

Choose Ye Therefore Christ the Lord

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Sisters, it is a glorious doctrine to me that we can choose to give Christ *all* our heart—that we can choose to put our Savior and Redeemer at the center of our heart. In each of us, the restored gospel of Jesus Christ can be “written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.”

¹ We chose to follow Christ in our first estate. What joyful news it is that we can choose Him each day during our sojourn on earth.

As covenant women living in many nations, it is essential to have Christ at the core of our lives. In these “perilous times,” ² oh, how we need Him! He is the source of strength and safety. He is light. He is life. His peace “passeth all understanding.” ³ As our personal Savior and Redeemer, He invites us, one by one, with outstretched arms to “come unto him” ⁴ in the most personal ways. Sisters, when a woman accepts the Savior’s invitation, she is strengthened individually, and others are blessed through her righteous influence.

I believe when a woman chooses to have Christ at the center of her own heart, at the nucleus of her personal world, she brings the Lord into the core of her home and family, be it a family of one or a family of many. Wherever she lives and whatever her circumstances, as the *heart* of the home and the family, what is in each woman’s heart is reflected in the environment and spirit of her home.

While we were on an assignment in Japan, a Church leader invited us to visit his home. We were honored to have this opportunity but wondered what his wife would think of her husband’s last-minute invitation to bring visitors from Salt Lake City home. En route, the man telephoned his wife, giving her what seemed to me about 15 minutes to prepare for this unexpected company.

From the moment we stepped inside the front door, slipped off our shoes, and were graciously greeted by a young, soft-spoken Relief Society sister, I sensed a spirit of order, peace, and love. Little children scurried upstairs carrying their playthings. In this family of eight, with seven still living at home, it was clear what the family valued. Evidences of the Lord were all around—pictures of the Savior on the wall, a family photograph and picture of the temple in a prominent place, copies of well-used scriptures and Church videos neatly stacked on a nearby shelf. “The fruit of the Spirit, ... love, joy, peace, ... gentleness, goodness, faith,” ⁵ seemed to reside in that home. I imagined the small room filled with children of all ages as parents sat around the low table to “talk of Christ, [to] rejoice in Christ, [to] preach of Christ, [to] prophesy of Christ, ... that [their] children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins.” ⁶ I sensed the answer the children in this home would give to the question posed by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland: “Do [our] children know that we love God with all our

heart and that we long to see the face—and fall at the feet—of His Only Begotten Son?”⁷ I believe the response to that question in this Japanese home would be a resounding *yes!*

When a woman chooses to have Christ at the center of her heart, she’s choosing not only to practice Christlike behavior each day but also to teach her family to do the same. And as you know, dear sisters, it’s in that daily business of practicing Christlike behavior that we have some of our greatest challenges.

One mother did her best to teach the steps of repentance in her home. Then came the day she helped her five-year-old son internalize the principles when she accompanied him to the store to account for a candy bar he had stolen. That experience is one the boy will *never* forget. He learned firsthand about taking responsibility for his actions. With fear in his heart, he returned the candy bar, offered an apology to the store manager, and promised never to steal again. I am pleased to report that he has kept that promise. I know—because I was the mother, and my son was the five-year-old.

Experiences like that come into every family, even when we work hard to ground our beloved children, grandchildren, nieces, and nephews in the gospel. “Trying to be like Jesus”⁸ does take practice, which then becomes habit. Choosing to make Christ the center of our hearts aids us in so many ways as we strive to teach others to put the Lord into their hearts. Sometimes we feel we are not making much progress, but on those discouraging days, I remember the comforting words of the Savior: “Be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work.”⁹

As we choose that good part and put the Savior in the center of our lives by praying daily for His guidance and help, God gives us “power and wisdom.”¹⁰ We are blessed with spiritual insights that can fortify our families. When Doug, the father of three small children, unexpectedly lost his job, unemployment benefits plus their small savings and some help from the extended family were the means of his family’s support. His wife, Lori, tried to be positive as they both took odd jobs to help cover their expenses. They continued doing all the right things—praying, reading the scriptures, attending the temple, and paying tithing. Yet in spite of hundreds of résumés and many inquiries, job interviews were few, and no job offer was forthcoming.

One day after almost six months of job searching, Lori called her mother. Tearfully and with some anger in her voice, she said: “I don’t think Heavenly Father is listening to us. I don’t think I can pray anymore. It doesn’t do any good.”

During that telephone conversation, inspired words and thoughts came to Lori’s mother as she bore her testimony and reminded her daughter of things she already knew: “Lori, you know better. You know that Heavenly Father loves you and is aware of your needs. But sometimes you have to wait. Perhaps this is your refiner’s fire. I don’t know. But what I do know is this: You need to go into your bedroom right now and kneel and pray, asking the Lord to comfort you and give you peace. Doug *will* find a job, but it may take a while longer. Remember all who love you and who are praying for you and who are helping you. You are very blessed.”

What Lori realized was that when she knelt down and prayed—because she was focused on the Lord—she redirected her thoughts. She brought the Savior’s love into her own life and into her home.

Dear sisters, I have felt the love of the Lord often in my life. On the good days and on those days when I have felt unequal to the challenges before me, I have turned to the Lord for help. I testify that He is *always* there, His merciful, loving arms outstretched to me and to you. With all my heart I declare that Jesus Christ is my strength.

He is my hope. He is my Savior and Redeemer. With you I say, “As for *me* and *my house*, we will serve the Lord.”

¹¹ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. 2 Cor. 3:3.

2. Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Times in Which We Live,” *Liahona*, Jan. 2002, 83; *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 72.

3. Philip. 4:7.

4. Omni 1:26.

5. Gal. 5:22.

6. 2 Ne. 25:26.

7. “A Prayer for the Children,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2003, 87.

8. “I’m Trying to Be like Jesus,” *Children’s Songbook*, 78.

9. D&C 64:33.

10. Alma 31:35.

11. Josh. 24:15; emphasis added.

