

Lest We Forget to Believe

ARDETH G. KAPP

My dear brothers and sisters, this is a great privilege and a frightening one. I would feel much more at home if we were having a zone conference. I pray for the Spirit and trust that the Lord will help me. I am grateful that Heber and I can be here together; that is the wonderful thing about a mission. I believe it was Elder Victor L. Brown's wife who observed that only in the Church can one be married for time and all eternity and separated for life; but that is not so in the mission field.

A few years ago, during a rather extensive trip to the British Isles, I had the opportunity to speak to many young women, gathered in many different meeting houses. Upon my return I received a letter in the mail from a young woman that began: "Do you remember me? I was the one in the green jumper on the second row!"

On another occasion following a large gathering of young women at a girls' camp in the Northwest, I received another letter. This young woman had no question that I would remember her, but her letter was one of request. She wrote: "After the meeting we had, I stood in line. You hugged me and said something wonderful to me, but I can't remember what it was. Would you please write and tell

me so I can put it in my journal and read it when I feel bad?" I, of course, didn't remember exactly what I had told her; but I answered her letter with the message that I usually tried to whisper in each young woman's ear (along with giving the hug): "Remember, you are a daughter of a Heavenly Father who loves you. Remember always to stand as a witness of God at all times, and in all things, and in all places." (Many of you will recognize that as part of the Young Women theme.) That would be about all there was time to say. Occasionally, one of these young women would go to the end of the line and come through a second time for a hug and a reminder.

Is there anyone who does not have a need, bone-marrow deep, to be remembered? In our recent general conference, in his closing address, President Gordon B. Hinckley expressed his feelings about this when he said: "I wish I had some way to thank you *individually*" ("Stay the Course—Keep the Faith,"

Ardeth G. Kapp was president of the Young Women of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when this devotional address was given at Brigham Young University on 7 November 1995.

Ensign, November 1995, p. 70). He said he hoped that in the growth of the Church we never forget it is the individual that counts. In a recent surprise visit to a stake conference in Magna, Utah, he told the people, “I did not come here to preach: I just came to tell you I love you.” Do you recall the gentle request of one of the thieves who hung on a cross next to Jesus? “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.” And Jesus’ reassuring answer was, “Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:42, 43).

He remembers us. He knows us. He knows our names, our thoughts, our hopes, and our fears. One of our early prophets wrote:

Now, this is the truth. We humble people; we who feel ourselves sometimes so worthless, so good-for-nothing; we are not so worthless as we think. There is not one of us but what God’s love has been expended upon. There is not one of us that He has not cared for and caressed. [George Q. Cannon, “Our Pre-Existence and Present Probation,” Collected Discourses, vol. 2, comp. and ed. Brian H. Stuy (Burbank, California: B.H.S. Publishing, 1988), p. 143]

There may be days when, like the young woman, we may want to ask, “Do you remember me? You hugged me and said something wonderful to me, but I forgot. Can you write and tell me so I can read it when I feel bad?” We might add “because I want to be happy.”

Fortunately we have the scriptures that I have referred to as my “letters from home.” The great plan of happiness, of which Alma speaks, calls for a forgetting. Through God’s mercy and love for us, He has provided a road map to eternal salvation that will eventually bring lasting happiness; and this plan requires that we be tried and tested along the way.

There is much to be learned from struggle, pain, and sorrow; however, the plan assures eternal happiness—a happiness far greater

than the common definition that most people think of today. Is our Father in Heaven *always* happy according to our definition? Is Christ always happy? The scriptures are replete with accounts of their sorrow and pain over the actions of disobedient children. And what were the feelings of God the Father when it became necessary to withdraw the support of His immediate presence as His Only Begotten Son was dying on the cross? Not happiness, surely. So what are we to understand about the nature of happiness? Because of the grand plan of salvation that necessitates this mortal period of testing, of freedom to choose, of growth toward eternal goals—if we choose to commit our lives in that direction—our Father in Heaven has provided a way for our return. It is that assurance that brings us peace and happiness and the joy of the journey.

Verily, thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am. [D&C 93:1]

Our return to our Father’s eternal realms is His ultimate objective—His work and His glory. It was and is also the essential mission of His Son. It was why Jesus Christ, who created our world and our whole universe, took a mortal body, endured temptation, ridicule, and an ignominious death to become our Savior, our Redeemer, and our advocate with the Father.

Lest we forget, the grand plan is designed for our happiness; but this plan required a period of *forgetting*, because an essential part of the plan is the exercise of faith—faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. One of the most reassuring thoughts that has comforted me throughout my years has been: “I chose to come here. I sustained Christ’s plan rather than Satan’s in the premortal existence.” We all knew, before we were born, that we were coming to earth and

would experience joy *and* sorrow. We eagerly accepted the plan. My father made this point very clear to me some years ago. I was wrestling with what to me seemed major issues in my life, with prayers not yet answered, or so I thought. Into my mind I heard him speak, although he had been gone for several years: "My dear, don't trouble yourself about the little things, and the big things you already agreed to before you came." We chose this life, with the struggles. We chose to accept the forgetting and to see whether we would walk by faith.

It is a wonderful reassurance in our day to have the scriptures. They give us evidence of many who, with no recollection of their premortal life, exercised their faith, kept the commandments, and were reassured of their salvation. Whatever pains or sorrows or dislocations we may endure, the ultimate definition of happiness for us must be knowing that we have been faithful and that our salvation is assured. The forgetting may be gradual, but that we learn to walk by faith is essential.

Consider the tender account told of little four-year-old Sachi.

Soon after her brother was born, little Sachi began to ask her parents to leave her alone with the new baby. They decided to allow it. Elated, she went into the baby's room and shut the door, but it opened a crack—enough for her curious parents to peek in and listen. They saw little Sachi walk quietly up to her baby brother, put her face close to his, and say quietly, "Baby, tell me what God feels like. I'm starting to forget."

Yes, there is a forgetting, but thankfully there is also a remembering crucial to our inner peace and well-being. To remember is to keep in mind, retain the thought; and remembrance is the ability to recall, to retrieve, to bring back. This matter of retaining or retrieving is strengthened with keepsakes,

mementoes, tokens, symbols, CTR rings, journals, and so on.

Young women have colors as reminders of Young Women values. Whenever the color purple is seen, it is to bring to mind the value of integrity: "I will make my actions consistent with my knowledge of right and wrong." Symbols of this kind stimulate our memories, which then affect our attitude and our behavior.

The "journal-keeping" of Nephi, of Alma, and especially the tremendous efforts of Mormon were motivated by their wish to keep future generations always in remembrance. How often we read of numerous times when God delivered a group of people when they were faithful, when they remembered.

On a very personal level, remember David's response to Saul, who had told him that he would not be able to fight Goliath because he was "but a youth," and so he was. However, he had some memorable experiences in his life to draw from. With confidence David responded, "The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine" (1 Samuel 17:37). How important was it to David and all of Israel that he remembered how the Lord had blessed him in the past?

How important is it for each of us to remember those times when without the Lord's help we could never have accomplished the mission or the calling, the task or the challenge given to us? When we can draw from the past, we don't have to retest every decision or experience, or burn our hand on the hot stove yet again. We can turn to our storehouse of memory over and over again to recall, replay, or relive precious, important, and sacred moments. These will sustain, comfort, and protect us against uncertainty or a faltering faith. I saw a cartoon recently of a huge slingshot. The caption read: "As you face your Goliaths

in life, remember, help is only a stone's throw-away."

When Oliver Cowdery began his labors as a scribe in the translation of the Book of Mormon, the Lord spoke to Oliver through Joseph Smith as follows:

Behold, thou art Oliver, and I have spoken unto thee because of thy desires; therefore treasure up these words in thy heart. Be faithful and diligent in keeping the commandments of God, and I will encircle thee in the arms of my love. . . .

Verily, verily, I say unto you, if you desire a further witness, cast your mind upon the night that you cried unto me in your heart, that you might know concerning the truth of these things.

Did I not speak peace to your mind concerning the matter? What greater witness can you have than from God? [D&C 6:20, 22–23]

It is as if the Lord were saying: "Remember, remember, Oliver, what I told you before. Treasure those memories. Draw strength from them, and never ever forget." He could say to each of us: "Remember those times that I spoke peace to your mind."

When I speak of remembering our Father in Heaven, it is quite a different thing than remembering the face, name, and influence of, say, an important teacher in our life from the past. When we left our Father's presence and were born, a veil was drawn over our eyes. It is similar to what we experience with the wind. We do not *see* it, but we can, if we observe carefully, see the trees sway and the waves build up and feel its force against us as we walk. We may also feel or see the influence of our Father in Heaven, but we are not allowed (for very sound eternal reasons) to remember our Heavenly Father in the same way I remember my fourth-grade teacher Miss Redd.

The text of Eliza R. Snow's poem is a glorious statement of our *not* coming here with a

full remembrance from the premortal existence:

*For a wise and glorious purpose
Thou hast placed me here on earth
And withheld the recollection
Of my former friends and birth.
["O My Father," Hymns, 1985, no. 292]*

Now if there were a formula, an equation, a prescription that could be easily dispensed that would provide total memory and instant recall of what we are learning daily, I would suppose that on the day before final exams, or for some, maybe the morning of the day, there would be a lineup that would make the BYU lineups seem short. When we have spent a great deal of time and effort with our studies, we ought to remember, we want to remember, but often times we don't. We know that the information is in our mind somewhere, like on a marvelous computer chip, but the retrieval is not always readily available or dependable. I've heard of people who claim to have a photographic memory but not same-day delivery! (You will better understand that in years to come.) Someone has said it is hard to be nostalgic when you can't remember anything.

This matter of forgetting and remembering seems to play tricks on us as we get older. But I'm not talking about such things as remembering where you put your wallet or the keys to the car or your checkbook—or even the information you need to pass your exams. I am talking about remembering the experiences that keep us ever mindful of the precious gift of life and its meaning and purpose and all that it offers—our covenants, our family relationships, and our homeward journey.

Where is this home I am referring to? Let's say that as I came here today, I saw one of you that I recognized as a former student and said, "Julie, how are you?"

And Julie replied, "I feel wonderful today. I just bought my ticket to fly home for

Christmas." I would not experience any confusion about where Julie is going, no ambiguity about her sense of joy in knowing she would be with her family; and, because I knew that she came from a place halfway around the world, I would also know what the costs were for her to travel home—how she had worked and saved and denied herself many luxuries and maybe some necessities. Today, in a different sense, Julie could also say, "I feel wonderful. I'm on my way home." So where is this home that is our ultimate journey?

This life is the time to work and to save and to prepare and, yes, deny ourselves some things, many things that we may at the time even consider a sacrifice. The gospel principles help give us a vision of that home, tell us what to do, how to save, where to buy the ticket, and the price we must pay. A current temple recommend is symbolic of that ticket. I urge you to remember the essential nature of the journey we are each on and the *home* that our journey leads us to. I testify that if we are devotedly intent on "being home for Christmas," we will be guided in every major decision we have to make throughout our lives, and we will enjoy the journey. Oh, let us remember, lest we forget to believe in that eternal home.

I am convinced that we do not enter this life without strong promptings, that there was for each of us a significant *before*, and there will be a significant *after*. W. H. Auden, the contemporary English poet, expressed this thought as follows:

I am sure it is everyone's experience, as it has been mine, that any "discovery" we make about ourselves or the meaning of life, is never, like a scientific discovery, a coming upon something entirely new and unsuspected; it is rather, the coming to conscious recognition of something which we really knew all the time, but, because we were unwilling or unable to formulate it correctly, we did not hitherto know we knew.

Eliza R. Snow expressed the same thought:

*Yet ofttimes a secret something
Whispered, "You're a stranger here,"
And I felt that I had wandered
From a more exalted sphere.
["O My Father," Hymns, 1985, no. 292]*

Because of the biblical accounts of Christ's death and resurrection, all those who accept Christian doctrines believe in an afterlife. By comparison, however, very few, if any, understand that we were born first as spirit children, that we had to make choices there, and that this mortal life is a *second* stage in a grand three-step plan. Through revelations given to prophets, we Latter-day Saints can put into concrete form what W. H. Auden referred to as "coming to conscious recognition of something which we really knew all the time."

We knew that a veil would be drawn over our eyes and our memories. Alma tells us: "God gave unto them commandments, after having made known unto them the plan of redemption" (Alma 12:32). The lessons we were taught in the premortal existence included the plan for our salvation. The small promptings or inklings of memory we carry into this life are like a lighthouse in the harbor that beckons us home through stormy seas. Faith in the eternal plan helps fill the cavity of emptiness when we may feel alone or homesick. It can help create a bond with those who have gone before when, for a time, the veil still separates us.

To the young woman who asked the question "Do you remember me?" perhaps I might have responded with the question "Do you remember you? Do you remember who you are and whose you are? Do you remember Him who bought you with a price?" President George Q. Cannon gives us this insight:

There is no doubt in my mind that we were familiar with the principles of the Gospel; and though they had faded from our memories, yet when

we heard them again the recollection was revived. I believe that when we see our Father in heaven we shall know Him; and the recollection that we were once with Him, and that He was our father, will come back to us, and we will fall upon His neck, and He will fall upon us, and we will kiss each other. We will know our Mother, also. We will know those who have begotten us in the spirit world just as much as we will know each other after we pass from this state of existence into another sphere. [George Q. Cannon, “Blessings of the Latter-day Saints,” *Collected Discourses*, vol. 1, comp. and ed. Brian H. Stuy (Burbank, California: B.H.S. Publishing, 1987), p. 235]

While we live in this sphere away from “home,” our Father has equipped us with a remarkable capacity to experience the beauty of life, the joy of life, and the abundance of it. Alma tells us “awak[en] and arouse your faculties” (Alma 32:27). This requires some work and attention on our part. It is not always easy. We may look but not see with an eye of faith; we may listen but not hear the whisperings of the Spirit; we may touch but be “past feeling”; we may live, but without sensitivity—and thus our arsenal of memory is not filled with experiences that can be used to fight against doubt, fear, discouragement, or despair and even faltering faith.

Do we see and hear and feel the hand of God all around us daily? Korihor seemed to be suffering some form of amnesia when he said to Alma, “Show me a sign, that I may be convinced that there is a God.” Then Alma pointed out that

all things denote there is a God; yea, even the earth, and all things that are upon the face of it, yea, and its motion, yea, and also all the planets which move in their regular form do witness that there is a Supreme Creator.

Korihor received the sign and was struck dumb. Then he put forth his hand and wrote,

“I always knew that there was a God” (Alma 30:43, 44, 52). He remembered too late.

When we are so busily engaged and consumed that our minds are clogged, saturated, or preoccupied, and we are distracted in our thoughts with no time to ponder—we may see the evidence of God’s hand but forget the Creator.

In the poem *Renascence* by Edna St. Vincent Millay (1912), we see the effects of one who looks without seeing, touches without feeling, listens without hearing. The poem begins:

*All I could see from where I stood
Was three long mountains and a wood;
I turned and looked another way,
And saw three islands in a bay.*

She surveys her surroundings and observes:

*The sky, I thought, is not so grand;
I ‘most could touch it with my hand!*

With senses deadened, she finds herself in her grave away from all of God’s beautiful creations. There she begins to *remember*. The majesty of it all begins to return, and she pleads for another chance:

*O God, I cried, give me new birth,
And put me back upon the earth!*

In time a heavy rain comes and washes her grave away. It is as if there were an instant recall. She sees things as they really are. She expresses her thoughts in prayer:

*I know not how such things can be;
I only know there came to me
A fragrance such as never clings
To aught save happy living things;
A sound as of some joyous elf
Singing sweet songs to please himself,
And, through and over everything,
A sense of glad awakening.*

*The grass, a-tiptoe at my ear,
Whispering to me I could hear;
I felt the rain's cool finger-tips
Brushed tenderly across my lips,
Laid gently on my sealed sight,
And all at once the heavy night
Fell from my eyes and I could see! —
A drenched and dripping apple-tree,
A last long line of silver rain,
A sky grown clear and blue again.
And as I looked a quickening gust
Of wind blew up to me and thrust
Into my face a miracle
Of orchard-breath, and with the smell, —
I know not how such things can be! —
I breathed my soul back into me.*

*Ah! Up then from the ground sprang I
And hailed the earth with such a cry
As is not heard save from a man
Who has been dead, and lives again.
About the trees my arms I wound;
Like one gone mad I hugged the ground;
I raised my quivering arms on high;
I laughed and laughed into the sky;
Till at my throat a strangling sob
Caught fiercely, and a great heart-throb
Sent instant tears into my eyes:
O God, I cried, no dark disguise
Can e'er hereafter hide from me
Thy radiant identity!
Thou canst not move across the grass
But my quick eyes will see Thee pass,
Nor speak, however silently,
But my hushed voice will answer Thee.
I know the path that tells Thy way
Through the cool eve of every day;
God, I can push the grass apart
And lay my finger on Thy heart!*

*The world stands out on either side
No wider than the heart is wide;
Above the world is stretched the sky, —
No higher than the soul is high.
The heart can push the sea and land*

*Farther away on either hand;
The soul can split the sky in two,
And let the face of God shine through.
But East and West will pinch the heart
That can not keep them pushed apart;
And he whose soul is flat — the sky
Will cave in on him by and by.*

It is possible to be dead spiritually while we are still alive physically.

Sin will dull the memories of rich spiritual experiences, but with faculties awakened and aroused, we can “experiment” upon the word and “feast upon this fruit” (see Alma 32:27, 42). In faith a woman reached out, *touched* the hem of the Savior’s garment, and was healed. Do you think she remembered for all time and eternity that touch?

Lehi *tasted* the fruit of the tree of life and declared “that it was most sweet, above all that [he] ever before tasted” (1 Nephi 8:11). Have you tasted that fruit?

Samuel *heard* the voice of the Lord, and the Lord told Samuel: “Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of everyone that heareth it shall tingle” (1 Samuel 3:11). Do your ears “tingle” when you hear the voice of the Lord through our living prophets?

The Prophet Joseph Smith testified, “I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air” (JS—H 1:17). Do you see with an eye of faith what the prophet saw? The crucial words I use here are *see with an eye of faith*.

When the Lord God “breathed into [man’s] nostrils the breath of life; . . . man became a living soul” (Moses 3:7). Should we be surprised that Satan’s strategy would include any and every means by which our senses may be dulled, deadened, and nonfunctioning so that what is *seen* at first as alarming in time becomes acceptable? And what is *heard* that at first is offensive and then becomes common place? The addicting habits destroy sensitivity.

Will we be weakened by such attacks or *will we remember* to draw near unto Him, knowing that He will draw near unto us? Will we remember to seek Him diligently, knowing that when we do we shall surely find Him? Of this we can be sure.

If there is any wavering in our trust in the Lord, closer examination may reveal that the lack of trust is not in the Lord but rather in ourselves. When we follow the direction of the great plan of happiness, we receive confirmation upon confirmation that Christ's mission was and is exactly what He claimed it to be. It is "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39). It is our *mortal memory* of these confirmations that allows you and me to say, "I believe in Christ." I believe, as surely as I am standing before you, that the Church is true, that Joseph Smith was and is a prophet of God, and that Jesus Christ is accomplishing the purpose of the divine plan through our modern-day prophet President Gordon B. Hinckley.

It was thirty years even prior to Christ's birth that Helaman counseled his sons, wanting them to be prepared for the challenges they would face.

And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall. [Helaman 5:12]

Do you feel the love and concern with which this father spoke to his sons? I don't doubt many of you have heard a similar tone of love and concern in your mother's or your father's voice, maybe before you left home to

come to school. Perhaps, if you listen, you can recall it even now.

At the close of Christ's mortal ministry, knowing what was ahead, Jesus was preparing the apostles for the challenges He knew would come. Now, as they were assembled in that upper room, He promised, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." He then further explained:

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. [John 14:18, 26]

Jesus took bread and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. . . .

And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them; and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, . . .

And as oft as ye do this ordinance, ye will remember me in this hour that I was with you and drank with you of this cup, even the last time in my ministry. [JST, Mark 14:20–24]

Would you have been absent from that upper room if you had been invited to be there with the Savior on that occasion just prior to His crucifixion? Will we ever be absent from those occasions each week when we are invited, even as the apostles, to eat and drink and remember the Savior, the Son of God, and keep His commandments so we can have His spirit to be with us? Think of how we would feel if these sacred emblems were not available to us because there was no authorized authority to administer them or because of our lack of worthiness to partake of them. Would we be more ready, more reverent, more thoughtful and grateful when the opportunity was restored for us? How would you feel if

you wanted with all your heart and soul to partake of those emblems and to witness anew that you were willing to take upon you the name of Christ; that you wanted to show that you would always remember Him and you would keep His commandments so that you might have His spirit to be with you always—but because of wrong choices in your life you were deprived from that blessing for a time?

I know someone in this situation. He tells me that each week he hears the words of that prayer with a clarity, a fervor, a commitment that he never felt before. But as the emblems of the bread and water are offered him, he must pass them on to others who often seem not to feel the full impact of what they are doing and his heart cries out, *Do you realize the blessing that is yours?*

Maybe we too often underestimate the significance of baptism. That event turns the key and opens the door to eternal life and eternal happiness. With the gift of the Holy Ghost bestowed after our baptism, we are entitled to a special kind of direction and guidance that will create the sustaining memories I have been talking about.

Baptism does not guarantee happiness as we tend to define happiness; it does not guarantee that we will not suffer physically or emotionally; it does not assure that bills will be paid; or that all of our relationships with others will be easy. What baptism does guarantee is that we need never lack for clarity about a major decision. The covenant of baptism and the renewal of that covenant through the ordinance of the sacrament admits us to a very

select environment in this mortal world. Whatever your loneliness and isolation, you can know that our Heavenly Father knows you personally and loves you and that His spirit can and will attend you.

I am deeply impressed by the last twenty years of Moroni's life. He was alone. All of his friends and family had been killed. He had to hide himself from his enemies. He was always on the move, trying to find his own shelter, trying to sustain himself physically, and all the while keeping secure the sacred records his father had entrusted to him. He was a mortal like you and me, but during all of those long years of trial and loneliness he was sustained by what we hear each week in the sacramental prayer: he always *remembered* Christ, he kept His commandments, and he had His spirit to be with him.

Finally, Moroni was able to express his remarkable testimony and warning. He was able to figuratively look each of us in the eye and say: "I exhort you to remember" (see Moroni 10:3).

My urgent plea to each of us today is to remember, lest we forget to believe! We may not remember all of the equations, the formulas, the histories, the prescriptions that become a part of our formal education—but let us remember and never forget: "God loved us, so he sent his Son, Christ Jesus, the atoning One" ("God Loved Us, So He Sent His Son," *Hymns*, 1985, no. 187).

To this I testify and pray that we may so live in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.