

# *Endowed with His Power, You Are Ready to Lead*

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**A**fter having previously rejected my father's marriage proposal twice, my mother, during a BYU devotional sixty-five years ago this summer, turned to my father and whispered, "Yes."

It was all my dad could do to not stand up and shout for joy, but with President Joseph Fielding Smith as the speaker, he quietly stayed seated. If anyone here has anything important to say to the person sitting next to you, consider this your invitation! Needless to say, I am grateful for BYU devotionals!

A few months after their engagement, my parents eloped to the Salt Lake Temple. On their way home, my mom went to her apartment, packed up her things, and announced that she was going to sleep with Al that night. Concerned—and rightfully so—her roommates called the bishop, only to be told: "It's about time. They have been married for hours!"

My parents continued their education here at BYU, and within their first year of marriage, my mom gave birth to a daughter. Some may remember a story of then Elder Spencer W.

Kimball helping a stranded pregnant woman in an airport who was pushing along her young toddler. Because of a threatening miscarriage, she was under doctor's orders not to pick up the child. Elder Kimball comforted the woman—whom he had never met before and knew nothing about—gave the little girl a piece of gum, and got the young, pregnant, exhausted mother and her wet and hungry two-year-old daughter on the next flight out of Chicago O'Hare International Airport.<sup>1</sup>

That pregnant young woman was my mother. Following this experience with Elder Kimball, my parents were blessed to have ten more naturally born children, adopt another, and also raise my dad's nephew, who is now my brother. Their ability to rear thirteen children was clearly a miracle. I am the twelfth of these thirteen children. My parents were true leaders.

Like my mom, I too attended BYU. Unlike my mom, at the age of twenty-one I sent in my mission papers. I made it clear to my father, who was serving as my stake president, that the only

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place in the world I did not want to serve was the Spanish-speaking mission in the Los Angeles Temple Visitors' Center. Let's just say that the tears I shed when I opened my call were not tears of joy. During my mission the Lord proved to me over and over again that His ways truly are higher than mine.<sup>2</sup> I loved my mission!

After my mission I returned to BYU and began to try and determine my path in life. As I walked to the Joseph Smith Building to attend my religion class, the inscription on the outside wall—"Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you"<sup>3</sup>—stopped me cold in my tracks. Somehow I knew that I was to be a religion teacher. Although I felt extremely inadequate, God promised me His grace if I would teach diligently.

Upon graduating from BYU, I accepted a job teaching seminary and began graduate studies in education. All along I dated, wanting to marry and start a family. I admit that as I watched all twelve of my siblings—and yes, even some of their children—as well as all of my roommates and friends marry and have children of their own, loneliness did set in at times. I wondered if the Lord's will and my will would ever align. Upon completing my PhD, I accepted a full-time job as an assistant professor of religion at BYU.

A few months after my mother's death and days after a broken engagement, I was invited to temporarily leave BYU to be the director of institutes and the seminary coordinator in Boston for the Church Educational System (CES). It seemed the timing couldn't have been worse. Strangely, I had always wanted to live in Boston. In fact, I always knew I would live there, but not under those circumstances. Striving to align my will with His, I packed up my house; left BYU; said goodbye to my dad, family, and friends; and drove across the country.

A year later I returned from Boston, having fulfilled my assignment for CES. In addition, I had served as a chaplain at both Harvard and MIT and had completed postdoctoral work at Harvard in higher education administration. I had met incredible people, many of whom have since become dear friends. And, most important, I had received a live sealing recommend the night before I left. My husband and I were married

shortly after. Three years later—and exactly three years from yesterday—we adopted our two beautiful daughters. One month later we were sealed as a family in the Mount Timpanogos Utah Temple. I wrote in my journal, "His ways truly are higher than mine."

Why do I tell you such personal stories? I want to be both authentic and intentional with you. I want you to see how individuals can uniquely walk the covenant path and be leaders in God's kingdom. President M. Russell Ballard taught:

*Mortality can be complicated. Many women are single for long periods of time in their lives. Some women are married; others become single when a spouse dies or when they divorce. And some women may never marry. . . .*

*. . . One sister may be inspired to continue her education and attend medical school. . . . For another sister, inspiration may lead her to forego a scholarship . . . and instead begin a family. . . .*

*Is it possible for two similarly faithful women to receive such different responses to the same basic questions? Absolutely! What's right for one woman may not be right for another.<sup>4</sup>*

Speaking to the women of the Church, President Russell M. Nelson pleaded:

*We, your brethren, need your strength, your conversion, your conviction, your ability to lead, your wisdom, and your voices. The kingdom of God is not and cannot be complete without women who make sacred covenants and then keep them, women who can speak with the power and authority of God! . . .*

*. . . We need women who are devoted to shepherding God's children along the covenant path toward exaltation; women who know how to receive personal revelation, who understand the power and peace of the temple endowment; women who know how to call upon the powers of heaven to protect and strengthen children and families; women who teach fearlessly.<sup>5</sup>*

We need you to lead.

Recently I had the opportunity to study the life of and tour the places associated with one of the greatest heroines in history, Joan of Arc. I learned of her remarkable courage and faith as

an inspired leader.<sup>6</sup> I was intrigued and humbled as I reflected on her declaration of hearing divine voices that were always accompanied by light and on her willingness and determination to obey and lead at whatever cost.

As an illiterate seventeen-year-old peasant girl, Joan of Arc left her family and the simple comforts of her home to liberate her country and place Charles VII on the throne. I was intrigued to realize that not only did she gain the trust of Charles VII but also the trust of more than twelve thousand troops placed under her command. At one point, determined to keep the Sabbath day holy, she required all of her troops to partake of the holy sacrament prior to entering into battle. Many believe her public demonstration of faith in God won her that battle.

Virtuous by choice and trusting in the Lord, Joan of Arc would not only liberate the city of Orléans but defeat the English in four other battles. Bishop Gérald Caussé explained:

*She was surrounded by men who were rough and sometimes disrespectful toward women. But she was committed to stay faithful and worthy because that was a condition for her to receive the guidance she needed from God.*<sup>7</sup>

Eventually captured in the battle of Paris, Joan was held as a prisoner—not for treason but for heresy. What was her crime? She believed and taught that she, as a woman, had received revelation from God. As I stood by her stone prison, I wondered at her determination and faith. Listen to some of the words she, as an illiterate nineteen-year-old girl and prisoner, spoke in her own defense in 1431, as translated from official court records. She said: “I must go, and I must do this thing, because my Lord will have it so” and “I look to God, my creator, in all. I love him with all my heart.”<sup>8</sup> She also said, “Everything I have said or done is in the hand of God, and I commit myself to Him.”<sup>9</sup> And in his play *Saint Joan*, George Bernard Shaw had her say, “It is better to be alone with God.”<sup>10</sup>

Joan was eventually sentenced to death and burned at the stake. One theatrical version of the event had Joan say these words:

*One life is all we have, and we live it as we believe in living it, and then it's gone. But to surrender what you are, and live without belief—that's more terrible than dying—more terrible than dying young.*<sup>11</sup>

Indeed, one life really is all that we have. President Nelson recently told young adults:

*This is a singular time in **your** life. There won't be another quite like it. You are establishing priorities and patterns that will dramatically affect not just your mortal life but also your eternal life.*<sup>12</sup>

Joan of Arc's life was vastly different than mine and vastly different than my mother's, yet each of our lives has similar patterns based on true principles. Each of us paid the price to hear and act upon the voice of the Lord. Each of us exercised the courage necessary and put forth the effort required to be endowed with His power. Each of us gained God's power by making and keeping sacred covenants. Each of us made promises with the Lord and in return were endowed with the power necessary to uniquely lead. Unlike Joan of Arc and my mother, however, my mortal life, as well as yours, still has time and purpose.

I pray that the Spirit will be your true mentor and teacher today as together we discuss principles of leading with God's endowed power.

### **Principle 1: You Are a Child of God, Born to Lead**

In his May 2022 devotional for young adults, President Nelson reminded each of us of our three most important identifiers: “child of God,” “child of the covenant,” and “disciple of Jesus Christ.”<sup>13</sup> He said, “Make no mistake about it: Your potential is divine. With your diligent seeking, God will give you glimpses of who you may become.”<sup>14</sup> Let's also remember that, regardless of gender, “the gathering of Israel on both sides of the veil is *the* most important cause on earth today” and that “you . . . have an essential role in this gathering.”<sup>15</sup> I testify that just as God knew Joan of Arc, my mother, and even me, He knows you and He has a purpose for you.

Whether you were born to lead with the vision of glorious Mother Eve, with the patience of Abraham and Sarah to be the parents of the entire

covenant Israel, with the courage of Esther to save an entire covenant people, with the perfect understanding of Moroni to win mortal battles, with the exact obedience of the sons of Helaman, with the loyalty and faith of their mothers, or a combination of all of these qualities and many more, you were born during this last hour of this last dispensation to lead.

Like the young Prophet Joseph Smith, whom God called by name, you too are known, and you have a unique leadership role in the gathering of Israel and in bringing forth the Savior’s Second Coming. President Joseph F. Smith taught, “It is not for you to be led by the women [and men] of the world; it is for you to lead the world and to lead especially . . . in everything that is . . . uplifting and that is purifying to the children of men.”<sup>16</sup>

Just as every piece of stained glass is critical to the whole picture, every individual child of God is needed. You are critical to His work and His glory. He needs you. We need you. And we need you to lead.

How has God shown you that He knows you?  
What is your unique role in this gathering?

### **Principle 2: Learning to “Hear Him” Is Necessary to Fulfill Your Unique Errand**

Like Joan of Arc, we must learn to “hear Him.”<sup>17</sup> In helping us learn how to receive personal revelation, President Nelson instructed us to follow the example of the young prophet and leader Joseph Smith. President Nelson instructed:

*Find a quiet place where you can regularly go. Humble yourself before God. Pour out your heart to your Heavenly Father. Turn to Him for answers and for comfort.*

*Pray in the name of Jesus Christ about your concerns, your fears, your weaknesses—yes, the very longings of your heart. And then listen! Write the thoughts that come to your mind. Record your feelings and follow through with actions that you are prompted to take. As you repeat this process day after day, month after month, year after year, you will “grow into the principle of revelation.”<sup>18</sup>*

As I listened to President Kevin J. Worthen in his BYU devotional in January 2023 give an invitation to “diligently study and apply the prophetic promises that the Lord has provided through President Nelson,”<sup>19</sup> I felt guided to accept it not only for me but for my students as well. With the patience of my students, I implemented a new experiential project that required them to study every single talk given by President Nelson since he had become the prophet and prayerfully look for invitations and promised blessings. They would then choose one invitation to apply throughout the rest of the semester and report on their experience in a one-on-one interview with me.

It seemed as if my office turned into a temple in terms of sacredness at the end of the semester as students individually shared experiences and miracles and testified of living prophets and God’s fulfillment of prophetic promises. I will share just one experience with you. One student wrote:

*The invitation I decided to focus on . . . was to better hear the voice of the Lord. [President Nelson’s promise] was that as we learn to “hear Him,” He will reveal truth to us and we will be guided by the Holy Spirit. . . . I chose this promise because sometimes I feel like we are living amidst so many distractions and things that numb our senses to the Spirit . . . like phones, sports, TV, hobbies, and outdoor activities. . . . I wanted to make time to focus on the Savior, and I wanted to learn from Him His will for me.*

What did this student do? He wrote the following:

*Each week, to aid my scripture study, I attended the temple. I attempted to converse with the Lord in the temple and to specifically focus on hearing His word for me. . . . I pondered nightly on what I was learning and supplicated the Lord through prayer for assistance in my endeavors. During the sacrament each week, I reflected on how I was doing. I also made it a point to do my best to have companionship study daily and to bear my testimony of what I was learning. Lastly, I tried to repent daily to make myself worthy to feel the Spirit and to hear His voice.*

What was the result for this student? He continued:

*I learned most of all that I was very capable of hearing the voice of the Lord when I put forth the effort to do so. . . . Even though I was not perfect at doing this plan, I came to notice that the Lord values every little effort that we make to hear Him and come closer to Him. I feel like I am getting closer to the Lord and better at hearing His voice. I feel like I am fortified against temptation and more susceptible to the Spirit.*

I challenge you to continue with that invitation from President Worthen.

President Elaine S. Dalton declared:

*In the world in which we live, your ability to lead will require the guidance and constant companionship of the Holy Ghost, who will tell you “all things what ye should do” as you recognize and rely on His guidance and promptings.<sup>20</sup>*

I can report that every single student who followed through with the prophetic invitation received the associated promised blessings. I promise that as we follow the Lord’s divine pattern, we will grow into the principle of revelation and learn to hear Him as He leads us and shows us how He would have us lead.

What are you doing to hear Him?

How is He guiding you to lead today?

What have you heard from the Spirit today that was not said vocally?

### **Principle 3: Leading Requires Courage, Effort, and Power from Jesus Christ**

“Is it hard to be a prophet?” young Pearl asked during an interview with Primary general president Joy D. Jones and President Nelson.

“Of course it’s hard,” President Nelson replied. “Everything to do with becoming more like the Savior is difficult.”<sup>21</sup>

Let’s be frank. Learning to hear His voice, staying on the covenant path, helping gather the house of Israel, and leading are not assignments for the weak at heart. There is a reason President Nelson encouraged us to “eat [our] vitamin pills” and “get [our] rest.”<sup>22</sup>

In section 93 of the Doctrine and Covenants, John the Beloved bore record that he

*beheld [Christ’s] glory, as the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, even the Spirit of truth, which came and dwelt in the flesh, and dwelt among us.*

*And I, John, saw that he received not of the fulness at the first, but received grace for grace. . . .*

*And I, John, bear record that he received a fulness of the glory of the Father;*

*And he received all power, both in heaven and on earth, and the glory of the Father was with him, for he dwelt in him.<sup>23</sup>*

Brothers and sisters, the Atonement of Jesus Christ was not easy. Christ’s power is critical to leading God’s children. In the same section of scripture in the Doctrine and Covenants, Christ declared:

*I give unto you these sayings that you may understand and know how to worship, and know what you worship, that you may come unto the Father in my name, and in due time receive of his fulness.*

*For if you keep my commandments you shall receive of his fulness, and be glorified in me as I am in the Father; therefore, I say unto you, you shall receive grace for grace.<sup>24</sup>*

Christ’s power is available to all of us. Accessing His power takes effort. President Nelson instructed:

*Our focus must be riveted on the Savior and His gospel. It is mentally rigorous to strive to look unto Him in every thought. . . .*

*When you reach up for the Lord’s power in your life with the same intensity that a drowning person has when grasping and gasping for air, power from Jesus Christ will be yours.<sup>25</sup>*

Our eyes are riveted on the Savior when we study about Him, His doctrine, and His teachings. We serve like Him and we live according to those teachings. We commit to becoming like Him, eventually abiding in Him and Him abiding in us. We align ourselves with His prophets, staying right on their heels—not slightly ahead or too far

behind. To help you be completely aligned with the will of the Lord and the teachings of the living prophets—in addition to general conference talks, devotionals, and firesides—I strongly recommend careful study and application of “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” “The Living Christ,” and “The Restoration Proclamation.”

These documents were inspired and were written by the united voice of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. I testify that both clarity and power will come into your life as you courageously put forth the effort to live by their doctrines and principles. Sister Sharon G. Larsen stated:

*If we are going to lead in righteousness, there can't be any question where we stand. . . .*

*. . . Educating our desires so our standards are the Lord's standards sends a clear message that in the Lord's kingdom there are no double standards. . . .*

*We have made covenants with the Lord, and leading often tests the level of our commitment to those covenants.*<sup>26</sup>

When I think of eyes riveted on the Savior, I think of Joan of Arc's final hours. Previous to her death, she requested that a priest shout prayers loud enough to be heard over the roar of the flames and that he also hold a cross high above her head so she could focus her mind on the Savior as she focused on the cross. Joan of Arc consecrated her life to God.

How are you keeping your eyes riveted on the Savior?

Where do you stand?

#### **Principle 4: God's Power Is Gained Through Keeping Covenants**

Sister Sheri L. Dew declared:

*If God wants a powerful people who can withstand the wiles of the devil—and He does—and if we were born to lead in these latter days—and we were—then we need to understand how God makes His power available to us and how we gain access to that power.*<sup>27</sup>

President Nelson declared:

*Every woman and every man who makes covenants with God and keeps those covenants, and who participates worthily in priesthood ordinances, has direct access to the power of God. Those who are endowed in the house of the Lord receive a gift of God's priesthood power by virtue of their covenant, along with a gift of knowledge to know how to draw upon that power.*<sup>28</sup>

What is this power? It is priesthood power. In 2019, President Nelson entreated all women of the Church “to study prayerfully *all* the truths you can find about priesthood power.”<sup>29</sup> One year later, President Nelson renewed his “invitation for you to increase your understanding of priesthood power and of temple covenants and blessings.”<sup>30</sup> Every covenant-keeping member receives the key of knowledge in the temple.<sup>31</sup> With this key of knowledge, with personal revelation, and with effort on your part, I promise that God will teach you more about His priesthood power and His temple covenants as well as how to lead with His power today.

The 2021 Church *General Handbook* declared:

*The priesthood is the authority and power of God. It has always existed and will continue to exist without end. . . . Through the priesthood, Heavenly Father accomplishes His work “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). God grants authority and power to His sons and daughters on earth to help carry out this work.*<sup>32</sup>

Whose power is it? God's power! Power to do what? All the power necessary for you to lead out in saving souls! What are some of these powers?

- Power of enlightenment, of testimony, and of understanding
- Power to thwart the forces of evil
- Power to use your gifts and capabilities with greater intelligence and increased effectiveness
- Power to overcome the sins of the world and to “stand . . . in holy places”<sup>33</sup>
- Power to make you better qualified to teach
- Power to receive “personal revelation that may bless your life with power, knowledge, light, beauty, and truth from on high”<sup>34</sup>

- Power from heaven to protect and strengthen children and families
- Power to love and be filled with His love
- Power to lead

These are powerful promises available to every covenant-keeping member of this Church. They are your promises.

In preparation for this devotional talk, I found myself continually attending the temple. During the last couple of weeks, I have participated in every ordinance available in the temple—some multiple times. I was reminded while listening to the confirmation ordinance that receiving the Holy Ghost requires action on the part of the receiver. While I participated in the ordinance of baptism, the Spirit pressed upon me the truth that “in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest.”<sup>35</sup> Please remember that the ordinances of baptism and confirmation are critical to the gathering of Israel and to eternal life for our Heavenly Father’s children. Thank you for serving in the temple. Thank you for leading out in this cause.

Just as effort is necessary to receive the Holy Ghost, effort is also necessary to receive priesthood power. In the oath and covenant of the priesthood, men and women must receive God’s priesthood, His servants, Jesus Christ, the Father, and the Father’s kingdom in order to receive the promise that “all that my Father hath shall be given unto [you].”<sup>36</sup> Only through our keeping covenants made in the temple do we obtain the blessing of receiving a fulness.

Elder Dale G. Renlund explained:

*By making and keeping temple covenants, we learn more about the Lord’s purposes and receive a fulness of the Holy Ghost. We receive direction for our lives. We mature in our discipleship so that we do not remain perpetual, unknowing children. Rather, we live with an eternal perspective and are more motivated to serve God and others.*<sup>37</sup>

In the endowment ceremony we covenant to obey five laws: the law of obedience, the law of sacrifice, the law of the gospel, the law of chastity, and the law of consecration.<sup>38</sup> Keeping each of

these laws is critical to becoming leaders endowed with His power. I will briefly discuss just two of these laws: the law of obedience and the law of sacrifice.

### *The Law of Obedience*

President Dallin H. Oaks taught, “God’s love is so perfect that He lovingly requires us to obey His commandments because He knows that only through obedience to His laws can we become perfect, as He is.”<sup>39</sup>

God’s love required a perfect obedience to law and the fulfillment of eternal suffering on the part of His Only Begotten Son: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.”<sup>40</sup> What kind of loving God would demand this kind of obedience and allow this kind of sacrifice? Our God! The God of love! God’s love includes, by His nature, His law. And His laws include an element of sacrifice.

Just a few months ago, my seven-year-old daughter asked, “Mom, if you didn’t love me so much, would you let me eat all the candy in the world?”

She gets it! She intuitively recognized that my rule or law regarding candy consumption was not, to paraphrase President Oaks, a *contradiction* of my love as much as it was *evidence* of my love.<sup>41</sup>

Trying to change God’s love or laws to satisfy mortal desires will simply not result in us receiving His life: eternal life. As a reminder, God prizes agency so much that He allows us “to enjoy that which [we] are willing to receive,” and if we do not receive eternal life, it is “because [we] were not willing to enjoy that which [we] might have received.”<sup>42</sup>

We receive according to what we choose to obey. What are the two great commandments we have been asked to obey? First to love God, second to love our neighbor—in that order.<sup>43</sup> Here at BYU, Elder D. Todd Christofferson instructed:

*Putting the first commandment first does not diminish or limit our ability to keep the second commandment. To the contrary, it amplifies and strengthens it. It means that we enhance our love by anchoring it in divine purpose and power. It means that we have the Holy Ghost to inspire us in ways to reach out that*

*we would never have seen on our own. Our love of God elevates our ability to love others more fully and perfectly because we in essence partner with God in the care of His children.*<sup>44</sup>

Why does understanding God’s love matter so much? In part because in your leadership role in the gathering of Israel and in saving souls, you must not only love as God loves but also help others understand God’s love. Those not firmly grounded in the teachings and doctrine of Jesus Christ may desire a false love that allows for promiscuity or cheap grace. In offering this lower love, you are not leading but complying and offering false hope in exchange for eternal life.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland taught:

*Jesus said, “Love one another, as I have loved you.” To make certain they understood exactly what kind of love that was, He said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” and “whosoever . . . shall break one of [the] least commandments, **and shall teach men so, he shall be . . . the least in the kingdom of heaven.**” Christlike love is the greatest need we have on this planet in part because righteousness was always supposed to accompany it.*<sup>45</sup>

Elder Holland later clarified:

*As near as I can tell, Christ never **once** withheld His love from anyone, but He also never once said to anyone, “Because I love you, you are exempt from keeping my commandments.” We are tasked with trying to strike that same sensitive, demanding balance in our lives.*<sup>46</sup>

Do we truly understand, as my seven-year-old daughter does, that while in the moment our cravings may not be satisfied, this may be proof of His love because His laws are meant to help us become like Him? That by keeping His commandments we ultimately receive a fulness of freedom and joy? Just as Christ’s capacity to love is directly tied to His obedience, so is ours. Love and obedience are critical qualities of Christlike leaders.

God loves infinitely because His capacity and power are infinite. Christ has a fulness of power, including a fulness of love—in part because of His choice to drink the bitter cup,<sup>47</sup> clearly

demonstrating that even He was willing to do the will of the Father over His own. In our lives, I promise there is no cup more bitter than His love can overcome.

### *The Law of Sacrifice*

In the *Lectures on Faith*, we are taught, “Let us here observe, that a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation.”<sup>48</sup>

Perhaps one of the greatest demonstrations of keeping the law of sacrifice is to deny yourself of all ungodliness, which is to “offer a sacrifice unto the Lord thy God . . . , even that of a broken heart and a contrite spirit.”<sup>49</sup> It is not easy to put off the natural man.

A while ago I wrongly chided a premed student in one of my classes for his use of a flip phone.

“I have a problem with pornography,” he publicly explained. “Although smartphones can be useful, I would rather have the companionship of the Holy Ghost and the power of the Savior.”

I was humbled by his response. He knew what it meant to deny yourself of all ungodliness.

Interestingly, although Joan of Arc may not have made covenants in the temple as we do today, she did—as far as it is known—keep all of God’s associated laws. Perhaps due in part to the law of compensation, she was able to lead endowed with His power.

How have you received God’s power through keeping your covenants?

### **Principle 5: Endowed with His Power, We Lead as Joint Heirs with and Are Perfected in Christ**

The purpose of priesthood power—Christ’s power—is to save souls. We are not simply making and keeping covenants; we are making and keeping binding covenant relationships. Listen to this instruction from President Nelson regarding covenant relationships:

*Once we make a covenant with God, we leave neutral ground forever. God will not abandon His relationship with those who have forged such a bond with Him. In fact, all those who have made a covenant with God have access to a special kind of love and mercy.*

In the Hebrew language, that covenantal love is called hesed (חסד).

Hesed has no adequate English equivalent. Translators of the King James Version of the Bible must have struggled with how to render hesed in English. They often chose “lovingkindness.” This captures much but not all the meaning of hesed. Other translations were also rendered, such as “mercy” and “goodness.” Hesed is a unique term describing a covenant relationship in which both parties are bound to be loyal and faithful to each other. . . .

[Now listen carefully to President Nelson’s understanding of hesed.] Hesed is a special kind of love and mercy that God feels for and extends to those who have made a covenant with Him. And we reciprocate with hesed for Him.

Once you and I have made a covenant with God, our relationship with Him becomes much closer than before our covenant. Now we are bound together. Because of our covenant with God, He will never tire in His efforts to help us, and we will never exhaust His merciful patience with us. Each of us has a special place in God’s heart. He has high hopes for us.<sup>50</sup>

There is a difference between God’s relationship with those who make and keep sacred covenants with Him and His relationship with those who do not. Of course God loves all of His children, but those who make and keep sacred covenants with Him experience hesed, a “covenantal love.” President Nelson instructed, “Yoking yourself with the Savior means you have access to His strength and redeeming power.”<sup>51</sup> God’s hopes are high for us because when we are yoked to the Savior, our power and potential are limitless!

Elder Dale G. Renlund explained:

*As you come to Christ and are connected to Him and our Heavenly Father by covenant, something seemingly unnatural happens. You are transformed and become perfected in Jesus Christ. You become a covenant child of God and an inheritor in His kingdom.*<sup>52</sup>

We become those “who are just men made perfect through Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, who wrought out this perfect atonement through the shedding of his own blood.”<sup>53</sup> We shall be filled with His love, see as He sees, and

become pure as He is pure until we are like Him and able to lead as He leads!<sup>54</sup> Thus He makes us joint heirs with Him, “equal in power, and in might, and in dominion.”<sup>55</sup>

Although leading can sometimes be a lonely position, endowed with His power you are never alone. God has promised that He “will go before your face,” that He “will be on your right hand and on your left,” that His “Spirit shall be in your hearts,” and that His “angels [shall be] round about you, to bear you up.”<sup>56</sup> Imagine the peace, hope, and joy this knowledge gave to the early pioneers, who, as they left Nauvoo, looked back at their burning temple with the fire of the covenant burning in their hearts. You too can have this confidence!

As we continue along the covenant path, entering into and keeping the new and everlasting covenant of marriage, according to God’s law, we become one with those who shall be gods:

*They [referring to the couple] have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power.*<sup>57</sup>

We will be leaders in the greatest role: parents.

Like Joan of Arc, Joseph Smith, Eve and Adam, Sarah and Abraham, Esther, Moroni, and the army of Helaman and their mothers, we are endowed with power to lead out in saving souls for eternity! We are not yet perfect in Christ, but, as Sister Patricia T. Holland said, “we must have the courage to be imperfect while striving for perfection.”<sup>58</sup>

How is Christ perfecting you?

How are you leading out in love?

### Counsel

As you, endowed with power, lead in His cause, may I offer just a few words of counsel?

### *Mingling the Philosophies of Men with Scripture*

First, be aware of Satan’s tactic of teaching the philosophies of men mingled with scripture. Applying Lehi’s dream to our day, President Boyd K. Packer, speaking at a BYU devotional,

reminded us that “instead of looking over into that spacious building, we are, in effect, living inside of it.”<sup>59</sup> Living in the world but not of the world has become more complex and confusing.

Satan is the great deceiver and mimicker. He packages truth in the most deceptive ways, often hoping you will not catch the subtle yet often pleasing lie tucked among the more demanding and constant truths. Regardless of how numerous, loud, soft, pleasing, comforting, intellectual, or intentionally silent these voices are, if they are not 100 percent grounded on and aligned with the doctrine of Jesus Christ and the teachings of His living prophets, they are not of God and will not produce the power necessary for you to lead in His cause. In a day when social media and the philosophies of men mingled with scripture are so prevalent, we must be courageous in both discerning and declaring the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. As a leader, you must discern and lead in truth.

#### *Separating God from His Prophets*

Second, be aware of any decoupling of God’s prophets from God. I would like to share with you a leadership principle I have come to call the parable of the crosswalk. As I approached an elementary school on a walk one morning, I watched three children move toward a crosswalk. As they got closer, a car drew near. The driver, noticing the children, stopped and let the children cross. The two boys ran quickly across the street, but the younger girl was much slower. As she tried to speed up, she went off balance and fell off her scooter. During this time a driver had pulled up behind the car in front and, seeing the boys run off, started honking his horn obnoxiously at the driver in front of him. When the first driver didn’t move, the driver behind rolled down his window and began yelling at the front car to go.

The driver in front gave the driver behind no heed but instead waited for the young girl to get back on her scooter and scoot across the street. By this time I had walked close enough to see the expressions on the faces of both drivers. The expression on the second driver’s face as he realized his mistake—for if the cars had gone forward, the girl could have been killed—was

unforgettable. In doing what he did, the driver in front saved the life of this girl. At that moment a simple phrase came to my mind: “Your perspective changes depending on where you are sitting.”

True prophets are fallible, but they are holy. Please be very careful never to say anything critical of one who has literally given his life to God in your service. Please be aware of anyone striving to decouple God from His prophets for any reason. I believe there are few things that draw the Spirit of God away from His children faster than mocking or criticizing God’s prophets. Please also remember that your perspective as a leader will change too, depending on your seat.

#### *Breaking Covenants*

Third, be aware that when we break covenants with God, we are in Satan’s power. Christ wants to share His power; Satan wants to take it away. When we intentionally break our covenants with God, we no longer have His power. No one should fight Satan alone.

#### *Avoiding Pride*

Fourth, be aware of pride. At the university level, we must be aware of pride. I believe one of the strongest antidotes for pride—and one of the greatest qualities of a leader—is the attribute of meekness. Elder David A. Bednar testified:

*Meekness is not weak, timid, or passive. Meekness is the quality of being God-fearing, righteous, teachable, patient in suffering, and willing to follow gospel teachings. A meek person is not easily provoked or irritated, pretentious, arrogant, or overbearing. Whereas humility generally denotes acknowledging dependence upon God and receptivity to counsel and correction, a distinguishing characteristic of meekness is a particular willingness to learn both from the Holy Ghost and from other people who may seem less experienced or capable, may not hold prominent positions, or otherwise may not appear to have much to contribute.<sup>60</sup>*

In God’s revelation to the elect Emma Smith, God gave His “voice unto all” and counseled her to act “in the spirit of meekness.”<sup>61</sup> In the revelation on the priesthood in section 84 of the Doctrine and Covenants, God told both women

and men endowed with His power to “edif[y] in all meekness.”<sup>62</sup> The Lord taught His endowed children in section 121, “No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned.”<sup>63</sup> Meekness, therefore, is a critical quality for all leaders endowed with His power.

### Conclusion

In my effort to show mere mortals as mentors for leadership on the covenant path, let us not forget that Jesus Christ was their true leader. The Prophet Joseph Smith’s final words as he charged to the window in the old Carthage Jail to die a martyr’s death were “O Lord my God!”<sup>64</sup> As Joan of Arc was unjustly swallowed up in the flames of the unquenchable fire, “Jesus, Jesus!”<sup>65</sup> fell lastly from her lips. It is Christ, our Savior, who perfectly walked the covenant path and gained all power. With His power and our agency, He selflessly transforms us to become like Him, if that is our desire.

As He died on the cross to save us all, Jesus Christ’s final expression of His covenant relationship with both His Father and with us was “Father, it is finished, thy will is done.”<sup>66</sup> Appearing to His disciples as the resurrected Savior, He declared, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.”<sup>67</sup> It is with His power—gained in the fullness through His Christlike life of leadership and sacrifice—that you are endowed. Endowed with His power, you are ready to lead in His cause.

Although I cannot have a personal interview with all of you, I would still like you to reflect on the questions that I have asked throughout this devotional. I would love to receive your answers to the following questions on social media platforms through #BYUDevo and by tagging me, @drbarbamorgangardner. I look forward to another sacred experience as we review your answers through video or written testimony.

- How has God shown you that He knows you?
- What is your unique role in this gathering?
- What are you doing to hear Him?
- How is He guiding you to lead today?

- What have you heard from the Spirit today that was not said vocally?
- How are you keeping your eyes riveted on the Savior?
- Where do you stand?
- How have you received God’s power through keeping your covenants?
- How is Christ perfecting you?
- How are you leading out in love?

In conclusion, I echo parts of the dedicatory prayer Joseph Smith offered in the Kirtland Temple as my prayer for you:

[We ask that Thy servants] *may grow up in thee, and receive a fulness of the Holy Ghost, and be organized according to thy laws, and be prepared to obtain every needful thing. . . .*

*And we ask thee, Holy Father, that thy servants may go forth from this house armed with thy power, and that thy name may be upon them, and thy glory be round about them, and thine angels have charge over them. . . .*

*. . . Help thy servants to say, with thy grace assisting them: Thy will be done, O Lord, and not ours. . . .*

*O Lord God Almighty, hear us in these our petitions, and answer us from heaven, thy holy habitation, where thou sittest enthroned, with glory, honor, power, majesty, might, dominion, truth, justice, judgment, mercy, and an infinity of fulness, from everlasting to everlasting.*<sup>68</sup>

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### Notes

1. See Edward L. Kimball and Andrew E. Kimball Jr., *Spencer W. Kimball: Twelfth President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1977), 334. See also Gordon B. Hinckley, “First Presidency Message: ‘Do Ye Even So to Them,’” *Ensign*, December 1991.
2. Isaiah 55:8–9.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 88:78.
4. M. Russell Ballard, “Women of Dedication, Faith, Determination, and Action,” BYU Women’s Conference address, 1 May 2015.
5. Russell M. Nelson, “A Plea to My Sisters,” *Ensign*, November 2015.

6. See *Joan of Arc*, BYU Broadcasting, docudrama video, November 2015, [byutv.org/joan-of-arc/details](http://byutv.org/joan-of-arc/details).
7. Gérald Caussé, in *Joan of Arc*, BYU Broadcasting, 25:52–26:07.
8. Joan of Arc, in *Joan of Arc: In Her Own Words*, comp. and trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Turtle Point Press, 1996), 16, 131.
9. Joan of Arc, in *The Trial of Jeanne d’Arc*, trans. W. P. Barrett (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1931), 120.
10. Joan of Arc, in George Bernard Shaw, *Saint Joan* (1923), scene 5.
11. Joan of Arc, in Maxwell Anderson, *Joan of Lorraine: A Play in Two Acts* (1946), act 2, interlude 3.
12. Russell M. Nelson, “Choices for Eternity,” worldwide devotional for young adults, 15 May 2022; emphasis in original.
13. Nelson, “Choices for Eternity.”
14. Nelson, “Choices for Eternity.”
15. Nelson, “Choices for Eternity”; emphasis in original.
16. Joseph F. Smith, 17 March 1914, in “President Smith’s Address,” *Minutes of the General Board of Relief Society* 5 (1914): 55.
17. Russell M. Nelson, “Hear Him,” *Ensign*, May 2020.
18. Russell M. Nelson, “Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives,” *Ensign*, May 2018; quoting Joseph Smith, *HC* 3:381 (27 June 1839); cited in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2007), 132.
19. Kevin J Worthen, “The Power of Prophetic Promises,” BYU devotional address, 10 January 2023.
20. Elaine S. Dalton, “Now Is the Time to Arise and Shine!” *Ensign*, May 2012; quoting 2 Nephi 32:5.
21. Pearl and Russell M. Nelson, in Joy D. Jones, “An Especially Noble Calling,” *Ensign*, May 2020.
22. Russell M. Nelson, in “Interview with President Nelson and Elder Stevenson in Chile,” Church Newsroom, YouTube video, 30 October 2018, 6:21–6:25, [youtube.com/watch?v=hOc2R2IpK7w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hOc2R2IpK7w).
23. Doctrine and Covenants 93:11–12, 16–17.
24. Doctrine and Covenants 93:19–20.
25. Russell M. Nelson, “Drawing the Power of Jesus Christ into Our Lives,” *Ensign*, May 2017; emphasis in original; see Helaman 8:15.
26. Sharon G. Larsen, “Fear Not: For They That Be with Us Are More,” *Ensign*, November 2001.
27. Sheri L. Dew, “You Were Born to Lead, You Were Born for Glory,” BYU devotional address, 9 December 2003.
28. Russell M. Nelson, “Spiritual Treasures,” *Ensign*, November 2019.
29. Nelson, “Spiritual Treasures”; emphasis in original.
30. Russell M. Nelson, “Embrace the Future with Faith,” *Ensign*, November 2020.
31. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:19.
32. “Priesthood Principles,” *General Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, July 2021 (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ, 2021), 3.0 (p. 26).
33. Doctrine and Covenants 87:8.
34. David B. Haight, “Come to the House of the Lord,” *Ensign*, May 1992.
35. Doctrine and Covenants 84:20.
36. Doctrine and Covenants 84:38.
37. Dale G. Renlund, “Accessing God’s Power Through Covenants,” *Liahona*, May 2023; see Doctrine and Covenants 109:14–15; see also D. Todd Christofferson, “The Power of Covenants,” *Ensign*, May 2009, note 5.
38. See “About the Temple Endowment,” Temples, Church of Jesus Christ, [churchofjesuschrist.org/temples/what-is-temple-endowment](http://churchofjesuschrist.org/temples/what-is-temple-endowment).
39. Dallin H. Oaks, “Love and Law,” *Ensign*, November 2009.
40. John 3:16.
41. See Oaks, “Love and Law.”
42. Doctrine and Covenants 88:32.
43. See Matthew 22:36–40; Mark 12:28–31.
44. D. Todd Christofferson, “The First Commandment First,” BYU devotional address, 22 March 2022.
45. Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Cost—and Blessings—of Discipleship,” *Ensign*, May 2014; emphasis in original; quoting John 15:12, John 14:15, and Matthew 5:19.
46. Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Second Half of the Second Century of Brigham Young University,”

BYU university conference address, 23 August 2021; emphasis in original.

47. See 3 Nephi 11:11; Doctrine and Covenants 19:18–19.
48. *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 69 (6:7).
49. Doctrine and Covenants 59:8.
50. Russell M. Nelson, “The Everlasting Covenant,” *Liahona*, October 2022. President Nelson added in endnote 3 of this talk, “A comprehensive discussion regarding *hesed* and the everlasting covenant is found in Kerry Muhlestein, *God Will Prevail: Ancient Covenants, Modern Blessings, and the Gathering of Israel* ([American Fork, Utah: Covenant Communications,] 2021).”
51. Russell M. Nelson, “Overcome the World and Find Rest,” *Liahona*, November 2022; emphasis in original.
52. Renlund, “Accessing God’s Power”; see Moroni 10:30–33 and Doctrine and Covenants 132:19–20.
53. Doctrine and Covenants 76:69.
54. See Moroni 7:48.

55. Doctrine and Covenants 76:95.

56. Doctrine and Covenants 84:88.

57. Doctrine and Covenants 132:20.

58. Patricia T. Holland, “‘One Thing Needful’: Becoming Women of Greater Faith in Christ,” *Ensign*, October 1987; emphasis in original.

59. Boyd K. Packer, “Lehi’s Dream and You,” BYU devotional address, 16 January 2007; see 1 Nephi 8:26–28, 31–33; 11:35–36; 12:18.

60. David A. Bednar, “Walk in the Meekness of My Spirit,” BYU university conference address, 28 August 2017; see also Guide to the Scriptures, s.v. “meek, meekness,” Church of Jesus Christ.

61. Doctrine and Covenants 25:16 and 14.

62. Doctrine and Covenants 84:106.

63. Doctrine and Covenants 121:41.

64. Doctrine and Covenants 135:1.

65. Joan of Arc, in Trask, *Joan of Arc: In Her Own Words*, 177.

66. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 27:54.

67. Matthew 28:18.

68. Doctrine and Covenants 109:15, 22, 44, 77.