

the ongoing foundation of that Church, and bear witness that such offices and such oracles are at work now, under the guidance of the Savior of us all, in and for our very needful day. Of these truths and of the divinity of this work I bear witness. Of them I *am* a witness, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. *History of the Church*, 2:197.
2. Luke 6:12–13.
3. See Ephesians 2:19–20.
4. Ephesians 4:14.
5. Helaman 5:12.
6. Hebrews 3:1.
7. Helaman 5:12.
8. *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1853), 2:498.

9. *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 18, *The “Miscellanies” 501–832*, ed. Ava Chamberlain (2000), 89–90.
10. *The Complete Essays and Other Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Brooks Atkinson (1940), 75, 71, 80.
11. Louis Cassels, quoted in Howard W. Hunter, “Spiritual Famine,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1973, 64.
12. “Discourse by John Taylor,” *Deseret News*, Mar. 4, 1874, 68; italics added.
13. See Richard L. Bushman’s essay “A Joseph Smith for the Twenty-first Century” in *Believing History* (2004). These citations are from page 274, but the essay should be read in its entirety.
14. “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet,” *Hymns*, no. 19.

Elder John H. Groberg

The power of God’s love

What is it about true love that touches every heart? Why does the simple phrase “I love you” evoke such universal joy?

Men give various reasons, but the real reason is that every person who comes to earth is a spirit son or daughter of God. Since all love emanates from God, we are born with the capacity and the desire to love and to be loved. One of the strongest connections we have with our premortal life is how much our Father and Jesus loved us and how much we loved Them. Even though a veil was drawn over our memory, whenever we sense true love, it awakens a longing that cannot be denied.

Responding to true love is part of our very being. We innately desire to reconnect here with the love we felt there. Only as we feel God’s love and fill our hearts with His love can we be truly happy.

God’s love fills the immensity of space; therefore, there is no shortage of love in the universe, only in our willingness to do what is needed to feel it. To do this, Jesus

explained we must “love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, . . . soul, . . . strength, and . . . mind; and thy neighbour as thyself” (Luke 10:27).

Obedience helps us find lasting love

The more we obey God, the more we desire to help others. The more we help others, the more we love God, and on and on. Conversely, the more we disobey God and the more selfish we are, the less love we feel.

Trying to find lasting love without obeying God is like trying to quench thirst by drinking from an empty cup—you can go through the motions, but the thirst remains. Similarly, trying to find love without helping and sacrificing for others is like trying to live without eating—it is against the laws of nature and cannot succeed. We cannot fake love. It must become part of us. The prophet Mormon explained:

“Charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found

possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him.

“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love” (Moroni 7:47–48).

Feeling God’s love in times of adversity

God is anxious to help us feel His love wherever we are. Let me give an example.

A devastating hurricane

As a young missionary I was assigned to a small island of about 700 inhabitants in a remote area of the South Pacific. To me the heat was oppressive, the mosquitoes were terrible, the mud was everywhere, the language was impossible, and the food was—well, “different.”

After a few months our island was struck by a powerful hurricane. The devastation was massive. Crops were ruined, lives were lost, housing was blown away, and the telegraph station—our only link to the outside world—was destroyed. A small government boat normally came every month or two, so we rationed our food to last four or five weeks, hoping the boat would come. But no boat came. Every day we became weaker. There were acts of great kindness, but as the sixth and seventh weeks passed with very little food, our strength slipped noticeably. My native companion, Feki, helped me in every way he could, but as the eighth week commenced, I had no energy. I just sat under the shade of a tree and prayed and read scriptures and spent hours and hours pondering the things of eternity.

Feeling the depth of God’s love

The ninth week began with little outward change. However, there was a great inward change. I felt the Lord’s love more deeply than ever before and learned firsthand that His love “is the most desirable

above all things . . . yea, and the most joyous to the soul” (1 Nephi 11:22–23).

I was pretty much skin and bones by now. I remember watching, with deep reverence, my heart beating, my lungs breathing, and thinking what a marvelous body God has created to house our equally marvelous spirit! The thought of a permanent union of these two elements, made possible through the Savior’s love, atoning sacrifice, and Resurrection, was so inspiring and satisfying that any physical discomfort faded into oblivion.

When we understand who God is, who we are, how He loves us, and what His plan is for us, fear evaporates. When we get the tiniest glimpse of these truths, our concern over worldly things vanishes. To think we actually fall for Satan’s lies that power, fame, or wealth is important is truly laughable—or would be were it not so sad.

I learned that just as rockets must overcome the pull of gravity to roar into space, so we must overcome the pull of the world to soar into the eternal realms of understanding and love. I realized my mortal life might end there, but there was no panic. I knew life would continue, and whether here or there didn’t really matter. What did matter was how much love I had in my heart. I knew I needed more! I knew that our joy now and forever is inextricably tied to our capacity to love.

Being transformed by God’s love

As these thoughts filled and lifted my soul, I gradually became aware of some excited voices. My companion Feki’s eyes were dancing as he said, “Kolipoki, a boat has arrived, and it is full of food. We are saved! Aren’t you excited?” I wasn’t sure, but since the boat had come, that must be God’s answer, so yes, I was happy. Feki gave me some food and said, “Here, eat.” I hesitated. I looked at the food. I looked at Feki. I looked into the sky and closed my eyes.

I felt something very deep. I was grateful my life here would go on as before; still, there was a wistful feeling—a subtle sense of postponement, as when darkness closes the brilliant colors of a perfect sunset and you realize you must wait for another evening to again enjoy such beauty.

I wasn't sure I wanted to open my eyes, but when I did I realized that God's love had changed everything. The heat, the mud, the mosquitoes, the people, the language, the food were no longer challenges. Those who had tried to harm me were no longer my enemies. Everyone was my brother or sister. Being filled with God's love is the most joyous of all things and is worth every cost.

The sacrament reminds us of God's love

I thanked God for this choice time and for the many reminders of His love—the sun, the moon, the stars, the earth, the birth of a child, the smile of a friend. I thanked Him for scriptures, for the privilege of prayer, and for that most marvelous reminder of His love—the sacrament.

I learned that as we sing the sacrament hymns with real intent, phrases like “How great the wisdom and the love” or “Dearly, dearly has he loved! And we must love him too” will swell our hearts with love and gratitude (“How Great the Wisdom and the Love,” *Hymns*, no. 195; “There Is a Green Hill Far Away,” *Hymns*, no. 194). As we sincerely listen to the sacrament prayers, phrases such as “always remember him,” “keep his commandments,” “have his Spirit to be with them” will fill our hearts with an overwhelming desire to be better (see D&C 20:77, 79). Then when we partake of the bread and the water with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, I know we can feel and even hear those most wondrous words “I love you. I love you.”

I thought I would never forget these feelings, but the pull of the world is strong and we tend to slip. But God continues to love us.

Power of true love knows no barriers

Several months after I regained my strength, we were caught in another violent storm, only this time at sea. The waves became so big they flipped our small boat over, throwing the three of us into the raging, churning ocean. When I found myself in the middle of a tumultuous sea, I was surprised, scared, and a little upset. “Why has this happened?” I thought. “I’m a missionary. Where is my protection? Missionaries aren’t supposed to swim.”

But swim I must if I wished to stay alive. Every time I complained, I found myself underwater, so it didn’t take long to quit complaining. Things are how they are, and complaining doesn’t help. I needed every ounce of energy to keep my head above water and make it to shore. Having earned my Eagle Scout Award, I was a pretty confident swimmer, but over time the wind and the waves began to sap my strength. I never quit trying, but there came a time when my muscles simply would move no more.

I had a prayer in my heart, but still I began to sink. As I was going down for what could have been the last time, the Lord infused into my mind and heart a deep feeling of love for a very special person. It was as though I could see and hear her. Even though she was 8,000 miles away, the power of that love came rushing across those miles and, penetrating time and space, reached down and pulled me up—lifted me from the depths of darkness, despair, and death and brought me up to light and life and hope. With a sudden burst of energy I made it to shore, where I found my shipmates. Never underestimate the power of true love, for it knows no barriers.

When filled with God's love, we can do and see and understand things that we could not otherwise do or see or understand. Filled with His love, we can endure pain, quell fear, forgive freely, avoid con-

tention, renew strength, and bless and help others in ways surprising even to us.

Partake of the Savior's unlimited love

Jesus Christ was filled with unfathomable love as He endured incomprehensible pain, cruelty, and injustice for us. Through His love for us, He rose above otherwise insurmountable barriers. His love knows no barriers. He invites us to follow Him and partake of His unlimited love so we too may rise above the pain and cruelty and injustice of this world and help and forgive and bless.

I know He lives. I know He loves us. I know we can feel His love here and now. I know His voice is one of perfect mildness

which penetrates to our very center. I know He smiles and is filled with compassion and love. I know He is full of gentleness, kindness, mercy, and desire to help. I love Him with all my heart. I testify that when we are ready, His pure love instantly moves across time and space, reaches down, and pulls us up from the depths of any tumultuous sea of darkness, sin, sorrow, death, or despair we may find ourselves in and brings us into the light and life and love of eternity. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir and congregation sang "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

Elder Dale E. Miller

True conversion brings peace, healing

Here at Church headquarters we hold many committee meetings, and early this year in one of those meetings, Elder Neal A. Maxwell was listening attentively to a presentation concerning the development of local leaders. Near the end of the meeting, Elder Maxwell asked, "Is there more that we can do to help bishops bring peace and healing to the Saints?" I was interested in knowing more of his concern, so just prior to his passing and in the privacy of his office, Elder Maxwell expanded on the doctrines associated with obtaining peace and healing. He gave encouragement to my sharing these remarks with Church members.

Elder Maxwell was and remains a wonderful example of selfless love. His concerns for others were bone deep, especially for those with physical and emotional pains. Walking out of his office, one could not help but be more committed to being Christlike. He set a standard for us all. He loved the Savior. He was indeed a true Apostle and disciple. We miss him.

He gave wonderful insights on how total peace and healing come only through full conversion of the soul. He commented on having learned years earlier from President Marion G. Romney concerning the steps to a complete conversion. He quoted from a 1963 general conference talk in which President Romney quoted the Savior's words to Peter: "But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:32). President Romney commented:

"It would appear that membership in the Church and conversion are not necessarily synonymous. Being converted, as we are here using the term, and having a testimony are not necessarily the same thing either. A testimony comes when the Holy Ghost gives the earnest seeker a witness of the truth. A moving testimony vitalizes faith; that is, it induces repentance and obedience to the commandments. Conversion, on the other hand, is the fruit of, or the reward for, repentance and obedience" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1963, 24; or *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1963, 1066).