

# *Hard Sayings and Safe Spaces: Making Room for Struggle as Well as Faith*

ERIC D. HUNTSMAN

Jesus ended His pivotal and heavily symbolic discourse on the Bread of Life by declaring:

*Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. . . .*

*He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. [John 6:53, 56]*

The crowds who had followed Jesus since His miraculous feeding of the 5,000 and the Jewish religious authorities who opposed Him were not the only ones who failed to understand His meaning. Even many of His own disciples exclaimed:

*This is an hard saying; who can hear it? . . .*

*From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. [John 6:60, 66]*

Somewhat plaintively, Jesus turned to the Twelve and asked, “Will ye also go away?” (John 6:67).

In response, Peter asked:

*Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.*

*And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God. [John 6:68–69]<sup>1</sup>*

The expression a “hard saying” has become a trope for any doctrine or practice that is difficult

to understand, accept, or follow.<sup>2</sup> Over the past few years, when I have asked my students what are hard sayings for them, although they have mentioned faith issues and apparent historical problems, they have increasingly spoken about life’s challenges—challenges that seem to call into question God’s love for them or struggles that they often feel they must endure alone, without the love and understanding of their fellow Saints. Such hard sayings include gender disparities, sexual and other identities, and racial and ethnic discrimination. In addition, they include a challenge that is common to almost all of us—the pain of loss and disappointment, whether that comes from the death of a loved one; poor physical, mental, or emotional health; or lost dreams.

These are challenges that do not go away easily. Rather, often they are struggles that we must deal with throughout our lives. While ideally we would all, with Peter, simply respond with seemingly immediate faith, the reality is as Moroni taught: “[We] receive no witness until after the trial of [our] faith” (Ether 12:6). Just as Jacob wrestled with an angel till dawn (see Genesis 32:24–29) and Enos wrestled all night before the Lord (see

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*Eric D. Huntsman, a BYU professor of ancient scripture and coordinator of the ancient Near Eastern studies program, delivered this devotional address on August 7, 2018.*

Enos 1:2–6), for many of us the trial of our faith often includes long—sometimes lifelong—struggles. I submit that these struggles are necessary to our progression, but they are not struggles that we should ever face alone.

While it is true that Jesus Christ and His Atonement provide us strength, healing, and salvation, in this life He often succors and blesses us through others. Employing the image of the Church as “the body of Christ” in 1 Corinthians 12:27, Quaker missionary Sarah Elizabeth Rowntree (1861–1942) wrote:

*Remember Christ has no human body now upon the earth but yours; no hands but yours; no feet but yours. Yours, my brothers and sisters, are the eyes through which Christ's compassion has to look upon the world, and yours are the lips with which His love has to speak.*<sup>3</sup>

This sentiment strongly supports the Church's renewed emphasis on ministering, which Elder Jeffrey R. Holland helped introduce by directly connecting it with Jesus's injunction to “love one another; as I have loved you” (John 13:34).<sup>4</sup>

### Ministering to the One

The Book of Mormon teaches that the obligation to love and serve one another is implicit in the covenants we make at baptism: we promise “to bear one another's burdens, . . . mourn with those that mourn; . . . and comfort those that stand in need of comfort” (Mosiah 18:8–9).

As part of her instruction regarding ministering, President Jean B. Bingham of the general Relief Society noted that Jesus is the model for ministering to the one:

*He . . . smiled at, talked with, walked with, listened to, made time for, encouraged, taught, fed, and forgave. He served family and friends, neighbors and strangers alike. . . .*

*. . . True ministering is accomplished one by one with love as the motivation.*<sup>5</sup>

As illustrated by His dialogue with the Samaritan woman (see John 4:4–26), Jesus's love

had no gender or ethnic bounds. The result of that encounter—one that flouted so many of the time's cultural expectations and constraints—was that an entire village of Samaritans came to Christ, leading the villagers to declare that Jesus was not just the Redeemer of Israel but “the Saviour of the world” (John 4:42; emphasis added).

Jesus's interactions were always tailored to the understanding and needs of the individual. When Martha, grieving at the death of her brother, expressed faith in the Resurrection, Jesus responded with testimony, declaring:

*I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:*

*And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? [John 11:25–26]*

Martha responded, “Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world” (John 11:27).

Conversely, when her sister Mary expressed her grief through uncontrolled tears, Jesus simply wept with her (see John 11:32–35), providing the perfect example of mourning with those who mourn.

Significantly, in Mark's version of the story of the rich young man (see Mark 10:17–22), Jesus showed that His love was not curtailed when one was unwilling or felt unable to follow Him. After the young man had expressed his prior obedience to the commandments, the Marcan narrator simply noted, “Then Jesus beholding him loved him” (Mark 10:21). While we have no idea what the young man's later choices—in this life or in the spirit world—might have been, we can be certain that Jesus continued to love him.<sup>6</sup>

Only by learning to follow the Lord's example of testifying to, compassionately mourning with, and persistently loving people in a variety of circumstances can we effectively minister to the one. As aspiring Christians but still imperfect Saints, we may not always understand the struggles of others or know how to help. But we can always love them, creating safe spaces where others—and often we ourselves—can struggle with the hard sayings in life.

### Creating Safe Spaces for Struggle

When I use the expression “safe spaces,” I do not necessarily use it in the same sense as some in our broader society use it. Rather than alluding to trigger warnings, the effects of micro-aggressions, or the need to shield ourselves from difficult language and ideas,<sup>7</sup> I am using it to refer to the creation of environments that are, on the one hand, places of faith where we can seek and nurture testimony but that are also, on the other hand, places where our sisters and brothers can safely question, seek understanding, and share their pain. This requires flexibility and sensitivity on our part; it requires that we listen as much as—or more than—we speak.

Sociologist Charles Derber, for instance, has warned of the danger of “conversational narcissism.” Sometimes we default to platitudes to avoid uncomfortable situations when we do not know what to say. Or, in an attempt to find common ground, we shift the conversation to our own experiences, rather than just listening or giving supportive responses.<sup>8</sup> Jesus’s example with Mary suggests just the opposite.

Even harder is overcoming our own implicit—and often explicit—biases and prejudices. Nonetheless, there is ample scriptural precedent that God loves all of His children, and we need to have that same openness.

Paul wrote:

*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: **for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.*** [Galatians 3:28; emphasis added. Compare 1 Corinthians 12:13; Colossians 3:11; Ephesians 6:8]

Likewise, Nephi declared:

*He inviteth them **all** to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female . . . ; and **all are alike unto God.*** [2 Nephi 26:33, emphasis added]

President M. Russell Ballard has taught:

*We need to embrace God’s children compassionately and eliminate any prejudice, including racism, sexism, and nationalism. Let it be said that we truly believe the blessings of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ are for every child of God.*<sup>9</sup>

Without diluting the doctrine or compromising the standards of the gospel, we must open our hearts wider, reach out farther, and love more fully. By so doing, we can create more space for love, testimony, mourning, and agency. We can then find not only peace but even joy in the midst of the struggle.

### Spaces for Love

Tom Christofferson provided a powerful example of how love created space for him in his lifelong wrestle with one of his own hard sayings. In his 2017 memoir *“That We May Be One”*: *A Gay Mormon’s Perspective on Faith and Family*, he recounted his own journey with homosexuality and the gospel. Although Brother Christofferson was careful to underscore that his experience was his alone and might not apply to all LGBTQ+ Latter-day Saints,<sup>10</sup> his journey illustrated what a decisive role love can have as one makes hard decisions about his or her life.

A few years after he came out to his family and after he had asked to be excommunicated, his mother explained to his brothers and their wives:

*The only thing we can really be perfect at is loving each other. . . . The most important lesson your children will learn from how our family treats their Uncle Tom is that nothing they can ever do will take them outside the circle of our family’s love.*<sup>11</sup>

His family did not wait for him to return to church before they could fully love him,<sup>12</sup> and at a much later point in his life, an inspired bishop and the Saints of New Canaan in Connecticut warmly accepted and supported him, not imposing any prequalifications.<sup>13</sup>

While this love eventually helped Brother Christofferson come back to full membership in the Church, it is clear that both his birth and ward

families would have continued to love and fellowship him regardless of what choice he had made.

We should never fear that we are compromising when we make the choice to love. As Brother Christofferson noted:

*Accepting others does not mean that we condone, agree with, or conform to their beliefs or choices, but simply that we allow the realities of their lives to be different from our own.*<sup>14</sup>

Whether those different realities mean that they look, act, feel, or experience life differently than we do, the unchanging fact is that they are children of loving Heavenly Parents and that the same Jesus suffered and died for them and for us. For not just our LGBTQ+ sisters and brothers but for many people, the choice to love can literally make the difference between life and death.

### **Spaces for Testimony**

Creating spaces in which testimony can give strength and encouragement is another powerful way of ministering to the one. An example of such strength-inspiring testimony is Mormon pioneer Jane Manning James (1813–1908), a sister of African descent. Not long after she heard Mormon elders preach in 1842, she joined the Church. Like the Samaritan woman, she shared her witness with her family. That same year she led eight of them on a journey of more than 800 miles from Wilton, Connecticut, to Nauvoo, Illinois—much of it by foot—in order to gather with the Latter-day Saints. She was in one of the first companies of pioneers to enter the Salt Lake Valley in 1847 and remained faithful throughout her life, even though her husband later left her and she was denied the temple blessings she sought during her mortal life, only being endowed by proxy in 1978.<sup>15</sup>

Along with Amanda and Samuel D. Chambers, Elijah Abel, and Green Flake, Sister James—or “Aunt Jane”—was one of the early LDS pioneers remembered at the Be One celebration on June 1, 2018, that commemorated the 1978 revelation on the priesthood. While the examples of these

pioneers are inspiring to all of us, their faithfulness has special meaning to our brothers and sisters of African descent. Among this number are those who were members of the event’s organizing committee—such as Darius Gray—who are pioneers themselves and examples of faith and testimony. All of us need to cultivate testimonies of our own, and when we struggle, sometimes we need to know that we are not alone.

This is certainly true for the women of the Church, many of whom desire female role models in addition to the often more talked about male figures of scripture and history. Although I grew up in a family of strong, talented, capable, and faithful women, I did not realize this was a need until I had a heartrending experience with my only daughter, Rachel, when she was eleven or twelve. She was our only child for six years; she was our baby girl and my princess. When she was in middle school, I used to drive her to the bus stop each morning. Often, as we waited, we would do our scripture reading together.

One day we were reading one of those “problem” passages written by Paul—either 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 or maybe 1 Timothy 2:11–12—when she looked at me and asked, “Daddy, why doesn’t Heavenly Father like girls as much as boys?”

I do not even know why I was reading Paul with a seventh grader—perhaps it is an occupational hazard of having a religion professor as a dad!

I could have tried a complicated exegesis, speaking of textual history or dislocation or trying to explain the time-and-culture specific problem of elite women in Corinth or Ephesus. But at that time all I could do was tearfully testify to my daughter that I knew that Heavenly Father and Jesus loved her as much as they loved me.

In the years since, I have striven to give my daughter and my students—male and female—models of powerful women of faith and testimony: Old Testament prophetesses such as Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, and Huldah; New Testament disciples such as Mary, the mother of our Lord, the other Marys, and Martha; and

latter-day women of Christ such as Emma Smith, Eliza R. Snow, and my own mother. In such an environment of testimony, Rachel has grown into a woman of Christ. She is a senior at BYU, a student of the scriptures, an ordinance worker in the Provo Temple, and one who is important as an individual—not just as our daughter, a sister, or a future wife and mother. I am still learning that in addition to my own testimony, I must find and share faithful witnesses of all sexes, tongues, peoples, and life experiences.

### Spaces for Mourning and Understanding

When Jesus wept with Mary, He gave her space to share her pain and then extended true understanding. When people struggle with a hard saying, such as our racial history, healing comes only when we listen and acknowledge what they feel. At the Be One celebration, President Dallin H. Oaks acknowledged such past and current pain. He noted:

*Institutionally, the Church reacted swiftly to the revelation on the priesthood. Ordinations and temple recommends came immediately. . . .*

*In contrast, changes in the hearts and practices of individual members did not come suddenly and univocally. . . . Some, in their personal lives, continued the attitudes of racism that have been painful to so many throughout the world, including the past 40 years.<sup>16</sup>*

Several years ago I became good friends with two wonderful, energetic, and spirited women, Tamu Smith and Zandra Vranes. Known as the “Sistas in Zion,” they are African American LDS bloggers, whom I have often heard describe their experiences—good and bad—as we have spoken together at events. I thought I understood and was sensitive to those experiences, but in the weeks leading up to the Be One celebration, I was party to discussions, online and in person, in which I saw their pain and the pain of their sisters and brothers. There were discussions about the difference between celebrating or commemorating the priesthood revelation. A terrible, fraudulent letter purporting to be an apology for past racism

reopened old wounds.<sup>17</sup> There were even debates about cultural appropriation, such as whether a white ally such as myself should even sing a traditional song of Negro liberation. There were things I had not understood and pain I had not felt, and I needed to resist the temptation to come up with answers or defenses. Instead I just needed to sit with them, listen, and try to understand.

Similarly, this last year I had a student who once tried to express herself in class. She did so awkwardly, trying to convey an idea that another student quickly countered. Rather ineptly I tried to bridge the gap. Eager to move the lecture on, I fumbled to close the conversation, which was, ironically, a discussion about hard sayings at the end of John 6.

Later that day I received an email from the student, who explained her ongoing struggle with a mental illness. She shared a poem with me, some of the lines of which speak tellingly of our need to listen and to try to understand the experiences of someone who struggles:

*You say  
I don't love enough  
I don't care enough  
I'm not kind enough  
I'm not good enough  
...  
But you don't see  
I'm frightened  
I'm scared  
I'm broken . . .  
I'm alone.<sup>18</sup>*

When we are called upon to mourn with those who mourn—even when they may not be struggling with an obvious hard saying such as race, mental illness, gender, or sexuality—sometimes we simply need to sit with them to listen and to love.

### Spaces for Agency

Just as Jesus did not compel the rich young man to follow Him and allowed those disciples who could not bear His teachings to depart, we must make space for agency. Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf,

then a member of the First Presidency, noted that today when people leave the Church, “sometimes we assume it is because they have been offended or lazy or sinful. Actually, it is not that simple.”

He continued:

*It may break our hearts when their journey takes them away from the Church . . . , but we honor their right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own conscience, just as we claim that privilege for ourselves.*<sup>19</sup>

We have been commanded to love our neighbors as ourselves, and when it comes to neighbors, there are no outsiders. Perhaps even more important, even when our fellow Saints find themselves outside of formal church fellowship or membership, they should never find themselves outside of the fellowship of our friendship and the circle of our love.

This point was underscored to me in late June when I was on tour with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. On tour we regularly have singers from local groups join us for our sound check the afternoon before a concert. In Mountainview, California, the local singers were members of the San Francisco Gay Men’s Chorus, who came in their purple T-shirts and were received kindly and without judgment into the choir stands. Their director, Dr. Tim Seelig, was warmly welcomed by Elder Donald L. Hallstrom, a General Authority Seventy, and by our choir leadership, and that evening he conducted the encore at the end of our concert. Our guests included people who may never become members of the Church—and a few who used to be members—but together we enjoyed our common humanity and a shared love of music.

As positive as that experience was, for one of my friends it was difficult. With his permission, I share part of his story. Alex is a member of the Church, a singer in the choir, someone committed to keeping his covenants, and gay. But as we were building bridges, he felt, in his terms, “like he was still under a rock.” His continued choice to stay in the Church comes at the cost of constant struggle,

frequent pain, and considerable loneliness. We sat together for the better part of an hour, during which time he, like Martha, expressed testimony but, like Mary, mourned.<sup>20</sup>

President Ballard has taught:

*We need to listen to and understand what our LGBT brothers and sisters are feeling and experiencing. Certainly we must do better than we have done in the past so that all members feel they have a spiritual home where their brothers and sisters love them and where they have a place to worship and serve the Lord.*<sup>21</sup>

### Spaces for Joy

The Psalmist proclaimed, “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning” (Psalm 30:5). Each of us has nights—and days—of weeping in this life. We all experience loss and pain in its various forms. Almost all of us have lost a loved one; many of us have lost dreams and hopes. All of us are at risk of losing health or ability. Yet even in our loss we can experience peace and joy. We are promised “peace in this world” as well as “eternal life in the world to come” (D&C 59:23). Christ came that we may “have life”—and “have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).

I have written and spoken elsewhere about the greatest loss and heartache of my life, the autism diagnosis of our only son, Samuel.<sup>22</sup> Although he was not formally diagnosed until he was four, he had clear developmental delays and challenges with emotional self-regulation from the time he was a baby. Still we were frantic when he soon began to regress: he stopped smiling, would not let us hold him, and began to lose some of the little language that he had had. On the day he was finally diagnosed, the child we thought we would have and the dreams we had for him died. Still, with early intervention, the help of trained specialists, and lots of prayer and inspiration, we have seen miracles small and great. We taught him to smile again, and he learned how to receive our love and better express his own. In March 2015 I ordained him as a deacon, and he now faithfully passes the sacrament each week. This last year, with the help of his dedicated aide, Kelly

Snelson, he successfully completed his freshman year of high school. While our worries for the future remain, with love, testimony, and support in our heartache, we have much room for joy.

The Psalmist also wrote, “This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it” (Psalm 118:24). I witnessed and experienced this kind of joy at the Be One celebration. After chronicling so much struggle and faith, that event featured joyful songs by a multicultural choir led by Sister Gladys Knight. Over the last fifteen years, as a member of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, I have had many opportunities to sing at Church events in the Salt Lake Tabernacle and the LDS Conference Center. But I have never felt so much a part of a worldwide church as I did that night as Saints—black, Hispanic, white, Polynesian, and Asian—joined their voices together in praise of God. I hope you feel this same joy as we watch that choir worshipping God through song. [A video was shown of the choir from the 2018 Be One celebration singing “We Sing Glory.”]

*This is the day that the Lord has made;  
We will rejoice and be glad in it.  
We lift our voices in higher praise;  
We sing glory, sing glory to God.  
We sing glory, sing glory to God.*

*Hallelujah, we sing the highest praise;  
Lord, you're worthy and we praise your name;  
From the rising of your Son,  
He's the only one  
That can save us all from sin,  
If we let him in.  
We sing glory, sing glory to God.  
We sing glory, we sing glory,  
We sing glory, glory unto God!<sup>23</sup>*

Before we reach such mornings of rejoicing, we must help each other through nights of struggle. We need to love one another as Jesus loves us! Without diluting the doctrine or compromising our standards, we must open our hearts wider, reach out farther, and love more loudly. We must

make space for struggle *and* faith as we await the final victory, which is assured if we come to Jesus Christ.

*To every thing there is a season, and a time to every  
purpose under the heaven:  
A time to talk, a time to listen  
A time to act, a time to sit  
A time to testify, a time to weep  
A time to embrace, and a time to let go  
A time to encourage, and a time to accept.<sup>24</sup>*

This is the Church of Jesus Christ. I love the wonderful diversity of the mosaic that is the body of Christ, each beautiful piece reflecting the glorious light of God’s love. As we all wrestle together, may we truly make our families and friendships, our neighborhoods and wards, and our classrooms and offices spaces for love, spaces for testimony, spaces for mourning and understanding, spaces for agency, and spaces for joy. Thanks be to God, who has given us this victory in Jesus Christ, our Lord. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Notes

1. Well-accustomed to sacramental imagery, we often fail to realize how jarring Jesus’s declaration would have been to first-century Jews, including Jesus’s disciples. Even though His followers had come to believe that He was the Messiah, they seem to have shared many of the messianic expectations of the time, not yet comprehending that their Savior must suffer and die for them. For a treatment of the Bread of Life discourse and its possible interpretations, see my “The Bread of Life Sermon” in *Celebrating Easter: The 2006 BYU Easter Conference*, ed. Thomas A. Wayment and Keith J. Wilson (Provo: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2007), 87–111.

2. Noted biblical scholar F. F. Bruce (1910–1990) compiled a collection of challenging teachings that numbered 265 pages (see Frederick Fyvie Bruce, *The Hard Sayings of Jesus* [Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1983]). In our own faith community, it is not uncommon for leaders and teachers to describe sometimes-difficult doctrines,

policies, and practices as “hard sayings.” For instance, Elder Neal A. Maxwell, a gifted author and speaker who was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles from 1981 to 2004, once wrote:

*When Jesus first began to preach strong doctrines . . . [and] once His doctrines really began to make demands of people, it was too much for many.*

*There are equivalent “hard sayings” about our secular societies that one hesitates to utter but which need to be heard. They are not popular. . . . A truth may touch us, bore us, or merely make us uncomfortable. [Wherefore, Ye Must Press Forward (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1977), 6–7]*

3. Sarah Eliza Rowntree, quoted in “The Redford Institute First Day School and Home Mission Association,” *British Friend* 1, no. 1 (1st Month 1st, 1892): 15. Rowntree, in turn, had borrowed her words from the earlier sentiments of Methodist minister Mark Guy Pearse (1842–1930); see “Tuesday, January 3: Confession,” *Evangelical Christendom*, 1 February 1888, 46. Both seem to be the basis for the popular anonymous prayer “Christ Has No Body” often attributed to St. Teresa of Ávila (1515–1582).

4. See Jeffrey R. Holland, “Be With and Strengthen Them,” *Ensign*, May 2018.

5. Jean B. Bingham, “Ministering as the Savior Does,” *Ensign*, May 2018.

6. See S. Mark Palmer, “Then Jesus Beholding Him Loved Him,” *Ensign*, May 2017.

7. See the warnings of Sheldon Lawrence, “The Coddling of the Mormon Mind: On Spiritual Trigger Warnings and Religious Safe Spaces,” *Dawning of a Brighter Day: Twenty-First Century Mormon Literature* (blog), 3 October 2016, [associationmormonletters.org/blog/2016/10/the-coddling-of-the-mormon-mind-on-spiritual-trigger-warnings-and-religious-safe-spaces](http://associationmormonletters.org/blog/2016/10/the-coddling-of-the-mormon-mind-on-spiritual-trigger-warnings-and-religious-safe-spaces).

8. See Charles Derber, *The Pursuit of Attention: Power and Ego in Everyday Life*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 18–31. For an apropos illustration of this, see the column by online commentator Celeste Headlee, “The Mistake I Made with My Grieving Friend,” *Huffington Post*, 2 April

2018, [huffingtonpost.com/entry/how-to-help-a-grieving-friend\\_us\\_5aa9801fe4b0004c0406d2fb](http://huffingtonpost.com/entry/how-to-help-a-grieving-friend_us_5aa9801fe4b0004c0406d2fb).

9. M. Russell Ballard, “The Trek Continues!” *Ensign*, November 2017.

10. See Thomas H. Christofferson, “*That We May Be One*”: A Gay Mormon’s Perspective on Faith and Family (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2017), xv.

11. Christofferson, “*That We May Be One*,” 19.

12. See Christofferson, “*That We May Be One*,” 23–24.

13. See Christofferson, “*That We May Be One*,” 135.

14. Christofferson, “*That We May Be One*,” 60.

15. See Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery, “Jane Manning James: Black Saint, 1847 Pioneer,” *Ensign*, August 1979; see also James Goldberg, “The Autobiography of Jane Manning James: Seven Decades of Faith and Devotion,” *Church History*, 11 December 2013, [history.lds.org/article/jane-manning-james-life-sketch?lang=eng](http://history.lds.org/article/jane-manning-james-life-sketch?lang=eng).

16. Dallin H. Oaks, “President Oaks’s Remarks at Worldwide Priesthood Celebration,” *Mormon Newsroom*, 1 June 2018, [mormonnewsroom.org/article/president-oaks-remarks-worldwide-priesthood-celebration](http://mormonnewsroom.org/article/president-oaks-remarks-worldwide-priesthood-celebration).

17. See Benjamin Wood, “No, the Mormon Church Did Not Apologize for Having a History of Racism; Hoaxer Says He Meant Fake Message to Spark Discussion,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, 17 May 2018, [sltrib.com/news/2018/05/17/no-the-mormon-church-did-not-apologize-for-having-a-history-of-racism](http://sltrib.com/news/2018/05/17/no-the-mormon-church-did-not-apologize-for-having-a-history-of-racism).

18. “Beware of Pride,” full poem received by this author in an email on 8 March 2018. Although the author’s name is withheld, she gave permission for its use in a private email dated 17 July 2018.

19. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Come, Join with Us,” *Ensign*, November 2013.

20. Permission to use Alex’s story came to this author in a private email dated 19 July 2018.

21. M. Russell Ballard, “Questions and Answers,” BYU devotional address, 14 November 2017.

22. See Eric D. Huntsman, “Appendix 3: Christmas with Autism,” in *Good Tidings of Great*



*Joy: An Advent Celebration of the Savior's Birth* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2011), 149–51; “Appendix B: Our Galilee Miracle,” in *The Miracles of Jesus* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2014), 139–43; *Worship: Adding Depth to Your Devotion* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2016), 26–27, 48–49; and “Eric Huntsman: Feeling God’s Love After My Son’s Autism Diagnosis,” 2017 Time Out for Women Arise tour, [youtu.be/6TUBCvr6wx8](https://youtu.be/6TUBCvr6wx8).

23. Tony Dyson and Richard Gibbs, “We Sing Glory”; see *Be One: A Celebration of the Revelation on the Priesthood*, LDS Media Library, 50:15–54:25, arranged by Xavier O’Connor and directed by Gladys Knight, [lds.org/media-library/video/2018-06-1000-be-one-a-celebration-of-the-revelation-on-the-priesthood?lang=eng](https://lds.org/media-library/video/2018-06-1000-be-one-a-celebration-of-the-revelation-on-the-priesthood?lang=eng).

24. See Ecclesiastes 3:1–8, paraphrased and recast by Eric D. Huntsman.