

the Lord would grant unto them a portion of his Spirit to go with them, and abide with them, that they might be an instrument in the hands of God to bring, if it were possible, their brethren, the Lamanites, to the knowledge of the truth” (Alma 17:9). Do we really want to be instruments in God’s hands? If so, our desire will permeate our prayers and be the focus of our fasts.

After losing his eyesight, my grandfather fasted and prayed that if he was to remain in darkness, the Lord would give him peace. He states that almost within the hour “my mind was enlightened and the cloud of darkness had lifted from me.” He could see again, not with physical eyes, but spiritual eyes. Later, Alma Benjamin Larsen was called to be a patriarch, where he served for 32 years. Like the sons of Mosiah, my grandfather fasted and prayed, and as a result, he was given the opportunity to bless thousands of God’s children.

Be receptive to promptings

We, like Jim Drinkwater and my grandfather, also need to be receptive to the promptings of the Holy Ghost, for when we desire to be an instrument in the hands of God, we can receive revelation. The prophet Alma the Younger tells us of revelations that he received: “I know that which the Lord hath commanded me, and I glory in it. . . . Yea, and this is my glory, that perhaps I may be an instrument in the hands of God to bring some soul to re-

pentance; and this is my joy” (Alma 29:9). Alma had received revelation of what to do.

I have a little book that I carry with me, where I record the inspiration and thoughts that I receive from the Spirit. It does not look like much, and it becomes worn out and needs to be replaced from time to time. As thoughts come to my mind, I write them down and then I try to do them. I have found that many times, as I have done something on my list, my action was the answer to someone’s prayer. There have also been those times that I didn’t do something on my list, and I have found out later that there was someone I could have helped, but I didn’t. When we receive promptings regarding God’s children, if we write down the thoughts and inspiration we receive and then obey it, God’s confidence in us increases and we are given more opportunities to be instruments in His hands.

In the words of President Faust: “You can be powerful instruments in the hands of God to help bring about this great work. . . . You can do something for another person that no one else ever born can do” (“Instruments in the Hands of God,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 115). God treasures those who help His children. I invite all of us to follow the counsel of the prophets and become instruments in the hands of God and be among His treasures because we have helped His children.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Keith R. Edwards

Approach suffering with focus on Christ

The Choir has sung “Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee.”¹ In the Book of Mormon, Nephi, speaking messianically, prophesies:

“And the world, because of their iniquity, shall judge him to be a thing of

naught; wherefore they scourge him, and he suffereth it; and they smite him, and he suffereth it. Yea, they spit upon him, and he suffereth it, because of his loving kindness and his long-suffering towards the children of men.”²

The great and exquisite suffering of the Savior was for us, to keep us from hav-

ing to suffer as He suffered.³ However, suffering is a part of life, and few will escape its grasp. Since it is something that each of us has gone through, is going through, or will go through, there is scriptural suggestion that we can learn spiritual lessons if we can approach suffering, sorrow, or grief with a focus on Christ. Anciently Paul wrote that our suffering may give us an opportunity to know the Savior better. Paul wrote to the Romans:

“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”⁴

Experience with injured son

Now, lest anyone go looking for hardship and suffering, that is not what is taught. Rather, it is the attitude with which we approach our hardships and trials that allows us to know the Savior better. Experience teaches us that suffering is one of life’s experiences that will come without seeking it. If I may use a personal example:

Some years ago when our first son was about a year old, I was the source of some seemingly unnecessary suffering. We were attending college, and one evening I had been playing with my boy on the floor. I left the room to study, and as I closed the door behind me he apparently reached for me, raising his hand up behind his head, and his finger went into the hinged side of the door. When I closed the door he suffered a rather severe injury to his finger.

We rushed him to the emergency room at the hospital, he was given a local anesthetic, and a doctor came in; he assured us that it could be repaired. Almost paradoxically, at that point the only thing my one-year-old wanted was to be held by his dad. As long as he could see me he resisted any efforts to bind him for the delicate surgery. When I left the room he

calmed down, and the doctor was able to proceed.

During the process I was anxious and would draw close to the open door and look around the corner to see how things were proceeding. Perhaps by some unseen sense, as I would peek noiselessly around the corner, which was located behind him and to the side, his head would come up and he would strain to see if I was there.

On one of those occasions, as I saw him with his arm pinned out from his side—his head arched, searching for his father—the thought came to my mind of another Son, His arms stretched out, nailed to a cross, searching for His Father, and to my mind came the words, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”⁵ What was a very traumatic moment in my life suddenly became very sacred.

Examples of those willing to endure

There is throughout the scriptures a line of men and women who always seemed to keep their focus on Christ—people who, no matter what injury or injustice life dealt them, remained faithful and willing to endure. I speak of Abraham, dispossessed of the land of his inheritance and commanded to sacrifice Isaac; of Joseph, who was sold into slavery by his brothers, imprisoned for honoring virtue and chastity, and left to linger in jail because of a thoughtless servant; of Ruth, widowed young and left destitute, yet constant and loyal to her mother-in-law; of all three Nephis, both Almas, and of course the Prophet Joseph.

Particularly notable to me is Nephi’s endurance. Continually receiving the wrath of his brothers, he was bound for four days on the boat coming to the promised land. He could not move, and on the fourth day, when it appeared that they were about to be swallowed up by the ocean, the brothers, fearing that they might perish, “loosed the bands which were upon [his] wrists, and behold they

had swollen exceedingly; and also [his] ankles were much swollen, and great was the soreness thereof.

“Nevertheless, [he] did look unto [his] God, and [he] did praise him all the day long; and [he] did not murmur.”⁶

Remember, though, that it was Nephi who recorded: “They scourge him, and he suffereth it; and they smite him, and he suffereth it. Yea, they spit upon him, and he suffereth it.”⁷ Nephi understood.

Although the purpose of the suffering is not always apparent at the time, the Prophet Joseph had a singularly spiritual experience as he lingered in Liberty Jail. The Lord comforted him:

“My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment;

“And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes.”⁸

“Know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good.

“The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he?”⁹

Appreciation for the Savior’s suffering

As we are called upon to endure suffering, sometimes inflicted upon us intentionally or negligently, we are put in a unique position—if we choose, we may be allowed to have new awareness of the suffering of the Son of God. While Alma tells us that Christ suffered all that any of us will ever have to suffer that He might know how to succor us,¹⁰ the reverse may also be true: that our suffering may allow us insight into the depth and magnitude of His atoning sacrifice.

As I have pondered that event with my own son so many years ago, it has provided new insights and perhaps even deeper understanding of the magnitude and magnificence of the Atonement. I have a deeper appreciation of what a Father was willing to allow His Son to go

through for me and for each of us. I had a new personal insight into the depth and breadth of the Atonement. I could not imagine that I would willingly have let my son suffer even in this small way; and our Father “so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.”¹¹

Although we have never discussed it, my son, too, would have the opportunity to appreciate the passage where the Savior explains, “Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.”¹²

Although I would not suggest that anything here can approach the holy Atonement, the scar on my son’s hand is continually before him, and he has the opportunity, if he chooses to take it, to use his scar as a reminder of scars in the palms of the Savior—suffered for our sins. He has the opportunity to understand in his own way the love the Savior has for us in willingly being scarred, bruised, broken, and torn for us.

Although suffering may provide insight, we must be careful not to compare but rather to appreciate. There will always be infinite differences between us and our Savior. His comment to Pilate, “Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee,”¹³ reminds us again of the willing and voluntary nature of His sacrifice. We can never endure the depth, the exquisite nature, or the magnitude of His suffering, “which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit.”¹⁴ But like Nephi, we can have a greater appreciation for that which He did, and we can feel His Spirit succoring us, and we can know the Savior in a very real sense, “and this is life eternal, that [we] might know” Him.¹⁵

I bear testimony that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world, that through His suffering and Atonement we can receive a remission of our sins and can gain eternal

life. I bear witness of His gentle and loving kindness. He is the Only Begotten of the Father and in all things did the will of His Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. *Hymns*, no. 141.
2. 1 Nephi 19:9.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 19:16–19.
4. Romans 8:16–17.

5. Matthew 27:46.
6. 1 Nephi 18:15–16.
7. 1 Nephi 19:9.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 121:7–8.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 122:7–8.
10. See Alma 7:11–12.
11. John 3:16.
12. Isaiah 49:16.
13. John 19:11.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 19:18.
15. John 17:3.

Elder Larry W. Gibbons

Belief in God as our Creator

As someone trained in medicine, understanding the complexity and the order and the harmony of the human body reinforces my faith in a Creator. I believe in God. I believe He created us.

The alternative to a belief in a Creator is to believe that life arose somehow spontaneously by accident. I do not believe that.

And if God created us, it is not logical that He would then leave us alone. It makes sense He would give us guidance. Some of this guidance has come in the form of what we call commandments.

Commandments are guideposts

Commandments are not given to burden or restrict us. Rather, they are guideposts from an all-wise Heavenly Father to keep us out of trouble, to bring us a fullness of happiness in this life, and to bring us safely back home to Him.

In a talk at Brigham Young University in 1994, Rabbi Harold S. Kushner said:

“I’m a traditional Jew, and I observe the biblical dietary laws. . . . I suspect most of you assume I go around all day saying to myself, ‘Boy, would I love to eat pork chops, but that mean old God won’t let me.’ Not so. The fact . . . is, I go around all

day saying, ‘Isn’t it incredible? There are five billion people on this planet and God cares what I have for lunch [and] what kind of language I use.’

“. . . I am not diminished by being told there are certain things I may not do because they are wrong. Rather, it enhances me.”¹

Elder Henry B. Eyring said it even better in the first worldwide leadership training broadcast: “The Lord has given us His standards of worthiness. He has not done it to keep us away from Him but to draw us to Him.”²

Brothers and sisters, keeping the commandments makes all the difference in this life and in the next. To be worthy of the celestial kingdom and the joy that is there, we must keep the commandments!

The only standard that makes sense for any of us is a celestial standard. In the Doctrine and Covenants we read, “For he who is not able to abide the law of a celestial kingdom cannot abide a celestial glory.”³ It’s that simple! But we do not have to wait to experience celestial joy. Living the commandments brings joy here and now.

Leaving the world behind

My fear is that too many of us are not fully committed to living all the commandments. These Saints are not willing