

Learn of Christ

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Brothers and sisters, thank you for gathering today for this devotional. I am incredibly grateful to be at BYU. I look out today and see so many who mean so much to me, from dear family members to mentors, students, friends, and incredible colleagues who have impacted my life in profound ways. I am so grateful for you, and I feel tremendous love for you because of the many ways all of you in this community help me and help one another draw closer to the Savior.

For those of you who are currently BYU students, there is so much good ahead for you! This is a time in your life for focused learning. Learning is why you are here at BYU, and learning is also why you are here on earth. You are here to progress and to become who Heavenly Father has created you to become.

To progress and develop, we need to keep learning. That progress comes when we persist in our learning, whether it is something new or whether we are building upon previous learning. As we continue to learn, it brings confidence and purpose to our lives.

So what things should we persist in learning? With so many different choices about what to learn—even when we narrow it to the time that we are learning at BYU—what are the most important things for us to learn?

The Lord has given us guidance concerning how to focus our learning. He taught, “Learn of me.” More expansively, He said, “Learn of me, and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my Spirit, and you shall have peace in me.”¹

I want to focus on His invitation in the phrase “learn of me.” The Savior wants us to learn about Him because He is “the way, the truth, and the life.”² Coming unto Him and following Him is the only way to return to our Heavenly Father. Nephi taught, “There is none other name given under heaven save it be this Jesus Christ . . . whereby man can be saved.”³ Thus, He provides the path for us to make it back to Him and our Heavenly Father.

Integrating the study of our Savior into your education will profoundly impact your personal growth and your experience at BYU. As a BYU

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undergraduate student, one of the most impactful experiences I had was participating in the BYU Jerusalem Study Abroad. The scriptures just came alive as I studied there.

One day our group had some free time, so we left the Jerusalem Center and quickly went to the Garden of Gethsemane. I found a quiet place in the garden and began praying. After a short time a gardener asked me to follow him. We crossed the street, and he opened a gate. On the other side of the gate was a large private area that was part of the Garden of Gethsemane. The gardener let me walk in and motioned to me that I would be alone and that I could take my time there to pray. That day, part of the garden was for me. I had a very personal, private moment in which I prayed, expressed gratitude, and pondered the importance of the Savior’s great atoning sacrifice for me.

I think the Savior wants each one of us to metaphorically spend time in the garden learning how the Atonement of Jesus Christ applies to us personally. The gate that leads to His strength, His healing, His love, and His guidance is wide open to us if we choose to learn of Him.

Just as the gardener opened up that part of the Garden of Gethsemane to me, are there aspects of the Savior’s life and teachings that could unlock more needed help for your life?

President Russell M. Nelson has repeatedly asked us to learn of the Savior so that we can find more divine strength. He said, “Whatever questions or problems you have, the answer is always found in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.”⁴ But the next line in President Nelson’s talk is also crucial—our prophet invited us to “learn more about His Atonement, His love, His mercy, His doctrine, and His restored gospel of healing and progression.”⁵

I hope that today we will walk away with a greater desire to do what our prophet has asked: to learn *of the Savior* so we can draw more of His power into our lives. Today I will share three ways that learning of the Savior helps us access His divine strength:

1. Listening to His words
2. Developing meekness
3. Serving others

1. Listening to His Words

First, the Lord taught us how to learn of Him when He said, “Learn of me and listen to my words.”

The apostle Paul taught that “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”⁶ As we listen to the words of Christ, the Holy Ghost can confirm truth. This confirmation of truth by the Spirit builds our faith in the Lord and motivates us to act.

Studying the Savior’s words, both in the scriptures and through the messages of modern-day prophets, helps us access His strength and often brings solutions to our challenges.

A few years ago I woke up one morning to find a text informing me that our stake center was on fire. When I learned from the investigation that it was arson,⁷ I felt very unsettled, given how much time I usually spent in the building, and I wondered whether or not they would find the arsonist.

One day the Savior’s words came clearly to my mind: “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.”⁸ These words of the Lord softened my heart, and gradually I genuinely began to desire good things for the person responsible for the fire. I felt prompted to ask our stake to pray for this person so that they could also find healing.

Although the person who started the fire has never been identified, I find myself—even today as I speak—still hoping and praying that they have been able to heal and find peace. I learned that the Savior cherishes each of His children. His words changed my heart, brought peace, and gave me strength to turn the matter over to Him.

How can Christ’s words bring solutions to *your* life right now? How might they prompt you to think about a difficult situation or a strained relationship in a new way?

Consider the personal application in your life of these words spoken by the Lord:

- “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”⁹
- “Blessed are the peacemakers.”¹⁰

- “Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly.”¹¹
- “Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not.”¹²

I testify that learning of Christ’s words can unlock strength and provide solutions in our lives.

While the Prophet Joseph Smith was in Liberty Jail, his perspective on his challenges changed when he heard the word of the Lord. Pleading in prayer for the Saints while he was personally struggling in jail, the Prophet Joseph cried out to the Lord for help. The Lord responded to him by listing many difficult burdens that can happen in this life and then saying, “Know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good.”¹³

Just as the Savior taught the Prophet, all our experiences and learning can be consecrated to help us become more like the Savior. His words can enlighten us and can bring all things together for our good.

We learn of Him by listening to His words.

2. Developing Meekness

Second, we learn of Him by developing meekness. The Savior said, “Learn of me . . . ; walk in the meekness of my Spirit.” An essential part of learning about the Savior is our willingness to cultivate a soft heart and a desire to change.

Elder David A. Bednar explained the necessity of meekness in our spiritual development:

Meekness is . . . distinguished by righteous responsiveness, willing submissiveness, and strong self-restraint.

The Christlike quality of meekness . . . is strong, not weak; active, not passive; courageous, not timid; restrained, not excessive; modest, not self-aggrandizing; and gracious, not brash. A meek person is not easily provoked, pretentious, or overbearing and readily acknowledges the accomplishments of others.

*. . . A distinguishing characteristic of meekness is a particular spiritual receptivity to learning both from the Holy Ghost and from people who may seem less capable, experienced, or educated, who may not hold important positions, or who otherwise may not appear to have much to contribute.*¹⁴

Our Heavenly Father knew that our life on earth would provide many opportunities to learn meekness. Years ago, I was studying and wasn’t doing well. For context, imagine taking the same exam over and over again every day for more than six months and failing every time. Day after day I worked on this project, and I thought I was doing well. Day after day I received feedback that my work was really poor. It became very discouraging. It seemed everything I tried wasn’t up to par, and I began to believe that I was not cut out for this work. I considered changing careers, and I wondered if I should quit.

Seeing this, my wife asked me if I would like to receive a priesthood blessing from our ministering brothers. As I sat for the blessing, an unexpected thing occurred. I didn’t hear what I wanted to hear. Instead, I knew the Lord was teaching me through the blessing. I remember two things from the blessing. First, I was told that I was blessed to have someone providing me with helpful, difficult, and experienced feedback so that I could learn and progress. Second, through His servant, the Lord admonished me to repeatedly and frequently thank my boss for helping me learn.

Brothers and sisters, I think it is often easier to see solutions that require others to change, but in this case *I* was being asked to change. I was being asked to develop the Christlike attributes of meekness and gratitude and to cultivate a heart that was willing to change.

The following day I walked into the office and received a disheartening evaluation of what I had done. At the end of the discussion, I decided to act in faith and express gratitude. I told my supervisor, “Thank you.” And I meant it, even though it was more difficult to say the words than I had hoped. I told him that I knew it was taking me a long time to learn this and that it must not be easy for him when others he had worked with had learned much more quickly. I told him that I would keep working at it, that I would learn it, and that I was grateful for his help.

I still remember him sitting in his chair looking at me and saying, “Yeah, sure,” and then turning back to his computer as if nothing had happened. But something significant had happened to me.

I started to see my relationship with my boss differently. I felt strength and the hope that if I listened carefully, I could improve and learn well what I needed to do.

Eventually, with time and lots of practice, I gradually learned what I needed to. This impacted my life in incredible ways. Our work eventually received recognition, and it opened doors for important experiences that would happen later in my career.

Through this experience I learned how striving to develop meekness gave me the strength to persist. Reflecting on that point in my life, I realize that I was in the steep part of my learning curve. For many important things that we will do in this life, we must persist in order to get through the steep part of our learning curve.

So, whether you are working at learning a new concept in a required class, focusing on developing a Christlike attribute, or just beginning to make covenants with the Lord, I hope you will persist. Just keep trying, keep striving—there is hope. Whatever you do, don't give up on things that are really good and really important for your eternal progress. You are not alone in your learning. If you are developing meekness, you will be more teachable and more open to inspired influences and promptings from the Holy Ghost to change, even to repent. As you act on those promptings, the Lord can transform you in wonderful ways.

I love the apostle Peter's example of meekness. As Peter learned from Christ, he received frequent correction. Meekness is also associated with learning when we are corrected. For example, when the Savior was walking on the water, He called Peter to come to Him. Peter began to walk on the water, but then, as he began to sink, he cried, "Lord, save me."¹⁵

In answer to Peter's plea, "Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him."¹⁶

The first thing the Savior did was to save Peter. Then Christ taught Peter about his need for more faith when He said, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"¹⁷

In Yongsung Kim's painting titled *The Hand of God* [the painting was shown], the Savior is reaching to Peter in the water. The painting shows

Peter's perspective at his presumed moment of most need. As a result, the person looking at the painting sees the Savior reaching out to them. The artist seems to be communicating that the Lord's arms are reaching out to lift up the viewer just as He lifted up Peter.

Whether you feel as if your life is sinking or as though you are underwater, I bear witness that as you call unto Him in prayer, the Savior can lift you up through your challenges. He loves you. He desires you to learn—even to know—how He can strengthen you.

Peter learned from the correction he received from the Savior; he was meek, and he persisted in his learning of Christ. Because of his persistence, he developed great faith and worked mighty miracles. Developing meekness can also help us develop faith, access the Savior's strength, and prepare to experience mighty miracles in this life.

We learn of Christ by developing meekness.

Our learning needs to be guided by the Spirit. An important role of the Holy Ghost is to teach us of Christ. The Holy Ghost can guide us in our decisions. When the time came for me to choose a major, I was nearing the end of my mission. This thought came to me: "I keep teaching, 'If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God.'¹⁸ Am I living that?"

And so I prayed to know what I should major in. In a missionary apartment in Döbeln, Germany, I started flipping through the course catalog and reading about all the majors that were offered at BYU. I finally turned to statistics. And suddenly I felt the Spirit very strongly. I read about statistics, and it seemed interesting. I kept reading about different majors until I finished the course catalog. I had never taken a stats class. I didn't know a lot about it, so I thought, "Maybe I'll go through this course catalog again. Maybe I've missed something." When I got to statistics, the same thing happened. I felt the Spirit. I decided to take the introductory class in statistics and, ultimately, I majored in statistics.

This experience taught me that the Savior wants to speak to us through the Spirit. As we seek Him, He will guide us and reveal His will to us through the Holy Ghost. That personal revelatory process through the Spirit is often different for each of us,

but my experience provided me with hope that God would be involved in my life and that I could trust in the Spirit.

Mormon taught:

*The remission of sins bringeth meekness, and lowliness of heart; and because of meekness and lowliness of heart cometh the visitation of the Holy Ghost, which Comforter filleth with hope and perfect love.*¹⁹

The Savior wants us to learn to walk by His Spirit and to be guided by the Spirit in our lives.

3. Serving Others

Third, we learn of Christ and how to access His strength when we serve others. King Benjamin taught, “For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?”²⁰

The Savior’s mission on earth was to serve Heavenly Father’s children through His great atoning sacrifice and His compassionate ministering to all whom He encountered. If we are to learn of Him, we also need to learn to serve.

The invitations we receive to serve and minister in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints can teach us about the Savior and the strength He provides us to face life’s challenges. More than a decade ago, I was assigned and invited to minister to a brother named Paul. One day Paul called and said he needed a ride to the hospital in Salt Lake City. The request came on a particularly busy day, and I was the only one available to take him.

On the drive home after Paul’s surgery, I realized I had been away for close to eight hours, and I started feeling anxious about falling behind in my work. Just as I felt this, Paul began opening up and talking about his life. He told me about his childhood—how his father had not been a part of his life and how his mother had physically abused him. This led to him being in foster care from the time he was around eight years old. Eventually my friend met the missionaries, was baptized, served a mission, and married in the temple.

Paul said that a few years later he decided to visit his mother before she passed away. He tried

to speak to her, but she couldn’t look him in the eye. He felt sorry for her and told her that he had forgiven her, even though he still felt a lot of hurt in his heart.

As he shared his experiences on that car ride home, I felt more love for my friend Paul. I felt the Savior’s love for him, and I knew that the time I had spent with Paul had been significant and incredibly meaningful for me.

A few weeks later I heard a knock on the door of my office at work. It was Paul. He asked, “Would you help me do some family history?”

As we found some of his family names, he felt energized and more connected to his family. Then he said, “I feel like it’s time to do the work for my mother.”

We prepared the documents, and he was ready to take her name to the temple.

Later, Paul called me and asked if my wife, Robyn, would be willing to be baptized as proxy for his mother when he performed the ordinance of baptism for her. I will never forget that morning in the baptismal font at the temple and the Spirit we felt as Paul stood in the water with my wife and performed the baptism for his mom.

Recently, as I prepared to give this talk, I called Paul and discovered that minutes before my call he had been to his mother’s grave—which is far away—for the first time in decades. He said, “Darron, I now feel a love for my mom that I didn’t have for her for so long. After this life I’m going to meet her face-to-face, and I’m at peace with that now.”

It took Paul almost fifty years to get to the point where he felt comfortable taking his mother’s name to the temple. We each have an individual timetable when it comes to forgiveness and reconciliation. Robyn and I felt grateful to witness Paul’s beautiful discovery that the Lord could heal his relationship with his mom through temple service.

Elder Dale G. Renlund taught about the Savior’s power in this process when he said:

*The Savior loves to restore what you cannot restore; He loves to heal wounds you cannot heal; He loves to fix what has been irreparably broken; He compensates for any unfairness inflicted on you; and He loves to permanently mend even shattered hearts.*²¹

I know many of you are remarkable examples of reaching out and finding ways to bless the lives of others through service. I have seen it over and over in my time here at BYU. There are people all around you who are in need of a little kindness, encouragement, friendship, and support. I invite you to renew your efforts to look outside yourself and find someone for whom you can make a difference.

I hope you see the blessings of the many opportunities to serve in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and how those opportunities help you learn of Him. I hope you will respond to the invitations to minister to one another, magnify your calling, serve in the temple, actively participate in your ward, and serve during your time at BYU and throughout your life. I promise that will help you learn more about the Savior and the unique gifts He has given you to bless others.

If we are serious about learning of Christ and accessing His strength, we must make time for the Lord. Spending time with Him daily is imperative in order to draw closer to Him.

The temple is a house of learning. The temple is a place that is holy. The time we spend in the temple provides both a time and a holy, reverent place for the Lord to speak to us, comfort us, teach us, and strengthen us through the Spirit. One of the powerful places for us to learn about the Savior is in the temple. We see the joy of our Heavenly Father’s plan and the central role of the Savior’s Atonement. We learn about our relationship to God the Father and His Son. Spending time in the temple is one of the best ways of avoiding unproductive distractions and finding answers to our problems.

One day I was meeting with a man who was having marital issues. I didn’t really know how to counsel him; all I could think to do was to invite him to go with me to the temple. At the end of the endowment, we had not spoken, but he came up and thanked me profusely. “I am so glad you invited me to the temple,” he said. “I have found my answer.”

The temple is a place of revelation where we can learn of the Savior and find personal guidance for the decisions we are making.

My wife, Robyn, and I enjoy going to the temple with friends—such as Brother and Sister Cowan, who live in our stake. For the context of this story, it is relevant to know that Brother Richard Cowan is blind.

On one occasion, Brother Cowan and I were discussing the visual presentation of the temple endowment. As we prepared for an endowment session, I asked him, “Is there anything I can pay attention to visually during the session that we could discuss afterward?”

He said, “Yes, there is. Every time there is a picture of the Savior, can you put your hand on my arm so I will know what is being shown?”

During that session, every time a picture of the Savior was presented, I touched Brother Cowan’s arm and held my hand there for as long as the picture of the Savior was shown.

Some of Brother Cowan’s responses were, “Wow!” “Really?” and “Thank you.”

This reminded me of the joy I feel when I look for the Lord in my life. It is special when we have the chance to share that experience with others.

The ordinances of the temple teach us of Christ, and the promises we make there can help us progress and improve our lives as we bind ourselves to Him and internalize the promises we make. Spending time in the temple is one way that we can open the gate to receive the great blessings of strength, healing, love, and guidance that the Lord wants to provide us.

Brothers and sisters, I have great hope for your future because I know you have access to the powerful truths we have discussed today. I invite you to make time to learn about the Savior and ponder His Atonement for you. This can open your heart to learn more about the perfect love He feels for you. As you persistently make learning of Him a priority in your daily life, you will be incredibly blessed.

I testify that Jesus is the Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. He lives. I witness that there is enabling power as we learn of Him. I testify that His Atonement can help us change. I know the Book of Mormon is another witness of Jesus Christ and His Atonement. I bear witness that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is His Church. I testify that the Prophet Joseph

Smith learned from the Savior and saw Him in the First Vision and that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. I truly testify that President Nelson, the First Presidency, and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles are “special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world.”²² Their teachings are so crucial for us today.

May you personally discover the blessings of learning of the Savior through listening to His words, developing meekness, and serving others. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. Doctrine and Covenants 19:23; emphasis added.
2. John 14:6.
3. 2 Nephi 25:20.
4. Russell M. Nelson, “The Answer Is Always Jesus Christ,” *Liahona*, May 2023.
5. Nelson, “The Answer.”
6. Romans 10:17.
7. See Adam Forgie, “\$5,000 Reward Offered in Arson of Provo LDS Church,” KUTV News,

4 March 2021, [kutv.com/news/local/feds-local-police-offer-5000-reward-in-arson-of-provo-lds-church](https://www.kutv.com/news/local/feds-local-police-offer-5000-reward-in-arson-of-provo-lds-church).

8. Matthew 5:44.
9. Matthew 6:33.
10. Matthew 5:9.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 121:45.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 6:36.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 122:7.
14. David A. Bednar, “Meek and Lowly of Heart,” *Ensign*, May 2018; emphasis in original.
15. Matthew 14:30.
16. Matthew 14:31.
17. Matthew 14:31.
18. James 1:5.
19. Moroni 8:26.
20. Mosiah 5:13.
21. Dale G. Renlund, “Consider the Goodness and Greatness of God,” *Ensign*, May 2020; emphasis added; see Boyd K. Packer, “The Brilliant Morning of Forgiveness,” *Ensign*, November 1995; Revelation 21:4; Psalm 147:3.
22. Doctrine and Covenants 107:23.