

Love of the Savior

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Over the past two weeks, we have seen an outpouring of love on the Brigham Young University campus. When we learned of the death of President Gordon B. Hinckley, students set up spontaneous memorials expressing their love for him. And when the reorganization of the First Presidency was announced last week, our hearts reached out in love to President Thomas S. Monson and his counselors.

Charity: The Love of the Savior

Love is a central principle in the gospel of Jesus Christ (see Joseph B. Wirthlin, “The Great Commandment,” *Ensign*, November 2007, 28–31). Often asked why people who joined the Church remained loyal to him, the Prophet Joseph Smith explained, “It is because I possess the principle of love. All I can offer the world is a good heart and a good hand” (*HC* 5:498).

A young man who knew the Prophet Joseph Smith later recalled an occasion when

Joseph and some of the young men were playing various out-door games, among which was a game of ball. By and by they began to get weary. He saw it, and calling them together he said: “Let us build a log cabin.” So off they went, Joseph and

the young men, to build a log cabin for a widow woman. [Edwin Holden, in “Recollections of the Prophet Joseph Smith,” *Juvenile Instructor* 27, no. 5 (1 March 1892): 153]

On other occasions after playing ball with the boys, the Prophet gathered up the players and sent them out to chop and deliver wood to the needy (see Mosiah Lyman Hancock, page 22 of *Autobiography*, typescript, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City; also in *They Knew the Prophet*, comp. Hyrum L. Andrus and Helen Mae Andrus [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1974], 103).

This kind love for others is a gift from God called charity (see 1 Corinthians 13). It is the love of the Savior (see Moroni 7:46–47).

A Pattern of the Savior’s Love

In the worldwide leadership training meeting this past Saturday (9 February 2008), Elder Jeffrey R. Holland shared what he called the parable of the homemade shirt. When he was young his mother would sometimes sew shirts

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for him. She did her best work when she followed a pattern. Without a pattern, a shirt might end up with errors. Elder Holland drew from this story the parallel that the gospel of Jesus Christ provides essential patterns for our lives to follow. Deviation from the gospel pattern is likely to result in error.

For example, romantic love is wonderful, but our society distorts romance beyond proportion. It is as if a clean, white shirt has been tie-dyed and tailored to the point of immodesty. It ends up fitting no one. No wonder so many end up disappointed! When it comes to love, we can take our measurements from a higher standard. The perfect pattern of love was taught by the Lord Jesus Christ: “Love one another; as I have loved you” (John 13:34).

There are countless patterns in the holy scriptures that can teach us about the love of the Savior, but today we will focus on only one pattern:

1. God first loves us.
2. We then turn to Him for healing and instruction.
3. He then sends us to love and serve others.

Not specific to romantic love, this pattern applies to a variety of circumstances that range from missionary service to marriage.

Let’s turn to the scriptures for three examples of this pattern. First, consider the story of the prophet Enos. He said, “I went to hunt beasts in the forests; and the words which I had often heard my father speak concerning eternal life, and the joy of the saints, sunk deep into my heart” (Enos 1:3).

First, Enos recognized God’s love for him and his people and opened his heart to God. Next, Enos turned to God and was healed. Enos said:

And my soul hungered; and I kneeled down before my Maker, and I cried unto him in mighty prayer and supplication for mine own soul; and all

the day long did I cry unto him; yea, and when the night came I did still raise my voice high that it reached the heavens.

And there came a voice unto me, saying: Enos, thy sins are forgiven thee, and thou shalt be blessed. [Enos 1:4–5]

Enos prayed for his own soul and received remission of his sins. As soon as he was healed, Enos turned his thoughts to others. He said:

Now, it came to pass that when I had heard these words I began to feel a desire for the welfare of my brethren, the Nephites; wherefore, I did pour out my whole soul unto God for them. . . .

. . . And I prayed unto him with many long strugglings for my brethren, the Lamanites. [Enos 1:9, 11]

First, Enos recognized God’s love as it had been manifested through His words and through the joy He gave to Enos’ people. Then Enos opened his heart to God and received healing forgiveness. When he was healed, Enos turned to serve others.

A second example of the pattern is found in the prophet Lehi’s vision of the tree of life. Here are Lehi’s own words:

I beheld myself that I was in a dark and dreary waste.

And after I had traveled for the space of many hours in darkness, I began to pray unto the Lord that he would have mercy on me. [1 Nephi 8:7–8]

First, Lehi was alone, until he remembered the Lord and His loving mercy. Next, Lehi turned to God and received of His love, which is represented by the tree of life. Lehi said, “After I had prayed unto the Lord . . . I beheld a tree, whose fruit was desirable to make one happy. And it came to pass that I did go forth and partake of the fruit thereof” (1 Nephi 8:9–11).

Lehi came to the tree of life and was filled with joy. This healing prompted him to remember his family. He said:

Wherefore, I began to be desirous that my family should partake of it also. . . .

And it came to pass that I beckoned unto them; and I also did say unto them with a loud voice that they should come unto me, and partake of the fruit. [1 Nephi 8:12, 15; see also verses 7–11]

Lehi and his family were in darkness. They were brought to the tree of life, which represents the love of God. Those who partook of the fruit were filled with joy, and they consecrated their lives to the Lord.

A third example of this pattern comes from the mission of the four sons of Mosiah who left their homes to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ among their enemies, the Lamanites. As a result of this mission, many Lamanites received the Lord's love, turned to Him, were healed, and then consecrated themselves to lives of service and peace (see Alma 26:33). As we can see, the pattern of love works the same for individuals (as in the case of Enos), for families (as in the case of Lehi), and for entire societies (as in the case of the Lamanites who believed the sons of Mosiah).

In a way, the pattern also follows Elder Oaks' counsel to wisely choose activities based on the classifications of "good, better, and best" (see Dallin H. Oaks, "Good, Better, Best," *Ensign*, November 2007, 104–8). It is good to believe that the Savior Jesus Christ loves us. It is better to turn to Him and be healed. It is best to love as He loves, giving all we have to others.

With Hands of Love

In the scriptures, the term *heart* sometimes refers to love, but the term *hand* is also used to signify love. Whereas *heart* refers to a feeling, *hand* refers to an act of giving—putting into action our feelings of love. In that sense, the image of an outreached hand symbolizes a type of love spoken of in the scriptures.

Using His hands, the Lord reaches out to us in love, heals us, and then sets us apart in His service. For example, the Apostle John

recorded that after the Resurrection, the Savior appeared to the Apostles, "shewed unto them his hands," and then set them apart, saying, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (John 20:20–21).

The same pattern occurred when the Savior appeared to the Nephites (see 3 Nephi 11–28). First, He showed them His hands, then He healed their sick, and then He ordained disciples to minister unto others.

Recognition and Coming unto Him

We face many challenges in life. You have experienced heartache and struggles known only to you and God. Says the Lord, "As the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand" (Jeremiah 18:6). For you it might be the darkest night, but "his arm of mercy is extended towards you in the light of the day" (Jacob 6:5).

No matter what your struggle, you can seek His love. No matter what your heartache, you can feel His love right now, for "he healeth the broken in heart" (Psalm 147:3). And when we are healed, we say, "But now, O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand" (Isaiah 64:8).

When we receive God's love, we become willing to submit to His will (see Mosiah 3:19). It is immediately after we say to our Father "Into thine hand I commit my spirit" (Psalm 31:5) that we are taken from the pain of this world and transformed by Him in a "mighty change" of heart (Mosiah 5:2; Alma 5:14).

Testimony

In heartache I have cried out for Him. And I have felt the love of the Savior. I know of His grace. He is love (see 1 John 4:7). "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting" (Psalm 103:17). Through His Atonement, we are healed (see Isaiah 53:5). And when we are healed, He turns our hearts to others (see Matthew 10:8).

He reaches out to us. That is how the Savior works. It is His work and His glory (see Moses 1:39). When we submit our will to Him (see James 4:6–8), we receive the greatest gift of all (see Psalm 138:7; 1 Nephi 15:35; Alma 32:42; D&C 14:7).

Progressing from Receiving to Giving

We do struggle in this life, but the pattern of our Savior’s love accounts for our limitations and growth over time. He works with us according to our abilities and needs, which change across every stage of life.

As children, we need to receive—we need to be loved. As we grow older we gain a personal witness of God, and we need forgiveness as we hurt ourselves and others. As adults, we shoulder responsibilities in our families and communities. The pattern reflects our own progression—we received as children; when we are healed, we give as adults.

Our Father in Heaven invites us, His children, to give: “Give, and it shall be given unto you” (Luke 6:38); “Freely ye have received, freely give” (Matthew 10:8). Said the Psalmist, “Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, . . . I will lift up my hands in thy name” (Psalm 63:3–4). Our hands become His when we labor in His name.

You can lift up your hands to serve. You have gifts to give. What are they? As President Thomas S. Monson has done, you might follow the Savior’s pattern of love by visiting “the sick and the afflicted” (D&C 52:40) and “the fatherless and widows” (James 1:27). Whatever your inclinations might be, the BYU Center for Service and Learning offers dozens of service opportunities, at least one of which will be suited to your needs. I hope we overwhelm them with requests! Chances are you already know someone in your family who needs you or someone who needs the truths of the gospel.

Both missionary service and marriage also qualify as service-learning opportuni-

ties! Because marriage and missionary service might be on the mind of at least one person here, they deserve further consideration.

Missions: Labors of Love

First, missionary service. A member of our ward, Sister Sharon Paulsen, received the missionaries into her home 13 years ago, and the gospel transformed her life. She sought to do all she could to further missionary work. So for 10 years she has served as a cook at the Missionary Training Center—chances are, many of you have been blessed by her service. Although her offering may have begun as the equivalent of five loaves and two fishes (see John 6:9), her hands have become His in feeding the thousands.

Like the four sons of Mosiah, once we have been healed by the Savior, our desire for others to receive that same joy motivates our actions (see Mosiah 28:1–5). When the love of the Savior is our motive, we become missionaries, full-time or not.

Said Elder M. Russell Ballard:

*Some members say, “I’m afraid to share the gospel because I might offend someone.” Experience has shown that people are not offended when the sharing is motivated by the spirit of love and concern. How could anyone be offended when we say something like this: “I love the way my church helps me” and then add whatever the Spirit directs. It’s when we appear only to be fulfilling an assignment and we fail to express real interest and love that we offend others. [M. Russell Ballard, “The Essential Role of Member Missionary Work,” *Ensign*, May 2003, 39–40]*

Our niece, who is currently serving in the North Carolina Raleigh Mission, recently shared with us that her goal is to see everyone she encounters as her literal brother or sister. She said that perspective has made all the difference in her work. Missionary service “requires genuine love” (Ballard, “Essential Role,” 39). We may

be called to serve, but we cannot truly serve without that qualification. Charity and love qualify us for the work (see D&C 4:5).

Having that qualification, missionaries fulfill the Lord's request: "Let them lift up their voice and declare my word . . . , lifting up holy hands upon them. For I am able to make you holy" (D&C 60:7). Missionaries follow the pattern of the Lord. They help others first to receive His love, then to turn to Him and be healed, and then to commit the remainder of their lives to His service.

Marriage

For the person still thinking about marriage, it's now your turn to listen. The thirteenth article of faith makes the claim "If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things." We seek after marriage! But what kind of marriage? We often hear people speak of "eternal marriage" or "temple marriage," but what kind of marriage is that? Said Elder Marlin K. Jensen:

*Eternal marriage is godlike marriage. The term eternal describes the quality of marriage as much as its duration. What type of marriage would our God have? [Marlin K. Jensen, "A Union of Love and Understanding," *Ensign*, October 1994, 51]*

If we have this perspective in mind when we speak of temple marriage, then we will worry less about the reception decorations and focus more on core values, such as those concluding the Young Women theme: "[Being] prepared to strengthen home and family, make and keep sacred covenants, receive the ordinances of the temple, and enjoy the blessings of exaltation."

Let me tell you about a young couple who lived that way. Amy met her sweetheart, Curtis, in the Clyde Building on campus, where they both took engineering classes. Curtis was a returned missionary who was

serving in his elders quorum. He loved the Savior, and Amy knew it because of the ways he served others and how he lived his life. They were sealed in the Mount Timpanogos Temple, and Curtis continued to serve Amy, and later their daughter, in countless little ways. Family came first, balanced with responsibilities as a student, a counselor in a BYU freshman ward bishopric, and a member of the BYU Ultimate Frisbee team. As Curtis was traveling to Canada with the BYU team, there was an accident and he was killed. Amy and Curtis' marriage is eternal: not because he died but because of how he lived—serving others and honoring his temple covenants.

Regarding his own marriage, President Gordon B. Hinckley said:

In our long life together I cannot remember a serious quarrel. . . .

*If every husband and every wife would constantly do whatever might be possible to ensure the comfort and happiness of his or her companion, there would be very little, if any, divorce. [Gordon B. Hinckley, "The Women in Our Lives," *Ensign*, November 2004, 82, 84]*

Another example of such dedication in marriage comes from a woman I know who was an English major at BYU. She met her sweetheart in Provo and corresponded with him throughout his mission to Germany and then throughout her own mission, also to Germany—three and a half years of writing letters! They were sealed in the Provo Temple a few months before their graduation from BYU. Even though they would be attending graduate school, they desired to have children immediately, but they were unable to do so. The wife later lamented, "My poor husband! For six years he thought marriage meant hearing me cry every night!"

Eventually they were able to adopt a baby boy. Two years later they adopted a baby girl, then another boy, and later another girl. After so many years of heartache, they were constantly

caring for children, but that was not the end. After undergoing additional treatments, they learned they were going to have triplets! Months of bed rest to prevent premature delivery were followed by months of constant devotion to the needs of the tiny infants. The couple then had seven children eight years old and younger! Through years of heartache, this sister had actively sought the love of the Lord. Eventually she was healed, and she dedicated her life to serving her family. That dedication did not begin when she first held a child in her arms. It began when, as BYU students, she and her future husband determined their life's priorities and then went forward, no matter the cost.

Anciently, devotion to God was demonstrated through daily sacrifices performed in the temple upon a holy altar (see Numbers 28:24). Today, eternal devotion in marriage begins within the temple across a holy altar—and sacrifices are still a daily requirement.

Marriage “is ordained of God” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, November 1995, 102), perfectly designed for us to increase in our capacity to love because marriage requires sacrifice. President Howard W. Hunter said, “We need to love one another with the pure love of Christ, . . . and, if necessary, shared suffering, for that is the way God loves us” (“Come to the God of All Truth,” *Ensign*, September 1994, 72).

There is joy in marriage, joy in missionary service, and joy whenever we reach out with the love of the Lord (see Philippians 2:17, D&C 132:19).

A Pattern of Love with Christ at the Center

The pattern of love presented today is but one of many found in the holy scriptures, and, like most patterns, it points us to Christ.

As we receive God's love, our faith motivates us to repent. The Atonement of Jesus Christ makes healing possible (see Alma 42:15), and we are born again—born of the water and of the Spirit through baptism and the gift of the

Holy Ghost (see Moses 6:59). The Holy Ghost prompts us to give to others by consecrating our talents and time for their benefit. Priesthood—“the perfect plan of service” (Stephen L. Richards, *CR*, April 1937, 46)—and temple covenants enable eventual sanctification.

Christ is at the center of the pattern. He is at the beginning and at the end (see D&C 19:1). He is the pattern of love we follow (see John 14:6).

Invitation to Apply the Pattern of Love

Whether we are single, married, or serving as a missionary, we can apply His pattern to our lives through active planning (see L. Tom Perry, “The Great Plan of Our God,” *BYU devotional*, 30 October 2007). Think about your schedule this week. When will you make time to serve others? Many people can be blessed by your love. Who can you help? So what if you receive no valentines? How many valentines will you give? Like the Prophet Joseph Smith, when we possess the principle of love, what we offer is a good heart and a good hand.

Patterns of Love at BYU

To my way of thinking, Brigham Young University embodies the pattern of Christ's love. Members of the Church who love the Savior give their tithes at some sacrifice so that our lives will be blessed. Through their giving and through the direction of Christ's servants who administer this institution, we are enabled to serve for a lifetime. This university exists through giving and love. Said Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, “We love you and measure that love as we measure the greatness of this school—by the profundity and power of the gospel of Jesus Christ” (“Unless You're a Mormon,” *BYU devotional*, 9 September 1986).

We faculty and staff love you students. We seek to turn you to Christ so that you will give of yourselves to others across your lifetime. That is what we all entered BYU to learn—to “go forth to serve.” In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.