

## *“And Always Remember Him”*

GORDON B. LINDSAY

I am humbled this morning to share a few words and pray I might say some things that will increase our desire and ability to live the gospel of Jesus Christ. I am grateful for university devotionals. They are a nice break from academic work and let us focus on the weightier matters of the kingdom. I know you students appreciate the chance to get away from writing papers and studying for exams. I have heard how difficult some of those exams can be.

I was told of a zoology professor who is so tough a grader that nobody has ever received an A in his course. Last semester, history was being made because an especially bright student had A's on the two midterms. If he could get an A on the final he would have the first A in this professor's class—ever. The final test was on birds, and so the student practically memorized the three chapters on birds. He went to the library, checked out extra readings, and felt ready for anything that might appear on the final.

The day of the final the professor said, “Good morning, students. This is your final exam.” From underneath the table he pulled out three stuffed birds. Each of them was covered with a little hood, and all you could see were the legs and feet poking out from underneath the hoods. He said, “Now,

students, looking at the legs and feet of these three specimens, I'd like you to tell me their common names and their scientific names. That's all you have to do. You have an hour and a half to complete the exam. Begin.”

The class sat absolutely stunned. There are thousands of bird species. How do you identify a bird by looking at the legs and feet? This test was given so nobody would get an A. The student who previously thought he had a shot at getting an A wrote down some names he knew were probably incorrect. He went up, slammed his paper on the professor's desk, and said, “Sir, that's the dumbest test I've ever taken in my life. I want to tell you something else. You are the most boring lecturer on this campus.”

The professor fumbled for a pen and said, “Just one minute, student. What was your name?”

The student thought for a second, pulled up his pant leg, showed his hairy leg, and said, “Why don't you tell *me*?”

Sometimes professors need to be put in their places.

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Now I know you appreciate this chance to have a break from academics, but I'm hoping you won't mind if I pull a short pop quiz to help explore today's subject. Please answer the following questions in your mind.

**Question Number 1:** What great event turned around the life of Alma the Younger? If you responded that an angel of God came down and called Alma to repentance, I would give you partial credit. Certainly that was part of the equation. But I think the story more importantly illustrates the power of remembering the Savior and thinking of Him than it illustrates the ability of angels to call us to repentance.

Alma reported being tormented for three days. Sometimes we think that is some sort of record. It's not. He could have gone three months, three years, or a lifetime and still not felt redemption. In other Book of Mormon stories angels confronted individuals such as Laman and Lemuel with their misdeeds, but no repentance and lasting change were seen. What was the difference with Alma the Younger? Here is how he described it:

*As I was thus racked with torment, while I was harrowed up by the memory of my many sins, behold, I remembered also to have heard my father prophesy unto the people concerning the coming of one Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone for the sins of the world.*

*Now, as my mind caught hold upon this thought, I cried within my heart: O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me, who am in the gall of bitterness, and am encircled about by the everlasting chains of death.*

*And now, behold, when I thought this, I could remember my pains no more.<sup>1</sup>*

I believe this story illustrates the tremendous power of remembering and thinking about the Savior. The focus of this devotional talk is the need to "always remember him"

and to consider the blessings that come from remembering the Savior.

Back to the pop quiz.

**Question Number 2:** If you combine the two sacrament prayers,<sup>2</sup> how many times is the phrase "and keep his commandments" used? The answer is one time. It is in the blessing of the bread.

**Question Number 3:** In the sacrament prayers, how many times are the phrases "in remembrance" and "always remember him" used? The answer is that each phrase is used in both of the prayers. The Lord wants us to take seriously our promise to keep His commandments. I believe He is equally serious about our promise to always remember His Son.

**Question Number 4:** In your average day, how many times do you remember Him? In other words, if I could be with you at the end of the day and download your mental files to examine what you have thought about during the last 24 hours, how many times would I find that you specifically, deliberately, deeply thought about the Lord Jesus Christ? We sing the song "I Need Thee Every Hour," not "I Need Thee Once in a While, or Occasionally." In the Doctrine and Covenants we are told to "look unto me in every thought."<sup>3</sup> We are counseled to "let virtue garnish [our] thoughts unceasingly."<sup>4</sup> In the sacrament prayers we promise to "always remember him."

Now certainly the Lord does not imply that every single thought be focused on His Son. We are not mystic monks who spend the whole day in meditation. We have real jobs and real assignments, and we live in the real world that requires our intellectual energy. But, throughout the day, good disciples of the Master should frequently think of the Savior in order to have His spirit to be with them. If any of you is a good, devout Buddhist, I would expect that your mind frequently returns to and contemplates the teachings of Buddha. A good disciple of Confucius contemplates the teachings and virtues of that master. I am impressed with

devout Muslims who at least five times a day stop their routines to pray and contemplate their relationship with Allah. How many times a day should thoughts of a good Christian return to Galilee or Gethsemane? And how frequently should covenant-renewing disciples in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints think of their Savior and Redeemer? The answer is “Always.”

At times in my life I have been embarrassed about how little I thought about the Savior. I could have been classified as maybe a good Zoramite but certainly not a Christian. A description of how the Zoramites worshipped is given in Alma 31. The people said their hollow prayers on Rameumptom, then

*they returned to their homes, never speaking of their God again [and I would insert “never thinking of Him either”] until they had assembled themselves together again to the holy stand, to offer up thanks after their manner.<sup>5</sup>*

The Zoramites didn’t have the time to remember the Lord. They, like we, must have been a very busy people. Are you a good Zoramite? Do you remember the Savior only from sacrament meeting to sacrament meeting or just a few times throughout the week?

Later in this same chapter Alma shared what the Zoramites were thinking about. Both their hearts and minds were set on the things of this world. The Zoramites’ hang-ups were materialism and persecution of the poor. They remind me of the ghost of Jacob Marley, who asked Ebenezer Scrooge, “Why did I walk through crowds of fellow-beings with my eyes turned down, and never raise them to that blessed Star which led the Wise Men to a poor abode?”<sup>6</sup> The answer is simple. His thoughts were on other things. In Marley’s own words, “In life my spirit never roved beyond the narrow limits of our money-changing hole.”<sup>7</sup>

In our day we suffer from the same busy lifestyle and materialism that afflicted the

Zoramites, but we also have added a variety of additional distractions that prevent us from remembering and thinking about the Savior. Our minds are stuffed with the thoughts of pop culture, entertainment, advertising, hobbies, sports, and other trivial concerns that easily crowd out those vital thoughts we should be having of the Savior.

President Monson challenged us:

*Prepare time for him in our lives and room for him in our hearts. In these busy days there are many who have time for golf, time for shopping, time for work, time for play—but no time for Christ.*

*Lovely homes . . . provide rooms for eating, rooms for sleeping, playrooms, sewing rooms, television rooms, but no room for Christ.*

*. . . Do we flush with embarrassment when we remember, “And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.” (Luke 2:7.) No room. No room. No room. Ever has it been.<sup>8</sup>*

A few years ago I was in a conference where President Hinckley urged brothers and sisters to turn off those “inane and empty television programs.”<sup>9</sup> *Inane* is a good word. It is defined as something devoid of purpose; senseless; meaningless. I have observed that sometimes there are some inane mental thought channels in my mind that could and should be replaced by more purposeful, deliberate thinking of the Savior. Is that true for you?

In the time of the Savior, the question “What think ye of Christ?”<sup>10</sup> was put to the Pharisees. Perhaps the more appropriate question for our day is “Do we think of Christ?” We sing the words “I think of his hands pierced and bleeding to pay the debt! / Such mercy, such love, and devotion can I forget?” And then we sing, “No, no,” that we won’t.<sup>11</sup> But as we examine our daily thoughts, we might have to confess, “Yes, yes,” we do indeed too often forget.

Now back to our pop quiz.

**Question Number 5:** When you remember to remember the Savior, what is it specifically that you contemplate? Here are a few thoughts. For me sometimes it is remembering the Savior in a casual way, and this too is good. We sing, “Jesus, the very thought of thee / With sweetness fills my breast.”<sup>12</sup> How true. The Church Office Building has rotating printed spiritual thoughts in the elevators that are appropriately titled “Uplifting Thoughts.” I find that even a casual reflection upon the Savior is an uplifting thought that fills my heart with peace.

But we also need to think more deeply. We are counseled to love the Lord with our heart, might, mind, and strength.<sup>13</sup> Loving the Lord with our mind implies pondering and thinking about spiritual issues. With the instruction to “always remember Him,” the Lord does not want some form of general, always-sort-of-in-the-back-of-the-mind kind of remembering. God the Father expects that we frequently have full mental attention and specific thoughts of His Son. Part of remembering the Savior, I believe, implies thinking deeply about some of the following:

- His atoning sacrifice and the price that He has paid in our behalf
- His goodness, mercy, and love
- His perfect life and His example of living the gospel
- His teachings and the beautiful stories of His ministry
- What He is actually like
- How we can know Him

Near the conclusion of the Church film *The Testaments* there is a scene where Helam, the faithful Nephite disciple, is now blind. The resurrected Savior is visiting the New World, but Helam cannot get to the Master because of the thronging crowd and his disability. The dialogue between Helam and his son Jacob goes like this:

“Is it really Him? Can you see Him?”

“Not yet.”

“Can you see Him?”

“Yes!”

“Tell me. Tell me everything. Describe Him to me!”

“He is magnificent, Father! He is everything you imagined!”<sup>14</sup>

Brothers and sisters, I like that portrayal. It implies that a true disciple of Jesus Christ, like Helam, spends a lifetime trying to envision in his mind the attributes, qualities, and characteristics of the Savior. How clear is your mental picture of what the Savior is actually like? A good disciple will recognize Him at the final judgment. In the King James Version of the Bible the Savior tells the wicked, “I never knew you: depart from me.”<sup>15</sup> In the Joseph Smith Translation the words are “Ye never knew me.”<sup>16</sup> Perhaps it would be accurate to say, “You never knew me because you never thought about me or contemplated who I was, what I did, or the attributes of my life and character.”

**Question Number 6:** What blessings do we receive when we always remember Him?

One blessing of remembering Him is an increased sense of gratitude. It was simply the fact that *he remembered* that made one cleansed leper so very different from the other nine.<sup>17</sup> The grateful leper remembered and therefore focused his thoughts on the giver of the gift rather than on the gift itself. It is impossible to contemplate the Atonement without a profound sense of gratitude and thanksgiving. Gratitude is the fertile soil from which so many other important virtues sprout.

A second blessing is the increased measure of the Holy Spirit that we receive. The entire message of the sacrament blessing on the water is that as we remember the Savior, the Lord will send His spirit to be with us. Having the influence of the Holy Ghost is not an all-or-nothing experience. It comes in degrees. Remembering the Savior tremendously

enhances or potentiates the influence of the Holy Ghost in our lives. Remembering Him increases the guiding, directing influence that comes from Christ. We sing the songs “Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah”;<sup>18</sup> “The Lord Is My Light”;<sup>19</sup> “Lead, Kindly Light”;<sup>20</sup> and “Jesus, Savior, Pilot Me.”<sup>21</sup> It is a big mistake to pilot your ship solo and not take Christ as copilot. Failing to remember the Savior often puts the natural man at the controls. Jesus is a far better navigator than the natural man.

Another blessing of remembering Him is that it recalls to us His example as the kind of person we ought to be. Here in the Harris Fine Arts Center, students are instructed in the techniques of art and painting. This is not one of my skills. A few years ago I was with my family in the Teton Mountains, and our car was parked on the highway because of road construction. I noticed an artist at the side of the road. She was painting the magnificent mountain scene. I had some time to observe her technique. As a nonartist I was impressed at how much time the artist spent looking up at the vista as opposed to the time she actually spent painting on the canvas. In order to get it right, she spent a tremendous amount of time studying, contemplating, and mentally processing the scene she was painting.

There is an analogy here. Too often you and I have our noses and brushes to the canvas of life—busily painting away but never looking up and getting that inspiration as to what our lives are supposed to look like when we are all finished. If we want to get it right in this life, it is imperative that we lift our thoughts from the canvas of daily life and frequently remember and think about Jesus Christ. If we do so, when our life is finished His image indeed will be painted in our countenance. We sing, “God loved us, so he sent his Son, / Christ Jesus, the atoning One, / To show us by the path he trod / The one and only way to God.”<sup>22</sup> As we think of the Savior, we are shown what manner of men and women we ought to be.

One more analogy: I was recently in a toy store and saw a jigsaw puzzle that boasted of having 2,000 pieces. I am sure there are trained counselors and therapists who can help people who like to put such things together. I am not a huge fan of jigsaw puzzles, but I remember doing a few as a child, usually at Christmastime with cousins. From those experiences I know that it is extremely difficult to put a puzzle together if you do not have the picture that is on the cover of the box. Similarly, it is challenging to put this earthly experience together if we do not frequently look at what the completed picture ought to look like. The life and perfect example of the Savior provides this picture. I suggest you refer to it frequently.

The idea of using the Savior’s example as a blueprint for our own life is well expressed in two Primary children’s songs. One states: “I’m trying to be like Jesus; / I’m following in his ways. / I’m trying to love as he did, in all that I do and say.”<sup>23</sup> Then there is an older song that I sang as a child: “So, little children, / Let’s you and I / Try to be like him, / Try, try, try.”<sup>24</sup> We will never achieve it in this life, but remembering the Savior and thinking about His attributes will help us to come closer to the mark.

Remembering Christ opens our thoughts and actions to the needs of others. The natural man sees life’s issues through the dim and cloudy lens of “What’s in it for me?” Thinking of the Savior is like putting on corrective glasses that help us see life’s issues with the clarity of charity. Have you ever wondered why President Monson has so many personal stories that illustrate the principle of service and the practice of pure religion undefiled? After listening to one of his talks, I think I found a clue. He said:

*Through the years, the offices I have occupied have been decorated with lovely paintings of peaceful and pastoral scenes. However, there is one picture that always hangs on the wall which*

*I face when seated behind my desk. It is a constant reminder of Him whom I serve, for it is a picture of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. When confronted with a vexing problem or difficult decision, I always gaze at that picture of the Master and silently ask myself the question, "What would He have me do?" No longer does doubt linger, nor does indecision prevail. The way to go is clear, and the pathway before me beckons.<sup>25</sup>*

When we have disciplined ourselves to more frequently remember the Savior, I believe it also changes our prayers. They become more like the prayer attributed to Saint Francis of Assisi: "Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace. Where there is hatred let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith." In other words, "Lord, put me to work. Whom can I help? How can I serve? What wouldst thou have me do?" We treat people differently when we think of Christ. We see things from the Lord's perspective. Our tongues are bridled. We show more kindness.

President Susan Tanner of the Young Women organization told a story that took place when her family was in Brazil. The family had recently left sacrament meeting. A careless driver pulled out into the street without looking and broadsided the Tanner family car. Fortunately no one was injured. Sister Tanner said:

*As my husband John [and I] got out to discuss our plight with the other driver, I kept reminding him that it was not our fault. Soon he returned to the car and slowly drove back to the little farmhouse where we were living, with metal grinding against the tires on every rotation. The other car followed. All John said was, "I'll explain later."*

*When we got home, John found our little envelope of emergency cash, and he paid the family to get their car repaired. They happily left. I was astonished. Then John gathered our family together. He was somewhat apologetic as he explained his actions. "I know this accident was not our fault,*

*but as I was negotiating with this family, the only thought in my head was that only a little over an hour ago I had covenanted with Heavenly Father to always act as He would. I knew that if He were standing in my position, He would have had compassion on this family and would have done all He could to help them.<sup>26</sup>*

Thinking of the Savior profoundly affects how we interact with others.

Finally, thinking about the Savior helps us to resist temptation and to repent. How true are the words "I need thee every hour; / Stay thou nearby. / Temptations lose their pow'r / When thou art nigh."<sup>27</sup>

I teach a substance abuse class here at BYU, and my students are required to attend an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. I always read with interest their reports of that experience. The following quote is typical:

*At the first part of the meeting the members shared some very difficult personal stories. Basically it seemed like a testimony meeting from hell. But then I listened as these people talked about relying upon their higher power, the Savior, to help them through their difficult times, trials, and temptations. I saw how earnest they were and realized that I did not use the Savior in the same way in my life.<sup>28</sup>*

In Primary we learn all of the R words of repentance such as *recognition* and *restitution*, but we should never forget that the word that starts with a capital R is the word *Redeemer*. The Lord can give us increased power and ability to resist temptation and to overcome the natural man. There is no better example of resisting temptation than the Savior's perfect performance on the Mount of Temptation. Equally powerful is His example before the Sanhedrin and on the cross when He demonstrated perfect control of His tongue. What an example of self-mastery!

As with Alma the Younger, remembering the Savior helps us repent. Let me share a personal story. For the past few years our department has sponsored a Tobacco Control Intervention in Eastern Europe—a place in dire need of assistance with this issue. Petty crime, especially pickpocketing, is a problem there, as it is in many places of the world. I followed all of the crime prevention advice we gave to our students. I bought a cheap substitute wallet, took out all of my credit cards, and kept a minimal amount of cash with me. I also put my wallet in my front rather than back pocket. One day while I was on the subway, some very skilled “Artful Dodger” picked me clean.

It was the first time in my life that I had been directly victimized by a crime. It bothered me. It bothered me a lot. I started brooding over this incident and devoted an extreme amount of mental energy and time thinking about it. I confess I had some very unchristian thoughts of what I would do to the thief if I ever caught him or what should be done with him. In the Doctrine and Covenants it says that when you are sinned against and you refuse to forgive the sinner, you have the greater problem.<sup>29</sup> I was exhibit A of that principle.

Even after four days I was still thinking about this “terrible injustice” in the middle of the night to the extent that I lost hours of sleep. I slept through my alarm and missed sacrament service. I nevertheless went to priesthood and Sunday School and decided to stay for the next branch’s sacrament meeting. I came into the chapel early. They have a very small hymnal in Ukraine, and the organist was playing some Christmas songs, in June, for the prelude. I started to contemplate the beautiful words of these Christmas hymns and thought of my Savior. I began to have a change of heart.

Two Aaronic Priesthood members came to prepare the sacrament. I have been a teacher and a teachers quorum advisor. You give me a couple of teachers and a good water faucet and

the sacrament can be prepared in just a few minutes. It does not take a lot of attention.

That was not the case with these young Aaronic Priesthood holders. The first thing they did was say a prayer before they started to prepare the sacrament. I assume they were praying to put themselves in the frame of mind for this holy ordinance. I had never seen this kind of devotion before.

Then they carefully laid the first linen on the sacrament table. They stood back to make sure all the corners were perfectly correct. They carefully pressed out a few wrinkles. They placed cups in the water trays and with bottled water carefully and uniformly filled each cup. They placed the bread on the table, then reverently and with great solemnity covered the sacrament table as if they were covering the dead body of the crucified Christ. I do not think Joseph of Arimathea and the earlier disciples showed any more reverence when they took care of the body of our Lord.

Watching these Aaronic Priesthood brethren touched me deeply and caused me to think about the teachings of the Savior. No angels came down from heaven to smite me, but the Spirit whispered the following message to my soul: “Brother Lindsay, you big baby! You lost 12 bucks and a cheap wallet, pal. Get over it! You claim to be a disciple of Christ; now act like it. That’s not how the Master would do it.” I was chastened.

The meeting started and rapidly progressed to the sacrament. I did not speak the language, but as the priests offered the sacrament prayers with heartfelt expression, I felt the meaning of the words, which sank deep into my heart. I remembered my Savior, and I cried unto Him, saying, “I am so sorry for my unchristian thoughts and actions. I have been so narrow, so petty. I can do better, and, with Thy help, I will do better. I want to be Thy disciple. Please forgive me.”

As my mind caught hold upon this thought, from the top of my head to the soles of my feet

the most beautiful spirit erased all the enmity and feelings of revenge that had infected my soul. All those negative feelings were completely gone. Brothers and sisters, I testify that when we remember the Savior, good things happen.

I apologize for my wandering words this morning. Almost all of what I wanted to say today has been more eloquently expressed in a single paragraph by a modern prophet of God. Consider this counsel from President Howard W. Hunter:

*Let us follow the Son of God in all ways and in all walks of life. Let us make him our exemplar and our guide. We should at every opportunity ask ourselves, "What would Jesus do?" and then be more courageous to act upon the answer. We must follow Christ, in the best sense of that word. We must be about his work as he was about his Father's. We should try to be like him. . . .*

*We must know Christ better than we know him; we must remember him more often than we remember him; we must serve him more valiantly than we serve him. Then we will drink water springing up unto eternal life and will eat the bread of life.<sup>30</sup>*

The prophet Alma taught that out of simple things great things come to pass.<sup>31</sup> Remembering the Savior and thinking about Him are certainly simple things, but I testify they bring mighty changes in our lives. Thinking of the Savior fills us with gratitude. It more powerfully increases the ability of the Holy Spirit to direct our lives. It helps us repent and change our behavior; it opens our eyes to the needs of others; and it helps us resist temptation. I testify that each of us has the ability to train and discipline our minds to more frequently remember Him.

We seldom sing the fifth verse from the sacrament hymn "God Loved Us, So He Sent His Son." The final verse states, "This sacrament doth represent / His blood and body for me spent. / Partaking now is deed for

word / That I remember him, my Lord."<sup>32</sup> "Deed for word" means an action for a promise that we remember Him, our Lord. It is my prayer that we will all more fully keep this promise to always remember the Savior. As we do so, I promise we will be blessed and will become more effective disciples in His holy work. I so testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### Notes

1. Alma 36:17–19.
2. See D&C 20:77, 79.
3. D&C 6:36.
4. D&C 121:45.
5. Alma 31:23.
6. Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol* (1843), stave 1.
7. Dickens, *Christmas Carol*, stave 1.
8. Thomas S. Monson, "The Search for Jesus," *Ensign*, December 1990, 4–5.
9. Gordon B. Hinckley, "We Have a Work to Do," *Ensign*, May 1995, 88.
10. Matthew 22:42.
11. "I Stand All Amazed," *Hymns*, 1985, no. 193.
12. "Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee," *Hymns*, 1985, no. 141.
13. See D&C 59:5.
14. From the film *The Testaments: Of One Fold and One Shepherd*, Intellectual Reserve, Inc., Salt Lake City, 2000.
15. Matthew 7:23.
16. JST, Matthew 7:33.
17. See Luke 17:12–19.
18. "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah," *Hymns*, 1985, no. 83.
19. "The Lord Is My Light," *Hymns*, 1985, no. 89.
20. "Lead, Kindly Light," *Hymns*, 1985, no. 97.
21. "Jesus, Savior, Pilot Me," *Hymns*, 1985, no. 104.
22. "God Loved Us, So He Sent His Son," *Hymns*, 1985, no. 187.

23. "I'm Trying to Be Like Jesus," *Songbook*, 78–79.

24. "Jesus Once Was a Little Child," *Songbook*, 55.

25. Thomas S. Monson, "Windows," *Ensign*, November 1989, 69.

26. Susan W. Tanner, "Steadfast in Our Covenants," *Ensign*, May 2003, 102.

27. "I Need Thee Every Hour," *Hymns*, 1985, no. 98.

28. As paraphrased from students in class.

29. See D&C 64:9.

30. Howard W. Hunter, "What Manner of Men Ought Ye to Be?" *Ensign*, May 1994, 64.

31. See Alma 37:6.

32. "God Loved Us, So He Sent His Son," *Hymns*, 1985, no. 187.