In my church and professional service, I often meet one-on-one with individuals who are searching for peace in their lives. I believe, as Elder Ronald A. Rasband has taught, that in our interpersonal relationships, there are no “chance” meetings in this life but that God brings us together by His “divine design.”

Because of this teaching, I try to see every person who seeks me out as someone the Lord has purposely brought into my path. Although I am not always successful, as we visit, I try to listen for three things:
First, I try to really hear what each person is saying.  
Second, I try to understand, through the Spirit, what this person may be trying to communicate, even if they are not able to express themselves through the words they are sharing.  
Third, I listen for the message the Lord would want me to convey to His beloved daughter or son in that moment—something this person may need to hear and that provides hope and a reminder of the Lord’s love and of His awareness of His daughter’s or son’s challenges, desires, or needs.  
Today I convey that same message to you. Our Heavenly Father is aware of your deepest inner yearnings, of every righteous desire of your heart, and of your every need and want. He does not love you from afar; He is always nearby. He always wants what is best for you, and He knows what He desires you to become. That is why He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, not only to show us the way but to be the way to become like Him.  
In preparation for my address, I reached out to several women who have had a positive influence on my life with the hope of gaining insights into ways they are cultivating a deeper faith in Jesus Christ, particularly in these extraordinary times. I share with you their collective wisdom along with my own thoughts on six ways we can cultivate a deeper faith in Jesus Christ.

1 BELEIVING THE FIRST PRINCIPLES AND ORDINANCES OF THE GOSPEL

First, we cultivate a deeper faith in Jesus Christ by believing the first principles and ordinances of the gospel.

I was raised in a migrant farmworker family, and I became intimately aware of the importance of caring for the soil in which crops and trees are planted.

Every year, farmers deeply cultivate the soil to break up hard and compacted soil to allow nutrients, air, and water to reach seeds and roots that depend on this nourishment. Continued cultivation of the soil allows growing plants and fruiting trees to thrive and flourish while also eliminating harmful weeds that draw nourishment away from the plants or trees. Deep cultivation of the soil, as opposed to scratching its surface, helps to lay the foundation for producing good fruit.

In the parable of the sower, the Savior taught: “But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”

We are responsible to prepare the soil conditions in which the seeds of our faith are planted. We do so by both hearing and understanding the word of God.  

As a law professor, I think a lot about the best way to teach our students. In order for our students to become the type of lawyers we want them to become, they must study diligently to learn foundational doctrines of law and the necessary skills to help them become competent and compassionate counselors at law.

I have often been asked if law students have to read and memorize all of the books that are contained in our law library. This is a reasonable question. The task, however, would be a never-ending one since our systems of government contain numerous laws of towns, cities, states, and nations and cover numerous subjects. Not only are these laws practically innumerable, but they are also ever changing, so any attempt to know all laws would be completely unachievable by even the brightest student.

A law student’s ability to correctly apply the law to serve others, however, is dependent on an understanding of the foundations upon which the law is established. Attempting to use the law without this understanding results in incorrect conclusions and an inability to achieve an appropriate solution to the problem at issue. Mastery and deep understanding of the foundations of law and associated practice skills allow students to influence, govern, and alleviate human suffering through the correct application of their knowledge and skills.

In contrast to the volumes of laws that govern cities, states, countries, and nations, the Articles of Faith of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, written by the Prophet Joseph Smith and published over 180 years ago, are contained on a single page and include fundamental doctrines of the Church. What began as a letter to educate Mr. John W. Wentworth, a Chicago newspaper editor and publisher, about the establishment of the Church ended up as a proclamation of beliefs that contains truths that guide our faith and our conduct.

The simplicity of these statements may often leave us thinking they are best fit for memorization in Primary as we graduate to the more profound doctrines of the Church. In truth, however, their simplicity is much more profound, for “by small and simple things are great things brought to pass.”

The fourth article of faith states:

We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.

When Jesus appeared to the people of ancient America, He invited them to come forth and to know Him. This they did by going forth, thrusting their hands into His side, and feeling the prints of the nails in His hands and in His feet, and they “did know of a surety” that it was Jesus Christ. Even
though they had seen Jesus with their own eyes and had touched His resurrected body, Jesus found it necessary to teach the multitude the foundational principles of His gospel. He taught them to believe in Him, to repent, to be baptized, and to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. This He explained to be His doctrine, or the doctrine of Christ.

The doctrine of Christ is a living doctrine that we apply in our lives; applying it is not a one-time event but a process. Each day we seek to believe in Christ, we seek to repent, we seek to live our baptismal covenants by worthily partaking of the sacrament, and we seek the companionship and the guidance of the Holy Ghost. As we do so, we are built upon the foundation of His rock.

2 BELIEVING AND TRUSTING CHRIST
Second, we cultivate a deeper faith in Jesus Christ by believing and trusting Him.

Many of you have come to understand deeply through your own life experience that which Elder Richard G. Scott taught about trusting Jesus:

This life is an experience in profound trust—trust in Jesus Christ, trust in His teachings, trust in our capacity as led by the Holy Spirit to obey those teachings for happiness now and for a purposeful, supremely happy eternal existence. To trust means to obey willingly without knowing the end from the beginning (see Proverbs 3:5–7). To produce fruit, your trust in the Lord must be more powerful and enduring than your confidence in your own personal feelings and experience.

In his metaphor of growing the seed of faith, Alma explained that it is enough that we "exercise a particle of faith, yea, even if ye can no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you, even until ye believe in a manner that ye can give place for a portion of" the word of God. Sometimes that is all we can do. We can desire to believe, and then we let this desire work in us until we are willingly giving and creating a place in our hearts for a portion of the word of God—whatever portion size that might be.

As a young boy, I learned how to harvest olives from large trees whose branches seemed to tower over me like large, green giants. As a result of this life experience, Jacob 5 and the allegory of the olive tree have significant meaning to me. One lesson that I have learned from this allegory is that the Lord plants us in places in which we will
best have the potential to be tried and tested, to be nourished, to grow, and to bring forth good fruit.

As the Lord of the vineyard planted trees, some were left in the original vineyard, others were planted in the nethermost part of the vineyard, some were planted in the poorest ground, others were planted in good ground, and some were planted in ground that was choice above all other parts of the vineyard. When the servant of the vineyard asked the Lord why he had planted trees in the poorest ground of the vineyard, the Lord rebuked the servant, saying:

_Counsel me not; I knew that it was a poor spot of ground; wherefore, I said unto thee, I have nourished it this long time, and thou beholdest that it hath brought forth much fruit._

_And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard said unto his servant: Look hither; behold I have planted another branch of the tree also; and thou knowest that this spot of ground was poorer than the first. But, behold the tree. I have nourished it this long time, and it hath brought forth much fruit; therefore, gather it, and lay it up against the season, that I may preserve it unto mine own self._

Like the servant, we can often question who we are, why and where we have been planted, why we are being tried and tested, how we are being nourished, and whether and how we are growing. Please note that the Lord of the vineyard knows intimately why and where His trees are planted and how to nourish all of the trees that He planted in His vineyard. He did not randomly plant His trees, nor did He neglect to nourish the trees in any part of the vineyard. He did not give more or less nourishment to the trees planted in the poorest ground or in the choicest of all ground. He provided each individual tree with perfect care and nourishment. We must trust God and have the full assurance that He has planted us where we will best be tried and tested and where we will best grow and bear good fruit.

President Russell M. Nelson has taught:

_The joy we feel has little to do with the circumstances of our lives and everything to do with the focus of our lives._

_When the focus of our lives is on God’s plan of salvation . . . and Jesus Christ and His gospel, we can feel joy regardless of what is happening—or not happening—in our lives. Joy comes from and because of Him . . . For Latter-day Saints, Jesus Christ is joy._

3 BELIEVING CHRIST BY HEARING AND RECOGNIZING HIS VOICE

Third, we cultivate a deeper faith in Jesus Christ by hearing and recognizing His voice.

In this life, we first learn the language or languages communicated by our family. We may then become educated in the language of the subjects we study in school and the language used in the work we do—for example, my students must learn and become conversant in the language of law.

Learning the language of the Spirit and recognizing how and when the Spirit speaks to us is the most important language we can master in this life.

Sister Julie B. Beck taught: “[T]he ability to qualify for, receive, and act on personal revelation is the single most important skill that can be acquired in this life.”

The Lord is urging us to learn this language—now. Please consider President Nelson’s recent teachings on personal revelation:

_In coming days, it will not be possible to survive spiritually without the guiding, directing, comforting, and constant influence of the Holy Ghost._

_My beloved brothers and sisters, I plead with you to increase your spiritual capacity to receive revelation. . . . Choose to do the spiritual work required to enjoy the gift of the Holy Ghost and hear the voice of the Spirit more frequently and more clearly._
4 BELIEVING CHRIST THROUGH RIGHTEOUS ACTIONS

Fourth, we cultivate a deeper faith in Jesus Christ through righteous actions.

I love the Spanish version of John 1:1: “En el principio era el Verbo, y el Verbo estaba con Dios, y el Verbo era Dios.”

The Spanish version of the New Testament describes the Savior as “the Verb,” whereas the English version describes Him as “the Word.”

_Faith_ is a noun and describes persons, places, or things. _Trust_ and _believe_ are verbs, or words of action or modes of being. Compare, for example, the following:

- She has faith.
- She trusts Jesus.
- She believes Jesus.
- She loves as Jesus does.

Elder David A. Bednar has taught:

> True faith is focused in and on the Lord Jesus Christ and always leads to righteous action. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that “faith [is] the first principle in revealed religion, and the foundation of all righteousness” and that it is also “the principle of action in all intelligent beings” (Lectures on Faith [1985], 1). Action alone is not faith in the Savior, but acting in accordance with correct principles is a central component of faith. Thus, “faith without works is dead” (James 2:20).

I was baptized and became a member of the Church when I was 14 years old. A few short years later, I was preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ to my brothers and sisters in Paraguay and serving as a branch president in a small branch in Concepción. I believe I was woefully unprepared for service, but I believed in what I was doing.

While I served as branch president, we would often travel to another city, Pedro Juan Caballero, by bus to have meetings. The trip normally took about four hours on clay roads. On one occasion, we traveled there with our entire branch—men, women, children, and missionaries—to attend a district conference. We began our journey, and about two hours into our trip, it began to rain such that soldiers closed the gates on the road and prevented us from reaching our destination.

The gates leading back to our city were also closed. We were stranded in the middle of a tropical forest far away from any town or city. I saw it as a blessing of the Lord that we happened to be stopped by a small roadside store where we could get food. I was worried because I only had enough money with me to pay for about two days of meals for our branch. After we had been there for two days, the weather gave me no hope that we would be leaving there anytime soon. Even our mission president, a former lieutenant in the Paraguayan army, could not successfully secure our passage. My pleas with the soldiers to let us return home were also unsuccessful.

Sister Naomi Torres and Sister Deanne Savage asked my permission to take the children and plead with the soldiers to let us return home. I remember being very skeptical and telling them that they could try but that our attempts had already been unsuccessful. Undaunted by what surely sounded like my faithless answer to their request, they moved ahead. I can still remember their bold presence as they faced the soldiers and the locked gates. Their pleas were, again, rejected by the soldiers. They were not, however, rejected by the heavens. Within two hours, the clouds parted, the rains ceased, and the sun shined brightly. The gates were opened, and we returned safely to Concepción. Upon our arrival, the rain again began to fall.

These sisters and Primary children demonstrated through their knowledge, faith, and action that they believed that Jesus Christ would deliver us.

When the Savior paid a return ministering visit to His disciples in ancient America, He pointed them to the scriptures for knowledge. He then explained and expounded on the principles of prayer, the ability of the Father to do His works through His Church, the Son’s submission to the will of the Father, His atoning sacrifice, and His ability to draw us to Him. He then commanded:

> Verily, verily, I say unto you, this is my gospel; and ye know the things that ye must do in my church; for the works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do; for that which ye have seen me do even that shall ye do;
> Therefore, if ye do these things blessed are ye, for ye shall be lifted up at the last day.

The ratios contained in this verse are telling in terms of what we know versus what we must do.

5 BELIEVING CHRIST’S PROMISED BLESSINGS

Fifth, we cultivate a deeper faith in Jesus Christ by believing in Christ’s promised blessings.

I have come to understand that modern-day prophets, seers, and revelators teach us how to invoke the Lord’s blessings in our lives by teaching us a pattern that is easily followed. They teach us principles, they issue invitations, and they promise blessings that will flow to us through obedience to those invitations.

For example, President Russell M. Nelson has recently taught us the principle of “letting God prevail in our lives.” Here are some of the invitations that followed his teaching on the principle of letting God prevail in our lives:

- “Are you willing to let God prevail in your life?”
- “Are you willing to let God be the most important influence in your life?”
- “Will you allow His words, His commandments, and His covenants to influence what you do each day?”
- “Will you allow His voice to take priority over any other?”
- “Are you willing to let whatever He needs you to do take precedence over every other ambition?”
- “Are you willing to have your will swallowed up in His?”
- “As you study your scriptures during the next six months, I encourage you to make a list of all that the Lord has promised.”
He then noted several of the promised blessings that will come as result of accepting his invitations:

*Live and watch for these promises to be fulfilled in your own life.*
*My dear brothers and sisters, as you choose to let God prevail in your lives, you will experience for yourselves that our God is “a God of miracles.”*²⁶

**6 BELIEVING WE CAN KNOW JESUS CHRIST**

Sixth, we cultivate a deeper faith in Jesus Christ by believing we can know Him.

At some point in our journey toward eternal life, we must move from knowing about or appreciating our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, to knowing Them. “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”²⁷

Elder M. Russell Ballard reflected on this scripture and taught:

*In other words, life eternal is predicated upon our own individual, personal knowledge of our Father in Heaven and His Holy Son. Simply knowing about them is not enough. We must have personal, spiritual experiences to anchor us. These come through seeking them in the same intense, single-minded way that a hungry person seeks food.*²⁸

As a young boy, I witnessed many acts of service that helped me to see how the Savior might treat others, particularly strangers in our midst. On one occasion, I accompanied my father on an errand he was running in the downtown area where we lived—a small agricultural town in California’s San Joaquin Valley.

I always enjoyed accompanying my father on such quick trips because it gave me the opportunity to be with him and learn from his interactions with others. My father was very friendly and enjoyed talking to others, and he made friends very quickly.

As we walked toward our destination, something caught his attention and caused him to turn toward a frail, elderly man who seemed to be disoriented, discouraged, and distressed.

My father began a conversation with him and discovered that he had traveled from the southern United States and that his destination was still hundreds of miles from our home. He had mistakenly gotten off of the bus at the wrong destination.

My father invited him to come to our home to rest from his travels and to have a home-cooked meal. He helped him into the front seat of our vehicle while I climbed into the back seat. When we arrived at our home, my father introduced him to my mother and allowed the weary traveler to rest from his journey.

My mother immediately went to the kitchen to begin making a meal for our guest. I can still vividly remember his wrinkled and worn face, his twinkling eyes, and a smile that revealed few teeth.

My father sat him at the head of our dining room table while my father sat next to him at his side and conversed with him while he ate. I was seated at the opposite end of the table and watched intently as he ate until he was full.

Our visitor told my mother how grateful he was for the meal, how much he enjoyed it, and how appreciative he was that she had taken the time to make something soft that he could actually eat because he had no teeth.

My father then took him back to the bus stop and helped him to board another bus that would take him to his intended destination.

I remember what happened and the heavenly feelings I felt on that day as if it had happened yesterday.

My professional practice as a lawyer has often brought me into contact with individuals who are in great distress. Some are experiencing conflict due to misunderstandings, mistakes, and perhaps unintentional or sometimes intentional misinterpretation or misapplication of laws that govern our interactions as human beings. Some are suffering significant distress because they do not know how to navigate the complex laws that govern our society or they do not know where to turn for help. In my teaching, I try to help my students understand that everything they do as a lawyer must be carefully guided and measured against their knowledge of the law, against the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of the Lord. In essence, we teach them to “be healers.”²⁹

*Hernandez’s parents, Carl and Petra Hernandez*
Many students and volunteers working in the BYU Community Legal Clinic and the No More a Stranger Foundation have taken time virtually every week of their lives to serve immigrants in our community, who are often destitute and traumatized by their life experiences. They have prepared themselves to serve through diligent study and significant personal sacrifice as they apply their legal skills to give others hope for the future. They come to love those they serve and often remark that they receive much more from those they serve than what they have given through their service.

They fulfill the Lord’s command to “sussor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees.”30

The Savior taught three parables about those who will enter the kingdom of God. In one parable, the five foolish virgins who did not have their lamps ready with oil were denied entry into the kingdom of God, with the Savior saying, “You never knew me.”31

How we see and treat others reflects how close we are to the Savior, particularly those who are different, in whatever way, than we are. In another parable, the Savior drew particular attention to those He identified as “the least of these”:

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:
For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:
Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.
Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?
When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?
Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?
And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.32

We can know the Savior by helping our brothers and sisters whom God, by His divine design, brings into our paths. In these moments, we will mutually feel the Savior’s love as we envelop each other in the arms of His mercy and we each come to know Him.

CONCLUSION
In summary, we can cultivate a deeper faith in Jesus Christ by

1. believing the first principles and ordinances of the gospel,
2. believing and trusting Christ,
3. believing Christ by hearing and recognizing His voice,
4. believing Christ through righteous actions,
5. believing Christ’s promised blessings, and
6. believing we can know Christ.

I bear my witness that I know that Jesus is the Christ. He is my Advocate with the Father, my Deliverer, my Redeemer, and my Savior. He is everything to me. Of His name I bear witness, even Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES
2 Matthew 12:23.
4 See James E. Talmage, The Articles of Faith (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ, 1890, 1975), 6.
7 See 3 Nephi 11:14.
8 3 Nephi 11:13.
9 See 3 Nephi 11:31–41.
10 See id.; see also 2 Nephi 31:2, 10–21.
12 See 3 Nephi 11:39.
14 Alma 12:27; emphasis added.
15 See Jacob 5:21, 25, 43.
16 Jacob 5:22–23.
17 1 Nephi 8:10–12.
25 Id.; emphasis in original.
26 Id.; quoting Mormon 9:11.
27 John 17:3.
28 M. Russell Ballard, “Feasting at the Lord’s Table,” Ensign, May 1996.
30 Doctrine and Covenants 81:5.
31 See Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 7:33; also David A. Bednar, “If Ye Had Known Me,” Ensign, November 2016.

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