

How Will You Carry His Name?

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On the heels of such an uplifting and inspiring general conference, I am honored to have the opportunity to bear my testimony of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and of the powerful potential it has to transform our everyday interactions as we take His sacred name upon us.

To set the stage, I would like to begin with two stories.

“An Example of the Believers” (1 Timothy 4:12)

As a young graduate, I went to work for an accounting firm. I was eager to demonstrate my worth, and I attempted to fulfill each task I was assigned with precision and efficiency. Beyond that, I often volunteered for extra assignments, and over time I built a reputation as an employee who would step up to whatever was asked of her.

Then came the request that gave me pause. An important reporting deadline was approaching, and our Fortune 500 client needed a physical inventory audit. I won't bore you with details of what the assignment entailed, but the key points

were these: the audit had to be done in person, it had to be done on a Sunday, and I was the person they wanted to do it. You see the dilemma.

I was fully committed to supporting my team. But I had also made a commitment to myself and to my God that I would avoid working on the Sabbath, except as strictly necessary. So I approached my manager and explained to her that I was a “Mormon.”

Now let me pause here and explain that this conversation happened prior to President Russell M. Nelson's divinely inspired corrections regarding the name of the Church.¹ While I should have said I belong to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I didn't. So, in retelling, I'm going to stick to the words I actually used.

I explained to my manager that I was a Mormon and that an important facet of my religious observance was keeping the Sabbath day holy. I emphasized that while I did not want to work on Sunday, I wasn't trying to shirk. I would be glad to take two Saturday assignments if I

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could be relieved of this one. The counteroffer seemed reasonable to me.

My manager smiled kindly and then firmly denied my request. She said, “I understand. I’ve worked with Mormons before, and I know that’s your preference. But at the end of the day, everyone just steps up and takes one for the team.”

Disappointed, I offered a silent prayer: “Father, give me the words to help her understand.”

As I concluded that prayer, my mind was immediately drawn to a colleague I had worked with during a summer internship. This colleague would arrive every Friday morning at 5 a.m. in order to leave by 3 p.m. because as an Orthodox Jew he was prohibited from driving on Shabbat, which began Friday at sundown. Although the sun didn’t set until closer to 7 p.m., this colleague valued his commitment so deeply that no amount of Los Angeles traffic could frustrate his important religious observance.

The Spirit whispered to me, “That colleague’s faith is the key to helping your manager understand.”

I took a deep breath and tried again: “Oh, I’m so sorry. I think I misexplained. I’m actually an *Orthodox* Mormon.”

It was as if a light came on for my manager, and her entire demeanor and response were wholly changed. Now that she understood the depth of my conviction, she was happy to accommodate my request.

What an incredible thing; the small word *orthodox* conveyed such powerful meaning because of individuals who have lived their faith with exactness and integrity. Through the example of a believing Jewish colleague, the way had been paved for me to exercise my own devotion. As members of the Church of Jesus Christ, we are empowered each week with the sacred opportunity to take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ—a designation that is far weightier than even the word *orthodox*.

In the words of Elder M. Russell Ballard, “The name the Savior has given to His Church tells us exactly who we are and what we believe.”² The question for you today then becomes “How do we carry that name?”

“I Will Shew Thee My Faith by My Works” (James 2:18)

Prior to coming to BYU, I spent several years on the faculty at Harvard Business School, where I had the opportunity to teach and interact with many amazing professionals.

I loved the Savior and I loved my students, and although I was not free to speak as candidly as we are blessed to do here at BYU, I took the opportunity to regularly speak of matters of eternal importance and to model Christlike attributes.

I was trying my best to be, as Paul admonished us, “an example of the believers.”³ And if I’m being honest, I *thought* I was doing pretty well. But the Lord knew I could do better.

One night after a conference, I went out with several colleagues. As the evening progressed, someone noticed I wasn’t drinking—which prompted the usual inquiry: “Abigail, are you a Mormon?”

As I responded in the affirmative, a nearby colleague dropped his drink and exclaimed: “Really? I would have never guessed!” He continued with dubious amazement: “But you’re not a *fully practicing* Mormon, right?”

At this point I was feeling a little bit humiliated and confused. What about me had screamed “not a member of the Church of Jesus Christ”? I dressed modestly, kept the Word of Wisdom, used clean language, and faithfully attended my worship services—all common litmus tests for an outsider questioning our faith. Beyond that, I had been trying to express my discipleship in the way I lived, in the way I loved, and in the way I served. Where had I gone wrong?

Befuddled, I affirmed my devotion to my faith and invited my colleague to ask me any question he liked. I had lived outside of Utah for most of my adult life, and this was not my first time being questioned about beliefs. I fully anticipated the usual litany of personal questions: “Have you ever smoked?” “Were you chaste before marriage?” And the one that always makes me laugh: “Do you wear ‘special underwear’?”

But none of these were on the quiz that night. Instead, my colleague looked at me earnestly and asked, “Do you do genealogy?”

Defeated, I feebly and honestly had to admit, “Well, not very much.”

My colleague then informed me that he had once known a devout member who had explained the importance of genealogy in the context of eternal families and temples. While I attempted to save the moment by sharing my own convictions on these revealed truths, my colleague soon lost interest, and I knew that I had missed an important opportunity. My actions—or inactions, in this case—had spoken louder than my words. It was impossible to accurately convey the depth of my convictions when they were so starkly juxtaposed against my lackadaisical negligence to an inspired prophetic invitation.

What this colleague had once supposed about members of the Church of Jesus Christ was weakened rather than strengthened by my example.

Again, I would ask, “How do we carry His name?”

**“A City That Is Set on an Hill Cannot Be Hid”
(Matthew 5:14)**

In both of these stories, my actions directly influenced what my colleagues came to know about me and what they had inferred by association about members of the Church. In a similar vein, their previous interactions with faithful members—both from our Church and from other religious denominations—had shaped their understanding of what to expect from a believer.

Over the last seven years, as I have been privileged to work here at BYU, I have been distinctly impressed that your challenges and opportunities to showcase what it means to be a believer will be even greater than mine.

Because I lived outside of Utah for most of my professional career and graduated from a non-BYU school, I have at times been what you might call a “member incognito.” By contrast, because you are receiving your education at a Church school and will someday start your career with a prestigious BYU degree stamped upon your diploma, you are immediately and visibly marked as a member of the Church. You will not likely fly under the radar.

As with the experiences I have shared, what people infer from your membership, what they

come to believe about BYU, and, more importantly, perhaps all they know about the restored gospel of Jesus Christ will, in many instances, be a direct consequence of their interactions with you.

In a very literal sense, the Savior is describing each one of you in His instruction that we must be “the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill [that] cannot be hid.”⁴

In recounting his visit from the angel Moroni, Joseph Smith recorded the following:

*He called me by name, and said unto me that he was a messenger sent from the presence of God to me . . . ; that God had a work for me to do; and that my name should be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues.*⁵

Like Joseph Smith, you have been given a charge. You have been trusted by God the Eternal Father to take upon yourself the most sacred of all names: that of His Son, Jesus Christ. God has a work for you to do, and He invites you to “*always* remember [Jesus Christ], and *keep* his commandments.”⁶

When you renew those covenants each week, you recommit to conduct yourself—in words, in actions, and even in your most secret thoughts—in ways that will uplift His Church. In a very real way, you must choose whether your name—and, through your actions, the Lord’s name—will be interpreted for good or for evil. What a weighty but exciting responsibility.

How will you carry His name?

“That They Might Know Thee” (John 17:3)

What do we want to be known for?

While there are many good things for which we might wish to be known, today I will focus on two messages that I believe are critical for us to convey to the world.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ Is a Gospel of Love

In response to the pharisaical inquiry “Master, which is the great commandment in the law?”⁷ the Savior taught:

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

This is the first and great commandment.

*And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*⁸

Although this answer is articulated as two separate commandments, President Thomas S. Monson has taught that the two are inseparably and deeply intertwined. He taught, “We cannot truly love God if we do not love our fellow travelers. . . . Likewise, we cannot fully love our fellowmen if we do not love God, the Father of us all.”⁹

In His final hours with His disciples, the Savior taught, “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you.”¹⁰ As members of the BYU community and, more importantly, as disciples of Jesus Christ, how must our daily interactions communicate this love for the Lord and for His children? Let me pose some primer questions for your internal reflection:

- Do I watch for individuals who may be struggling and proactively help bear their burdens?
- Am I slow to criticize and quick to forgive?
- Do I avoid contention, striving instead to love and understand those with whom I disagree?
- Do I seek to elevate and celebrate the divine in *all* those around me?

If your answer to any of these questions is yes, then the question that follows is “How can I best continue to do that?” If your answer is “I am not quite there yet,” then the next question is “How can I do better?”

In the six months that have followed since last April’s general conference, my mind has repeatedly been drawn back to President Nelson’s talk “Peacemakers Needed,”¹¹ which contains an urgent call to action. If you have not listened to this talk, do it today. And if you have listened to this talk, do it again. I testify that there is prophetic wisdom in that talk for each one of you individually that will help you know how you can do better.

In his talk, President Nelson acknowledged with sadness the toxic contention, polarization, and evil speaking that have become all too

characteristic of our civic dialogue, personal relationships, and online interactions. He was pointed in his affirmation of the Savior’s declaration that “those who have ‘the spirit of contention’ are not of Him.”¹²

And then, with prophetic clarity, President Nelson provided this invitation, which has so deeply penetrated my soul. In this message the prophet of the Lord asked us to “please listen carefully.”¹³ This message is for each of you. Please listen carefully:

*My dear brothers and sisters, how we treat each other really matters! How we speak to and about others at home, at church, at work, and online really matters. Today, I am asking us to interact with others in a higher, holier way. Please listen carefully. “If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy” that we can say about another person—whether to his face or behind her back—that should be **our** standard of communication.*¹⁴

Love is not about simply abstaining from the negative, choosing to hold your tongue when your thoughts are unkind, or walking away rather than engaging in conflict. Love is instead, like all of the Savior’s commands, a much higher and much holier law.

We are instructed by the Savior to “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.”¹⁵

This difficult command can only be fulfilled as we learn to perceive: to see one another through His vantage, to focus on and elevate the goodness in others rather than just eschewing the bad, to believe with a fulness of heart that each person we encounter is a divine child of our Heavenly Father, beloved beyond compare by Him and, by virtue of His creation, endowed with the potential to become as He is.

Only when we *see* one another as He does can we start to *love* one another as He has loved us.

To carry His name, we must carry His love.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ Is a Gospel of Revelation

One of the most exciting and marvelous truths of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is that God

has not ceased to communicate with His children. As He ever did, He ever does, revealing principles of divine instruction essential to our day through His living prophets. Indeed, this is a defining foundation for the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

Through revelation we are taught of our unique relationship to the God of all heaven as the literal Father of our spirits.¹⁶ Knowing our divine heritage and perceiving others in this light, we are better equipped to trust in His love, perceive our own potential, and view others as He sees them.

Through revelation we are taught that we are created in His image, that our bodies are like sacred temples, that we are endowed with godlike power to create life, and that we are destined to reunite with our spirit through resurrection. This knowledge provides the foundation for outward manifestations of our reverence for our physical bodies, including living the principles of modesty and chastity, wearing the temple garment, and keeping the Word of Wisdom.

Through revelation we obtain a deeper knowledge of the Savior as the Only Begotten of the Father who suffered not only for our sins but also for all the heartache, illness, and vexation we encounter. We learn that no transgression is beyond the reach of His infinite Atonement and no despair is beyond the healing of His infinite embrace.

Through personal revelation you can come to know the truthfulness of these revealed doctrines and feel the depth of His love for you.

Knowing these truths—really knowing them—will help us keep the first great commandment and create in us an urgent desire to “love the Lord [our] God with all [our] heart, . . . soul, and . . . mind.” Loving Him must then motivate us to do as He asks: to “feed [His] sheep”¹⁷ and “keep [His] commandments.”¹⁸

This is a beautiful circle of truth. The great commandment is to love God, and to love God you keep His commandments as they are revealed by the voice of His servants the prophets.¹⁹ As you do, you will come to know Him and love Him more deeply—“one eternal round.”²⁰ It is a simple but profound framework.

How then does this framework manifest in the daily actions of a disciple of Jesus Christ?

First, disciples of Jesus Christ, motivated by their deep and abiding love for Him, seek to keep His commandments with exactness and integrity. We must be known as “orthodox believers,” if you will. I have often heard the phrase “the devil is in the details.” However, I think one might more accurately conclude that “the devotion is in the details” while “the devil is in the deviations.”

God does not give commandments that He does not want us to keep. Full stop. He does not provide counsel through His prophets that He does not want us to implement. Rather, He instructs, “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear,”²¹ and He invites all to “come, follow me.”²²

Every time we choose to deviate from His inspired commands—justifying that we are the exception or that our deviations are somehow inconsequential—we are stepping away from rather than toward the Savior. “No man can serve two masters.”²³ Our actions must bear witness to whose side we are on.

Second, disciples of Jesus Christ, motivated by a deep and abiding love for Him, trust in His timeline. We know that although much has been revealed, “many great and important things”²⁴ are yet to be revealed as we are taught “line upon line.”²⁵

This principle of revelation is crucial to our time. As students pursuing higher education, you are being trained to ask deep questions and to seek diligently for answers. Make no mistake, developing your intellectual capabilities is a godlike characteristic, and the Lord wants you to think deeply about issues of great importance.

However, as we pursue our questions, God expects us to have humility, to be willing to “be still and know that [He is] God,”²⁶ and, like Nephi, to rely on the fact that while we may “not know the meaning of all things,” the thing most worth knowing is that God “loveth his children.”²⁷

Since coming to BYU, I have had the privilege of sitting in my office with many exemplary disciples of Jesus Christ who have trusted me enough to come with questions, concerns, or even doubts about principles of eternal significance. A frequent occurrence in these visits is for individuals to enter my door with some sort of apology: “I know I should have more faith, but it is so hard”

or “I have tried, but I am still struggling” or “I feel like an imposter.”

Please listen to me closely. Faith is not the absence of doubt; it is not the absence of concerns or questions. Indeed, faith cannot exist without doubt—or else we would have perfect knowledge. Faith is a choice, and, foundationally, it is a desire to believe *in spite of* what we do not know or cannot yet understand.

These individuals who have come to my office are true examples of the believers. They are choosing to stay at the table and trust that the metaphorical brussels sprouts truly are better than a steady diet of BYU mint brownies.

Don’t walk away. *Don’t* walk away. Choose to hope rather than despair when the answers or the solutions that you are earnestly seeking aren’t forthcoming. You are seen.

Faith is the manifestation of your deep and abiding love for God paired with a humility sufficient to believe that *His* knowledge of and love for us surpasses “*all* understanding”²⁸—even that of brilliant BYU students and professors.

Your presence here today, listening to this devotional, shows that you are seeking revelation. Trust in the power of revelation to right all wrongs and make all things clear in His time.

As disciples of Jesus Christ, we must convey the conviction of a gospel centered in revelation and love not by shying away from the hard questions but by approaching those questions with a lens of faith.

How can our actions reflect this conviction to the world around us? Again, let me offer a few questions for personal reflection:

- Do I actively advocate for, support, and live with exactness the counsel of prophets, bearing witness through my words and actions?
- Do I exercise humility and patience in seeking to understand doctrine, policy, or historical accounts that do not presently resonate with my worldview, politics, or understanding?
- Do I seek diligently for personal revelation in my daily life and interactions?
- Do I call upon the Savior as part of my daily repentance?

To carry His name, we must trust and act upon His revealed commandments, exercising humility and patience in Him and in His timeline.

Disciples of Jesus Christ are not perfect, nor do they expect others to be; rather, they trust that only by and through Him is perfection possible.

“The Way, the Truth, and the Life” (John 14:6)

Within the next few years, you will graduate from this elite university. Your degree will open doors for you because people will understand the rigor and academic excellence of a BYU education.

But more importantly, your choice to come to BYU proclaims to the world your personal commitment to continue to learn of, serve, and know your Savior. That choice will make you distinctive among your peers and provide opportunities for you to influence what people around you know of His gospel and His love. You are His ambassadors, and His light must be reflected through your actions.

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I testify, from a lifetime of learning, that being “an example of the believers” does not happen by accident. It requires deep and sometimes painful introspection to determine how one can better emulate the Savior and more boldly defend His work. It necessitates love and the commitment to serve God and our fellow beings with full purpose of “heart, might, mind and strength.”²⁹

As disciples of Jesus Christ, we must take upon us not only His name but also His revealed perspective and His love so that those who know us might know Him, “the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom [He] hast sent.”³⁰

He is truly “the way, the truth, and the life,”³¹ and this is His restored gospel. Of this I testify, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. See Russell M. Nelson, in “The Name of the Church,” Official Statement, Newsroom, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 16 August 2018, newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/name-of-the-church. See also Russell M. Nelson, “The Correct Name of the Church,” *Ensign*, November 2018.

2. M. Russell Ballard, “The Importance of a Name,” *Ensign*, November 2011.
3. 1 Timothy 4:12.
4. Matthew 5:14.
5. Joseph Smith—History 1:33.
6. Moroni 4:3; emphasis added. See also Doctrine and Covenants 20:77.
7. Matthew 22:36.
8. Matthew 22:37–39.
9. Thomas S. Monson, “Love—the Essence of the Gospel,” *Ensign*, May 2014.
10. John 13:34.
11. See Russell M. Nelson, “Peacemakers Needed,” *Liahona*, May 2023.
12. Nelson, “Peacemakers Needed”; quoting 3 Nephi 11:29.
13. Nelson, “Peacemakers Needed.”
14. Nelson, “Peacemakers Needed”; emphasis in original; quoting Articles of Faith 1:13.
15. Matthew 5:44.
16. See Acts 17:27–29; see also Hebrews 12:9.
17. John 21:17.
18. John 14:15.
19. See Doctrine and Covenants 1:38; see also Amos 3:7.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 3:2.
21. Matthew 11:15.
22. Luke 18:22.
23. Matthew 6:24.
24. Articles of Faith 1:9.
25. 2 Nephi 28:30; Isaiah 28:10, 13; Doctrine and Covenants 98:12, 128:21.
26. Doctrine and Covenants 101:16; see also Psalm 46:10.
27. 1 Nephi 11:17.
28. Doctrine and Covenants 76:114; emphasis added.
29. Doctrine and Covenants 4:2.
30. John 17:3.
31. John 14:6.