

# Be True to God and His Work

By Elder Quentin L. Cook  
*Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles*

We all need to seek our own testimony of Jesus Christ, bridle our passions, repent of our sins, and be true to God and His work.

Last October, I was assigned, along with President M. Russell Ballard and Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, to visit the United Kingdom, where all three of us served as young missionaries. We had the privilege of teaching and testifying, as well as reliving early Church history in the British Isles, where my great-great-grandfather Heber C. Kimball and his associates were the first missionaries.<sup>1</sup>

President Russell M. Nelson, teasing us about this assignment, noted that it was unusual to assign three Apostles to visit the area where they had served as missionaries in their youth. He acknowledged that all desire to be assigned to visit their original mission. With a big smile on his face, he succinctly explained the precedent that if there is another set of three Apostles who served in the same mission over 60 years ago, then they also may receive a similar assignment.

In preparation for that assignment, I reread the *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, written by his grandson Orson F. Whitney, who later was called to the apostleship. This volume was given to me by my precious mother when I was almost seven years old. We were preparing to attend the dedication of the This Is the Place Monument on July 24, 1947, by President George Albert Smith.<sup>2</sup> She wanted me to know more about my ancestor Heber C. Kimball.

This book contains a profound statement attributed to President Kimball that has significance for our day. Before sharing the statement, let me provide a little background.

While the Prophet Joseph Smith was incarcerated in Liberty Jail, Apostles Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball had the responsibility, under terribly adverse circumstances, of overseeing the evacuation of the Saints from Missouri. The evacuation was required in large part because of the extermination order issued by Governor Lilburn W. Boggs.<sup>3</sup>

Almost 30 years later Heber C. Kimball, then in the First Presidency, reflecting on this history with a new generation, taught, “Let me say to you, that many of you will see the time when you will have all the trouble, trial and persecution that you can stand, and plenty of opportunities to show that you are *true to God and His work*.”<sup>4</sup>

Heber continued: “To meet the difficulties that are coming, it will be necessary for you to have a knowledge of the truth of this work for yourselves. The difficulties will be of such a character that the man or woman who does not possess this personal knowledge or witness will fall. If you have not got the testimony, live right and call upon the Lord and cease not [until] you [attain] it. If you do not you will not stand. ... The time will come when no man nor woman will be able to endure on borrowed light. Each will have to be guided by the light within himself. ... If you don’t have it you will not stand; therefore seek for the testimony of Jesus and cleave to it, that when the trying time comes you may not stumble and fall.”<sup>5</sup>

We each need a personal testimony of God’s work<sup>6</sup> and the seminal role of Jesus Christ. The 76th section of the Doctrine and Covenants refers to the three degrees of glory and compares the celestial glory to the sun. It then compares the terrestrial kingdom to the moon.<sup>7</sup>

It is interesting that the sun has its own light, but the moon is reflected light or “borrowed light.” Speaking of the terrestrial kingdom, verse 79 states, “These are they who are not valiant in the testimony of Jesus.” We cannot obtain the celestial kingdom and live with God the Father on borrowed light; we need our own testimony of Jesus Christ and His gospel.

We live in a world where iniquity abounds<sup>8</sup> and hearts turn from God because of the precepts of men.<sup>9</sup> One of the most compelling examples in the scriptures of Heber C. Kimball’s concerns about seeking a testimony of God’s work and Jesus Christ is set forth in Alma’s counsel to his three sons—Helaman, Shiblon, and Corianton.<sup>10</sup> Two of his sons had been *true to God and His work*. But one son had made some bad decisions. To me the greatest significance of Alma’s counsel is that he was imparting it as a father for the benefit of his own children.

Alma’s first concern, like Heber C. Kimball’s, was that each have a testimony of Jesus Christ and *be true to God and His work*.

In Alma’s remarkable teaching to his son Helaman, he makes a profound promise that those who “put their trust in God shall be supported in their trials, and their troubles, and their afflictions, and shall be lifted up at the last day.”<sup>11</sup>

While Alma had received a manifestation where he saw an angel, this is rare. Impressions made by the Holy Ghost are more typical. These

impressions can be equally as important as angelic manifestations. President Joseph Fielding Smith taught: “Impressions on the soul that come from the Holy Ghost are far more significant than a vision. When Spirit speaks to spirit, the imprint upon the soul is far more difficult to erase.”<sup>12</sup>

This leads us to Alma’s counsel to his second son, Shiblon. Shiblon was righteous, like his brother Helaman. The counsel I want to emphasize is Alma 38:12, which reads in part, “See that ye bridle all your passions, that ye may be filled with love.”

*Bridle* is an interesting word. When we ride a horse, we use the bridle to guide it. A good synonym might be to direct, control, or restrain. The Old Testament tells us we shouted for joy when we learned we would have physical bodies.<sup>13</sup> The body is not evil—it is beautiful and essential—but some passions, if not used properly and appropriately bridled, can separate us from *God and His work* and adversely impact our testimony.

Let’s talk about two passions in particular—first, anger, and second, lust.<sup>14</sup> It is interesting that both left unbridled or uncontrolled can cause great heartache, diminish the influence of the Spirit, and separate us from God and His work. The adversary takes every opportunity to fill our lives with images of violence and immorality.

In some families, it is not uncommon for an angry husband or wife to hit a spouse or a child. In July, I participated in a United Kingdom All-Party Parliamentary forum in London.<sup>15</sup> Violence against women and youth was highlighted as a significant worldwide problem. In addition to violence, others have engaged in verbal abuse. The proclamation on the family tells us those “who abuse spouse or offspring ... will one day stand accountable before God.”<sup>16</sup>

President Nelson strongly emphasized this yesterday morning.<sup>17</sup> Please make up your mind that regardless of whether your parents did or did not abuse you, you will not physically or verbally or emotionally abuse your spouse or children.

In our day one of the most significant challenges is contention and verbal abuse related to societal issues. In many cases anger and abusive language have replaced reason, discussion, and civility. Many have abandoned the admonition of the Savior’s senior Apostle, Peter, to seek Christlike qualities such as temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity.<sup>18</sup> They have also abandoned the Christlike quality of humility.

In addition to controlling anger and bridling other passions, we need to lead pure moral lives by controlling our thoughts, language, and actions. We need to avoid pornography, evaluate the appropriateness of

what we are streaming in our homes, and avoid every form of sinful conduct.

This brings us to Alma's counsel to his son Corianton. Unlike his brothers, Helaman and Shiblon, Corianton engaged in moral transgression.

Because Corianton had engaged in immorality, it was necessary for Alma to teach him about repentance. He had to teach him the seriousness of sin and then how to repent.<sup>19</sup>

So Alma's preventive counsel was to bridle passions, but his counsel for those who have transgressed was to repent. President Nelson gave members profound counsel on repentance at the April 2019 general conference. He made it clear that daily repentance is integral to our lives. "Repentance is not an event; it is a process. It is the key to happiness and peace of mind," he taught. "Daily repentance is the pathway to purity, and purity brings power."<sup>20</sup> If Corianton had done what President Nelson counseled, he would have repented as soon as he had begun to entertain impure thoughts. Major transgressions would not have occurred.

The concluding counsel that Alma gave to his sons is some of the most important doctrine in all the scriptures. It relates to the Atonement wrought by Jesus Christ.

Alma testified that Christ would take away sin.<sup>21</sup> Without the Savior's Atonement, the eternal principle of justice would require punishment.<sup>22</sup> Because of the Savior's Atonement, mercy can prevail for those who have repented, and it can allow them to return to the presence of God. We would do well to ponder this wonderful doctrine.

None can return to God by his or her own good works alone; we all need the benefit of the Savior's sacrifice. All have sinned, and it is only through the Atonement of Jesus Christ that we can obtain mercy and live with God.<sup>23</sup>

Alma also gave wonderful counsel to Corianton for all of us who have gone through or will go through the repentance process, regardless of whether the sins are small or as severe as those committed by Corianton. Verse 29 of Alma 42 reads, "And now, my son, I desire that ye should let these things trouble you no more, and only let your sins trouble you, with that trouble which shall bring you down unto repentance."

Corianton heeded Alma's counsel and both repented and served honorably. Because of the Savior's Atonement, healing is available to all.

In Alma's day, in Heber's day, and certainly in our day, we all need to seek our own testimony of Jesus Christ, bridle our passions, repent of our sins, and find peace through the Atonement of Jesus Christ and be true to God and His work.

In a recent talk and again this morning, President Russell M. Nelson said it this way: "I plead with you to take charge of your testimony of Jesus Christ. Work for it. Own it. Care for it. Nurture it so that it will grow. Then watch for miracles to happen in your life."<sup>24</sup>

I am grateful that we will now hear from President Nelson. I testify that President Nelson is the Lord's prophet for our day. I love and treasure the marvelous inspiration and guidance we receive through him.

As an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, I bear my sure witness of the Savior's divinity and the reality of His Atonement in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### Notes

1. See Ronald K. Esplin, "A Great Work Done in That Land," *Ensign*, July 1987, 20: "On June 13, Elder Kimball, Orson Hyde, Joseph Fielding, and Heber's friend Willard Richards left Kirtland for England. In New York, on June 22, Canadians Isaac Russell, John Goodson, and John Snyder joined them. The seven missionaries then booked passage for Liverpool on the *Garrick*." (See Heber C. Kimball papers, 1837–1866; Willard Richards journals and papers, 1821–1854, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.)
2. The This Is the Place Monument, located on the east side of Salt Lake City, Utah, at the mouth of Emigration Canyon, commemorates the 100th anniversary of the arrival of the Saints into the Salt Lake Valley on July 24, 1847. The monument features statues of Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and Wilford Woodruff.
3. Between 8,000 and 10,000 Latter-day Saints fled Missouri in early 1839 to escape violent acts of vigilantes and mobs. Under the direction of Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball, a committee was formed to collect supplies, assess needs, and establish routes for the grueling 200-mile (320-km) winter exodus to Illinois. Compassionate residents of the town of Quincy provided temporary refuge for the suffering Saints by way of shelter and food. (See *Saints: The Story of the Church of Jesus Christ in the Latter Days*, vol. 1, *The Standard of Truth, 1815–1846* [2018], 375–77; William G. Hartley, "The Saints' Forced Exodus from Missouri," in Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Kent P. Jackson, eds., *Joseph Smith: The Prophet and Seer* [2010], 347–89.)

4. In Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball: An Apostle, the Father and Founder of the British Mission* (1945), 449; emphasis added.
5. In Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 450.
6. See Moses 1:39; see also “The Work of Salvation and Exaltation,” section 1.2 in *General Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ChurchofJesusChrist.org. We come unto Christ and assist in God’s work by living the gospel of Jesus Christ, caring for those in need, inviting all to receive the gospel, and uniting families for eternity. See also Doctrine and Covenants 110, which sets forth the keys that were given for the work of salvation.
7. See also 1 Corinthians 15:40–41.
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 45:27.
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 45:29.
10. Alma was the son of Alma the prophet. He was the chief judge of the nation and high priest and prophet. He experienced a miraculous conversion as a young man.
11. Alma 36:3.
12. Joseph Fielding Smith, “The First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve,” *Improvement Era*, Nov. 1966, 979.
13. See Job 38:7.
14. See Alma 39:9. Alma instructs Corianton, “Go no more after the [lust] of your eyes.”
15. All-Party Parliamentary Group, Parliamentary sessions, Tuesday, July 5, 2022, “Preventing Violence and Promoting Freedom of Belief.”
16. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” ChurchofJesusChrist.org; see also Patrick Kearon, “He Is Risen with Healing in His Wings: We Can Be More Than Conquerors,” *Liahona*, May 2022, 37–39.
17. See Russell M. Nelson, “What Is True?,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2022, 29.
18. See 2 Peter 1:5–10.
19. See Alma 39:9.

20. Russell M. Nelson, “We Can Do Better and Be Better,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2019, 67, 68.
21. See Alma 39:15.
22. See Alma 42:16.
23. See 2 Nephi 25:23.
24. Russell M. Nelson, Facebook, Aug. 1, 2022, [facebook.com/russell.m.nelson](https://www.facebook.com/russell.m.nelson); Twitter, Aug. 1, 2022, [twitter.com/nelsonrussellm](https://twitter.com/nelsonrussellm); Instagram, Aug. 1, 2022, [instagram.com/russellmnelson](https://www.instagram.com/russellmnelson); see also “Choices for Eternity” (worldwide devotional for young adults, May 15, 2022), [broadcasts.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://broadcasts.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).