

and spirit. In the Word of Wisdom, for example, the spiritual and physical are intertwined. When we follow the Lord's law of health for our bodies, we are also promised wisdom to our spirits and knowledge to our minds (see D&C 89:19–21). The spiritual and physical truly are linked.

I remember an incident in my home growing up when my mother's sensitive spirit was affected by a physical indulgence. She had experimented with a new sweet roll recipe. They were big and rich and yummy—and very filling. Even my teenage brothers couldn't eat more than one. That night at family prayer my father called upon Mom to pray. She buried her head and didn't respond. He gently prodded her, "Is something wrong?" Finally she said, "I don't feel very spiritual tonight. I just ate three of those rich sweet rolls." I suppose that many of us have similarly offended our spirits at times by physical indulgences. Especially substances forbidden in the Word of Wisdom have a harmful effect on our bodies and a numbing influence on our spiritual sensitivities. None of us can ignore this connection of our spirits and bodies.

We will receive a perfected body

These sacred bodies, for which we are so grateful, suffer from natural limitations. Some people are born with disabili-

ties, and some suffer the pains of disease throughout their lives. All of us as we age experience our bodies gradually beginning to fail. When this happens, we long for the day when our bodies will be healed and whole. We look forward to the Resurrection that Jesus Christ made possible, when "the soul shall be restored to the body, and the body to the soul; yea, and every limb and joint shall be restored to its body; yea, even a hair of the head shall not be lost; but all things shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame" (Alma 40:23). I know that through Christ we can experience a fulness of joy that is available only when spirit and element are inseparably connected (see D&C 93:33).

Our bodies are our temples. We are not less but *more* like Heavenly Father because we are embodied. I testify that we are His children, made in His image, with the potential to become like Him. Let us treat this divine gift of the body with great care. Someday, if we are worthy, we shall receive a perfected, glorious body—pure and clean like my new little granddaughter, only inseparably bound to the spirit. And we shall shout for joy (see Job 38:7) to receive this gift again for which we have longed (see D&C 138:50). May we respect the sanctity of the body during mortality so that the Lord may sanctify and exalt it for eternity. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

Fishermen gave warnings of the tsunami

On December 26, 2004, a powerful earthquake struck off the coast of Indonesia, creating a deadly tsunami that killed more than 200,000 people. It was a terrible tragedy. In one day, millions of lives were forever changed.

But there was one group of people who, although their village was destroyed, did not suffer a single casualty.

The reason?

They knew a tsunami was coming.

The Moken people live in villages on islands off the coast of Thailand and Burma (Myanmar). A society of fishermen, their lives depend on the sea. For hundreds and

perhaps thousands of years, their ancestors have studied the ocean, and they have passed their knowledge down from father to son.

One thing in particular they were careful to teach was what to do when the ocean receded. According to their traditions, when that happened, the “Laboon”—a wave that eats people—would arrive soon after.

When the elders of the village saw the dreaded signs, they shouted to everyone to run to high ground.

Not everyone listened.

One elderly fisherman said, “None of the kids believed me.” In fact, his own daughter called him a liar. But the old fisherman would not relent until all had left the village and climbed to higher ground.¹

The Moken people were fortunate in that they had someone with conviction who warned them of what would follow. The villagers were fortunate because they listened. Had they not, they may have perished.

Prophets warn and lead to higher ground

The prophet Nephi wrote about the great disaster of his day, the destruction of Jerusalem. “As one generation hath been destroyed among the Jews because of iniquity,” he said, “even so have they been destroyed from generation to generation according to their iniquities; and never hath any of them been destroyed save it were foretold them by the prophets of the Lord.”²

Since the days of Adam, the Lord has spoken to His prophets, and while His message differs according to the specific needs of the time, there is one consistent, never-changing theme: Depart from iniquity and journey to higher ground.

Prosperity can lead to wickedness

As people heed the words of the prophets, the Lord blesses them. When they disregard His word, however, distress

and suffering often follow. Over and over, the Book of Mormon teaches this great lesson. In its pages we read of the ancient inhabitants of the American continent who, because of their righteousness, were blessed of the Lord and became prosperous. Yet often this prosperity turned into a curse in that it caused them to “harden their hearts, and . . . forget the Lord their God.”³

There is something about prosperity that brings out the worst in some people. In the book of Helaman we learn of one group of Nephites who experienced great loss and slaughter. Of them we read:

“And it was because of the pride of their hearts, because of their exceeding riches, yea, it was because of their oppression to the poor, withholding their food from the hungry, withholding their clothing from the naked, and smiting their humble brethren upon the cheek, making a mock of that which was sacred, [and] denying the spirit of prophecy and of revelation.”⁴

This sorrow would not have afflicted them “had it not been for their wickedness.”⁵ If only they had heeded the words of the prophets of their day and journeyed to higher ground, their lives would have been dramatically different.

Solomon was left to his own strength

The natural consequence that comes to those who depart from the way of the Lord is that they are left to their own strength.⁶ While in the heat of our success we might assume that our own strength is sufficient, those who rely upon the arm of the flesh soon discover how weak and unreliable it truly is.⁷

For example, Solomon at first obeyed the Lord and honored His law. Because of this, he prospered and was blessed not only with wisdom but with wealth and honor. If he continued in righteousness, the Lord promised to “establish the throne of [his] kingdom upon Israel for ever.”⁸

But even after heavenly visitations, even after receiving blessings above all men, Solomon turned away from the Lord. Because of this, the Lord decreed that the kingdom would be torn from him and given to his servant.”⁹

The name of that servant was Jeroboam. Jeroboam was an industrious man from the tribe of Ephraim whom Solomon had promoted to manage a portion of his laborers.¹⁰

Jeroboam loses promised blessings

One day as Jeroboam was traveling, a prophet approached and prophesied that the Lord would rend the kingdom from Solomon and give ten of the twelve tribes of Israel to Jeroboam.

Through His prophet, the Lord promised Jeroboam if he would do what is right, “I will be with thee, and build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee.”¹¹

The Lord chose Jeroboam and promised remarkable blessings to him if only he would obey the commandments and journey to higher ground. After Solomon’s death, the words of the prophet were fulfilled, and ten of the twelve tribes of Israel followed Jeroboam.

After receiving such favor, did the new king obey the Lord? Unfortunately he did not. He set up golden calves and encouraged his people to worship them. He created his own “priesthood” by selecting whomsoever he would, consecrating them to be “priests of the high places.”¹² In short, in spite of the great blessings he had received from the Lord, the king was evil above all those before him.¹³ In later generations, Jeroboam was the standard by which evil kings of Israel were compared.

Because of such wickedness, the Lord turned away from Jeroboam. As a result of the king’s wickedness, the Lord decreed that the king and all of his family would be destroyed until not one was left. This prophecy was later fulfilled to the let-

ter. The seed of Jeroboam perished from the earth.¹⁴

The tragic cycle

Solomon and Jeroboam are examples of a great, tragic cycle so often illustrated in the Book of Mormon. When the people are righteous, the Lord prospers them. Prosperity often leads to pride, which leads to sin. Sin leads to wickedness and to hearts that become hardened to things of the Spirit. Eventually, the end of this road leads to heartbreak and sorrow.

This pattern is repeated not only in the lives of individual people but by cities, nations, and even the world. The consequences of ignoring the Lord and His prophets are certain and often accompanied by great sorrow and regret. In our day the Lord has warned that wickedness will ultimately lead to “famine, and plague, and earthquake, and the thunder of heaven” until “the inhabitants of the earth be made to feel the wrath, and indignation, and chastening hand of an Almighty God.”¹⁵

It is important to understand, however, that many fine and good people are affected by calamities of man and nature. The early Saints of this dispensation were persecuted and driven from their homes. Some lost their lives. But, perhaps because they had endured so much, they developed an inner strength that was a necessary preparation for the work they were yet to do.

The same happens in our day as well. Because we are not immune to calamities, we must learn from them.

Heeding the Lord brings blessings

While the scriptures show the consequences of disobedience, they also show what can happen when people listen to the Lord and heed His counsel.

When the wicked city of Nineveh heard the warning voice of the prophet Jonah, they cried mightily to the Lord, repented, and were saved from destruction.¹⁶

Because the people in Enoch's day were evil, the Lord commanded Enoch to open his mouth and warn the people to turn from their wickedness and serve the Lord their God.

Enoch set aside his fears and did as he was commanded. He traveled among the people, crying with a loud voice, testifying against their works. The scriptures tell us that "all men were offended because of him." They spoke among themselves of "a strange thing in the land" and a "wild man" that had come among them.¹⁷

Although many hated Enoch, the humble believed his words. They abandoned their sins and journeyed to higher ground, and "they were blessed upon the mountains, and upon the high places, and did flourish."¹⁸ In their case, instead of prosperity leading to pride and sin, it led to compassion and righteousness. "And the Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them."¹⁹

After His Resurrection, the Savior came to the Americas. Because of His wondrous ministry, the people's hearts were softened. They abandoned their sins and journeyed to higher ground. They cherished His words and sought to follow His example.

They lived so righteously that there were no contentions among them, and they dealt justly one with another. They shared freely of their substance one with another, and they prospered exceedingly.

Of this people it was said that "surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God."²⁰

Follow the prophets to higher ground

In our day we face a similar choice. We can foolishly ignore the prophets of God, depend on our own strength, and ultimately reap the consequences. Or we

can wisely draw near to the Lord and partake of His blessings.

King Benjamin described both paths and both consequences. He said that those who forsake the Lord will be "consigned to an awful view of their own guilt and abominations, which doth cause them to shrink from the presence of the Lord into a state of misery and endless torment."²¹

But those who journey to higher ground and keep the commandments of God "are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual; and if they hold out faithful to the end they are received into heaven, that thereby they may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness."²²

Choose to love God and love others

How do we know which direction we are headed? When the Savior walked the earth, He was asked to name the greatest commandment. Without hesitation He said:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

"This is the first and great commandment.

"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

"On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."²³

In these verses the Lord offers a clear way of knowing if we are on the right path. Those who journey to higher ground love the Lord with all their hearts. We see in their lives manifestations of that love. They seek their God in prayer and plead for His Holy Spirit. They humble themselves and open their hearts to the teachings of the prophets. They magnify their callings and seek to serve rather than be served. They stand as witnesses of God. They obey His commandments and grow strong in their testimonies of the truth.

They also love Heavenly Father's children, and their lives manifest that love.

They care for their brothers and sisters. They nurture, serve, and sustain their spouses and children. In the spirit of love and kindness, they build up those around them. They give freely of their substance to others. They mourn with those that mourn and comfort those that stand in need of comfort.²⁴

The pathway of discipleship

This journey to higher ground is the pathway of discipleship to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a journey that will ultimately lead us to exaltation with our families in the presence of the Father and the Son. Consequently, our journey to higher ground must include the house of the Lord. As we come unto Christ and journey to higher ground, we will desire to spend more time in His temples, because the temples represent higher ground, sacred ground.

In every age we are faced with a choice. We can trust in our own strength, or we can journey to higher ground and come unto Christ.

Each choice has a consequence; each consequence, a destination.

I bear witness that Jesus the Christ is our Redeemer, the living Son of the living God. The heavens are open, and a loving Heavenly Father reveals His word unto man. Through the Prophet Joseph Smith the gospel was restored to earth. In our day a prophet, seer, and revelator, President Gordon B. Hinckley, lives and reveals the word of God to man. His voice sounds in harmony with those prophetic voices of all ages past.

“I invite every one of you,” he has said, “wherever you may be as members of this church, to stand on your feet and with a song in your heart move forward, living the gospel, loving the Lord, and building the kingdom. Together we shall stay the course and keep the faith, the Almighty being our strength.”²⁵

Brothers and sisters, we are called to journey to higher ground.

We can avoid the sorrow and distress that come as a consequence of disobedience.

We can partake of peace, joy, and eternal life if we will heed the words of the prophets, be sensitive to the influence of the Holy Ghost, and fill our hearts with love for our Heavenly Father and our fellowman.

I leave my witness that the Lord will bless all who embark upon the paths of discipleship and journey to higher ground, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. “Sea Gypsies See Signs in the Waves,” CBS News, *60 Minutes* transcript, Mar. 20, 2005, <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2005/03/18/60minutes/main681558.shtml>.
2. 2 Nephi 25:9.
3. Helaman 12:2.
4. Helaman 4:12.
5. Helaman 4:11.
6. See Helaman 4:13.
7. See John 15:5: “Without me ye can do nothing.”
8. See 1 Kings 9:4–5.
9. See 1 Kings 11:9–11.
10. See 1 Kings 11:28.
11. 1 Kings 11:38.
12. See 1 Kings 12:28–30; 13:33.
13. See 1 Kings 14:9.
14. See 1 Kings 15:29.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 87:6.
16. See Jonah 3:4–10.
17. See Moses 6:37–38.
18. Moses 7:17.
19. Moses 7:18.
20. 4 Nephi 1:16.
21. Mosiah 3:25.
22. Mosiah 2:41.
23. Matthew 22:37–40.
24. See Mosiah 18:9.
25. In Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 96; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 72.

The choir sang “I’m Trying to Be like Jesus.”
