

21:17). That includes searching out those who are not with us and extending to them our love and fellowship. They stood with us in our first estate. They have made sacred covenants through baptism, and perhaps even in the temple. They now need our help.

I pray that each of us can think about our families and our friends and acquaintances who are not enjoying the full blessings of the gospel. Think about those over whom you have a responsibility because of your calling. Ask yourself, “What can I do?” Heavenly Father will guide you as you seek His help. Then go and search them out and invite them to return and enjoy full fellowship and the wonderful message of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. Let them feel your love and hear your testimony. Help them to recall the feelings that they once knew of the eternal truths that will make their lives full of joy and happiness.

May we be anxiously engaged in gathering in His sheep who have gone astray so they can be safe in the fold. He “who is mighty to save” (2 Nephi 31:19) is the Good Shepherd, and He loves His sheep. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

The choir and congregation will now sing “Come, Come, Ye Saints.”

Following the singing, we will hear from Elder Ronald T. Halverson of the Seventy, after which we shall hear from Sister Bonnie D. Parkin, Relief Society general president. Elder Donald L. Staheli of the Seventy will then address us.

The choir and congregation sang
“Come, Come, Ye Saints.”

Elder Ronald T. Halverson

“You can know as surely as I know”

A few weeks ago I was in a social gathering with a friend of many years—a friend who recently retired, is well educated, and has been very successful. He is recognized in his country as the leader in his field. As we sat next to one another at dinner, he turned to me and asked about the Church. This was somewhat surprising because I was aware that he, like many in the world today, had rationalized God out of existence. His question was earnest. It was apparently something he had been thinking about because it came without anything in the previous conversation that would have prompted it.

I responded by telling him of the Restoration—that God, the Eternal Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to Joseph Smith and that through him the priesthood and authority of God were re-

stored to the earth. I bore witness that I knew assuredly that what I had told him was true. There was a long pause as I watched him ponder what I had said. Then, knowing that he was internalizing what he had heard, I leaned over and said, “You can know as surely as I know that what I have borne witness to is true. If you will ‘ask God, the Eternal Father, . . . with a sincere heart, . . . having faith in Christ, [I promise you that] he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost. And by the power of the Holy Ghost [you] may know the truth of all things.’”¹

He continued to ponder. Unfortunately we were interrupted by the other guests and that precious moment passed, but I knew that in his heart he was still internalizing what he had heard and felt. And I hope that an opportunity will come

again, for there is so much more that I would like to share with him. I know that he, like thousands or millions of others in the world today, is content with life as it is. As Nephi stated, they have been pacified and lulled away “into carnal security.”² They have been steeped in traditions and taught by the precepts of men.

As I have reflected on that moment, I have asked myself the question “What is the reward for following the philosophies of men?” The answer seems clear: the philosophies die with their civilizations and are left in the dust of the past without hope of eternal reward. I felt my friend had been touched by the Spirit of the Lord. Our Heavenly Father never gives up on us.

How to know whether teachings are true

The Savior said, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”³ But we must have the desire to open the door, even if it shakes the very foundation of our past beliefs and way of life. And this applies to less-active members as well as those who are not yet members of the Church. I am reminded of the words of a hymn:

Know this, that ev’ry soul is free
To choose his life and what he’ll be;
For this eternal truth is giv’n:
That God will force no man to heav’n.
He’ll call, persuade, direct aright,
And bless with wisdom, love, and light,
In nameless ways be good and kind,
But never force the human mind.⁴

Our Father in Heaven will never take away our agency. We must seek after or desire to know our Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. There is a way by which all of us can know whether or not the teachings of Jesus Christ are true. As Jesus answered

the skeptics at the Feast of Tabernacles, He said, “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.”⁵

President David O. McKay said that this “is the most simple test to give knowledge to an individual of which the human mind can conceive. *Doing a thing, introducing it into your very being*, will convince you of whether it is good or whether it is bad. You may not be able to convince *me* of that which you know, but *you know it*, because *you have lived it*.”⁶

What is the Father’s will? “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints bears testimony to the world that the ‘will’ of God has been made manifest in this dispensation; that the principles of the gospel, the principles of life, have been revealed. [That] they are in harmony with the principles which Christ taught in the meridian of time”⁷ and that “through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.”⁸

Learn by the Spirit, not just the mind

We live in a day of rationalization; people want to discount spiritual experiences, and they deny themselves revelation. What happened to the seeking mind, the open mind, the inquiring mind—one seeking to know truth and knowledge? We tend to rely on our own rational powers. The Lord wants us to be sensitive to the Spirit, and He has given us a pattern:

“And again, I will give unto you a pattern in all things, that ye may not be deceived; for Satan is abroad in the land, and he goeth forth deceiving the nations—

“Wherefore he that prayeth, whose spirit is contrite, the same is accepted of me if he obey mine ordinances.

“He that speaketh, whose spirit is contrite, whose language is meek and edifieth, the same is of God if he obey mine ordinances.”⁹

Blessings of knowing God and His Son

Why is it important for us to seek to know truth?

Jesus, our Redeemer, just before He crossed the brook of Cedron and was betrayed by Judas, offered the glorious prayer of intercession. He prayed to the Father for us. He said, “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”¹⁰

To know God and His Son is eternal life. How can we learn to know God if we are unwilling to seek after Him and do His will? Eternal life is what we should desire more than anything else in this world.

One cannot study about Jesus Christ and His teachings without being affected and changed for good. As you develop a testimony of the Savior, you want to become like Him and to follow Him, and thus you enter the waters of baptism and make a sacred covenant with Him.

Our Savior is concerned for each one of us:

“Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God;

“For, behold, the Lord your Redeemer suffered death in the flesh; wherefore he suffered the pain of all men, that all men might repent and come unto him.

“And he hath risen again from the dead, that he might bring all men unto him, on conditions of repentance.

“And how great is his joy in the soul that repenteth!”¹¹

Because of His great love for us—a divine love—He wants us to experience the kind of joy that He, Himself, experiences. He said, “These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.”¹² He will bless us with a genuine peace—mentally, emotionally, physically, spiritually, economically—“not [a peace] as the world giveth,”¹³ but a “peace . . . which passeth all understanding.”¹⁴

As one complies with the will of our Father in Heaven, there will come spiritual, intellectual, and emotional growth and a reassurance through the Holy Spirit of Truth. That reassurance and joy can grow to a perfect knowledge. The Savior said, “If thou shalt ask, thou shalt receive revelation upon revelation, knowledge upon knowledge, that thou mayest know the mysteries and peaceable things—that which bringeth joy, that which bringeth life eternal.”¹⁵

Come to know God by doing His will

To the less active, to the honest in heart, to my friend, and to the good people of the earth, I invite you to awake out of complacency and foolish contentment and come unto Christ and do whatever it takes to earnestly seek truth, to know God, the Eternal Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ. For “this is the way; and there is none other way nor name given under heaven whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God.”¹⁶

I bear my witness that as you do His will, you will feel close to Him and begin to know what eternal joy is and that eternal life is attainable. You will know that He does exist, that He is our Father, who lovingly reveals to us the reality of the Atonement and the Resurrection and the divinity of this great work. To this I bear my humble witness, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Moroni 10:4–5.
2. 2 Nephi 28:21.
3. Revelation 3:20.
4. “Know This, That Every Soul Is Free,” *Hymns*, no. 240.
5. John 7:17.
6. “What Is Eternal Life?” *Instructor*, Mar. 1968, 97.
7. David O. McKay, *Instructor*, Mar. 1968, 98.
8. Articles of Faith 1:3.

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| <p>9. Doctrine and Covenants 52:14–16.
10. John 17:3.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 18:10–13.
12. John 15:11.</p> | <p>13. John 14:27.
14. Philippians 4:7.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 42:61.
16. 2 Nephi 31:21.</p> |
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Sister Bonnie D. Parkin

How has Relief Society blessed your life?

Looking back on his life, a man recently shared this tender story with me:

“When I was growing up, my father was less active in the Church. He struggled with alcohol—and in his darkest moods could become harsh and accusing. He normally didn’t object to Mom serving in the ward. She worked in Primary for 38 years, and during much of that time she also served in Young Women. She carried a heavy load. Her marriage was difficult, and I now know that she was discouraged at times, but I didn’t know it then.

“I didn’t realize until later that the sisters in our ward were her strength. She didn’t work in the Relief Society leadership, but she always attended the meetings, and she loved her friends there. I never thought of them as the ladies of Relief Society; they were simply Mom’s sisters. They cared about her and loved her. She had all brothers and all sons. She found the sisters she wanted and needed in our ward. I know she shared her feelings with them—feelings she couldn’t express anywhere else. None of that seemed ‘Relief Society’ to me then, but I understand now that it was.”¹

This son’s memory of Relief Society touched my heart. Yes, Relief Society’s members are women, but Relief Society does not bless only the women; it blesses each one of us.

How has Relief Society blessed your life?

I asked this question of President Hinckley. He responded: “Relief Society has blessed my family and the family of

my dear wife for some seven generations. Since the earliest days of the Church, our mothers and daughters have been taught of their obligations to those in distress. They have been schooled in the finer points of homemaking, encouraged in their spiritual development, and guided in the realization of their full potential as women. Much of this has taken place in Relief Society and has then been brought home to bless the life of each member of my family.”²

I have my own sweet memories of playing under my grandmother’s quilting frames as she and her Relief Society sisters stitched. I was young, but I knew that this was part of Relief Society—blessing the lives of others. I was mentored with love for Relief Society by my mother and my grandmother. I love Relief Society—I think I always have. Relief Society has helped me know the Savior and has strengthened my love for Him and my Heavenly Father. My belonging to Relief Society has provided me with many opportunities to learn, love, serve, and be filled with the love of the Lord in my life as I strive to keep my covenants, exercise charity, and strengthen my family.

So I ask again, how many ways has Relief Society blessed your life?

A fundamental part of the gospel

Visiting the Missionary Training Center in Brazil, I said to the missionaries, “Tell me what you know about Relief Society.” One elder said, “Casseroles!” Another added, “My mother and sister belong to it.” Finally, one declared, “It’s the Lord’s