

"Come, Follow Me" by Practicing Christian Love and Service

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As the Savior's latter-day disciples, we come unto Him by loving and serving God's children.

Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel was in the hospital recovering from open-heart surgery when he was visited by his five-year-old grandson. As the little boy looked into his grandfather's eyes, he saw his pain. "Grandpa," he asked, "if I loved you more, would you [hurt less]?"¹ Today I ask a similar question of each of us: "If we love the Savior more, will we suffer less?"

When the Savior called His disciples to follow Him, they were living the law of Moses, including seeking "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,"² but the Savior came to fulfill that law with His Atonement. He taught a new doctrine: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you."³

The disciples were taught to turn from the ways of the natural man to the loving and caring ways of the Savior by replacing contention with forgiveness, kindness, and compassion. The "new commandment" to "love one another"⁴ was not always easy to keep. When the disciples worried about associating with sinners and certain classes of people, the Savior patiently taught, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."⁵ Or, as a Book of Mormon prophet explained, "When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God."⁶

As the Savior's latter-day disciples, we come unto Him by loving and serving God's children. As we do, we may not be able to avoid tribulation, affliction, and suffering in the flesh, but we will suffer less spiritually. Even in our trials we can experience joy and peace.

Our Christian love and service naturally begin in the home. Parents, you are called to be loving teachers and missionaries to your children and youth. They are your investigators. You bear the responsibility to help them become converted. In truth, all of us are seeking to be converted—which means being filled with our Savior's love.

As we follow Jesus Christ, His love motivates us to support each other on our mortal journey. We cannot do it alone.⁷ You have heard me share the Quaker proverb before:

Thee lift me, I'll lift thee, and we'll ascend together eternally.⁸ As disciples, we begin to do this when we are baptized, showing our willingness "to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light."⁹

"Teach[ing] one another the doctrine of the kingdom"¹⁰ is a way to love and serve each other. Parents and grandparents, we tend to bemoan the state of the world—that schools are not teaching moral character. But there is much we can do. We can take advantage of the teaching moments in our own families—that means now. Don't let them slip by. When an opportunity comes to share your thoughts about the gospel and the lessons of life, stop everything, sit down, and talk with your children and grandchildren.

We should not worry that we are not professionally trained gospel teachers. No training class or manual is as helpful as personally studying our scriptures, praying, pondering, and seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit will lead you along. I promise you: the calling to be a parent includes the gift to teach in the ways that are right for you and for your children. Remember, God's power to influence us righteously is His love. "We love him, because he first loved us."¹¹

Youth, you are some of our most effective gospel teachers. You come to church to learn so that you can go home to teach and serve your family, neighbors, and friends. Don't be afraid. Have faith to testify of what you know to be true. Think how full-time missionaries grow because they are faithfully living a consecrated life—using their time and talents and bearing testimony to serve and bless others. As you share your testimony of the gospel, your faith will grow and your confidence will increase!

Some of our most impactful Christian service is given by holding family scripture study, family prayer, and family council meetings. For more than a hundred years, Church leaders have called us to set aside uninterrupted time each week. But many of us are still missing the blessings. Family home evening is not a lecture from Mom and Dad. It is our family time to share simple spiritual concepts and experiences, to help our children learn to care and share, have fun together, bear testimony together, and grow and progress together. As we hold family home evening every week, our love for one another will grow stronger and we will suffer less.

Let us remember, the most important work we do in our families is through the power of the Holy Ghost. Whenever we raise our voices in anger, the Spirit leaves our companionships and families. When we speak in love, the Spirit can be with us. Let us remember that our children and grandchildren measure our love by how much devoted time we give them. Above all, don't lose patience and don't give up!

The scriptures tell us that when some of Heavenly Father's spirit children chose not to follow His plan, the heavens wept.¹² Some parents who have loved and taught their children also weep when their grown children choose not to follow the Lord's plan. What can parents do? We cannot pray away another's agency. Remember the father of the prodigal son, who patiently waited for his son to "[come] to himself," all the while

watching for him. And "when he was yet a great way off," he ran to him.¹³ We can pray for guidance about when to speak, what to say, and yes, on some occasions, when to be still. Remember, our children and family members already chose to follow the Savior in their premortal realm. Sometimes it is only by their own life's experiences that those sacred feelings are awakened again. Ultimately, the choice to love and follow the Lord has to be their own.

There is another special way disciples show their love for the Savior. Today I pay tribute to all who serve the Lord as caregivers. How the Lord loves you! In your quiet, unheralded service, you are following Him who promised, "Thy Father who seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly."¹⁴

I think of my neighbor whose wife was afflicted with Alzheimer's disease. Every Sunday he would help her dress for Church meetings, comb her hair, apply her makeup, even put on her earrings. In rendering this service, he was an example to every man and woman in our ward—in fact, for the world. One day his wife said to him, "I just want to see my husband again and be with him."

He answered, "I am your husband."

And she sweetly replied, "Oh, good!"

I cannot speak of giving care without acknowledging the special caregiver in my life—the Savior's special disciple to me—my eternal companion, Mary. She has given all in compassionate nurturing and love. Her hands reflect His gentle, sustaining touch. I would not be here without her. And with her, I will be able to endure to the end and be with her in eternal life.

If you are suffering deeply, with others or alone, I urge you to let the Savior be your caregiver. Lean on His ample arm.¹⁵ Accept His assurance. "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you," He promises.¹⁶

Brothers and sisters, if we have not fully done so yet, let us turn more toward forgiveness, kindness, and love. Let us renounce the war that so often rages in the heart of the natural man and proclaim Christ's caring, love, and peace.¹⁷

If "ye have come to the knowledge of the glory [and goodness] of God"¹⁸ and also "the atonement which was prepared from the foundation of the world,"¹⁹ "ye will not have a mind to injure one another, but to live peaceably. ... And ye will not suffer your children that ... they transgress the laws of God, and fight and quarrel one with another. ... But ye will teach them ... to love one another, and to serve one another."²⁰

Just before the Savior's Crucifixion, He taught His Apostles: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you"²¹ and "If ye love me, keep my commandments."²²

I testify that the Savior's true posture toward us is the one posed by the outstretched arms of Thorvaldsen's statue *Christus*. He continues to stretch forth His hands,²³ beckoning, "Come, follow me." We follow Him by loving and serving one another and keeping His commandments.

I bear my special witness that He lives and loves us with a perfect love. This is His Church. Thomas S. Monson is His prophet on the earth today. That we may love our Heavenly Father and His Son more, and suffer less, is my prayer. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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