

He also quoted the not-so-familiar statement of the Prophet Joseph Smith: “It is the first principle of the gospel to know for a certainty the character of God.” “I want you all to know Him, and to be familiar with Him” (*History of the Church*, 6:305).

Knowing God and becoming His friend comes with the conversion process. Enos found it. King Benjamin’s subjects found it. Alma found it. It is available to all who will repent and obey the commandments. This conversion is an intimate and intensely personal experience. It is about relationships. It involves awakening the Spirit of Christ, which is in all men and women (see D&C 84:45–46; 88:11). It involves awakening within us the feelings of the Holy Ghost, leading us to a testimony of truth. It involves receiving the Holy Ghost after accepting the covenant of baptism. The gift of the Holy Ghost guides us and comforts us in our discipleship, bringing us near to the Savior. The Savior,

in turn, is our Advocate with the Father, and through our faithfulness He will bring us to the Father to become joint heirs with Him (see John 14:6; Romans 8:17; D&C 45:3–5).

Prophets lead to peace and healing

We have a rich treasure of marvelous teachings and thoughts left to us by the holy prophets. They are truly God’s messengers leading His children to salvation and eternal life.

Their testimonies serve to strengthen our faith. Please listen to their words and testimonies. They will help to lead you toward peace and healing to your soul.

It is my personal witness that the Spirit of the Lord is real and unmistakable. I testify that the Father and the Son are knowable and love you. I feel that love through the power of the Spirit. Of these truths I testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Richard G. Scott

Peace of conscience and peace of mind

In these times of increasing uncertainty there is so much heartache, anguish, and suffering throughout the world that could be avoided by understanding and applying truth. For many, relief and happiness can come by understanding the relationship between peace of conscience and peace of mind and by living the principles upon which both of these blessings are founded.

God wants each of His children to enjoy the transcendent blessing of peace of conscience.¹ A tranquil conscience invites freedom from anguish, sorrow, guilt, shame, and self-condemnation. It provides a foundation for happiness. It is a condition of immense worth, yet there are few on earth that enjoy it. Why? Most often

because the principles upon which peace of conscience is founded are either not understood or not adequately followed. My life has been so richly endowed from peace of conscience that I would share insights on how it can be obtained.

Peace of conscience is the essential ingredient to your peace of mind. Without peace of conscience, you can have no real peace of mind. Peace of conscience relates to your inner self and is controlled by what you personally do. Peace of conscience can come only from God through a righteous, obedient life. It cannot exist otherwise.

On the other hand, peace of mind is most often affected by external forces such as concern for a wayward child, economic pressures, real or imagined offenses, deteriorating world conditions, or more to do

than sufficient time to do it. An unsettled mind is temporary, transitory.

Peace of mind is restored by resolving the external forces that disturb it. Not so with a troubled conscience, for it is unrelenting, ever present, a constant reminder of the need to correct your past mistakes, to resolve an offense to another, or to repent of transgression. Oh, a disturbed conscience can be temporarily masked by physical stimulation of the mind and body where one yields to the temptations of alcohol, drugs, pornography, and worse—all this at the cost of an increased appetite for false efforts to calm an aching conscience, with the risk of incurring unrelenting addictions. There is a better way to restore peace of conscience.

The ability to have an unsettled conscience is a gift of God to help you succeed in this mortal life. It results principally from the influence of the Light of Christ on your mind and heart. The Light of Christ is that divine power or influence that emanates from God through Jesus Christ.² It gives light and life to all things. It prompts all rational individuals throughout the earth to distinguish truth from error, right from wrong. It activates your conscience.³ Its influence can be weakened through transgression and addiction and restored through proper repentance. The Light of Christ is not a person. It is a power and influence that comes from God and, when followed, can lead a person to qualify for the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Ghost.⁴

It is well to remember that even with peace of conscience you can have temporary periods when your peace of mind is interrupted by external concerns. Your understanding of the causes can relieve much of the pressure they generate. As your personal life conforms to the teachings of the Lord, you can seek His help in resolving the troubling issues. Thus your faith in the Lord and in His teachings will yield peace of mind. Your efforts will be

stepping-stones to greater personal growth as Spirit-guided solutions are found. In addition, as they are resolved, such challenges can often bring blessings to others when their needs have caused the disturbed feelings in your mind.

In summary, you can regain peace of conscience by repenting of personal transgressions that cause you internal turmoil. Then peace of mind can be secured by resolving the external pressures that cause you temporary anxiety, worry, and distress. Yet try as you might, you will not find enduring happiness until, through repentance, you satisfy personally broken law to restore peace to a troubled conscience.

Principles for finding peace of conscience

Whether you are one who recognizes a need to repent and are finding it difficult to do so or one who wonders if you have repented enough to be fully forgiven, it may be helpful to review some fundamental principles upon which peace of conscience is founded.

Repent of sins

Broken law from sin or transgression causes anguish of mind and heart from an offended conscience. Knowing that all of His spirit children save His Only Begotten, Jesus Christ, would unintentionally or intentionally violate His laws, our Eternal Father provided a means to correct the consequences of such acts. Whether the violation be great or small, the solution is the same: full repentance through faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement with obedience to His commandments.

When needed, full repentance will require action on your part. If you are not familiar with the classic steps to repentance, such as *confession and abandonment of sin, restitution, obedience, and seeking forgiveness*, talk to a bishop or study a source such as President Spencer W. Kim-

ball's masterly work *The Miracle of Forgiveness*.

Forgive others

In addition to fulfilling those requirements, the return of your peace of conscience will be hastened by giving careful attention to another step that is sometimes not recognized. The Savior has made it clear that to receive forgiveness you must forgive others their offenses against you.

"I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men.

"And ye ought to say in your hearts—let God judge between me and thee, and reward thee according to thy deeds."⁵

"And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

"But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses."⁶

If as an innocent victim you have been seriously wronged, don't harbor feelings of hatred, anger at what appears to be unjust. Forgive the offender even when you are innocent. To do that may require an enormous effort on your part. Such forgiveness is most difficult, but it is the sure path to peace and healing. If there is discipline required for a serious transgression against you, leave that to the Church and civil authorities. Don't burden your own life with thoughts of retribution. The Lord's mill of justice grinds slowly, but it grinds exceedingly well. In the Lord's economy, no one will escape the consequences of unresolved violation of His laws. In His time and in His way, full payment will be required for unrepented evil acts.

Seek forgiveness through Jesus Christ

I testify that of all the necessary steps to repentance, the most critically important is for you to have a conviction that

forgiveness comes in and through Jesus Christ. It is essential to know that only on His terms can you be forgiven. You will be helped as you exercise faith in Christ.⁷ That means you trust Him and His teachings. Satan would have you believe that serious transgression cannot be entirely overcome. I testify that the Savior gave His life so that through repentance the effects of all sin can be put behind you, save the shedding of innocent blood and the denial of the Holy Ghost.⁸

The fruit of true repentance is God's forgiveness, which opens the door to receive all of the covenants and ordinances provided on this earth and to enjoy the resulting blessings. When repentance is full and one has been cleansed, there comes a new vision of life and its glorious possibilities. How marvelous the promise of the Lord: "Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more."⁹ The Lord is and ever will be faithful to His words.

A suggested way to come back

If you have a troubled conscience from broken laws, I plead, please come back. Come back to the cool, refreshing waters of personal purity. Come back to the warmth and security of Father in Heaven's love. Come back to the serenity and peace of conscience that come from living the commandments of God.

May I suggest a way back? You can begin alone and proceed at your own pace. I invite you to carefully study the Book of Mormon. There are many scriptures that show how others have overcome barriers to repentance. For example, Alma speaks to Shiblon:

"I was three days and three nights in the most bitter pain and anguish of soul; and never, until I did cry out unto the Lord Jesus Christ for mercy, did I receive a remission of my sins. But . . . I did cry unto him and I did find peace to my soul.

“And now, my son, I have told you this that ye may learn wisdom, that ye may learn . . . that there is no other way or means whereby man can be saved, only in and through Christ. Behold, he is the life and the light of the world.”¹⁰

From this scripture you can see that suffering does not bring forgiveness. That comes through faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to His teachings so that His gift of redemption can work its miracle. He invites:

“Behold, I have come . . . to bring redemption unto the world, to save the world from sin.

“Therefore, whoso repenteth and cometh unto me as a little child, him will I receive . . . ; therefore repent, and come unto me . . . and be saved.”¹¹

Apply what the Book of Mormon teaches you. Ponder the verses that speak of the Savior. Seek prayerfully to know Him. Ask your Father in Heaven to strengthen your faith in His Son and give you the power to obey His commandments. When ready, seek the aid of a caring bishop to help you complete the process of repentance. Then you can have peace of conscience and the assurance that the Lord has forgiven you.

Please come back. Don't wait until all is in perfect order. We will walk beside you. We love you. Please come back.

Forgive yourself after repenting of sins

Now if you are one who cannot forgive yourself for serious past transgressions—even when a judge in Israel has assured that you have properly repented—if you feel compelled to continually condemn yourself and suffer by frequently recalling the details of past errors, I plead with all of my soul that you ponder this statement of the Savior:

“He who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more.

“By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins . . . , he will confess them and forsake them.”¹²

To continue to suffer when there has been proper repentance is not prompted by the Savior but the master of deceit, whose goal is to bind and enslave you. Satan will press you to continue to relive the details of past mistakes, knowing that such thoughts make forgiveness seem unattainable. In this way Satan attempts to tie strings to the mind and body so that he can manipulate you like a puppet.

I testify that when a bishop or stake president has confirmed that your repentance is sufficient, know that your obedience has allowed the Atonement of Jesus Christ to satisfy the demands of justice for the laws you have broken. Therefore, you are now free. Please believe it. To continually suffer the distressing effects of sin after adequate repentance, while not intended, is to deny the efficacy of the Savior's Atonement in your behalf.

When memory of prior mistakes encroached upon Ammon's mind, he turned his thoughts to Jesus Christ and the miracle of forgiveness. Then his suffering was replaced with joy, gratitude, and thanksgiving for the Savior's love and forgiveness.¹³ Please, go and do likewise. Do it now so that you can enjoy peace of conscience and peace of mind with all their attendant blessings. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Mosiah 4:2–3.
2. See Topical Guide, “Light of Christ,” 290.
3. See Moroni 7:16.
4. See John 1:9; Doctrine and Covenants 84:46–47.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 64:10–11.
6. Mark 11:25–26.
7. See 2 Nephi 9:22–24; Alma 11:40.
8. Unpardonable: see Hebrews 6:4–8; Alma 39:6; Doctrine and Covenants 76:31–38; 132:27. Unforgivable: see Doctrine and Covenants 42:18.

9. Doctrine and Covenants 58:42.
10. Alma 38:8–9.
11. 3 Nephi 9:21–22.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 58:42–43.
13. See Alma 26:17–20.

The choir sang “Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel.”

President Monson

The choir has just sung “Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel.”

President James E. Faust

My dear brothers and sisters and friends, President Hinckley has reminded us that the “golden years” are filled with more lead than gold! That is why I am sitting down as I speak to you today. I am recovering from a slipped disk, which caused a pinched nerve in my back. I have been told that in time I can expect a full recovery.

I express my profound appreciation for the blessings that have come to the world through the magnificent service of our departed Brethren, Elders Neal A. Maxwell and David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Our loss is great. We welcome Brother Uchtdorf and Brother Bednar, men of strength and faith, into the sweet councils of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

A message of hope for those who suffer

I humbly pray this morning that I may be understood and not misunderstood. In an increasingly unjust world, to survive and even to find happiness and joy, no matter what comes, we must make our stand unequivocally with the Lord. We need to try to be faithful every hour of every day so

We are grateful to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they have provided this morning. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our concluding speaker at this session.

Following President Faust’s remarks, the choir will sing “Come, Let Us Anew.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder D. Rex Gerratt of the Seventy, and conference will be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

that our foundation of trust in the Lord will never be shaken. My message is one of hope and counsel for those who may wonder about the seemingly unfair distribution of pain, suffering, disaster, and heartache in this life. Some may ask:

“Why was I born with physical or mental limitations?”

“What did I do to deserve this heartache?”

“Why did my father have to suffer so much following a cruel, disabling stroke? He was such a righteous man and was always faithful and true to the Lord and His Church.”

“Why did I have to lose my mother twice—once to the ravages of Alzheimer’s disease and, secondly, to death? She was such an angel.”

“Why did the Lord let our little baby girl die? She was so precious, and we loved her so much.”

“Why hasn’t the Lord answered our prayers the way we wished?”

“Life isn’t fair. We know some people who have done some very bad things, and yet they seem to have everything they want or need.”