

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 fulness 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

to leave the world completely behind. They are holding back.

In the priesthood leadership session of a regional conference, we sang the hymn “Ye Elders of Israel.” The chorus contains a line “O Babylon, O Babylon, we bid thee farewell.”⁴ Following the singing, Elder Neal A. Maxwell spoke and expressed the thought that bidding Babylon farewell is actually one of our challenges, that too many of us like to keep a summer cottage there.⁵

We cannot keep one foot in the Church and one foot in the world. One reason is the world and the Church are rapidly diverging. We will lose our balance.

We know that “no man can serve two masters.”⁶ Some, I fear, are attempting to do what President Marion G. Romney described as trying to “serve the Lord without offending the devil.”⁷

The Savior taught: “Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.”⁸

How do we lose our savor? One way is when we stop being different from the world. Many in the Church are drifting in the direction of the world and looking and becoming more and more like the world. We must stop drifting.

Elder Robert D. Hales said: “As Latter-day Saints, we need not look like the world. We need not entertain like the world. Our personal habits should be different. Our recreation should be different.”⁹

In this day of moral relativism we must be prepared to take a stand and say, “This is right, and this is wrong.” We cannot follow the crowd! Now, I am not suggesting, of course, that we move to the wilderness and lock our doors. We can be in the world, go to school, go to work, join worthwhile community organizations, and so forth. But we must hold to the Lord’s standards.

Being “altogether” Latter-day Saints

I have a dear friend who is a respected physician. He writes a regular national article on health. Often his subject concerns nutrition. He has a problem. He loves doughnuts—delicious but not usually considered one of the world’s most nutritious foods.

To resolve this dilemma, he has come up with what he calls his 80:20 theory of nutrition. This theory says if you are very good 80 percent of the time, you can eat what you want the other 20 percent of the time.

Now, this may be all right in nutrition, but the 80:20 principle is not acceptable in such things as gambling, pornography, or honesty. Brothers and sisters, are we sometimes 80:20 members of the Church?

Consider the woman who keeps the Sabbath day holy, unless she needs something from the store. Or the man who is honest in all his dealings until he cannot resist the urge to exaggerate his tax deductions because it saves him over \$1,000. Or the father who is kind and gentle with his wife and children except when he has had a difficult day at the office.

Brothers and sisters, let’s sell that summer cottage in Babylon. Let us be not “almost” but “altogether” Latter-day Saints.

In Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 14:28, the Lord says: “Wherefore, settle this in your hearts, that ye will do the things which I shall teach, and command you.” I love that phrase “settle this.” Brothers and sisters, I pray that we are “settled.” There are precious blessings that come only from the complete yielding of one’s heart to God.

Safety in keeping the commandments

President Heber J. Grant said: “There is but one path of safety to the Latter-day Saints, and that is the path of duty. It is not a testimony, it is not marvelous manifestations, it is not knowing that the Gospel of

Jesus Christ is true, . . . it is not actually knowing that the Savior is the Redeemer, and that Joseph Smith was His prophet, that will save you and me, but it is the keeping of the commandments of God, the living the life of a Latter-day Saint.”¹⁰

Now, young men and young women, as you begin to set your priorities in life, remember, the only true security in life is living the commandments. Financial security and public position are hollow without righteousness. I promise you that.

You lived with your Heavenly Father in a premortal life. You were there with Him. Your spirit knows what it is like to live in celestial realms. You can never be truly happy in an uncelestial environment. *You know too much.* That is one of the reasons that for you, wickedness never can be happiness.¹¹ What a great thing it is to decide once and for all early in life what you will do and what you will not do with regards to honesty, modesty, chastity, the Word of Wisdom, and temple marriage.

Brothers and sisters, stay on the straight and narrow path. No, stay in the *middle* of the straight and narrow path. Don’t drift; don’t wander; don’t dabble; be careful.

Remember, do not flirt with evil. Stay out of the devil’s territory. Do not give Satan any home-field advantage. Living the commandments will bring you the happiest

ness that too many look for in other places.

As Elder Nelson taught this morning, this *is* the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This *is* His Church. The Restoration *did* occur! There is no reason to hold back.

I know that President Gordon B. Hinckley is the Lord’s prophet today. I am grateful to stand with him and thank him for his teaching, his leadership, and his wonderful example of strength. I know that God lives and is our Father. I testify that Jesus is the Christ. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. “The Human Soul’s Quest for God,” *Brigham Young Magazine*, Feb. 1995, 26.
2. “Standards of Worthiness,” *First Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 2003, 13.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 88:22.
4. *Hymns*, no. 319.
5. See *The Neal A. Maxwell Quote Book*, ed. Cory H. Maxwell (1997), 25.
6. Matthew 6:24.
7. “The Price of Peace,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1983, 6.
8. Matthew 5:13.
9. “Gifts of the Spirit,” *Ensign*, Feb. 2002, 17.
10. “The President Speaks,” *Improvement Era*, Nov. 1936, 659.
11. See Alma 41:10.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

Carolyn Rasmus’s conversion

Not long after our friend Carolyn Rasmus joined the faculty of Brigham Young University, a group of her new teaching colleagues invited her to join them on a Saturday hike in the mountains above Provo. Carolyn was not a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but she had felt particularly wel-

come in her new circle of associates. She eagerly joined them for the climb.

As the sun steadily rose, so did the hikers on the mountainside. Then, as the ten o’clock hour approached, the group began to find places to sit down. Carolyn thought, “This is wonderful. How did they know I needed the rest?” and she, too, looked for a comfortable spot to stretch out. But the participants seemed unusu-