

The Lord taught us that eternal life, or exaltation, is God's greatest gift to man (D&C 14:7). In fact, the Lord tells us that it is not only His greatest gift to us, but it is His greatest work and his glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man (Moses 1:39). Interestingly, in the 1835 first edition of the Pearl of Great Price, that same scripture was phrased this way: “This is my work *to my glory*—the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39, 1835 ed.).

Although eternal life, or exaltation, is our ultimate goal, we all must discover and follow the path that leads to it. The Lord taught us that to have life eternal we must know Him (see John 17:3).

When I was a young man serving my mission in Uruguay and Argentina, I taught

repeatedly the scripture in John 17:3, “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” As I learned more about the gospel of Jesus Christ, this scripture began to take on more meaning. I realized that knowing the Lord, in the fuller meaning of this passage in John, meant more than simply knowing *about* Him. It meant ultimately to experience Him, to come into His presence.

On my mission I learned Spanish. The Spanish language makes this scripture more clear, because it has two verbs “to know”—*saber* and *conocer*. *Saber* means to have intellectual knowledge of something. *Conocer* means to experience or meet someone or something. The verb used in John 17:3 for know-

ing the Lord is *conocer*. In Spanish it becomes clear that to know Him in this sense is to meet Him and to come into His presence.

As I began to probe this concept, the importance of knowing the Lord as a key to gaining eternal life was driven home by other scriptures. For example, in Matthew 7:21–23, the Savior warned,

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

The first important thing we learn about this passage is that, according to the Prophet John Taylor, it speaks of members of the Lord's Church who have done many wonderful works in His name but who fail to gain eternal life at the end. Significantly, the Lord inspired the Prophet Joseph Smith to make an important change to verse 23 that corresponds fully with John 17:3 and other scriptures. In the JST version of Matthew, the Lord says: “And then I will say, *ye never knew me*; depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (emphasis added).

The Book of Mormon confirms that the Joseph Smith Translation (JST) of Matthew 7:23 was inspired. Mosiah 26:25–26 states: “And it shall come to pass that when the second trump shall sound *then shall they that never knew me* come forth and shall stand before me. And then shall they know that I am the Lord their God, that I am their Redeemer; but they would not be redeemed” (emphasis added).

On my mission I also grew to love the scripture in Doctrine and Covenants 88:68, which states: “Therefore, sanctify yourselves that your minds become single to God, and the days will come that you shall see him; for he will unveil his face unto you, and it shall be in his own time, and in his own way, and according to his own will.” That scripture, coupled with my greater understanding of John 17:3, had a profound impact on my life. I wanted with all my heart to know the Lord in this fuller sense so that I, too, might have life eternal. I wanted to become worthy to

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come into His presence and thereby know Him. This, of course, is a long-range goal. To know the Lord in this sense became a lifelong quest for me.

As I pursued this quest, I became acquainted with the role of law in this process—the “law of Christ.” To begin, in the Doctrine and Covenants 130:20–21, the

Lord taught, “There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated—And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated.”

Certainly, coming into the presence of the Lord would be a blessing, one of the greatest we could have. Thus, I understood there must be a law or laws upon which that blessing of knowing Him by coming into His presence is predicated. I continued to search more earnestly to discover those laws upon which this great blessing is predicated.

One day, while reading the Doctrine and Covenants, I found a key, the very key to knowing Him in this fuller sense mentioned in John 17:3. In Doctrine and Covenants 132:20–25, the Lord was speaking of those who were exalted.

Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye abide my law ye cannot attain to this glory.

For strait is the gate, and narrow the way that leadeth unto the exaltation and continuation of the lives, and few there be that find it, because ye receive me not in the world neither do ye know me.

But if ye receive me in the world, then shall ye know me, and shall receive your exaltation; that where I am ye shall be also.

This is eternal lives—to know the only wise and true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent. I am he. Receive ye, therefore, my law.

Broad is the gate, and wide the way that leadeth to the deaths; and many there are that go in thereat, because they receive me not, neither do they abide in my law.

There were two things that leaped out at me in this scripture: (1) the clear statement that our obedience to God’s law is absolutely necessary—for “except ye abide my law ye cannot attain to this glory,” and (2) that the key to knowing Him is to receive Him in the world. Indeed, I noticed this last statement was in the form of a conditional promise—“if ye receive me in the world, then shall ye know me.”

To receive the Lord in the world became the key to knowing Him. I continued to search the scriptures to find out what we must do to receive the Lord in the world. In doing so I rediscovered Doctrine and Covenants 84:33–40 and read the oath and covenant of the priesthood in an entirely new light.

For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies.

They become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God.

And also all they who receive this priesthood receive me, saith the Lord;

For he that receiveth my servants receiveth me;

And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father;

And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father’s kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him.

And this is according to the oath and covenant which belongeth to the priesthood.

Therefore, all those who receive the priesthood, receive this oath and covenant of my Father, which he cannot break, neither can it be moved.

It is not enough simply to be ordained to the priesthood in order to “receive it” for the purpose of receiving the Lord in the world. The first part of the oath and covenant of the priesthood makes this clear. It is only when a man obtains and magnifies his calling in the priesthood that he receives the sanctifying Spirit unto the renewing of his body and thereby becomes “the church and kingdom and the elect of God.” Thus, it is necessary for us to both receive the priest-

hood and magnify our callings therein in order to receive the Lord in the world.

Elder Boyd K. Packer has repeatedly taught that it is a false doctrine in the Church that we are free to turn down callings in the Church. Our covenants of sacrifice and consecration, properly understood, prevent us from doing so. In his book *Things of the Soul* (p. 25), Elder Packer quotes this teaching from the First Presidency: “In The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, as President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., said, ‘One takes the place to which one is duly called, which place one neither seeks, nor declines’ (Conference Report, April 1951, p. 154).”

I am personally convinced by my own personal experience in life that we are saved and exalted largely through this process of accepting and magnifying our callings. A calling gives us a purpose and stability in the many ups and downs of life. It gives us a reason to serve one another and opportunities to do so on a regular basis, a time when some of the greatest growth and joys are experienced in mortality.

Elder Packer also teaches that there is no greater calling than that of father or mother. He states: “Now some highly important counsel, young man. When you go to the temple to be married, there will be organized a unit of the Church, the eternal unit. You may be a bishop of a ward some day or the president of a stake, but from such callings you will be released. The highest calling that can come to you in mortality is to preside over a home as a husband and a father” (*id.* at 227).

Elder Packer then adds:

Make sure, young man, that you treat your wife with reverence and with respect. Treat her as your sweetheart, your loving companion, the mother of your children. In this marriage relationship comes the greatest of exaltation and the greatest experiences of life. You will come to know that most of what you know that is worth knowing you learn from your children. Then you will come to know that success comes from following a simple pattern. All you have to do is live the gospel. All you have to do is go to church and pay your tithing and try to live the gospel and respond to calls and try to do a responsive and dedicated work in the callings that come to you. Because, you see, the whole thing is put together. The ultimate aim of all of the activities in the Church is to have a father and a mother, a husband and a wife, and their children happy together at home. [Id. at 228]

This doctrine of accepting all callings and magnifying them is also confirmed in the *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (p. 308, hereinafter *Teachings*), where the Prophet Joseph Smith revealed, “If a man gets a fullness of the priesthood of God he has to get it in the same way that Jesus Christ obtained it, and that was by keeping all the commandments and obeying all the ordinances of the house of the Lord.”

But that is not all. The oath and covenant also requires that we receive the Lord’s servants in order to receive Him in the world. Doctrine and Covenants 84:36 again states that “[H]e that receiveth my servants receiveth me.” Just as with receiving the priesthood, it is not enough just to listen to the Lord’s servants and their messages in

every conference, but we must be truly obedient to what we hear.

Ultimately, receiving the Lord in the world comes down to obedience—strict obedience—not just to commandments but to *all* the ordinances of the house of the Lord and to magnifying *all* callings we receive from His servants.

As I continued to search this doctrine, I found it fascinating that it was plainly taught by the Lord in the Bible as well. The Lord, as recorded in John 13:20, taught His people, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.”

This same doctrine was also taught by the Lord in the Book of Mormon: “And wo

be unto him that will not hearken unto the words of Jesus, and also to them whom he hath chosen and sent among them; for whoso receiveth not the words of Jesus and the words of those whom he hath sent receiveth not him; and therefore he will not receive them at the last day” (3 Nephi 28:34).

In fact, I believe that this is one of the greatest tests we as lawyers will have: to be fully obedient to the counsel and teachings of the Lord’s *living* servants. This is exactly what we must do in order to receive the Lord in the world, which is the key to knowing Him.

This is especially challenging for lawyers for two primary reasons: (1) the law is a jealous mistress, and (2) we may think we are wise when we are learned. When I say that law is a jealous mistress, I am referring to the time that this practice demands. This alone makes it difficult to give proper time and attention to Church callings and to family duties.

When I say that we may think we are wise when we are learned, I am referring to the fact that as a group we are trained in logic and reasoning. Our profession, more than most, relies upon our wits. The sharper we are intellectually, the more we advance in the law. Although that can be a blessing, it also contains the seeds of a great danger: that of trusting in the arm of flesh over the whisperings of the Holy Spirit and over receiving the Lord’s servants and their words.

As to the jealous mistress point, I caution you as young lawyers to maintain balance in your lives with Church callings, family duties, and your profession. I speak of this after 32 years as a trial lawyer in a major firm. If you are not careful, your profession will capture all your available time. A wise lawyer taught me once that no one rewards you for doing the work of two when you take on the work of four. There is a strong pull to accept all assignments that come to you as a young lawyer. Beware of this temptation; keep balance in your life, for if you don’t, no one else will. It is better to temporarily disappoint someone looking for a person to fill an assignment than to take on more than you should. “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul” (Mark 8:36)—or his family?

As to the being learned point, too often people hold their obedience hostage to man’s logic. This is a great danger. In fact, obedience to the living prophets has always



been the greatest test—and always will be. From before the foundations of the world, the Savior told His associates in the creation, while referring to all of us in Abraham 3:24–25: “[W]e will make an earth whereon these may dwell; And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them.”

Recently, President Hinckley called upon all Church members in California to support Proposition 22, which added to the law of California: “Only a marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized.” There were many members of the Church who did not understand why they should be asked to support this ballot proposition by actively campaigning and donating funds to it. Many criticized the prophet for allegedly crossing the line between political and religious jurisdictions, saying that this call to arms violated the separation between church and state. Many others had problems understanding the Church’s position logically, based on their own views of what the world calls “political correctness.” As a result, there was much murmuring about the prophet’s summons to support Proposition 22.

Some people even boycotted the Church until the campaigning was over and the vote taken. This was most sad to see. These Saints had their faith tested, and it was found wanting. The good news is, these were a very small minority. However, the people in this category were mostly those with higher degrees—those highly educated by the world and more educated in so-called “political correctness.”

At one point a priesthood leader was quoted in the *Salt Lake Tribune* as saying in a ward council meeting that he had not yet received a witness of the correctness of this call to support Proposition 22. I learned who this priesthood leader was and approached him. He told me that he had said that because it was true. I asked him if he had recently read Ether 12:6, which states, “For ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith.” He said he was familiar with that scripture.

I asked him what that scripture meant to him. He reflected on it, and gave the correct answer—“It means our faith must first be tried by our obedience to what living prophets tell us to do before we receive a witness of its truth.” We then discussed one

of my favorite passages from the Prophet Joseph Smith on this subject, which states, “Whatever God requires is right, no matter what it is, although we may not see the reason thereof till long after the events transpire.” The Prophet added, “God said, ‘Thou shalt not kill;’ at another time He said, ‘Thou shalt utterly destroy.’ This is the principle on which the government of heaven is conducted—by revelation adapted to the circumstances in which the children of the kingdom are placed” (*Teachings*, p. 256).

Then I said that it is my experience that the Lord first tests our faith by our obedience to revealed principles before giving us the more complete reasons why. But there is one thing we can and should always be able to know—that it came from God or His authorized servants. As it says in Doctrine and Covenants 1:38: “What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same.”

The Lord is always willing to give us a spiritual witness of the divinity of a prophet. If we do not have that spiritual witness, that is a different and more pressing problem—either because we did not ask Him sincerely, or because we are not living our life close enough to Him to receive such confirmation.

I reminded the priesthood leader that this call to arms was directly from the Lord’s prophet in a general priesthood session of general conference. That should be clear enough that it came from God or the voice of His servants. The priesthood leader said he truly felt sorry for having said what he said in a Church meeting, and he swiftly repented. He was an outstanding and exemplary leader thereafter in every way. He had learned a valuable lesson, one that would serve him well throughout his life.

There are many other examples of how we must never use man’s logic—the arm of flesh—to hold our obedience hostage, especially our obedience to His living prophets. A classic is when Adam was commanded by God to offer animal sacrifice in a very specific way, using the firstlings of the flock, specifically an unblemished lamb, whose bones must not be broken in the sacrifice offering, and given many other details that

must have seemed meaningless and strange to Adam. No explanation was given of why Adam was required to do this sacrifice or what it meant. Yet Adam was obedient.

After Adam had been obedient for some time, an angel of the Lord came to him and asked why he offered sacrifice. We all know his response: “I know not, save the Lord commanded me” (Moses 5:6). Adam didn’t know the ultimate reasons why he was doing it, but the one thing he had to know he did know—that the Lord had commanded him to do it. That was sufficient for Adam. And once we know it comes from God—or His authorized servants on earth—it should also be sufficient for us.

Another example of how the Lord tests our faith by asking us to do things that seem illogical is the story of Abraham and Isaac. Abraham was told by an angel of the Lord that he was to take Isaac, his only son, from his first wife, Sarah, and sacrifice his life. No explanation was given—just that it was what God required of him. That command must have seemed totally illogical to Abraham. Isaac had come to him by a miracle birth, something that would take another miracle to duplicate. Abraham was promised an endless seed through Isaac, as numerous as the stars of the heaven or the sands of the seashore. Yet his only son Isaac now was to be sacrificed before Isaac had married or had any posterity.

But Abraham didn’t murmur to the Lord or the angel. Rather, he went and did as the Lord commanded him; undoubtedly with a very heavy heart. But in the end his obedience passed the test, and the Lord blessed Abraham forever. The Lord gives this added insight in Doctrine and Covenants 132:37: “Abraham . . . as Isaac also and Jacob did none other things than that which they were commanded; and because they did none other things than that which they were commanded, they have entered into their exaltation, according to the promises, and sit upon thrones, and are not angels but are gods.”

In the days of Elijah the prophet, the Lord told him to go to a widow during a severe drought that Elijah had ordered at the Lord’s behest. The Lord told Elijah to tell the widow to prepare him a cake to eat and that if she did, she would not lack. We all know the story. The widow said she only had enough to prepare a cake for her and

her son, and they were planning to eat it and die. Elijah gave his promise that if she would first prepare a cake for him, the Lord would assure that the barrel of meal and the cruse of oil would not fail. The scripture records the widow's faith and obedience, as well as the day-by-day fulfillment of the prophet's promise.

Again we might ask ourselves, How logical was it that such an outcome would happen? If we tested the Lord's commands only by man's logic, we would often withhold our obedience to the most important tests—the ones that would determine our eternal destiny.

Yet in our very own time the Lord has given the same kind of command to all of us. He gave it to the Church at the time of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Note what the Lord said in Doctrine and Covenants 43:12–14:

And if ye desire the glories of the kingdom, appoint ye my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and uphold him before me by the prayer of faith.

And again, I say unto you, that if ye desire the mysteries of the kingdom, provide for him food and raiment, and whatsoever thing he needeth to accomplish the work wherewith I have commanded him;

And if ye do it not he shall remain unto them that have received him, that I may reserve unto myself a pure people before me. [Emphasis added]

This gives us a greater sense of what it means to “receive the Lord's servants” in order to receive the Lord in the world. We must sustain His servants by our prayers of faith; we must provide for them food and raiment, if necessary, and “whatsoever thing [they] need to accomplish the work wherewith [the Lord has] commanded [them]” including our obedience to their teachings. Make no mistake, to receive the Lord's servants and their words, we must be obedient to their directives and teachings given in general conferences and elsewhere.

During the Savior's ministry, He was tempted by the Pharisees, one of whom asked Him, “Master, what is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it,

Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:36–40).

If on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets, this is the law that we must live to know Him in the fullest sense. It eclipses all other laws. We must love Him with all our hearts, our souls, and our minds. In other places the Lord reiterates this great law by telling us that He requires our hearts. In Doctrine and Covenants 64:22 He tells us plainly that “I, the Lord, require the hearts of the children of men.” In verse 34 He reiterates this again with an additional requirement: “Behold, the Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind.”

A caution is thus in order. Mere conformity is not true obedience. Even Laman and Lemuel conformed most of the time to what their father, the Lord's prophet, told them to do. They initially left their homes and possessions in Jerusalem to go with their family to the wilderness. They went back to Jerusalem to seek the brass plates. They went back again to bring the daughters of Ishmael and returned to the wilderness. They helped Nephi build the ship to cross the great waters. They went on the ship. But their conformity was almost always with a great deal of murmuring. To murmur, simply stated, means to complain. We must resist the temptation to complain about the Lord's chosen leaders, anyone who holds a stewardship over us in the kingdom of God. This is destructive to the spirit and prevents—or damns—our spiritual progress.

Finally, I came to learn what a wise man once called the law of surrogates. I learned there is another way in which we can receive the Lord in the world. I spent my life seeking His face, yet I discovered His face was all around me but I couldn't see it. A surrogate is someone who takes the place of another, who represents the first person. The Savior taught us this great lesson Himself. In describing the scene on Judgment Day in Matthew 25:31–40, He said:

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:

And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:

And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

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.

Every time my service has flagged, every time I get so tired I think of missing my home teaching assignment, I think of each such person as if they were the Savior. Then somehow my fatigue gives way to a wonderful feeling that I have the opportunity to come into His presence by serving that fellow member in need. His words echo in my mind, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

The Savior is all around us. His surrogates are each of our fellowmen. It was perhaps this thought that the Savior was articulating when He said the second great commandment of loving our neighbor as ourselves was like unto the first of loving God with all our heart, mind, and soul. For when we love our neighbor as ourselves, we have done it unto Him.

May we all become more obedient and receive the Lord in the world by receiving and magnifying all callings in the priesthood and the Church, especially that of father and mother, and by serving well our neighbor—even the least of these His brethren—that we may come to know Him in this fullest sense, whom to know is life eternal, is my prayer and blessing on each of us here tonight. I say this in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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