is he that keepeth my commandments, whether in life or in death; and he that is faithful in tribulation, the reward of the same is greater in the kingdom of heaven.

Ye cannot behold with your natural eyes, for the present time, the design of your God concerning those things which shall come hereafter, and the glory which shall follow after much tribulation.

For after much tribulation come the blessings. Wherefore the day cometh that ye shall be crowned with much glory; the hour is not yet, but is nigh at hand.

Remember this, which I tell you before, that you may lay it to heart, and receive that which is to follow.

Behold, verily I say unto you, for this cause I have sent you—that you might be obedient, and that your hearts might be prepared to bear testimony of the things which are to come;

And also that you might be honored in laying the foundation, and in bearing record of the land upon which the Zion of God shall stand. [D&C 58:2–7]

President Spencer W. Kimball often said that we should hate the sin but love the sinner. We should fellowship him who has gone astray and love him back into the fold.

Recently I interviewed a young lady who needed clearance from a General Authority before she could go on a mission. As she came

in, I could see that she was very concerned about the interview. I assured her that she could go on this mission that she had been working toward for the past few years. Then she burst into tears, and they flowed freely down both cheeks. I asked her to tell me about her concerns. She started by saying that during her young teenage years she left home and started a life with her peers, thinking this was what she wanted. After about two and a half years she became involved with drugs and all kinds of worldly ways and was living a life of sex and loose morals. One day, as she groveled in self-pity, like the story of the prodigal son, she decided to return home because she realized that nothing good could come from her life-style.

Humbly, she returned home to her parents. To her surprise, they took her in and blessed her with medical help and the love that she never appreciated before. After four years of rehabilitation, she had a desire to serve the Lord as a missionary and worked closely with her bishop and stake president to qualify for this calling.

I told her that when she received her call as a missionary, she would bring into the hearts of her parents unspeakable joy, for their daughter who was lost had come alive again. I told her that all of the years of heartaches she had caused her parents, especially when they knew she was living close by and was steeped in drugs and doing all the things they had taught her were wrong—all of those heartaches would melt and swiftly disappear because now she had straightened herself out and desired to serve her Father in Heaven. When she received her call, there would be no higher honor paid to her parents, especially her mother who brought her into the world and nursed her and nurtured her. I told this young lady that missionary work is not easy, but the joy that she will receive from her labors as a missionary will be an eternal blessing that she will cherish forever and ever.

Missionaries must not lie. They must not cheat. They must not deceive anyone. They must be honest, clean, and pure. Henry David Thoreau said that “when our thoughts are pure, our spirit automatically flows unto God.” And I know that if missionaries will be pure and clean, their spirits will flow unto God.

Partake of the Blessings

Brothers and sisters, many of you are returned missionaries and have gone into the house of the Lord and have made very important covenants with the Lord. Eternal salvation rests upon how you keep those covenants. Those of you who have not had the opportunity should make yourselves available through your bishops and stake presidents for those great, great blessings that come, because we who are members of this, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, are the only people on this earth who have such great blessings given to us through living prophets and angels and the servants of God. We need those blessings to gain the presence of our Father in Heaven.

Temple work today is now being carried on like no other time in the history of this Church. The thirty-ninth temple was just dedicated, and there are others announced and in progress. In the isles of the sea there are now five temples. I know the people in Tonga, Samoa, Tahiti, and other isles of the sea are so poor that they could not go to New Zealand or Hawaii to the temple. Now the Lord has made it so easy that no one has an excuse to stay away from the house of the Lord.

The last days are here, brothers and sisters. I hope and pray that we will make ourselves available to partake of the blessings in the Lord’s house.

In the parable of the prodigal son, the older brother asked the father why he was doing so much for the younger brother when he hadn’t done it for the older one. And the father replied, “All that I have is thine.” *All that I*

have is yours. If we will endure to the end and search the scriptures and live honorably according to the principles and precepts that we know are true, we have the promise: "For this cause, that men might be made partakers of the glories which were to be revealed, the Lord sent forth the fulness of his gospel, his everlasting covenant, reasoning in plainness and simplicity" (D&C 133:57).

I bear you my humble testimony, that if we live the gospel and do everything we can to be honorable, the Lord will bless us and help us on our journey toward eternity.

You are all here for an education and I read this statement from Thomas Huxley:

Perhaps the most valuable result of all education is the ability to make yourself do the thing you have to do, when it ought to be done, whether you like it or not; it is the first lesson that ought to be learned; and however early a man's training begins, it is probably the last lesson that he learns thoroughly.
[*Technical Education*, 1877]

I bear you my humble testimony that I know that the gospel is true. It has been revealed in these last days in its fulness by living prophets. And we must keep sacred the covenants we make in the house of the Lord, for in these covenants a promise is given to us that we can become gods.

I bear humble witness that today President Ezra Taft Benson is a living prophet. I think about President Benson working under President Spencer W. Kimball these many years and then, in his eighty-seventh year, being called to be the prophet. Some of us who are in our sixties and seventies feel we're so tired and worn out that we need to retire. We need to go to Hawaii and bask in the sun. But President Benson was called by the Lord in his advanced years to become the prophet.

I bear you my humble testimony that if we live the gospel and do all we can to be honest with ourselves and with the Lord, these things will bring us the blessings that he has promised to those who are faithful to the end. I say this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.