

Prophetic Invitations and Promised Blessings

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My dear brothers and sisters, my wife, Shelley, and I are thrilled to be with you today. We both have very fond memories of being here forty-five years ago. Let me tell you a little bit about the two of us. Neither of us came from fairytale backgrounds or perfect circumstances.

My wife grew up in a part-member family. Her nonmember father passed away when she was seventeen, and a beloved older brother passed away a few years later. Fortunately, when Shelley arrived here at BYU, she was ministered to by incredible students and faculty just like you—for which I am eternally grateful.

While Shelley was here, I arrived as a young full-time missionary—before the MTC was even built. My parents were already struggling in a marriage that would eventually end in divorce. Soon after arriving here, I became homesick, and I became really discouraged. Then I was Dear Johned by my girlfriend at the time. In spite of all of this, it all worked out really well, because even though neither of us knew it at the time,

my future eternal companion and my very best friend was right here waiting for me. We both love being here!

Now, you may not come from perfect circumstances either, but I promise that if you will act with faith in your Heavenly Father and His plan—His great plan of happiness—and if you will act with faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement and follow God’s prophets, you will be given power to do whatever the Lord needs you to do and to become whatever He needs you to become, in spite of your circumstances.

While I am speaking today, the Holy Ghost will also communicate important truths to you and give you guidance that you need in your life. I encourage you to write these things down and then follow the feelings that come to you.

Randall K. Bennett, a General Authority Seventy of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, delivered this devotional address on March 19, 2019.

Follow the Prophets of God

First, I would like to tell you about the angel who consented to be my wife after I had made four marriage proposals. When Shelley was fifteen years old, she had an experience that changed the rest of her life. At a youth conference, she unexpectedly met an apostle. He did not know Shelley or her family, but he invited her to do something really surprising. He asked, “Will you kiss your father on the cheek every night and tell him that you love him for one full year?”

Shelley agreed, even though silently she thought, “This is going to be impossible!”

The apostle did not know that her father was a wonderful but very, very reserved man. Shelley had never seen her father kiss anyone, including her mother, and she had never heard her father say, “I love you,” to anyone. But, as impossible as it seemed, she decided to do what an apostle had invited her to do.

The first few nights as she kissed her father on the cheek and said, “I love you, Dad,” he did not react positively at all.

She persisted night after night, but her father would simply sit rigid, like a statue, while she kissed him on the cheek and said, “I love you, Dad.”

This continued for one entire year. By then it felt good expressing love to him, so she decided to continue. Eventually, one night she heard her father whisper, “I love you, too.” The next night, he kissed her on the cheek as well.

A few days later, her beloved father suddenly passed away from a heart attack.

Please don’t misunderstand. I am not telling you to kiss people who don’t want to be kissed. I am not telling you that it is okay for anyone to react to kindness with anger. I am telling you of the power that has come into Shelley’s life because she learned at a very young age to follow the prophets of God.

Shelley’s father did not join the Church before he passed away, but many years later another apostle asked her, “Shelley, do you know why the Spirit clearly prompted that apostle to invite you to do what he invited you to do?” He then said, “It was because Heavenly Father knew that you could

soften your father’s heart before he passed away so that he could accept the gospel on the other side of the veil.”

Shelley has been blessed in countless ways throughout her life by following the Lord’s apostles and prophets. As a result, she has blessed my life immeasurably. I love my eternal companion, and I am grateful for who she has become—first and foremost because of her love for God and also because of her trust in and willingness to follow His prophets.

You and I were reserved for this exact time on earth, and I am grateful for the blessings that come as we follow the direction of the Lord’s living prophet, President Russell M. Nelson, and his Brethren in the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. You can trust the Lord’s apostles. Love them. Sustain each one as a prophet, seer, and revelator. I promise you that great blessings will follow!

President George Albert Smith taught:

From father Adam until the present time, [those] who have had the greatest joy and happiness in life have been those who have followed the teachings of the prophets of the Lord; those who have ignored them have paid the penalty in many cases by sorrow and destruction, missing the great blessings that our Father has placed within their reach.¹

Question: Are you and I missing any of the blessings that our Heavenly Father has placed within our reach? As President Smith taught, following the prophets of God is directly connected to receiving Heavenly Father’s blessings. Shelley deeply desired to hear her father tell her that he loved her. She only received that particular blessing by doing exactly what an apostle had invited her to do.

President Ezra Taft Benson taught, “The words of the prophets, particularly the living president of the Church, are crucial.”²

Invitations and Promises in the Words of President Russell M. Nelson

Let’s review what President Russell M. Nelson, the living president of the Church, has powerfully

and clearly taught. We will begin with what he has taught about who *you* are and what you were sent to earth to do:

- *You are an elect son or daughter of God.*
- *You are created in His image.*
- *You were taught in the spirit world to prepare you for anything and everything you would encounter during this latter part of these latter days (see D&C 138:56). That teaching endures within you!*³

Brothers and sisters, that is who you really are, not what the world might be telling you! Because of who you are, you were sent to earth with a specific purpose:

*Our Heavenly Father has reserved many of His most noble spirits—perhaps, I might say, His finest team—for this final phase. Those noble spirits—those finest players, those heroes—are **you!** . . .*

*. . . You were sent to earth at this precise time, the most crucial time in the history of the world, to help gather Israel. There is **nothing** happening on this earth right now that is more important than that. There is **nothing** of greater consequence. Absolutely **nothing**.*

*This gathering should mean **everything** to you. This is the mission for which you were sent to earth. . . .*

*. . . You are among the best the Lord has **ever** sent to this world. You have the capacity to be smarter and wiser and have more impact on the world than any previous generation!*⁴

I promise that your contribution to this world will be profound if you will always be found following God's prophets.

In addition to reminding you of who you are, President Nelson continually invites you to become better, and he always promises blessings that will follow as you accept the Lord's invitations through him.

President Nelson has extended numerous prophetic invitations with significant promised blessings. Acting on those invitations will draw you closer to your Heavenly Father and your Savior. We will now review just six of the many

invitations that President Nelson has extended specifically to you. With each one, see if you recognize the blessings he promises you.

1. Ask Heavenly Father How He Feels About You and Your Mission Here on Earth

President Nelson has given us this invitation:

Ask your Heavenly Father in the name of Jesus Christ how He feels about you and your mission here on earth. If you ask with real intent, over time the Spirit will whisper the life-changing truth to you. Record those impressions, review them often, and follow through with exactness.

*I promise you that when you begin to catch even a glimpse of how your Heavenly Father sees you and what He is counting on you to do for Him, your life will never be the same!*⁵

This simple invitation is to ask Heavenly Father "how He feels about you and your mission here on earth." Follow the impressions with exactness. The promise is that "your life will never be the same!"

The world would have you believe that prophetic invitations are not important and will not make any difference in your life. However, I testify "that by small and simple things are great things brought to pass" in our lives (Alma 37:6).

Was the apostle's invitation to my wife simple? Yes! But it was really challenging!

Have you been asking yourself, "If an apostle asked me personally to do something, would I do it?"

What if it was really challenging?

I believe that you would!

Our living prophet *has* been inviting you personally. I pray that you will accept his invitations. I promise that as you do, you will be blessed—personally!

2. Learn All You Can About Jesus Christ and Follow Him

Let's review another important invitation and the incredible promised blessings God extends to you through His living prophet:

*If you proceed to learn **all** you can about Jesus Christ, I promise you that your love for Him, and for God’s laws, will grow beyond what you currently imagine. I promise you also that your ability to turn away from sin will increase. Your desire to keep the commandments will soar. You will find yourself better able to walk away from the entertainment and entanglements of those who mock the followers of Jesus Christ.*⁶

The invitation is to learn all you can about Jesus Christ and follow Him. To receive the beautiful promised blessings, what will you do to learn more about your Savior? What will you do to better follow Him? Listen carefully for more invitations and the associated promised blessings:

You will have days when you will be thoroughly discouraged. So pray for courage not to give up! You will need that strength because it will become less and less popular to be a Latter-day Saint. Sadly, some who you thought were your friends will betray you. And some things will simply seem unfair.

*However, I promise you that as you follow Jesus Christ, you will find sustained peace and true joy. As you keep your covenants with increasing precision, and as you defend the Church and kingdom of God on the earth today, the Lord will bless you with strength and wisdom to accomplish the impossible.*⁷

Do you believe you can accomplish the impossible? I promise that “with God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26; Mark 10:27).

For one full year Shelley told her father that she loved him, and she had no idea that it was doing any good. At times she felt great discouragement. We have all experienced feelings of discouragement.

But did you hear President Nelson promise *you* strength, wisdom, sustained peace, and true joy as you learn about and follow Jesus Christ?

I promise that as you come unto Christ and place Him at the very center of your life, He will bless you with every essential thing that you need. Do not let the world’s distractions displace or replace the Savior’s place in your heart or in your life!

3. Spend More Time Where the Spirit Is Present

An invitation that will help you place the Savior at the center of your life is the following:

*Spend more time—much more time—in places where the Spirit is present. That means more time with friends who are seeking to have the Spirit with them. Spend more time on your knees in prayer, more time in the scriptures, more time in family history work, more time in the temple. I promise you that as you consistently give the Lord a generous portion of your time, He will multiply the remainder.*⁸

Spend more time “in places where the Spirit is present.” Where can the Spirit be present? At your desk, in your room, in your apartment, at a park, in a class, even during an exam, and, of course, at church and in the temple. The Spirit can be present in any appropriate place where you and those you are with earnestly seek and desire to invite His influence.

The Lord will more than match your efforts. He will magnify your remaining time if you will generously commit time to communicating with Him, studying His truths, and assisting in His work.

4. Learn How to Hear and Follow the Whisperings of the Holy Ghost

Let’s listen as President Nelson continues to teach us:

*I promise **you**—not the person sitting next to you, but **you**—that, wherever you are in the world, wherever you are on the covenant path—even if, at this moment, you are not centered **on** the path—I promise you that if you will sincerely and persistently do the spiritual work needed to develop the crucial, spiritual skill of learning how to hear the whisperings of the Holy Ghost, you will have **all** the direction you will ever need in your life. You will be given answers to your questions in the Lord’s own way and in His own time.*⁹

So this is one of the promises: “You will have *all* the direction you will ever need in your life” if you will learn how to hear and follow the whisperings of the Holy Ghost.

Did you notice the other promise? You will be given answers! Will the answers always come immediately? Perhaps not. But I promise that the answers will come.

To do what the Lord needs us to do, we must have the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost. In fact, we cannot endure to the end without following the Holy Ghost's guidance and direction.

5. Prayerfully Study and Ponder the Book of Mormon Every Day

Two daily holy habits will powerfully invite the Spirit into your heart, your home, and your life:

My dear brothers and sisters, I promise that as you prayerfully study the Book of Mormon every day, you will make better decisions—every day. I promise that as you ponder what you study, the windows of heaven will open, and you will receive answers to your own questions and direction for your own life. I promise that as you daily immerse yourself in the Book of Mormon, you can be immunized against the evils of the day, even the gripping plague of pornography and other mind-numbing addictions.¹⁰

President Nelson invites us to prayerfully study and ponder the Book of Mormon every day. Isn't making better decisions—every day—what we all want? A wonderful young friend and student here at BYU shared with me how accepting this particular invitation has brought blessings:

I have had some struggles in the past resisting temptations, so when President Nelson invited us to read the Book of Mormon every day and made those promises, it struck me. He promised that we could be immunized from our temptations, and that got my attention. I have felt the power of that promise from a prophet of God. I have felt more strength to resist the temptations that used to be so hard to overcome because I read the Book of Mormon every day.

During my years in university, I remember vividly the stress of study, work, finances, papers, reports, finding better work, midterms, finals, a thesis, etc. At times it felt overwhelming. But

for me, daily prayer and scripture study powerfully magnified my ability to do all else that was required. These invitations are simple and the promises are great. Remember, "by small and simple things are great things brought to pass."

6. Serve Your Ancestors and Others in the Temple

President Nelson has also emphasized the importance of being in the temple as often as our circumstances permit. Again, see if you can identify the promised blessings:

Our need to be in the temple on a regular basis has never been greater. I plead with you to take a prayerful look at how you spend your time. Invest time in your future and in that of your family. If you have reasonable access to a temple, I urge you to find a way to make an appointment regularly with the Lord—to be in His holy house—then keep that appointment with exactness and joy. I promise you that the Lord will bring the miracles He knows you need as you make sacrifices to serve and worship in His temples.¹¹

Serve your ancestors and others in the temple. Being outward and other-focused instead of inward and self-focused will bring great blessings and incredible joy as you serve others. Another very dear young friend here at BYU shared how accepting the invitation to be in the temple has brought the miracles President Nelson promises:

I accepted this invitation from President Nelson hoping to simply receive the revelation and peace that time in the temple brings. In a fashion typical of Heavenly Father, my small efforts were magnified, and I received blessings that I never thought I would experience during this life.

Like many converts, I struggle with the concern that the rest of my family cannot enter into the Lord's temple with me. However, Heavenly Father used my efforts to remind me that miracles can and will occur as we act in obedience and faith. While I was home recently, my family unexpectedly asked me to take them through the temple during the upcoming temple open house. I testify that the sacred work done in the temple is amplified in ways that will bring us and our families eternal joy.

Take the Necessary Small and Simple Steps to Receive the Blessings

Prophetic invitations always come with promised blessings! These prophetic promises apply to each and every one of you. All you have to do is exercise faith and take the necessary small and simple steps to receive the blessings promised to you personally by the Lord’s prophet. My dear brothers and sisters, again I promise you that you can trust the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Like Nephi, if you will follow the Lord’s prophet, you can come to know that you are “highly favored of the Lord” in spite of afflictions (1 Nephi 1:1). Like the sons of Mosiah, you can also experience “incomprehensible joy”—in spite of adversity, sorrow, suffering, or your circumstances (Alma 28:8).

Wonderful gifts that we are given every six months are the general conferences of the Church in which we are taught clearly by apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ. During these conferences we are given the latest revelation from heaven for God’s children here on the earth—for us.

I invite you to spiritually prepare for and watch every general conference session. I am preparing by reviewing President Nelson’s messages from past years as well as those addresses given by each of the apostles at recent general conferences. As you watch the next general conference sessions, listen for apostolic invitations and their associated promised blessings.

I bear my witness that apostles of Jesus Christ are on the earth and that President Russell M. Nelson is the Lord’s prophet today. I love and sustain each of them. I pray for them and commit to continue following them.

Joseph Smith is the prophet of this great and last dispensation, the dispensation for which you were reserved to come to earth. I promise that you will draw nearer to your Heavenly Father and your Savior by prayerfully studying the Book of Mormon every day.

I bear my witness of the living reality of our Heavenly Father. He is aware of you. He knows you. He loves you. I bear my witness of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. He willingly journeyed to Jerusalem that last time knowing that He would suffer, bleed, and die for you. He did so because of His love for His Father and because of His love for you—for each and every one of you.

The Savior’s Atonement was not only universal and infinite; it was personal and intimate. He atoned for you, He knows you, and He understands you perfectly. I promise that if you will turn to Him, He will always help you. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. George Albert Smith, *CR*, April 1916.
2. Ezra Taft Benson, “Do Not Despair,” *Ensign*, November 1974.
3. Russell M. Nelson, “Stand as True Millennials,” *Ensign*, October 2016.
4. Russell M. Nelson, in Russell M. Nelson and Wendy W. Nelson, “Hope of Israel,” worldwide youth devotional, 3 June 2018, lds.org/new-era/2018/08-se/hope-of-israel?lang=eng; emphasis in original.
5. Nelson, “Stand as True Millennials.”
6. Russell M. Nelson, “Prophets, Leadership, and Divine Law,” worldwide devotional for young adults, Brigham Young University, 8 January 2017, lds.org/broadcasts/article/worldwide-devotionals/2017/01/prophets-leadership-and-divine-law?lang=eng; emphasis in original.
7. Nelson, “Stand as True Millennials.”
8. Nelson, “Stand as True Millennials.”
9. Nelson, in Nelson and Nelson, “Hope of Israel”; emphasis in original.
10. Russell M. Nelson, “The Book of Mormon: What Would Your Life Be Like Without It?” *Ensign*, November 2017; emphasis in original.
11. Russell M. Nelson, “Becoming Exemplary Latter-day Saints,” *Ensign*, November 2018.