

## “What Seek Ye?”

L. TOM PERRY

We read from the book of John the account of the baptism of our Savior and the remarkable manifestations that followed this significant event. The scriptures record:

*Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples;*

*And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!*

*And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.*

*Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? [John 1:35–38]*

What a wonderful sight to behold as I look into so many faces today. You seem happy and eager with the prospects ahead of you this week. As I looked at the program for this exciting week’s schedule of activities, I saw the title on the front page, “What Seek Ye?” It brought to mind many questions. How soul-searching will you make this week? How deep will you be willing to probe? What will you seek this day? What will you seek here this week? Will you seek self-renewal and rejuvenation in your stay on the campus these next few days?

The thirteenth article of faith tells us, “If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.”

What seek ye intellectually, in talents, in skills? What seek ye in knowledge, in wisdom, in mental and emotional stability, in peace of mind? We must be here seeking something that will better our lives, that will improve our talents, our abilities, our knowledge, that will make life sweeter and more meaningful for us. Otherwise, we would not have made the effort to gather and spend time at this institution.

Within the Church there is a place for all truth—for everything that is praiseworthy, virtuous, lovely, or of good report. We are taught “to look with unwavering confidence for other revelation, truths yet to be added, glories grander than have yet been made known, eternities of powers, dominions, and progress, beyond the mind of man to conceive or the soul to contain” (James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith* [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1924], p. 430).

The Prophet Joseph Smith said:

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*L. Tom Perry was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when this devotional address was given at Brigham Young University on 21 August 1984.*

*We consider that God has created man with a mind capable of instruction, and a faculty which may be enlarged in proportion to the heed and diligence given to the light communicated from heaven to the intellect; and that the nearer man approaches perfection, the clearer are his views, and the greater his enjoyments, till he has overcome the evils of his life and lost every desire for sin. [HC 2:8]*

### **Our Changing Society**

What an exciting world we live in today! We have opportunities now that even just a decade ago we would never have believed possible.

The other day I sat in my hotel room in Auckland, New Zealand, and watched a young Mormon athlete, Peter Vidmar, win his gold medal for his performance on the pommel horse. I marveled and was fascinated and exhilarated by the world we live in today. Imagine sitting so far away on the other side of the world, enjoying events happening simultaneously at the Olympics being held in Los Angeles. It is stimulating, as well as overwhelming, to try to comprehend the changes just ahead of us in our society.

In his book, *Megatrends*, John Naisbitt says that we live in an information economy, an information society. In other words, we have shifted from an industrial society to one based on the creation and distribution of information. “No longer do we have the luxury of operating within an isolated, self-sufficient, national economic system; we now must acknowledge that we are a part of a global economy” (John Naisbitt, *Megatrends: Ten New Directions Transforming Our Lives* [New York: Warner Books, 1982], p. 1).

And so it is regarding the Church. We are no longer just a Wasatch Front or Utah or an American church. We are a global church, reaching everywhere.

What a challenge it is to keep pace with an everchanging world. I have been fascinated with computers for years, ever since I became

exposed to the punch card, the floppy disc, the microchip, the mainframe, the tape drives, the software and the hardware, and all that goes into their makeup.

### **Our Central Processing Unit**

Computers are designed to imitate the functions of the human mind. All computers do similar things. They receive data input, they process it according to instructions in a central processing system, and they produce a result, an output. In our minds it is automatic. In many ways the human brain operates like a computer, but on a higher level, with judgment and self-awareness. Our human computers, our minds, receive input from our senses—sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell. This data and the instructions as to what to do with it, are loaded in from sources such as schooling, other experiences, reasoning, and inspiration.

We store these data and instructions in our memory. They remain there until they are changed or erased. Our central processing unit examines the instructions and then brings the data back from our memory to be processed. The results will either be stored in our memory for future use, or the results will be used as output—speech, movement, insight, or solutions to problems.

Instructions which determine how our input data is processed are arranged in program patterns of thought or action, just as in electronic computers. When our human model is misprogrammed or misled, or receives false instructions, we produce bad output, usually to our harm. To correct the wrong program, we must clear out the register and lay out a new set of processing instruction which will produce a happier, more beneficial output. This is the process of repentance.

### **We Need Righteous Input for Righteous Output**

When we have processed the same kind of data over and over again with the same kind

of instructions, the actions involved become almost automatic. Righteousness or unrighteousness also become habitual through the things we see, hear, do, or think about continually. The old computer adage is certainly true that “garbage in produces garbage out.”

In terms of the gospel, we each possess a powerful, spiritual central processing unit, which may or may not operate adequately if it is troubled by a storm or bad static from our human processors. We can receive input from righteous sources or from evil sources. Our programming can be according to the Spirit and commands of God, or it can be from Satan. Our output can be righteous lives and actions which produce happiness and joy, and from which come blessings, or it can be misery, unhappiness, and condemnation that come from wrongdoing and wrong thinking.

The electronic counterparts of our mental computers will process mistaken data just as easily as correct data. We cannot have right or truly useful output in ignorance. Studying the holy scriptures provides righteous input, as well as programming instructions for righteous processing. Personal prayer produces a continual correction of error and opens the way for inspiration input to us from heavenly sources.

The words of prophets provide us with instruction and data. The whisperings of the Spirit can confirm that we are operating correctly.

### **We Must Program Carefully**

I remember vividly my first exposure to computer programming which taught me a great lesson. We were to computerize a swing at a golf ball and direct it toward a hole. We had to take into account all the factors to be certain our golf ball was programmed to reach the hole safely. We had to program the length of the stroke, the power of the swing, the type of ball we were using, the angle at which we struck the ball, the atmospheric conditions in

which the ball would take flight, and the type of terrain on which it would land.

I remember how I struggled with this problem. The first time I tried out my program on the computer, there was a swing at the ball, the ball took off into space and never landed again! I had to turn the computer off to get the ball back into the atmosphere. It was headed in a direction entirely out of control and away from its objective. I had to go back and, piece by piece, reconstruct the steps until I found the error and could change the course of the ball toward the hole.

### **It Applies to All Dispensations**

Lessons taught to us in the history contained in the Book of Mormon certainly illustrate this point. What we put into our system is exactly what comes out in our actions. History records in the sixth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi that there were no contentions or wars in Zarahemla, but the people still suffered.

*The people were afflicted, yea, greatly afflicted for the loss of their brethren, and also for the loss of their flocks and herds, and also for the loss of their fields of grain, which were trodden under foot and destroyed by the Lamanites.*

*And so great were their afflictions that every soul had cause to mourn; and they believed that it was the judgments of God sent upon them because of their wickedness and their abominations; therefore they were awakened to a remembrance of their duty.*

*And they began to establish the church more fully; yea, and many were baptized. [Alma 4:2–4]*

They had corrected their input. But then, only a few verses later, we see what begins to happen to the people.

*And it came to pass in the eighth year of the reign of the judges, that the people of the church began to wax proud, because of their exceeding*

*riches, and their fine silks, and their fine-twined linen, and because of their many flocks and herds, and their gold and their silver, and all manner of precious things, which they had obtained by their industry; and in all these things were they lifted up in the pride of their eyes, for they began to wear very costly apparel.*

*Now this was the cause of much affliction to Alma . . . and [the] elders over the church. . . .*

*For they saw and beheld with great sorrow that the people of the church began to be lifted up in the pride of their eyes, and to set their hearts upon riches and upon the vain things of the world, that they began to be scornful, one toward another, and they began to persecute those that did not believe according to their own will and pleasure.*

*And thus, . . . there began to be great contentions among the people of the church; yea, there were envyings, and strife, and malice, and persecutions, and pride. [Alma 4:6–9]*

What was their output as a result of their becoming so involved with the riches of the world? The people lifted themselves up in their pride, despising each other and turning their backs on the needy and the naked, and those who were hungry, and those who were thirsty, and those who were sick and afflicted.

### **We Have an Advantage over Computers**

Yes, what we put in is exactly what will control our output. Fortunately, we, as human beings and children of God, have a distinct advantage over computers. We can reason with our brain. We can adapt, we can change if we so desire. We can change that which might have been programmed that is not good. But once we are programmed, it is not easy to change. How much better then that we live our lives in such a way that we are programmed only with what the Lord would have us do. How important it is that we carefully screen and watch what we input into our brain!

It is the diseased minds of this world that produce immoral plays and movies,

disreputable literature, violence, crime, and corruption. How much of this can we absorb without having the same results come out in our actions?

What is the status of your spiritual data-processing system? Are you in control of the input, the instructions, and the output? Are you happy or unhappy? Are you moving toward higher goals or are you wandering through a wasteland of wrongdoing? Join the age of marvels and “power up” your spiritual processing system for righteous thinking, righteous doing, and happiness before the Lord.

### **What Do You Seek?**

Today we are gathered at the beginning of another Education Week at BYU. So again we ask the question, “What seek ye here?” Do you come here to seek strength to be obedient, to follow the commandments? Do you seek earnestly for the best gifts, always remembering the reason they are given—that we may be of greater service? Do you seek to be of greater service in the kingdom of God?

*[These gifts] are given for the benefit of those who love me and keep all my commandments, and him that seeketh so to do; that all may be benefited that seek or that ask of me. [D&C 46:9]*

Do you seek the assurance that the course you are pursuing in life is approved of the Lord? You can enter into the “rest of the Lord” while still in mortality if you can gain the peace of mind and heart that comes from knowing your pursuits in life are in complete harmony with God’s commandments, and you know without doubt that you have chosen the right way.

Do you seek help with the problems and decisions in your life?

*Behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall*

*burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.* [D&C 9:8]

Are you here seeking to become an instrument in the Lord's hands by seeking humility, meekness, and submissiveness?

Sister Pat Holland, newly called first counselor in the Young Women presidency, said,

*It was a long time . . . before I came to a path in my life where I understood the need to fully submit to the Lord's will. I think I was probably a mother with two small children before that became really clear to me.*

*I just can't underscore enough that loyalty to the will of God is the only way to fulfillment and peace.* [Church News, 15 July 1984, p. 4]

Are you seeking for happiness, contentment, peace of mind? Do you seek for physical well-being, good health, exercise? What seek ye in your home and in your family? What seek ye to accomplish in your family home evenings, in your family prayer? Do you seek for the good in others or look for the flaws that are so common in human beings?

Do you seek to be a good example? Do you seek for emotional stability by being understanding with others, patient, loving, and accepting responsibility for the direction your own life is taking? Do you seek to improve your relationship with God, and yet fail to improve your relationship with your neighbor?

What seek ye in the way of forgiveness among your family, your neighbors, your friends, your business associates? Can we forever reach out with a spirit of forgiveness to all?

Do ye "suffer the hungry, and the needy, and the naked, and the sick and the afflicted to pass by you, and notice them not?" (Mormon 8:39). Or do you look for ways to serve them?

Do you come here seeking to make your leisure hours more productive? How mundane or ordinary our lives would be without cultural

endeavors. Cultural arts are the spice of life. How we need to seek for the finer things of life to keep us on a higher plane—symphonic music rather than rock and roll, beautiful paintings rather than pornography, good literature rather than so-called adult magazines, exquisite needlework rather than idleness, educational programs on TV rather than sex and violence. What are we exposing our minds, our brains, to?

### **What Influences Do You Choose?**

Eventually we will become not only what we think, but what we watch.

*Unfortunately, too many people exist on a mental diet of television, motion pictures created to shock us, and publications designed to stimulate us. . . . Most of what we have available is "junk food" that leads to mental malnutrition and poor emotional and spiritual health. You can turn off the TV set, but you can't turn off television's influence.* [Denis E. Waitley, *Seeds of Greatness: The Ten Best-kept Secrets of Total Success* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1983), pp. 45–46]

On the other hand potential learning opportunities afforded us by television programming is unparalleled. Think what we can do in teaching gospel principles worldwide with satellites now available to us? Which do you choose?

The most beautiful melody has yet to be composed. The sweetest poem has yet to be written. The most magnificent sculpture has yet to be made. The most breathtaking sunset has yet to occur. The finest painting has yet to be painted. The most magnificent building has yet to be built. The greatest book is still forming in someone's mind.

### **Love One Another**

Are you here seeking great compassion and understanding for your fellowmen? Can we seek love and benevolence for our fellowmen? Benevolence embraces charity and love for

others. The Savior placed it second only to the love of God.

On one occasion, certain Pharisees came to Christ, tempting him with questions on doctrine in the hope they could entangle him.

Their spokesman, a lawyer, said:

*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.*

*And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.*

*On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. [Matthew 22:36–40]*

Do we seek for this love? We cannot have one without the other. Without love for one another, it would be impossible to please God. John the Beloved said:

*Let us love one another: for love is of God. . . .*

*If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?*

*And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also. [1 John 4:7, 20–21]*

### **This Land of Promise**

Did you come here seeking a better insight into ways you can help preserve and help build this great land of America, this land blessed above all others, a land of promise? The Lord has declared to us:

*Even a land which I have prepared for you; yea, a land which is choice above all other lands. [1 Nephi 2:20]*

Yes, a land especially prepared for the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ, a

magnificent land, truly a land of promise! We know the Lord has poured out his blessings upon this land with one great provision:

*And now, we can behold the decrees of God concerning this land, that it is a land of promise; and whatsoever nation shall possess it shall serve God, or they shall be swept off when the fulness of his wrath shall come upon them. [Ether 2:9]*

What seek ye to fulfill your part in preserving this choice land, in upholding law and order, in making your community a better place to live? Did you attend your mass meetings? Did you vote in the primary election today before coming to BYU?

Did you seek to study the issues, know the platforms, acquaint yourself personally with the candidates' beliefs and intentions? Are you seeking to be a participating member in this land of the free by making your contribution in your own special way in preserving the great blessings the Lord has given to us?

### **Are You Seeking the Spirit of God?**

What seek ye in spirituality? Do ye seek spiritual well-being, spiritual insight and understanding? Do ye seek for greater faith? Do ye seek an eternal perspective toward life's purposes? Do ye honestly and wholeheartedly seek for a true knowledge of the Lord's ways?

What seek ye in understanding the powers and workings of the holy priesthood, to know its blessings and its magnitude? Do we constantly make an effort to communicate with our eternal Father in Heaven? Do we seek him in humble, pleading, and yet gratuitous prayer? Do we pray often enough? Do we seek to have a prayer in our heart always?

Do we seek to understand his many, many ways of communicating with us, not only through prayer and inspiration, but through the messages of his prophets who are here today? Do we listen? Do we grasp the message? Do we *hear* the word of God?

Do we seek the spirit of God through fasting and prayer, by studying and pondering the scriptures, by reading as well as listening to the teachings of our prophets?

Do you seek for a greater understanding of the scriptures? Do you seek from the scriptures the blessings which are yours to receive? Do you seek for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in every aspect of your life—for direction in all things? Are you willing to be led by the Holy Spirit? Do you seek to magnify the light of Christ, the light that all of his children are born with?

*And the Spirit giveth light to every man that cometh into the world; and the Spirit enlighteneth every man through the world, that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit. [D&C 84:46]*

What are we doing with this light? What do we seek with it? Do we seek to stand before the judgment seat of Christ clean and pure, faithful and ready to face our Savior?

What seek ye on the Sabbath day? Will the promised blessings, temporal and spiritual, from the Lord be yours because you have sought always to keep the Sabbath day holy? Do you seek after a Christlike character, for personal integrity, for a good reputation, a reputation that will stand the test with Church members or nonmember friends?

#### **Are You Obeying the Commandments?**

Do you seek for an honest living, to be honest in all your dealings with you fellowmen? Are you seeking to pay all obligations? Do you seek to be in good standing with the Lord financially by paying a full tithe, a generous fast offering, a missionary contribution?

What seek ye in the way of a testimony of Jesus Christ, the Son of God? Do you seek to take upon yourself the name of Christ? Do you seek to make the Lord the center of your life? Do you seek to understand the Atonement, the great atoning sacrifice the Savior made for us

and the blessings that are ours, attainable only because of it? Do ye seek to live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God? Do ye seek to embrace the new and everlasting covenant? Do ye seek for the blessings of the temple for yourself and your spouse, for your children, for your ancestors?

How important it is to seek to live worthy of the temple recommend you carry in your pocket. How important it is to use it. This is our obligation as recommend holders, *not just an option we have.*

#### **Are You Seeking the Blessings of the Temple?**

Oh, what joy there is in temple attendance! While the Salt Lake Temple was undergoing remodeling, my wife decided one day to gather up some of the ladies in our condominium building and drive out to the Jordan River Temple to enjoy a session there. After completing the session, they came out of the temple to find the land being blessed with hard rain. As they drove out of the temple grounds, standing under the shelter waiting for the bus was a little, elderly lady. My wife stopped and asked her if she wanted a ride into the city. She immediately came forward. On the ride into the city they heard a most humble testimony of a sweet sister, who every day was taking the bus out to the Jordan River Temple, summer and winter, rain or shine, to accomplish her temple work. She was only eighty-four years of age. She possessed a spirit of enthusiasm for temple work which deeply affected the riders in the car that day.

I attended a touching and very heartwarming event recently on a trip to Tonga. We held a birthday celebration honoring the first anniversary of the dedication of that temple. I was so impressed with the people who gathered that morning as we sang a hymn and offered a prayer of thanksgiving to the Lord for having a temple in their land. I asked the temple president how the membership had responded to this new blessing in their midst. The statistics

he furnished were shocking. Each temple recommend holder in Tonga had attended an average of twenty temple sessions during the first year of its operation.

As you know, Tonga is made up of a group of small islands. Some Saints had literally paddled over from their island to come and stay two and even three weeks, sleeping on straw mats on a cement floor and cooking over an open fire to provide their nourishment while they fulfilled their obligation in the temple.

What seek ye in the blessings of the temple? Do ye seek for the great teaching of truths we can learn from no other place? What seek ye in developing a deep, rich, spiritual understanding of your purpose here in mortality? It is not enough to just think about good works, or desire them, or wish for them. We cannot simply sit back and pray for help and expect the Lord to answer our prayers forthwith. Spiritual growth, intellectual growth, stimulating our minds and our brains, all takes time and effort. But, oh, it is so worthwhile. It is not so much *when* we start seeking, but *how* we seek and *what* we seek.

### **You Are Never Too Young**

For example, Mickey Mantle, at age twenty, hit twenty-three home runs his first year in the major leagues. Golda Meir was seventy-one when she became prime minister of Israel. Mozart was just seven when his first composition was published. Ben Franklin was a newspaper columnist at the age of sixteen, and a framer of the United States Constitution at age eighty-one (*Reader's Digest*, June 1984, p. 99). Joseph Smith was a mere boy of fourteen when he began to seek after truth and found it.

You are never too young or too old to seek after the right things. I know most of us have a plan, well-defined, and have set some goals. Yes, we think about them, and often ponder them. We generally do seek after good things.

I was impressed with what Sharlene Wells, Miss Utah of 1984, said:

*Setting high goals is essential if you want to develop your potential. I go for anything I think I can accomplish. . . . The Lord has given everyone certain talents, and we have to realize that only by developing our own unique abilities will we be able to become like our Heavenly Father. [Church News, 1 July 1984, p. 10]*

She has a strong conviction, not only about the gospel, but about her self-development as well.

### **We Must Each Seek Our Own Guidance**

“What we obtain too cheaply, we esteem too lightly,” said Thomas Paine. Each of us must earn our own salvation and exaltation. We have this privilege through the Atonement of our Savior, Jesus Christ. No one else can do it for us. We must each seek for our own specific guidance. Seek for valiant testimonies of the truthfulness of the gospel. Seek for the good things in life. Let us not be so busy that the Spirit cannot enter into our minds and our hearts, and give us promptings and guidance, and the help we so earnestly want and need.

Let us not be so busy seeking after the things of the world that we forget to seek after the things that really count in eternal life. Let us listen to the still, small voice as we seek our Heavenly Father in our daily activities. Let us strive to live so honestly, so righteously, so devotedly and in tune with the Spirit that our earnest prayers will be heard. For “if there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report, or praiseworthy, we seek after these things” (Articles of Faith 1:13).

Now you have before you this glorious week! What effort will you be putting forth to store the right input into this great central processing unit the Lord has especially blessed you with?

Will what you experience here expand your vision, change your determination, open new opportunities, and develop within you a greater understanding of your personal worth?



I hope this week will “power up” your enthusiasm to seek after the good things, the eternal truths with which we have been so abundantly blessed. May our output from this experience reach out to dramatically affect the world in which we live for good.

Brothers and sisters, the gospel of Jesus Christ is true! God lives! Jesus is the Christ! Of this I bear solemn witness to you! The Lord has shown us the way to live. He wants us to seek after truth, to seek after our own testimonies, to know of a surety that he lives, and that he will be willing to help and guide our lives along the path to exaltation. He wants us to seek after the very best and stretch ourselves to do that which is for our eternal good. The Lord has given us a great promise:

*Verily, verily, I say unto you, as I said unto my disciples, where two or three are gathered together*

*in my name, . . . behold, there will I be in the midst of them—even so am I in the midst of you.*

*Fear not to do good, my sons, for whatsoever ye sow, that shall ye also reap; therefore, if ye sow good ye shall also reap good for your reward.*

*Therefore, fear not, little flock; do good; let earth and hell combine against you, for if ye are built upon my rock, they cannot prevail.*

*. . . perform with soberness the work which I have commanded you.*

*Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not.*

*. . . be faithful, keep my commandments, and ye shall inherit the kingdom of heaven. [D&C 6:32–37]*

I know this to be true. Once again, what seek ye here this day? In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.