

that you know are needed in your life now. The Savior said:

“Will ye not now return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you?

“. . . If ye will come unto me ye shall have eternal life.”¹²

I bear testimony that as you pray for guidance, the Holy Ghost will help identify the personal changes you need to make for full conversion. The Lord can then bless you more abundantly. Your *faith* in Him will be fortified, your capacity to *repent* will increase, and your power to *consistently obey* will be reinforced. The Savior lives. He loves you. As you do your best, He will help you. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Matthew 17:1–3; see also 1 Kings 17:1; Doctrine and Covenants 110:13.
2. Luke 22:31–33; italics added.
3. See Mark 14:27, 29–31.
4. Luke 22:56–62.
5. In Conference Report, Guatemala Area Conference 1977, 8.
6. In Guatemala Area Conference 1977, 9.
7. See Romans 10:17; Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 99.
8. See Ether 12:6.
9. Mark 4:14–20.
10. Helaman 3:35.
11. See Regional representatives' seminar, 6 Apr. 1984, quoted by W. Mack Lawrence, in Conference Report, Apr. 1996, 103; or *Ensign*, May 1996, 75.
12. 3 Nephi 9:13–14.

Elder Henry B. Eyring

Our promise at baptism to be a friend

Each year, hundreds of thousands of the children of our Heavenly Father come into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. For most it requires a great change in their lives. All of them have made a sacred covenant with great promises and with a solemn pledge to endure. That covenant is so important that our Heavenly Father described the blessing and the challenge to the prophet Nephi:

“And I heard a voice from the Father, saying: Yea, the words of my Beloved are true and faithful. He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.

“And now, my beloved brethren, I know by this that unless a man shall endure to the end, in following the example of the Son of the living God, he cannot be saved.”¹

The Savior warns that if we start along the path and go far enough and then fail and deny Him, it would have been better if we had never begun.²

I think of that each time I visit with new members of the Church. I get that opportunity often, across the world. I see their trusting faces, and often they tell me about some trial of their faith, and then, with urgency in their voices, they whisper, “Please pray for me.” At those moments I feel again the weight of the charge to each of us from the Lord’s living prophet. It is to keep the promise we made in the waters of baptism “to bear one another’s burdens.”³ It is to be a friend.

Friendship brings young man to the gospel

These words of President Hinckley energize me: “I hope, I pray, I plead with you, every one of you, to embrace every new member of the Church. Make a friend of him or her. Hold on to them.”⁴

President Hinckley can’t be there as a friend for every new member. But you can be there for at least one. All it takes is to feel something of what they feel and something of what the Savior feels for

them. Try to feel the heart of a young man, Nkosiyabo Eddie Lupahla, in Africa, writing about his friend.

"Two and a half years prior to my joining the Church in 1999, my good friend, Mbuti Yona, looked me up. We had been friends through grades 5 to 12, then [were] separated when we attended different [schools].

"Mbuti was baptized in April 1999, and four weeks later he visited me at home and introduced the gospel to me. Regardless of the rumors about the Church, I was impressed by the 'fellow Saints' who gave me a warm welcome on my first visit. It was this same Sunday that my friend introduced me to the missionaries. Arrangements were made to be taught. My friend was there for every discussion, and he kept inviting me to the activities. I really enjoyed being around people with the same values, interests, standards, and goals. It was during this same time period that I began attending institute [of religion]. It all seemed very natural: Thursday nights [5:30]—missionary discussion, followed by institute.

"I learned a lot in institute and especially enjoyed our class about how to achieve a celestial marriage. The first semester ended in May, shortly after I began attending, and I felt cheated. But I was fortunate enough to catch the second-semester class, Teachings of the Living Prophets. While in institute, I bought myself the four standard works and continued to learn and grow in the Church line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little. I was baptized September 17, 1999, by another friend I had made while attending institute.

"I am thankful for the institute program. It has not only shaped me, but it has also helped me qualify to become a missionary, which mission I started preparing for five months after my baptism. I have been blessed with many opportunities to serve and to teach prior to my mission.

"I am thankful for my friend. I hope he realizes what he has done for me. We have both served missions, I to South Africa Durban, he to South Africa Cape Town. All it takes is a friend to bring such a mighty change in one's life."⁵

Now, there seems to be nothing miraculous in that story. But there is a miracle of wisdom beyond human capacity.

Perhaps because Mbuti had walked the path himself or perhaps by revelation, he knew what his friend would have to do to endure. And so he knew how to lift and help.

He introduced his friend to the missionaries. He saw that his friend was baptized and received the gift of the Holy Ghost. He took his friend, even before baptism, to where he would study the scriptures and thus be nurtured by the good word of God. Even before baptism he helped his friend discover this promise: "Wherefore, I said unto you, feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do."⁶ The words must have told him to buy scriptures, which he did.

Holy Ghost gives direction, brings change

At baptism, Brother Lupahla received the gift of the Holy Ghost to serve as his constant companion as long as he invited it and lived worthy of it. That assured him of another promise: "For behold, again I say unto you that if ye will enter in by the way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do."⁷ The Holy Ghost must have told him to begin to prepare for a mission, which he did.

We do not know which friends went with him to his sacrament meetings both before and after baptism, but some must have greeted him warmly, as they did on his first visit. There he renewed his covenant to always remember the Savior, to keep His commandments, and to receive

again the promise of the companionship of the Holy Ghost. We don't know what part his friends had in his calls to serve and to speak. But we can be sure that they thanked him and told him when they felt the Spirit in his service and in his teaching.

We can know something of his private life. Remember that he wrote that he continued to learn. He wrote that he grew in the Church line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little. He said that he had been shaped by his experiences in the Church Educational System institute. We know from the scriptures what caused those changes in him. He had to be praying with faith in the Savior. He was receiving testimony and directions through the Spirit. And then he was not only doing what he was inspired to do but he was asking God to let the Atonement work in his life.

Nephi, describing that miracle of change and what brings it, said this:

"And now, my beloved brethren, I perceive that ye ponder still in your hearts; and it grieveth me that I must speak concerning this thing. For if ye would hearken unto the Spirit which teacheth a man to pray ye would know that ye must pray; for the evil spirit teacheth not a man to pray, but teacheth him that he must not pray.

"But behold, I say unto you that ye must pray always, and not faint; that ye must not perform any thing unto the Lord save in the first place ye shall pray unto the Father in the name of Christ, that he will consecrate thy performance unto thee, that thy performance may be for the welfare of thy soul."⁸

The Holy Ghost is a comforter and a guide. But it is also a cleansing agent. That is why service in the kingdom is so crucial to enduring. When we are called to serve, we can pray for the Holy Ghost to be our companion with assurance it will come. When we ask in faith, a change can come in our natures both for the welfare of our souls and to strengthen us for the tests we all must face.

New members must choose to live gospel

There are limits on what friends can do to help the ones who must endure. It is the new members who must pray. It is they who must rely on the strength they will receive in answers to their prayers. They must choose for themselves in faith to be baptized, trusting in their perfect friend, the Savior. They must choose in faith in Him to repent, to be humble and contrite.

They must choose to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. The words of confirmation into the Church are an invitation: "Receive the Holy Ghost." And that choice must be made not once, but every day, every hour, every minute. Even when the Holy Ghost comes and inspires them what they should do, doing it or not is a choice. Even when they read the scriptures regularly, it takes a choice to "feast upon the words of Christ." And even the feast is not nourishing without a choice to do what the words of Christ tell them to do. With faith and obedience practiced long enough, the Holy Ghost becomes a constant companion, our natures change, and endurance becomes certain.

How true friends help new members

The member must make the choices, but the true friend is vital. There are important ways for us to share the new member's burden that it may be bearable. We can love, listen, show, and testify.

Love as Christ loves

First, we must love them. That is what the Savior does. We can do it with Him and for Him. He showed us the way in His mortal ministry. He taught by precept and example that we are to love His disciples.

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

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

“Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command 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.”⁹

The Savior watches over the struggling member as a friend. He laid down His life for all of us. He loves us and will grant us, if we are faithful, the gift of feeling a part of His love for them. I have at times been blessed by the Holy Ghost to sense the Savior’s love for a struggling new member. I know for myself that is possible.

Listen with understanding

Second, we must listen to the new member with understanding and empathy. That also will take spiritual gifts, since our experience will rarely parallel theirs. It will not be enough to say, “I understand how you feel,” unless we do. But the Savior does. He is prepared to help you be a friend who understands even those you have just met, if you ask in faith. Before He was born, prophets knew what He would do to be able to help you be a friend for Him:

“And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people.

“And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities.”¹⁰

Set an example

Third, we must be an example for the new member. We can feast upon the word of God. We can ask for and live for the companionship of the Holy Ghost. We

can be obedient out of our faith in Jesus Christ. And in time we can become an example of a disciple who is born again through the Atonement. It may be gradual. It may be hard for us to discern in ourselves. But it will be real. And it will give hope to the new member and to all those we befriend on the path to eternal life.

Testify of gospel truths

Fourth, we must testify of the truth to the new member. It must be sincere, and it is best when it is simple. It is most helpful when it is about the reality and mission of the Savior, about our Heavenly Father’s love, and of the gifts and companionship of the Holy Ghost. And it is essential to testify that the Father and the Son appeared to the young Joseph Smith and that the full gospel and the true Church have been restored by heavenly messengers. The Holy Ghost will confirm those simple declarations as truth.

The new member will need that confirmation again and again, even when we are not there to testify. Should they choose to reject the companionship of the Holy Ghost, he or she will not endure. But that is true for all of us, wherever we are and however faithful we have been. All of us will be tested. And all of us need true friends to love us, to listen to us, to show us the way, and to testify of truth to us so that we may retain the companionship of the Holy Ghost. You must be such a true friend.

True friends may bless generations

I can still remember, as if it were today, friends who touched my life for good long ago. They are gone, but the memory of their love, example, faith, and testimony still lifts me. And your friendship to even one new member may, in this life and in the next, cause hundreds or even thousands of their ancestors and their descendants to call you blessed.

This is the true Church of Jesus Christ. He lives. He loves you, and He loves those whom you must serve and who will become your true friends forever.

In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. 2 Nephi 31:15–16.
2. See 2 Nephi 31:14; Doctrine and Covenants 40:1–3; 41:5–6.

3. Mosiah 18:8.
4. Meeting, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, 2 Aug. 1998.
5. Personal correspondence.
6. 2 Nephi 32:3.
7. 2 Nephi 32:5.
8. 2 Nephi 32:8–9.
9. John 15:12–15.
10. Alma 7:11–12.

Elder R. Conrad Schultz

Sneaker waves

In this world in which we live, things are not always what they appear to be. We sometimes are unaware of the powerful forces pulling on us. Appearances can be very deceptive.

A few years ago I had an experience with deceptive appearances where the results could have been tragic. My wife's cousin and family were visiting us from Utah. It was a calm summer day on the Oregon coast, and we were fishing in the ocean. It was pleasant, and we were having a good time catching salmon, when for some reason I turned around to see a huge eight-foot wave bearing down upon us. I only had time to shout a warning before the wave hit us broadside. Somehow the boat stayed upright, but Gary, our cousin, was thrown overboard. We were all wearing life jackets and with some difficulty maneuvered the boat, half filled with water, to where he was floating and pulled him aboard.

We had been hit by what is called a sneaker wave. It doesn't happen often, and there is no way to predict an occurrence. Later we found that up and down the Oregon-Washington coast, five people had drowned that day in three separate boating accidents. All were caused by the same sneaker wave, which for no apparent reason had welled up off the ocean surface. At the time we went out

over the bar, the ocean was flat and calm and gave no sign of any danger. But the ocean turned out to be very deceptive and not at all what it appeared to be.

As we make our way through this life's journey, we must continually be on guard and watch for those things which are deceptive and not what they appear to be. If we are not careful, the sneaker waves in life can be as deadly as those in the ocean.

“Faith obedience” is not blind obedience

One of the sneaky ploys of the adversary is to have us believe that unquestioning obedience to the principles and commandments of God is blind obedience. His goal is to have us believe that we should be following our own worldly ways and selfish ambitions. This he does by persuading us that “blindly” following the prophets and obeying the commandments is not thinking for ourselves. He teaches that it is not intelligent to do something just because we are told to do so by a living prophet or by prophets who speak to us from the scriptures.

Our unquestioning obedience to the Lord's commandments is not blind obedience. President Boyd K. Packer in the April conference of 1983 taught us about this:

“Latter-day Saints are not obedient because they are compelled to be obedi-