

Let Doing Good Be Our Normal

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If we are steadfast and immovable in doing good, our customs will help us to stay on the covenant path.

I will always be grateful for my assignments in the Church that have taken me to live in different countries. We found in each one of these countries a great diversity and extraordinary people with different customs and traditions.

We all have customs and traditions that are personal, from our family, or from the community in which we live, and we hope to keep all those that align with the principles of the gospel. Edifying customs and traditions are fundamental to our efforts to stay on the covenant path, and those that are an obstacle, we ought to reject.

A custom is the practice or the frequent and habitual way of thinking for a person, culture, or tradition. Frequently, the things we think and do in a habitual way we recognize as normal.

Allow me to illustrate this: Patricia, my beloved wife, loves to drink coconut water and then to eat the coconut. During our first visit to Puebla, Mexico, we went to a place where we bought a coconut. After drinking the water, my wife asked them to cut the coconut and bring her the flesh to eat. When it came, it was reddish. They had sprinkled it with chili! Sweet coconut with chili! That seemed so strange to us. But later we learned that the strange ones were my wife and I, who did not eat coconut with chili. In Mexico, however, it is not rare; it is very normal.

On another occasion we were eating in Brazil with some friends, and they served us avocado. Just as we were about to sprinkle salt on it, our friends said to us, “What are you doing? We already put sugar on the avocado!” Avocado with sugar! That seemed so odd to us. But then we learned that the odd ones were my wife and I, who did not eat avocado with sugar. In Brazil, avocado sprinkled with sugar is normal.

What is normal for some may be odd for others, depending on their customs and traditions.

Which customs and traditions are normal in our lives?

President Russell M. Nelson has said: “Today we often hear about ‘a new normal.’ If you really want to embrace a new normal, I invite you to turn your heart, mind, and soul increasingly to our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. Let that be *your* new normal” (“A New Normal,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2020, 118).

This invitation is for all. It does not matter whether we are poor or rich, educated or uneducated, old or young, sick or healthy. He invites us to let the normal things in our lives be those which help keep us on the covenant path.

No country contains the totality of what is good or admirable. Therefore, as Paul and the Prophet Joseph Smith taught:

“If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things” (Articles of Faith 1:13).

“If there be any praise, think on these things” (Philippians 4:8).

Note that this is an exhortation, not merely a commentary.

I would like all of us to take a moment to meditate on our customs and the way they are influencing our families.

Among the marvelous habits that should be normal for members of the Church are these four:

1. Personal and family study of the scriptures. To become converted to the Lord Jesus Christ, each person is responsible for learning the gospel. Parents are responsible for teaching the gospel to their children (see Doctrine and Covenants 68:25; 93:40).
2. Personal and family prayer. The Savior commands us to pray always (see Doctrine and Covenants 19:38). Prayer allows us to communicate personally with our Heavenly Father in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ.
3. Weekly sacrament meeting attendance (see 3 Nephi 18:1–12; Moroni 6:5–6). We do so to remember Jesus Christ as we take the sacrament. In this ordinance the members of the Church renew their covenant of taking upon themselves the name of the Savior, of always remembering Him, and of keeping His commandments (see Doctrine and Covenants 20:77, 79).
4. Frequent participation in temple and family history work. This work is the means of uniting and sealing families for eternity (see Doctrine and Covenants 128:15).

How do we feel when we hear these four things? Are they part of our normal lives?

There are many other traditions that could be part of the normality we have adopted, thus letting God prevail in our lives.

How can we determine what will be the normal things in our life and in our family? In the scriptures we find a great model; in Mosiah 5:15 it says, “I would that ye should be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in good works.”

I love these words because we know that the things that become normal in our lives are those that we repeat again and again. If we are steadfast and immovable in doing good, our customs will be in accordance with the principles of the gospel and they will help us to stay on the covenant path.

President Nelson has also counseled: “Embrace your new normal by repenting daily. Seek to be increasingly pure in thought, word, and deed. Minister to others. Keep an eternal perspective. Magnify your callings. And whatever your challenges, my dear brothers and sisters, live each day so that *you* are more prepared to meet your Maker” (“A New Normal,” 118).

Now it is not odd for either my wife, Patricia, or for me to eat coconut with chili and avocado with sugar—in fact, we like it. However, exaltation is something much more transcendent than a sense of taste; it is a topic related to eternity.

I pray that our normality may allow us to experience that state of “never-ending happiness” (Mosiah 2:41) that is promised to those who keep the commandments of God and that, while doing so, we may be able to say, “And it came to pass that we lived after the manner of happiness” (2 Nephi 5:27).

My brothers and sisters, I testify of the 15 men whom we sustain as prophets, seers, and revelators, including our beloved prophet, President Russell M. Nelson. I testify that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is true. I especially testify of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.