

Finding Lasting Peace and Building Eternal Families

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It is the gospel of Jesus Christ that provides the foundation upon which we can find lasting peace and build eternal family units.

Our journey through life has periods of both good times and bad. Each presents different challenges. How we learn to adjust to the changes which come along depends on the foundation on which we build. The gospel of our Lord and Savior provides a sure and solid foundation. It is constructed piece by piece as we gain knowledge of the Lord's eternal plan for His children. The Savior is the Master Teacher. We follow Him.

The scriptures testify of Him and provide an example of perfect righteousness for us to follow. I have shared with the body of the Church at a previous conference that I have a number of notebooks in which my mother had recorded material she was using to prepare her Relief Society lessons. The notes are as timely today as they were then. One of these was a quote written in 1908 by Charles Edward Jefferson on the character of Jesus Christ. It reads:

“To be a Christian is to admire Jesus so sincerely and so fervently that the whole life goes out to him in an aspiration to be like him.

“... We may come to know him through the words he spoke, through the deeds he did, and also through his silences. We may know him also by the impression which he made first upon his friends and secondly upon his foes, and thirdly upon the general body of his contemporaries. ...

“One of the notes of twentieth century life is discontent [and trouble]. ...

“... The world is crying out for something, it scarce knows what. Wealth has come, ... [and] the world is filled with ... inventions of human skill and genius, but ... we are [still] restless, unsatisfied, [and] bewildered. ... [If we open] the New Testament [we are greeted by these words], ‘Come unto me and I will give you rest, I am the bread of life, I am the Light of the world, If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink, My peace I give unto you, You shall receive power, You shall rejoice’” (*The Character of Jesus* [1908], 7, 11, 15–16).

Men and women are shaped partly by those among whom they choose to live. Those to whom they look up and try to emulate also shape them. Jesus is the great Exemplar. The only way to find lasting peace is to look to Him and live.

What about Jesus is worthy of our study?

“The New Testament writers ... cared nothing for [Jesus's] stature, the clothes he wore or the houses he lived in. ... He was born in a stable, worked in a carpenter's shop, taught for three years, and then died on a cross. ... The New

Testament was written by men who were determined that we ... fix our eyes on [Him]" (*The Character of Jesus*, 21–22) with an assurance that He truly was and is the Son of God, the Savior and Redeemer of the world.

One of the Savior's parables, I believe, especially applies to our current day.

It is contained in Matthew chapter 13, where we read:

"But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.

"But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.

"So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?

"He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?

"But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.

"Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn" (verses 25–30).

That old enemy of all mankind has found as many devices as he can think of to scatter tares far and wide. He has found ways to have them penetrate even the sanctity of our own homes. The wicked and worldly ways have become so widespread there seems to be no real way of weeding them out. They come by wire and through the air into the very devices we have developed to educate and entertain us. The wheat and the tares have grown close together. A steward managing the field must, with all his or her power, nourish that which is good and make it so strong and beautiful the tares will have no appeal either to the eye or the ear. How blessed are we as members of the Lord's Church to have the precious gospel of our Lord and Savior as a foundation on which we can build our lives.

From the Book of Mormon in 2 Nephi we read: "For behold, again I say unto you that if ye will enter in by the way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do" (2 Nephi 32:5).

We must never let the noise of the world overpower and overwhelm that still, small voice.

We certainly have been warned of events that we will be facing in our day. Our challenge will be how we prepare for the events the Lord has said are surely still to come.

Many in our worried society understand that the disintegration of the family will bring only sorrow and hopelessness into a troubled world. As members of the Church, we have the responsibility to preserve and protect the family as the basic unit of society and eternity. The prophets have warned and forewarned about the inevitable and destructive consequence of a deterioration of family values.

As the world continues to watch us, let us be certain that our example will sustain and support the plan the Lord has designed for His children here in mortality. The greatest teaching of all must be done by righteous example. Our homes must be holy places in order to stand against the pressures of the world. Remember that the greatest of all the blessings of the Lord come through and are given to righteous families.

We must carefully continue to evaluate our performance as parents. The most powerful teaching a child will ever

receive will come from concerned and righteous fathers and mothers. Let us first look at the role of the mother. Listen to this quote from President Gordon B. Hinckley:

“Women who make a house a home make a far greater contribution to society than those who command large armies or stand at the head of impressive corporations. Who can put a price tag on the influence a mother has on her children, a grandmother on her posterity, or aunts and sisters on their extended family?”

“We cannot begin to measure or calculate the influence of women who, in their own ways, build stable family life and nurture for everlasting good the generations of the future. The decisions made by the women of this generation will be eternal in their consequences. May I suggest that the mothers of today have no greater opportunity and no more serious challenge than to do all they can to strengthen the [home]” (*Standing for Something: 10 Neglected Virtues That Will Heal Our Hearts and Homes* [2000], 152).

Now let’s look at the role a father plays in our lives:

Fathers give blessings and perform sacred ordinances for their children. These will become spiritual highlights in their lives.

Fathers are personally involved in leading family prayers, daily scripture reading, and weekly family home evenings.

Fathers build family traditions by being involved in helping plan vacation trips and outings that will involve all of the family members. Memories of these special times together will never be forgotten by their children.

Fathers hold one-on-one visits with their children and teach them gospel principles.

Fathers teach sons and daughters the value of work and help them establish worthy goals in their own lives.

Fathers set an example of faithful gospel service.

Please remember, brethren, your sacred calling as a father in Israel—your most important calling in time and eternity—a calling from which you are never released.

Many years ago at stake conferences, we would show a film clip to illustrate the theme of the message we were presenting. During the course of a year, as we traveled around the Church on our assigned stake conference visits, we became very familiar with the content of the film. We could almost quote it by heart. The message has remained in my mind over all these years. The film was narrated by President Harold B. Lee and gave an account of an occurrence in the home of his daughter. It goes something like this:

One evening the mother of the home was frantically trying to finish bottling some fruit. Finally the children were ready for bed and were settled down. It was now time to get to the fruit. As she began to peel and pit the fruit, two little boys appeared in the kitchen and announced that they were ready for their bedtime prayers.

Not wanting to be interrupted, the mother said very quickly to the boys, “Why don’t you just say your prayers alone tonight, and Mother will just keep working on the fruit?”

The older of the two sons firmly planted his feet and asked, “Which is the most important, prayers or fruit?” (See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Harold B. Lee* [2000], 143–44.)

Sometimes we find ourselves in situations when we have the opportunity to teach children a lesson which will have a

lasting effect on their young lives. Of course, prayers are more important than fruit. A successful parent should never be too busy to capture a moment in a child's life when an important lesson can be taught.

It is my firm conviction that there has never been a period in my many years of life when our Father in Heaven's children have needed the guiding hand of faithful, devoted parents more. We have a great and noble heritage of parents giving up almost everything they possess to find a place where they could rear their families with faith and courage so the next generation would have greater opportunities than had been theirs. We must find within ourselves that same determined spirit and overcome the challenges we face with the same spirit of sacrifice. We must instill in future generations an ever stronger reliance on the teachings of our Lord and Savior.

“And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall” (Helaman 5:12).

It is the gospel of Jesus Christ that provides this foundation upon which we can find lasting peace and build eternal family units. Of this I testify in the name of our Lord and Savior, even Jesus Christ, amen.