

“Look unto Him in Every Thought”

JOY D. JONES

It is such a remarkable privilege to be here with you today. The years I spent on this campus afforded me a delightful assortment of memories, but never in a thousand years would I have imagined that I would be standing here addressing you today, my dear brothers and sisters. I honor and thank my Heavenly Father for this opportunity.

I had the sweetest and most distinct impression last week that my great-great-great-grandfather and my great-great-great-grandmother had something to do with my speaking here today. His name is Brigham Young, and his first wife’s name is Miriam Works Young. It is good to have support from both sides of the veil.

Being a student at Brigham Young University was a life-changing experience for me. Coming from a small town in Oregon, I felt the world open up to me right here in Provo, Utah. The Spirit was alive in every classroom, in each activity, and in the incredible roommates, friends, and teachers I loved and learned from. It has been priceless over the years to watch our children have their own life-changing experiences at this wonderful university.

A couple of weeks ago, I asked Gigi, our three-year-old granddaughter, “Will you go to college?”

She said yes.

I asked if she would go to BYU.

She again said yes. Then she turned to her daddy and asked, “Daddy, will you come with me?”

One of the sweet highlights of my BYU experience was meeting my precious husband, Rob. Little did we know during our growing up years that we lived just a little over an hour from each other. But we have all heard of BYU’s reputation for bringing people together, and that reputation became our reality. Rob was called as my family home evening “father,” and the ward rules prevented us from dating that year. But as soon as he was released, we made up for lost time.

We just celebrated our forty-fourth anniversary. This dear man has put toothpaste on my toothbrush nearly every night of those forty-four years. I know he has been tempted a time or two to surprise me by putting something other than toothpaste on my brush, but he never has. Although life is not over yet, is it?

Joy D. Jones, Primary general president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, delivered this devotional address during BYU Campus Education Week on August 21, 2018.

Growing Our Spiritual Muscles

My dear brothers and sisters, I welcome you to Campus Education Week! Oh, how wonderful it is to learn! We have gathered here to be taught, inspired, and challenged. I pray that the Holy Ghost will be with each of us as we learn, apply, and change.

Dear friends, I believe that the gospel of Jesus Christ is our Heavenly Father's practical guide for happy living. President Brigham Young explained the practicality of the gospel in these words:

*The principles of eternity and eternal exaltation are of no use to us, unless they are brought down to our capacities so that we practice them in our lives.*¹

The Lord likewise told us, "I give unto you directions how you may act before me, that it may turn to you for your salvation."²

Some of those "directions" that the Lord promised us are found in our 2018 Campus Education Week theme, which is Doctrine and Covenants 6:36: "Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not." I love this verse. It is simple and straightforward, but the challenge to look unto Him in every thought is also magnificently empowering.

Let's now examine a peculiar word taught to us by the great prophet Lehi that can help us in our efforts to look unto the Lord. This word has taken on great meaning to me over the years. In 2 Nephi 2, Lehi gave direction to his son Jacob. Lehi said:

I speak unto you these things for your profit and learning; for there is a God, and he hath created all things, both the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are, both things to act and things to be acted upon.

And to bring about his eternal purposes in the end of man, after he had created our first parents, and the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and in fine, all things which are created, it must needs be that there was an opposition; even the forbidden fruit in opposition to the tree of life; the one being sweet and the other bitter.

Wherefore, the Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself. Wherefore, man could not act for

*himself save it should be that he was enticed by the one or the other.*³

Man and woman are God's creations, and we were given the power and agency to act. But there would be no acting without first being enticed. The peculiar word I would like to focus on is *entice*. Definitions for this word are "to attract" or "to tempt."

We are confronted each day with choices that require us to choose between "the one or the other"—meaning, between light and dark, between pleasure and pain, and between good and bad. The world is filled with enticements for the very purpose of encouraging us to act on our God-given agency. An enticement can come in the form of temptation—which can lead us to doubt, fear, anger, and ultimately the loss of the Spirit. Or an enticement can come through happiness and blessings as encouragement to do good—which can lead us to understanding, confidence, fulfillment, and "the fruit of the Spirit," which includes love, joy, and peace.⁴

One of the great ironies in life is this: The one precious thing that Heavenly Father will *never* take from us is our agency—the very thing that we give away so freely to others. Letting others influence our decisions through their behavior can weaken our ability to use our agency correctly. In fact, it can happen so frequently that we are not even aware of what we are forfeiting.

The Holy Ghost is our best protection. Elder Robert D. Hales explained:

*If we ignore . . . promptings, the light of the Spirit will fade. Our agency will be limited or lost, and we will lose the confidence and ability to act.*⁵

In other words, we always have the *privilege* to choose, but we can lose the *ability* to choose.

Let me share with you a personal experience I had years ago.

I was driving to the temple one lovely spring morning. I had my scripture CDs playing, the sky was a glorious blue, the birds seemed to be singing, "Oh, how lovely was the morning!"⁶ in

four-part harmony, and I was on top of the world as I drove down the street. It was just one of those rare perfect mornings—until I suddenly noticed a number of cars ahead of me being pulled over by the police. Before I knew what was happening, I saw flashing red-and-blue lights in my rearview mirror. I was caught in a speed trap, and I was guilty. My heart sank, my pride was dashed, and, unfortunately, my biggest worry was that someone I knew would see me!

It was little consolation that I wasn't the only one being subjected to such humiliation from the "tyranny" of the local police. As the very kind officer finished writing out my ticket, he handed it to me and cheerfully directed, "You have a good day, ma'am!"

"Have a good day"? How could I have a good day? I was amazed at how quickly feelings of darkness, failure, and shame washed over me.

My immediate thought was, "How can I go to the temple *now*? I am not worthy to be in the Lord's house."

I turned my car around and began slowly driving toward home. My own thoughts were separating me from the Spirit. My mind quickly began listing all my personal weaknesses as I mentally beat myself up. I had truly been enticed. I had made a mistake—one I could make restitution for and learn from. Yet I was choosing to allow myself to slip into darkness. But in this one particular instance, instead of continuing this negative berating, just as in the story of the prodigal son, I came to myself.⁷

I decided to pour out my heart in prayer to express my love to my Heavenly Father, to ask Him to forgive me for choosing darkness after getting the ticket, and to help me see with spiritual eyes what was really happening. After all, isn't repenting going from darkness into light? As Ezekiel said, "Make you a new heart and a new spirit. . . . Wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye."⁸

In those few moments, a loving Father helped me see that I was allowing lies to enter my *personal* temple. Receiving a speeding ticket had *nothing* to do with my worth as a daughter of God. In that moment I longed even more for the light, refuge,

and peace of the Lord's temple. I turned my car around and, through my tears, was once again on my way to my original destination, watching the speedometer with great care.

My temple experience that day was tender. I felt Heavenly Father's love and peace in such rich abundance. I realized what I could have so easily missed had the Spirit not helped me see what was really happening.

I have learned through this simple experience and many others that this life is perfectly designed to give us all the opportunities we need to grow "spiritual muscles" and—through patience and dependence upon our Savior, Jesus Christ—become like our Father in Heaven. We know this life is about progression as we work toward perfection in the life to come.

Making "Decisions for Eternity"

Are we aware that we are continually being enticed to progress or to regress? In today's world we are constantly bombarded. Companies pay billions of dollars every year to entice us. Enticements come in the form of billboards, TV ads, and ads on our electronic devices.

We also experience many personal enticements. Did you encounter one getting here today? Perhaps it was a flat tire on your way to the airport or you woke up to a broken water heater and no hot water for your shower. Or maybe the blow dryer took its last breath, perhaps the babysitter fell through at the last minute and you scrambled to get here, or you are squinting this very moment because you couldn't find your glasses. This is just a small sampling of the distracting and discouraging temporal enticements that our mortal experience serves up on a daily basis. It is so easy to get hooked!

Is it possible that something nearer and dearer to us than a water heater or a blow dryer could entice us? Let me illustrate.

A woman was standing in the grocery check-out line watching a man in front of her with what looked like a two-year-old boy sitting in the shopping cart.

The little guy was fussing and getting more and more out of control as time went on. Then she

overheard the father whispering to his son, saying, “Be patient, Billie. You can handle this, Billie. Just relax and you can have your treat when we get out to the car.”

The woman watching was so impressed with the father that she leaned forward and said to him, “I am so impressed with how loving and patient you are with your little Billie.”

The father smiled and said quickly, “Actually, my son’s name is Patrick. My name is Billie.”

Even our children, a spouse, or a parent can be enticements. The people we love most can provide some of our greatest enticements and *also our greatest opportunities for spiritual growth.*

As Lehi stated, there must be “an opposition in all things.”⁹ Life provides us with daily opportunities to choose darkness or to progress spiritually as we practice responding to the influence of the Holy Ghost. Recognizing this, King Benjamin taught that we are to yield to “the enticings of the Holy Spirit” and that to not do so is to exhibit “the natural man,” who “is an enemy to God.”¹⁰ Mormon, in some of his concluding statements in the Book of Mormon, explained:

*That which is of God inviteth and enticeth to do good continually; wherefore, every thing which inviteth and enticeth to do good, and to love God, and to serve him, is inspired of God.*¹¹

Enticements, both positive and negative, are real, and it is what we choose to do with them when they occur that will make all the difference in our daily lives. Can you be excited and motivated realizing that you can use every enticement to progress spiritually?

Now, let’s explore more enticements. What might entice you? Maybe chocolate chip cookies? Or food in general? Maybe other drivers on the road? How about poor health? Maybe a friend or coworker? Or perhaps your teenager? The list could go on and on, couldn’t it?

Anything, as Lehi stated, can entice us into the light or into the darkness. We are enticed to use our agency, to make the choice to remain steadfast in Christ, as Nephi described.¹² Nephi’s brother

Jacob spoke of “the awfulness of yielding to the enticings of that cunning one.”¹³ Instead we are to look unto the Lord in every thought and gain strength and faith as we use our agency in wise and meaningful ways.

Let’s consider another example. What if your seventeen-year-old son has a Friday-night curfew of midnight? It is now 2:00 a.m., and he is not home yet—nor has he even called. Would that entice you toward the darkness or the light? You and your spouse are both up—worried, doubting, and fearing the worst. You say to yourselves, “When he walks through that door . . . !” As time goes by, you feel the Spirit being pushed away as angry or fearful thoughts envelop your mind. You are moving into darkness. Finally you hear your son’s car pull up in the driveway. You are both poised to pounce. The door opens, and he walks in.

Now what? In this moment, can you appreciate that this experience, and so many others like it, are perfectly designed for your spiritual growth? You have been enticed. Now you have the privilege of exercising your agency. It is your choice whether you will “teach him a lesson” with angry words or whether you will remember that this is all about your relationship with your son and your Father in Heaven and your spiritual growth, no matter what your son did. Of course there must be consequences for his behavior, but feeling and expressing sincere love is the most important thing in this moment, described in the scriptures as

showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reprov’d, lest he esteem thee to be his enemy;

*That he may know that thy faithfulness is stronger than the cords of death.*¹⁴

This is one of those critical moments that could influence eternal relationships—one of those opportunities to truly “look unto [the Lord] in every thought.”

What if, before your son’s arrival, you had chosen to pray in faith while waiting for him? How might that have changed your reaction when he

walked through the door? Would the Spirit help you feel peace, sincere gratitude, and relief that he is safely home? Could you wrap your arms around him and sincerely tell him how much you love him? Two scriptures illustrate this point.

The first is found in Romans 12:12, when the apostle Paul told the Saints to continue “instant in prayer.” I love that. In other words, when an enticement comes, the first thing we can choose to do is pray and acknowledge our loving Heavenly Father. Is that not looking unto the Lord in every thought? I don’t necessarily mean getting down on our knees. We may not have that option. I am suggesting talking to the Lord instantly, as Paul said, wherever we are and about whatever enticement has confronted us.

A second scripture that can help us remember to pray when tempted or enticed is Doctrine and Covenants 59:7: “Thou shalt thank the Lord thy God in *all* things” (emphasis added). This verse does not suggest that we thank Him for only the good things that occur in our lives. We are being taught to thank the Lord in *all* things—even in the enticing moments that challenge and stretch us. We can *practice* throughout the day looking unto Him in instant prayer and gratitude.

It is also instructive to recognize *who* wants us to give in to enticements as he tempts us to become impatient, frustrated, doubtful, fearful, or angry. Nephi, the son of Helaman, lamented the fact that his people had not kept their covenants. He said, “Yea, how could you have given way to the enticing of him who is seeking to hurl away your souls down to everlasting misery and endless wo?”¹⁵

Brothers and sisters, inherent in every enticement to do wrong is a spiritual growth opportunity to do right. This is no doubt a reason that James wrote, “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into many afflictions.”¹⁶ “Count it all joy”? Yes, joy. Every enticement can be a blessing to us if we allow it to be.

I believe the key to transcending a negative enticement is to begin praying as soon as we recognize what is happening. As we pray, the Holy Ghost will influence us because we “receive the Spirit through prayer.”¹⁷

Sometimes we will have the opportunity to experience multiple enticements, one after the other or several at the same time. Some of you in this very hour may be in the middle of serious adversity or trial, which can be an enticement magnified. We must have the courage to continue in faith and hope in our Savior, Jesus Christ, and not be overcome. Every single prayer is heard by our loving Father in Heaven. Doubt not. Fear not.

Despite the resulting challenges, spiritual change and strength are what we are all seeking. As our beloved prophet, President Russell M. Nelson, has counseled:

*The wise use of your freedom to make your own decisions is crucial to your spiritual growth, now and for eternity. . . . Each day brings opportunity for decisions for eternity.*¹⁸

Learning from Nephi’s “Bad Day”

What I refer to as Nephi’s “bad day” illustrates well decisions for eternity. Nephi was commanded to build a ship. Did his older brothers go along with his idea? No. They called him a fool, complained to him constantly, and wouldn’t help. When Nephi was discouraged, they rejoiced to his face and said, “We knew you couldn’t do it!”

What a wonderful example of an enticement. But it didn’t stop there. Nephi eventually accomplished his assignment from the Lord, and the family set sail.¹⁹ Not long into the trip, Laman and Lemuel began to forget the Lord once again and turned the ship into a “party boat” with the sons of Ishmael, “and also their wives began to make themselves merry, insomuch that they began to dance, and to sing, and to speak with much rudeness, yea, even that they did forget by what power they had been brought thither.”²⁰

At this point, surely Nephi’s great concern was the Liahona, the compass or spiritual GPS that the Lord had provided for them. It worked only when they heeded the Spirit. Nephi told them to keep the partying down, which, of course, angered them.

Nephi, humbly understating the circumstances, said, “And they did treat me with much harshness.”²¹ So tight were the cords they bound him

with that his ankles and wrists were “swollen exceedingly.”²² Was Nephi enticed?

Imagine the emotions felt in this circumstance. Nephi’s wife was in tears, but she was praying. Nephi’s children were crying. Outside, a great storm arose, and all were about to be swallowed up in the depths of the sea. Nephi’s parents were so weighed down by the behavior of their rebellious sons that they were brought down to their sickbeds, nigh unto death.

I hope you can sense Nephi’s predicament and the emotion that this scene must have created in him. All this was happening while he was tied up and unable to move. What a perfect seedbed for doubt and fear.

So what were his choices? He could be angry, he could fear for their lives, he could give up, he could forsake his faith, or he could remain steadfast in Christ by continuing “instant in prayer” and thanking God in *all* things. Prayer and praise.

In one very meaningful verse, Nephi explained how he endured well the multiple enticements that were besetting him:

*Nevertheless, I did look unto my God, and I did praise him all the day long; and I did not murmur against the Lord because of mine afflictions.*²³

Eventually Nephi was loosed, the compass began to work again, and they all made it safely to the promised land.

My question is this: Could Nephi have succeeded had he not prayed and praised God all the day long? I don’t think so. He remained spiritually focused through the entire ordeal, and then miracles happened.

Brothers and sisters, enticements in our daily lives are inevitable. *How* we view them makes all the difference. Many years later, Nephi’s brother Jacob counseled all of us to contemplate these truths when he said, “Therefore, cheer up your hearts, and remember that ye are free to act for yourselves—to choose.”²⁴

When enticements come, and they will, Jacob is effectively saying, “Be happy! You have agency

and you can *choose* your reaction to everything coming your way”—whether it is the bad driver in front of you, the teenager who comes home after curfew, the police officer who gives you a ticket, the bills that keep piling up and becoming overdue, the pneumonia that just won’t go away, the rebellious big brothers who treat you terribly, the spouse who won’t understand your situation, the washing machine that just quit working, or your daughter who just flunked her history test because she seldom attended class. They are all there for our spiritual growth, if we can see them for what they really are—and then be grateful.

Enduring Well

Obviously we cannot completely control the events that come at us daily, but we can indeed control the *worthwhileness* of those events. We worship an omniscient God and know that “all things wherewith you have been afflicted shall work together for your good, and to my name’s glory, saith the Lord.”²⁵

Let’s examine for a moment an experience from the life of Paul. He and his companion, Silas, while preaching the gospel to the people of Macedonia, were beaten with stripes and thrust into jail. The jailor put them in the inner prison and bound their feet in stocks.

I am sure you would agree that Paul and Silas encountered a challenging enticement. They were faced with a choice. Would they take the “natural man” route and complain to the Lord and wonder *why* they hadn’t been warned of this danger? After all, weren’t they doing His work? Would they ask *why* the Lord had allowed this to happen?

No, instead, the scriptures tell us, “At midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God.”²⁶ First, they prayed, which brought the Spirit, and then they sang praises, denoting that they were in a state of gratitude.

This scriptural illustration begs the question: Do you think that Paul and Silas *felt* like praying and singing when they were thrust into the inner prison? Perhaps not. But they transcended the adversity in which they had found themselves

and remained faithful to the Lord. And what was the outcome of their faithfulness? The next verse tells us:

*And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.*²⁷

Remember the words of the Lord to the Prophet Joseph Smith after Joseph arrived in Jackson County, Missouri:

Ye cannot behold with your natural eyes, for the present time, the design of your God concerning those things which shall come hereafter, and the glory which shall follow after much tribulation.

*For after much tribulation come the blessings.*²⁸

Enticements, tribulations, and tests, when endured well, are followed by blessings.²⁹ As we see negative or evil enticements with our spiritual eyes, we can receive the power to overcome them. That is one of the blessings. The challenge and opportunity of our lives, then, is to be steadfast in Christ by *practicing* rising above enticements and adversities. This leads us to President David O. McKay's profound definition: "Spirituality, our true aim, is the consciousness of victory over self."³⁰ President McKay also said, "Spirituality impels one to conquer difficulties and acquire more and more strength."³¹

As I have reflected on my simple little experience of the ticket on the way to the temple, I recognize that I had two choices: I could keep up my shield of faith, chock it up to experience, learn from it, and continue on my way to the temple. Or I could let the police officer and the ticket ruin the rest of my day. In choosing the latter, I would have said in effect to the officer, "Here, sir, here is my agency. I give it to you freely. Now you control me and all my emotions. I now *choose* to have a lousy day."

Taking Steps Toward Spiritual Refinement

I earlier referred to Nephi's life and how his brothers treated him. Let's now add his

commentary given years later when perhaps he looked back on those events. Let's read his reactions to the adversities, temptations, and enticements in his life that did so easily beset him.³² He wrote:

Why should my heart weep and my soul linger in the valley of sorrow, and my flesh waste away, and my strength slacken, because of mine afflictions?

*. . . Yea, why should I give way to temptations, that the evil one have place in my heart **to destroy my peace and afflict my soul? Why am I angry because of mine enemy?***³³

Could it be that Nephi's peace was occasionally "destroyed" by the behavior of his brothers? Did he ever view his brothers as his "enemies"?

Nephi then continued as if a major epiphany had occurred, seeming almost to shout:

Awake, my soul! No longer droop in sin. Rejoice, O my heart, and give place no more for the enemy of my soul.

*Do not anger again because of mine enemies. Do not slacken my strength because of mine afflictions.*³⁴

By following the promptings of the Spirit and looking to the Lord, Nephi overcame and grew in spirit and in power. He experienced tests and trials as well as the blessings that followed. His enticements helped him deepen his ability to remain spiritually focused.

Maybe a modern example makes Nephi's actions even more real to us.

Many years ago our daughter spent the night at a friend's house. She drove her car there and parked it in front of the house. Other cars were parked there as well.

The next morning she got up, ate breakfast, and went out to her car, but it was gone. Her friend had forgotten to tell her that no one was supposed to park on the street after dark. Her car had been towed away. The puzzling thing was that hers was the only car that had been towed.

Our daughter called home, and my husband went to pick her up. He got the number of the

towing company and called them. He was informed that he would have to pay \$85 in cash to get her car back and was given the address.

“Come any time after 4:00,” the man said.

My husband asked him why all the other cars weren’t towed away. The man promptly hung up on him.

We felt that we had been wronged and certainly treated unfairly. We were upset, yes, even greatly enticed!

We had to wait nearly four hours to retrieve the car. During that time my husband prepared a lesson for priesthood meeting. Listen to the excerpt he studied from the President John Taylor manual as he was preparing that day:

If men, by taking a wrong course, act imprudently and seek to injure us, shall we seek to injure them? No, we will try to do them all the good we can. “But that is not natural.” But then we ought to be changed from nature to grace. . . .

*. . . If there be trouble existing between me and anybody else, I would meet them halfway, yes, I would meet them three-quarters or even all of the way. I would feel like yielding; I would say, I do not want to quarrel, I want to be a Saint. I have set out for purity, virtue, brotherhood, and for obedience to the laws of God on earth, and for thrones and principalities and dominions in the eternal worlds, **and I will not allow such paltry affairs to interfere with my prospects. I am for life, eternal lives and eternal exaltations in the kingdom of God.**³⁵*

With that enticing reminder ringing in my husband’s head, he and our daughter drove to retrieve her car. As my husband walked into the yard with all the towed vehicles, he spotted a little shack that had an office sign hanging in front. A long-haired gentleman in overalls stood there, looking as if he was waiting for a great verbal altercation. Our daughter stayed behind, not wanting to witness the probable confrontation.

My super-enticed husband walked up to the man and said, “Well, I imagine you get pretty tired of people coming in here and yelling at you just for doing your job, don’t you?”

The man’s heart seemed to melt. A big smile appeared on his face, and a friendly conversation followed. My husband made a new friend and retained control of his agency at the same time.

Does that help to put it into perspective? We cannot allow the enticements of life “to interfere with [our] prospects” for eternal life. We must learn to rise above them, turning to the Lord and looking unto Him in *every* thought. Isn’t that one step toward spiritual refinement?

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught us magnificently throughout his life of that gradual spiritual refinement. The Lord told him that he would triumph if he not only endured but “endure[d] it well.”³⁶

Toward the end of the Prophet’s life, he said:

*As for the perils which I am called to pass through, they seem but a small thing to me. . . . But nevertheless, deep water is what I am wont to swim in. It all has become a second nature to me; and I feel, like Paul, to glory in tribulation.*³⁷

None of us will go through what the Prophet Joseph Smith went through in his life, but we do encounter enticements every single day, don’t we? It is what we do with those enticements that prepares us for the adversities that come in our lives. Enticements are the practice round for when the great adversities come.

Retaining Control of Your Agency

I am grateful for the perfect examples from our Savior’s life. With the Son of God standing before him, Pilate asked Jesus, “Whence art thou?”

Jesus remained silent.

Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?

*Jesus answered, Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above.*³⁸

Jesus calmly reminded Pilate who was *really* in control of the situation. He looked to His Father in every thought. He didn’t doubt. He didn’t fear.

The scriptures attest to the fact that the Savior “suffered temptations but gave no heed unto them.”³⁹ No human being could ever have endured what He suffered.⁴⁰ He was and is the Master at transcending enticements and always retaining complete control of His agency.

As Elder David A. Bednar taught:

*As we come unto and follow the Savior, we increasingly and incrementally are enabled to become more like Him. We are empowered by the Spirit with disciplined self-restraint and a settled and calm demeanor. Thus, meek is what we become as disciples of the Master.*⁴¹

Brothers and sisters, each enticement has potential value for us, just as Elder Neal A. Maxwell reminded us:

*Therefore, how can you and I really expect to glide naively through life, as if to say, “Lord, give me experience, but not grief, not sorrow, not pain, not opposition, not betrayal, and certainly not to be forsaken. Keep from me, Lord, all those experiences which made Thee what Thou art! Then let me come and dwell with Thee and fully share Thy joy!”*⁴²

We can rejoice with each adversity, even the smallest one, because we can use each one to help us remain spiritually focused upon the glory that is yet to come!

President Brigham Young explained:

*When [God] is calling us to pass through that which we call afflictions, trials, temptations, and difficulties, did we possess the light of the Spirit, we would consider this the greatest blessing that could be bestowed upon us.*⁴³

As we make a daily effort to overcome our enticements and put off the natural man, we begin to experience greater control in our lives. The little things don’t bother us as much because we see them for what they really are—opportunities to use our agency to turn to our Heavenly Father and to become as He is.

My dear friends, I testify to you that the gospel of Jesus Christ is not a theory. It is not a group of unproven assumptions. It is not conjecture nor speculation. It is not unlivable. It is based on the doctrines and principles of the Son of God. When we follow His teachings, we are happy; when we do not, we reap sadness. As Jesus explained, “If ye know these things, happy are ye *if ye do them.*”⁴⁴

Simply put, the gospel of Jesus Christ works. I challenge you this week and beyond to watch for those enticements, to treasure and protect your agency, and to look unto Him in your every thought.

Brothers and sisters, let us heed current prophetic counsel, as President Nelson urged:

*Our focus must be riveted on the Savior and His gospel. It is mentally rigorous to strive to look unto Him in every thought. But when we do, our doubts and fears flee.*⁴⁵

I testify to you, my dear brothers and sisters, that Jesus Christ lives, He loves us, and He invites each of us to come unto Him. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. Brigham Young, *JD* 4:28 (17 August 1856).
2. D&C 82:9.
3. 2 Nephi 2:14–16; emphasis added.
4. Galatians 5:22.
5. Robert D. Hales, “To Act for Ourselves: The Gift and Blessings of Agency,” *Ensign*, May 2006; emphasis added.
6. “Joseph Smith’s First Prayer,” *Hymns*, 2002, no. 26.
7. See Luke 15:17.
8. Ezekiel 18:31, 32.
9. 2 Nephi 2:11.
10. Mosiah 3:19.
11. Moroni 7:13.
12. See 2 Nephi 31:20.
13. 2 Nephi 9:39.
14. D&C 121:43–44.
15. Helaman 7:16.

16. JST, James 1:2.
17. D&C 63:64.
18. Russell M. Nelson, “Decisions for Eternity,” *Ensign*, November 2013.
19. See 1 Nephi 17–18.
20. 1 Nephi 18:9.
21. 1 Nephi 18:11.
22. 1 Nephi 18:15.
23. 1 Nephi 18:16.
24. 2 Nephi 10:23.
25. D&C 98:3.
26. Acts 16:25.
27. Acts 16:26; see also verses 9–40.
28. D&C 58:3–4.
29. See D&C 121:8.
30. David O. McKay, *CR*, October 1969, 8.
31. David O. McKay, *CR*, October 1963, 8.
32. See 2 Nephi 4:18.
33. 2 Nephi 4:26–27; emphasis added.
34. 2 Nephi 4:28–29.
35. John Taylor, *JD* 22:228, 231 (26 June 1881); emphasis added. Quoted in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: John Taylor* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2001), 26.
36. D&C 121:8; emphasis added.
37. D&C 127:2.
38. John 19:9, 10–11.
39. D&C 20:22.
40. See Mosiah 3:7.
41. David A. Bednar, “Meek and Lowly of Heart,” *Ensign*, May 2018.
42. Neal A. Maxwell, “Lest Ye Be Wearied and Faint in Your Minds,” *Ensign*, May 1991.
43. Brigham Young, *JD* 2:303 (3 June 1855); emphasis added.
44. John 13:17; emphasis added.
45. Russell M. Nelson, “Drawing the Power of Jesus Christ into Our Lives,” *Ensign*, May 2017; emphasis in original.