

Spiritual Checkups

CARLOS E. ASAY

President Lee, platform guests, brothers and sisters, I feel privileged to meet with you this morning. I also feel humble and in desperate need of spiritual assistance as I share with you some personal thoughts that have preoccupied my mind this past summer.

Some of you may have heard a portion of what I plan to say. Please, however, bear with me, and perhaps the repetition will enhance your learning.

More than forty years ago, I read these lines:

*A thorough physical checkup every now and again,
Is considered a plan of wisdom by most clear thinking
men.*

So why not the same sort of checkup

In our quest for the ultimate goal?

A checkup, not just of the body

But one as well, for the soul

[Sunshine]

There was a time when I felt that I would live forever. I was young, my body was lean and strong, and my energy was almost limitless. I ran when I might have walked, I leaped when I might have lumbered. But as the years have passed, many rivets have come loose in

my marvelous machine, and I am reminded almost daily of the need to use wisdom and to take care of myself. Otherwise, I will not be able to “walk and not faint,” nor will “the destroying angel” pass by me (see D&C 89:20–21).

Yes, I receive an annual physical checkup, and I see my dentist at least twice a year. I watch my diet, I try to get the proper amount of rest, and I walk the boulevard almost daily. All of this is done rather religiously so that I might lengthen my days in mortality and enjoy a fulness of life.

I do subscribe to the philosophy stated by a noted physician: “To keep the body fit is a help in keeping the mind pure, and the sensations of the first few hours of the day are the best test of its normal state. The clean tongue, the clear head, and the bright eye are birthrights of each day” (William Osler, *A Way of Life*, p. 25).

However, I wonder whether I am paying sufficient attention to the spiritual aspects or dimensions of my life. I do so because I know

Carlos E. Asay was a member of the Presidency of the Seventy of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when this devotional address was given at Brigham Young University on 21 August 1990.

that “the spirit and the body [constitute] the soul of man” and that a synergistic relationship should exist between the flesh and the divine spark within all of us (D&C 88:15). I also wonder whether I am conducting frequent and thorough “spiritual checkups” to assess my standing before God and to determine whether I am on the path that leads to eternal life—my “ultimate goal.” It would profit me little if I were to close my life on earth with bulging muscles, a full set of teeth, and an anemic or sagging spirit.

It was the Apostle Paul who wrote, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves” (2 Corinthians 13:5). Paul didn’t include in his writings a specific checklist or testing instrument that we might use in determining our spiritual fitness. Nonetheless, I believe there are several ways of conducting spiritual checkups whereby we might obtain readings of the spirit comparable to EKGs, blood pressure, temperature, and other readings of the body.

Permit me to suggest five opportunities for proving our own selves or undergoing regular spiritual checkups. There are others, I am certain, that could be cited; however, these five tests of faith and faithfulness seem to be the most obvious and practical.

Four of the Five Spiritual Checkup Opportunities

1. Attendance at Sacrament Meeting

One spiritual checkup is related to the weekly sacrament service. In this meeting we partake of the sacrament and renew our covenants with the Lord. Moreover, we fast and pray and speak with one another concerning the welfare of our souls (see Moroni 6:5–6, 9). Those who participate in this service properly and worshipfully conduct a quiet self-introspection centered around searching questions:

- Do I remember the Savior and the Atonement?
- Do I really love the Lord?
- Have I taken upon me the name of Christ?
- Am I keeping all of the commandments?
- Does the Holy Spirit abide with me?
- What can I do more to strengthen my faith, increase my devotion, and demonstrate my love and gratitude to deity?

Answers to these questions provide a reading of our spirituality similar to the physical readings obtained with a thermometer or blood pressure instrument. Each answer ought to reveal needed changes. And, renewal and resolve should be uppermost in our minds as we partake of the sacrament.

It is said that immediately following a ten-minute presentation the average person remembers only half of what was said. Two days or forty-eight hours later the recall drops to 25 percent.

In a week’s time, the recall drops even more, perhaps to as little as 10 percent or less, depending upon the circumstances under which the instruction was given and our own receptivity. Little wonder God commands us to meet together regularly to renew our covenants with him.

Do you regard each sacrament service as a time to examine and to prove yourself, whether ye be firmly planted in the faith? Keep in mind these words of Paul, “But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup” (1 Corinthians 11:28), and, I would add, let him do so worthily.

2. Interviews with Priesthood Leaders

The second spiritual checkup occurs when we are interviewed by a priesthood leader and he ascertains our worthiness to serve, to receive a temple recommend, or to enjoy some other privilege in the Church. Each leader represents the Great Physician, even Jesus Christ,

and is authorized to ask us certain questions in confidence.

How often have you been asked:

- Do you sustain the General Authorities of the Church?
- Are you honest in your dealings with your fellowmen?
- Are you morally clean?
- Do you pay your tithing, etc.?

How we answer the priesthood leader's questions and how we feel in his presence reveals much concerning our standing before the Lord.

Recently, a sister-in-law was interviewed by a priesthood leader as she sought the renewal of a temple recommend. He asked:

"How long has it been since you received your first recommend?"

"Twenty-five years," she responded.

The stake president paused for several moments, then asked: "Are you twenty-five times better today than when you first went to the temple?"

She did some serious soul-searching on that occasion.

All of us must remember that we do not become automatically saints, in the full sense of the word, through baptism. We are baptized so that we might enter the kingdom of God; but once through that gateway, we must essay or strive to become saints of the living God (see D&C 125:2). Every LDS family should keep in mind the scripture found in Mosiah chapter 3, verse 19. This scripture reminds us that we must become saints through the atonement of Christ by yielding to the enticings of the Holy Spirit and by acquiring Christlike virtues.

Do you regard each interview with a priesthood leader as a time to examine and to prove yourself, whether ye be firmly planted in the faith?

3. Temple Attendance

A third opportunity to receive a spiritual checkup occurs in the temple. It is recorded that the house of the Lord is a place where we may grow up in God, receive a fulness of the Holy Ghost, be organized according to divine laws, and be prepared to obtain every needful thing (see D&C 109:15).

However, the realization of these temple blessings is predicated upon our personal worthiness and faithfulness. One who goes to the temple worthily draws closer to the Lord and feels of his holy presence. But one who goes to the temple unworthily and under false pretenses does so with a bothersome conscience and fails to receive the instruction in an edifying manner. Let me illustrate.

A few years ago, my wife and I attended an afternoon session in the Salt Lake Temple. The company was small, consisting of no more than a dozen men and a dozen women. I scanned the group, casually noting that all were strangers to me except my wife. We were instructed in the first room and then moved to the next. As we took our seats in the second room, there was a slight commotion. I looked about to see what was wrong. In doing so, I saw a woman leave the room. All of us assumed that she was ill or had perhaps forgotten a piece of clothing. The interruption was brief and the instruction resumed. It was a refreshing temple experience for us, and we returned home rejoicing.

The next day I received a very unusual telephone call. My secretary came to my office door and said: "A woman wants to speak with you, but she won't give me her name."

I picked up the phone and announced myself. The caller promptly asked, "Elder Asay, what do you know about me?"

"How can I answer your question," I responded, "when you haven't even given me your name?"

She continued, “You were in the three o’clock temple session yesterday, weren’t you?”

“Yes,” I answered, “I was there.”

She said, “Do you remember someone walking out of the second room?”

“Yes,” I replied.

“It was I who walked out of the temple yesterday. Elder Asay, what do you know about me?”

At this point the conversation was becoming a bit tedious, and I said, “My dear, please don’t play games with me. Unless you tell me who you are, how can I respond to your query?”

Almost totally ignoring what I said, the woman confessed: “It was I who left the temple room yesterday before the instruction began. I did so because you looked at me with a searching look, and you made me feel as though I was unworthy to be there.” Once again, she asked, “What do you know about me?”

I said: “Well, if you attended the temple worthily yesterday, I apologize for how I may have looked at you and for how I may have made you feel. However, if you were there unworthily, I make no apology.”

There was a long silence and then soft sobbing over the telephone. Finally, the woman confessed: “I have committed a serious sin, and I attended the temple yesterday under false pretenses. However,” she added, “I visited my bishop last night, and I will follow his counsel and advice.”

This unusual experience reminded me of the words of Moroni:

Then will ye longer deny the Christ, or can ye behold the Lamb of God? Do ye suppose that ye shall dwell with him under a consciousness of your guilt? Do ye suppose that ye could be happy to dwell with that holy Being, when your souls are racked with a consciousness of guilt that ye have ever abused his laws?

Behold, I say unto you that ye would be more miserable to dwell with a holy and just God, under a consciousness of your filthiness before him, than ye would to dwell with the damned souls in hell.

For behold, when ye shall be brought to see your nakedness before God, and also the glory of God, and the holiness of Jesus Christ, it will kindle a flame of unquenchable fire upon you. [Mormon 9:3–5]

It is most significant that the woman judged herself through my eyes in the house of the Lord. She verified in part the truth that “no unclean thing can dwell with God” or abide his holy presence (1 Nephi 10:21), for “the piercing eye of the Almighty God” sees all (Jacob 2:10). Nothing escapes his view, whether it be done in private or in public. Therefore, we should be consistent in our righteousness and strive to reach that state of goodness whereby we feel comfortable in his holy house—the place where he manifests himself to his people (see D&C 109:5).

Do you regard each visit to the temple as a time to examine and prove yourself, whether ye be planted firmly in the faith?

4. Reading/Pondering Scriptures

A fourth way of undergoing a spiritual exam or checkup is by reading and pondering selected scriptures. A modern scripture reads:

These words are not of men nor of man, but of me; wherefore, you shall testify they are of me and not of man;

For it is my voice which speaketh them unto you; for they are given by my Spirit unto you, and by my power you can read them one to another; and save it were by my power you could not have them;

Wherefore, you can testify that you have heard my voice, and know my words. [D&C 18:34–36]

Please note that the scripture states that we may hear God’s voice through the scriptures. That is why I refer to my scripture reading as

my daily interview with the Lord. He not only speaks to me as I ponder his holy word but he also holds before me a mirror of standards and principles that reflects my level of performance.

For example, there is one chapter in the Book of Mormon that I refer to as the “mirror” chapter. I speak of Alma 5. This scripture centers upon more than forty soul-searching questions, according to my count. One who reads those questions and answers them personally and honestly will obtain a fairly accurate reading of his standing before God.

Permit me to hold this mirror before your faces and ask but eleven questions:

And now behold, I ask of you, my brethren [and sisters] of the church, have ye spiritually been born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances? Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts?

Do you exercise faith in the redemption of him who created you? Do you look forward with an eye of faith, and view this mortal body raised in immortality, and this corruption raised in incorruption, to stand before God to be judged according to the deeds which have been done in the mortal body?

I say unto you, can you imagine to yourselves that ye hear the voice of the Lord, saying unto you, in that day: Come unto me ye blessed, for behold, your works have been the works of righteousness upon the face of the earth?

Or do ye imagine to yourselves that ye can lie unto the Lord in that day, and say—Lord, our works have been righteous works upon the face of the earth—and that he will save you?

Or otherwise, can ye imagine yourselves brought before the tribunal of God with your souls filled with guilt and remorse, having a remembrance of all your guilt, yea, a perfect remembrance of all your wickedness, yea, a remembrance that ye have set at defiance the commandments of God?

I say unto you, can ye look up to God at that day with a pure heart and clean hands? I say unto you, can you look up, having the image of God engraven upon your countenances? [Alma 5:14-19]

How did you fare? Did you have the proper answers to the questions asked? Did you pass Alma’s spiritual examination?

One who stands before a scriptural mirror and comes up short but who refuses to make needed corrections in his life-style reminds me of these inspired words:

For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:

For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. [James 1:23–24]

Do you regard the reading and pondering of the holy scriptures as a time to examine and prove yourself, whether ye be planted firmly in the faith?

Fifth Spiritual Checkup

A fifth spiritual checkup should take place as you participate in special programs such as BYU Education Week.

As announced, the theme for this gathering is “Education: Awakening Understanding.” The opening paragraph in the class schedule reads as follows:

“Welcome to Education Week—the sixty-eighth year of this rich tradition. Whether your interests include religious education, family relationships, self-improvement, art, literature, history, or dozens of other topics, Education Week can provide an enlightening and informative view. With a distinguished and distinctively qualified faculty, *the dawning of new realms of understanding* await you here” (emphasis added).

I underscore these words, *the dawning of new realms of understanding*, for they suggest that all of you will be participating in an educational reveille this week—a reveille bugled by 168 teachers and consisting of in excess of 1,000 different formations or classes. Each instructor is expected to sound his or her

trumpet in a way that will catch your attention, awaken your senses, and open your eyes of understanding to those things that matter most. Each of you is expected to apply himself or herself to learning and to awake and shake off the chains of ignorance in one way or another.

Winston Churchill said: “Men occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of them pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing had happened.” Such “stumbling” and “hurrying off” is not in harmony with the purpose and intent of this program. What is sought for here is serious soul-searching, conscious hungering of truth—even a quest for hidden knowledge—and a more consistent application of righteous principles in our daily living; otherwise, we shall not gain understanding nor shall we rid ourselves of the dust that accumulates from our falls.

Said Lehi to his children:

O that ye would awake; awake from a deep sleep, yea, even from the sleep of hell, and shake off the awful chains by which ye are bound, which are the chains which bind the children of men, that they are carried away captive down to the eternal gulf of misery and woe.

Awake! and arise from the dust. [2 Nephi 1:13–14]

Lehi’s appeal to his children may be 2500 years old, but it constitutes a timely call for us today. Many of us are asleep and oblivious to “things as they really are, and of things as they really will be” (Jacob 4:13). We, therefore, see things “through a glass, darkly” and miss the glorious views of life that make all the difference (1 Corinthians 13:12; see also 2 Nephi 1:24). And if we don’t wake up, our dozing will have a damning effect upon us forever—perhaps even making us captives of the enemy of our souls.

As you prepare to receive instructions in one or more of the 1,000-plus class offerings of

this educational experience or time of spiritual testing, perhaps the words of the prophet Jacob apply: “O my brethren [and sisters], hearken unto my words; *arouse the faculties of your souls*” (Jacob 3:11; emphasis added).

Whether you plan to attend one of the more traditional classes such as

- The Old Testament;
- Faith unto Life and Salvation;
- Revelation;
- The Profile of a Prophet;

or one of the more exotic titles like

- Snap, Crackle, Pop, or Soggy Cornflakes;
- A Juggler’s Life for Me;
- Danger: Burn-out Ahead!;
- There’s No Traffic Jam on the Extra Mile, etc.,

it is hoped that there will be a full investment of minds, spirits, and willpower. When all of the faculties of one’s soul are awakened by light and truth, knowledge is transferred into wisdom, wisdom leads to understanding, understanding provides a fulness of life, and God grants to men according to their wills.

The reveille or spiritual testing that I feel should be associated with this educational experience is centered in these scripturally based questions:

- Do you have a knowledge of God’s goodness, and do you have a sense of your own nothingness by comparison?
- Are you aware of God’s judgment and holy cause or purposes?
- Is your soul fully awake and able to fend off all forms of sin?
- Do you have a full sense of your duty to God, and are you walking blamelessly before him?

In effect, are you men and women of understanding?

Sense of Nothingness

King Benjamin made reference to an awakening, to a “knowledge of the goodness of God at this time” and to “a sense of [our] nothingness” (Mosiah 4:5). Such realization reminds all of us of our puniness before God and fosters feelings of humility—placing us in a teachable frame of mind.

We frequently sing these inspired words:

*O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the worlds thy hands have made,
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,
Thy pow’r thru out the universe displayed;
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to thee,
How great thou art! How great thou art!
And when I think that God, his Son not sparing,
Sent him to die, I scarce can take it in,
That on the cross my burden gladly bearing
He bled and died to take away my sin,
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to thee,
How great thou art! How great thou art!* [“How Great Thou Art,” *Hymns*, 1985, no. 86, verses 1 and 3]

We need not cower before our Maker or engage in denigrating practices, but we must allow his greatness and goodness to bend our knees and to lift our eyes ever Godward. If we don’t, our spiritual progress will be stunted and our quest for understanding detoured.

Do you have a knowledge and understanding of God’s goodness? Do you have a sense of your own nothingness? Are you humble and teachable as this Education Week begins?

God’s Cause and Judgment

The Psalmist wrote: “Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment, even unto my cause, my God and my Lord” (Psalms 35:23). Unless we stir within us an awareness of God and his holy purposes, much of what we learn here will be lost and quickly forgotten. We will have no hooks upon which to hang our newfound knowledge. But if we keep uppermost in our

minds the Great Planner and his great plan, all that we learn here will be placed in proper perspective and have real meaning.

Moses did not fully understand the judgment of God until he climbed Mount Nebo. However, once he placed his feet upon that pinnacle and “the Lord shewed him all the land of Gilead, unto Dan, And all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim, and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the utmost sea, And the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, unto Zoar,” then he realized the full consequences of his transgression (see Deuteronomy 32:49–52, 34:1–4).

It is hoped that you will climb your own Mount Nebo on this campus and attend classes that will not only stir your souls but open to your eyes a panoramic view of the divine scheme of things and your standing before God Almighty.

Are you fully aware of God’s cause, his purposes, his plan, and his judgment and work among men?

“Righteousness, and Sin Not”

The Apostle Paul appealed to the Saints in Corinth to “awake to righteousness, and sin not” (1 Corinthians 15:34). In the modern vernacular, we would say, “Wake up and fly right.” Nephi said it this way: “Awake, my soul! No longer droop in sin. Rejoice, O my heart, and give place no more for the enemy of my soul” (2 Nephi 4:28).

Old Scratch, even Satan, specializes in singing the softest, sweetest, and most sinister of all lullabies. He lulls people to sleep by calling evil good, justifying a little sin, ridiculing goodness, and twisting the truth ever so slightly until it becomes false and vain and foolish doctrine (see 2 Nephi 28:7–9).

One writer referred to understanding as “that faculty whereby we are enabled to apprehend the objects of knowledge, generals as well as particulars, absent things as well as present,

and to judge of their truth or falsehood, good or bad" (John Wilkins; emphasis added).

Our spiritual well-being depends upon our ability to discern between truth and error and to hold fast to that which is good. The question is asked once again: Is your soul fully awake and able to not only discern but to fend off all forms of sin?

Sense of Duty

Said Alma to the people in a city called Gideon: "And now my beloved brethren, I have said these things unto you that I might *awaken you to a sense of your duty to God, that ye may walk blameless before him, that ye may walk after the holy order of God*, after which ye have been received" (Alma 7:22; emphasis added).

Two questions follow: What is our duty to God? Are we walking blamelessly before him, after the holy order of God?

It is written: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

This statement answers one question, but what about the other? Perhaps it will be answered as you learn more this week about priesthood, ordinances, family, and other saving aspects of the gospel of Christ. And perhaps through this experience your resolve to "pay that that [you] have vowed" (Jonah 2:9) will be strengthened as you participate in classes, especially those similar to "Developing Self-Discipline."

If this program does nothing else for you, I pray that it will help you understand more clearly your duty to God and bolster your determination to walk the high road that leads to eternal life.

Spiritual Power

I fear that we underestimate the potential spiritual power that resides within all of us. Hence we ignore the need for spiritual fitness, and we allow our spirits to become flabby and

terribly out of shape. Rather than "put[ting] off the natural man," as we have been told to do, we allow him to gain the upper hand, thus wasting the inner and spiritual powers (Mosiah 3:19).

Perhaps I can illustrate those powers by sharing a quote from the Defense Strategy Seminar of the National War College in 1972. I quote:

The incredible feats of little Japan during World War II cannot be explained in terms of its meager objective resources, but must be attributed above all to the existence of a self-image that has translated into superior national morale. This national morale became an immense storehouse of power. A well-known student of Japan, Ruth Benedict, provides a fascinating illustration of this morale factor in her report of a Japanese radio broadcast describing the behavior of a Japanese pilot during the war:

"After the air battles were over, the Japanese planes returned to their base in small formations of three or four. A Captain was in one of the first planes to return. After alighting from his plane, he stood on the ground and gazed into the sky through binoculars. As his men returned, he counted. He looked rather pale, but he was quite steady. After the last plane returned, he made out a report and proceeded to Headquarters. At Headquarters he made his report to the Commanding Officer. As soon as he had finished his report, however, he suddenly dropped to the ground. The officers on the spot rushed to give assistance, but alas! he was dead. On examining his body it was found that it was already cold, and he had a bullet wound in his chest, which had proved fatal. It is impossible for the body of a newly dead person to be cold. Nevertheless, the body of the dead Captain was as cold as ice. The Captain must have been dead long before, and it was his spirit that made the report. Such a miraculous feat must have been achieved by the strict sense of responsibility that the dead Captain possessed."

To a non-Japanese, this story might seem like an outrageous yarn. But this writer himself heard the particular broadcast and was able to observe the

reaction of Japanese military personnel in occupied Shanghai. The story was believed almost without exception. It was common knowledge that a disciplined spirit was master of the body, that indeed “a composed spirit could last a thousand years.” Why should it not be possible that the spirit of a man could outlive his body by a few hours if that man had made duty and responsibility to the Emperor the central tenets of his life? [John G. Stoessinger, “The Nature of Power,” reprinted in *The Might of Nations: World Politics in Our Time*, 3rd ed. (New York: Random House, 1969), pp. 15–27]

Let me read that last sentence once again, substituting some words. “Why should it not be possible that the spirit of a man could outlive his body . . . if that man had made duty and responsibility to *God* the central tenets of his life?”

A knowledge of who we are, a self-image that is ennobling, a strict sense of moral responsibility, a disciplined spirit, and a keen sense of duty to God—these are the keys to spiritual power.

People of Understanding

Throughout the scriptures we read of people who were spiritually strong and who had understanding—a most coveted character trait. In the book of Ezra, a group was referred to as “men of understanding” (Ezra 8:16). Abigail was mentioned as a “woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance” (1 Samuel 25:3). God gave Daniel and his associates “wisdom and understanding” that was ten times better than that of all the magicians and astrologers in the country (Daniel 1:20). And, of course, there was Solomon, and the sons of Mosiah, and Moroni. Such spiritual giants remind us of the need for real spiritual fitness because “a man [or woman] of understanding” (according to holy writ) is of “an excellent spirit” (Proverbs 17:27).

I find it interesting that men and women of understanding are described in the Old Testament as people who

- have wisdom (Proverbs 10:23),
- hold their peace (Proverbs 11:12, 17:28),
- follow good leaders (Proverbs 12:11),
- are slow to wrath (Proverbs 14:29),
- seek knowledge (Proverbs 15:14),
- walk uprightly (Proverbs 15:21), and
- hear reproof (Proverbs 15:32).

I also find it interesting to note that in holy writ, understanding is acquired by

- seeking it (Proverbs 4:7),
- pondering truth (D&C 110:1; 138:11, 29; Psalms 49:3),
- keeping the commandments (D&C 1:24),
- searching the scriptures (Alma 17:2; 32:28, 34),
- studying language (Mosiah 1:2),
- applying hearts (Mosiah 12:27; Proverbs 2:2),
- loving God (Mark 12:33),
- sinning no more (Hosea 13:2; Job 28:28),
- trusting in God (Proverbs 3:5),
- receiving counsel of the Lord (Deuteronomy 32:28), and
- asking for it (1 Kings 3:9).

Is this not the purpose of your experience here at this university—to seek understanding and wisdom and spiritual strength?

At a general conference years ago, President Brigham Young expressed concern about the Saints and their degree of understanding. He asked:

what do we understand? how far have we advanced? What do we expect to receive? How are we looking at things pertaining to this world? . . . Do we live our religion so that we improve on all the knowledge that God has given us? Do we live up to the light that the Lord has revealed? [JD 12:258]

In brief, President Young was asking: Are the members of the Church men and women of understanding? Are they progressing spiritually as they should? These are relevant questions today.

Conclusion

I have suggested, brothers and sisters, the need for us to conduct spiritual checkups on a regular basis. I have also proposed five occasions when we might assess our spirituality. These occasions are as follows:

1. When we partake of the sacrament in our worship services.
2. When we are interviewed by priesthood leaders—those who represent the Lord.
3. When we attend the temple—the house of God.
4. When we read “mirror” scriptures such as Alma 5.
5. When we attend educational conferences such as BYU Education Week.

All of these “checkups” have their place and are very important so long as we apply ourselves fully. Each should serve to awaken us from the so-called “sleep of hell” and to shake off the chains of ignorance by which we

are bound. Each should cause us to desire understanding or a more excellent spirit. And all five occasions should help us understand that spiritual fitness, that of which I have spoken, is more important than gold and silver and the things they can buy (Proverbs 16:16).

The Apostle Paul must have had this thought in mind when he advised Timothy,

Exercise thyself rather unto godliness.

For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.
[1 Timothy 4:7–8]

The children of Issachar were referred to anciently as “men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do” (1 Chronicles 12:32). If there was ever a time when such an understanding group (multiplied a thousandfold over) was needed, it is now.

God bless you. God bless your instructors this week. And God bless all of us to seek new realms of understanding by awakening the powers within—even the powers of the Spirit. I say this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.