

understanding of who they are” (“Great Shall Be the Peace of Thy Children,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1994, 60).

Brothers and sisters, as a mother and a Primary leader, I know this work with children is not easy. Protecting, teaching, and loving children can be demanding, often discouraging, sometimes exhausting, and occasionally the fruits of our efforts are long delayed. But it is precisely because it is not easy to bring children to the Savior that we must come to Him ourselves.

As we seek Him and His Spirit to help us, we will see a miracle. We will recognize that our own hearts are changing and

we too are becoming “submissive, meek, humble, patient, [and] full of love” (Mosiah 3:19). We too will reflect the light of the gospel in our own countenance. We will come to understand these words of the Savior: “And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me” (Matthew 18:5).

I love the Savior and testify of His redeeming power for me and you and for our children, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir and congregation sang
“Now Let Us Rejoice.”

Elder Anthony D. Perkins

Snares of Satan

Children in pure faith proclaim, “We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.”¹ But sometimes youth and adults do not feel the power of this simple declaration.

Satan is the “enemy to all righteousness”;² thus he plants doubts about the nature of the Godhead and our relationship with Them. Jesus Christ prophesied that in the last days even the very elect would be deceived.³ Consider three examples of how Lucifer is “laying traps and snares to catch the holy ones of God.”⁴

The snare of false inadequacy. A faithful young person feels unable to meet the expectations of others. At home and school, she is rarely praised and often criticized. The popular media tells her she is not beautiful enough or smart enough. Every day this righteous sister questions whether she is an individual worthy of Heavenly Father’s love, the Savior’s atoning sacrifice, or the Spirit’s constant guidance.

The snare of exaggerated imperfection. An outstanding missionary feels incapable

of meeting the expectations of God. In his mind, this worthy elder imagines a stern Heavenly Father bound to irrevocable justice, a Savior capable of cleansing others’ transgressions but not this elder’s own, and a Holy Ghost unwilling to accompany an imperfect person.

The snare of needless guilt. A middle-aged woman is a devoted mother, a loving friend, a faithful Church servant, and a frequent temple patron. But in her heart, this sister cannot forgive herself of sins committed years ago that she has repented of and fully resolved with priesthood leaders. She doubts that her life will ever be acceptable to the Lord and has lost hope of eternal life in Heavenly Father’s presence.

Feeling God’s love

If you have any thoughts and feelings similar to these good Saints, I invite you to become as a little child and feel again “the great and wonderful love made manifest by the Father and the Son in the coming of the Redeemer into the world.”⁵ Childlike faith in the perfect love of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ will “divide

asunder”⁶ Satan’s snares of inadequacy, imperfection, and guilt.

Proverbs teaches, “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he.”⁷ May I suggest—in addition to consistent prayers, scripture study, and Church and temple attendance—five changes to your thoughts and heart to more fully feel the tender love of God.

See yourself as a child of God

First, see yourself as a precious child of a loving Father in Heaven. Our children with confidence sing, “I am a child of God, and he has sent me here.”⁸ Little children feel and know what perhaps you have forgotten. You are the beloved son or daughter of Heavenly Father, created “in his own image,”⁹ and of immense value—so much so that Jesus Christ gave His life for you.

God the Father is merciful and has infinite love for you despite your faults. Only the voice of Satan will cause you to feel of no value. In contrast, the Holy Ghost will cause you to feel “godly sorrow”¹⁰ unto repentance in a manner that fills you with hope of positive change.

When you feel worthless, “remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God.”¹¹ Refrain from repeatedly thinking or saying negative words about yourself—there is a clear difference between humility and humiliation. Identify and use your unique talents rather than dwelling on your weaknesses.

Place burdens on the Savior

Second, place your burdens on Jesus Christ. When you feel overwhelmed by expectations and challenges, do not fight the battle alone. Follow the example of small children, and drop to your knees in prayer.

Jesus Christ has commanded us, “Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not.”¹² Doubt, fear, and worry indicate we have taken all of life’s burdens and anxieties on ourselves. When plagued

by thoughts that you are inadequate, confidently say, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”¹³ Then as you “cheerfully do all things that lie in [your] power,”¹⁴ you can rest assured that the Lord will do the remainder and things will work out all right.

The Savior promised, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”¹⁵ As you “cast [your] burden upon the Lord,”¹⁶ you will feel the peace of the Spirit.¹⁷

Forgive yourself

Third, forgive yourself of sins and imperfections. Heavenly Father is not expecting you to become completely perfect in this life. He knew His children would make mistakes as they learned from experience in mortality. But “God so loved the world”¹⁸ that His plan of happiness provided a merciful Savior.

Jesus said, “I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men.”¹⁹ Start with yourself, and forgive others as well. If God will not remember our repented-of sins,²⁰ then why should we? Avoid wasting time and energy reliving the past.

To forgive yourself and others, you must trust the Atonement of Jesus Christ. The prophet Zenock prayed, “Thou art angry, O Lord, with this people, because they will not understand thy mercies which thou hast bestowed upon them because of thy Son.”²¹ Our Father in Heaven is saddened when we limit the power of His Son’s atoning sacrifice. As you exercise faith in Jesus Christ, you can have your guilt “swept away.”²² If guilt remains after sincere repentance, believe your priesthood leaders when they declare you to be worthy.²³

Have hope

Fourth, sustain hope of eternal life. If you imagine that your prior sins, character flaws, and poor decisions prevent you

from receiving all of God's blessings, consider the experience of Alma the Elder. Referring to his younger years as an immoral priest for the wicked King Noah, Alma admitted, "I myself was caught in a snare, and did many things which were abominable in the sight of the Lord, which caused me sore repentance."²⁴ Yet Alma's repentance was so complete and Christ's Atonement so infinite that Alma became a prophet and was promised eternal life.²⁵ As you do your best to be obedient and repentant, you too can receive a place in the celestial kingdom through the Atonement and grace of Jesus Christ.²⁶

Find joy

Fifth, find joy each day. One source of joy is service, for when you are busy helping others, you will have less capacity to agonize over your own shortcomings. The Savior wisely taught, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it."²⁷

You will experience greater joy in life as you eradicate adult-onset pessimism and substitute childlike optimism. Optimism is a virtue that allows us to see God's loving hand in the details of our life. A favorite hymn counsels, "Count your many blessings; see what God hath done."²⁸

I testify of Heavenly Father, who in great and wonderful love reaches out to each of His children. I bear witness of Jesus Christ, who is "mighty to save"²⁹ us from our inadequacies, imperfections, and sins. I bear testimony of the Holy Ghost, who will accompany the imperfect yet penitent soul. To you faithful and worthy Saints who struggle with latter-day snares of the devil,³⁰ "may God grant unto you that your burdens may be light, through the joy of his Son."³¹ In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Articles of Faith 1:1.
2. Alma 34:23; see also Acts 13:10; Mosiah 4:14; Moroni 9:6.
3. See Matthew 24:24; see also Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:22, 37.
4. Alma 10:17.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 138:3.
6. Helaman 3:29.
7. Proverbs 23:7.
8. "I Am a Child of God," *Hymns*, no. 301.
9. Genesis 1:27; see also Alma 22:12; Ether 3:15–16; Doctrine and Covenants 20:17–18; Moses 6:8–10; Abraham 4:26–27.
10. 2 Corinthians 7:10.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 18:10.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 6:36; see also Isaiah 41:10; Matthew 10:31; Luke 8:50; Doctrine and Covenants 50:41; 122:9.
13. Philippians 4:13; see also 2 Corinthians 12:7–10; Hebrews 11:33–34; 1 Nephi 7:12; 17:3; Jacob 4:7; Alma 26:12; Ether 12:27.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 123:17.
15. Matthew 11:28.
16. Psalm 55:22.
17. See Galatians 5:22; see also Doctrine and Covenants 19:23.
18. John 3:16.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 64:10.
20. See Doctrine and Covenants 58:42; see also Psalm 25:7; Isaiah 43:25; Jeremiah 31:34; Hebrews 8:12; 10:17; Alma 36:19.
21. Alma 33:16.
22. See Enos 1:3–8; see also Alma 24:10; 36:16–19.
23. See Marvin J. Ashton, "On Being Worthy," *Ensign*, May 1989, 20–22.
24. Mosiah 23:9.
25. See Mosiah 26:20.
26. See Titus 3:7; 1 Peter 5:10; 2 Nephi 2:6–8; 10:24–25; 25:23; Enos 1:27; Moroni 7:41; Doctrine and Covenants 138:14.
27. Mark 8:35; see also Alma 36:24–25.
28. "Count Your Blessings," *Hymns*, no. 241.
29. 2 Nephi 31:19; see also Isaiah 63:1; Alma 7:14; 34:18; Doctrine and Covenants 133:47.
30. See 2 Timothy 2:26.
31. Alma 33:23.