

*Moments with
The Master*

*A Daily Devotional
January/February 2020*

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The Power of Prayer

(Beginning this New Year seeking the power of prayer.)

Wednesday January 1

By Jim Gates

***..The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.
- James 5:16***

I was prompted by the spirit to bring the Sacrament sermon to Center congregation on October 6, 2019. I asked for, and received, this assignment. My brothers and sisters in the congregation know I am very limited in what I can do physically because of spinal stenosis and other back problems. Knowing the difficulties, I faced, my name was placed on the prayer list the week prior to the sermon.

Before the service began, a tall stool was placed behind the pulpit next to the wall. This was for my use when I had to sit down to finish the sermon. It had been months since I was able to stand more than five to ten minutes before pain would force me to sit down.

I witness and give testimony of the mercy of God and the power of prayer. Even though it had been months since I stood for thirty minutes, I completed the sermon standing without any pain. The Lord continued to bless me, as I was able to go to the foyer and stand while greeting the saints as they exited the sanctuary.

My only regret was that I did not tell the congregation they just witnessed a miracle given to me through the power of the prayers of my brothers and sisters. Without this miracle, I would not have been able to stand without pain for the entire sermon. This experience bears witness of the first point given to me by the Spirit. ***“God will take care of you and He will lift you up”***

Hymn Meditation: “There’s a Garden Where Jesus Is Waiting” #607

Prayer Thought: Almighty God, as we begin this wonderful new year, we pause to thank You for the gift of prayer which allows us to come to You in time of need that we might be lifted.

What Kind of Soil Will Your Soul Have?

Part One

Friday January 31

By Dawn Hoover

All kingdoms have a law given: and there are many kingdoms; for there is no space in the which there is no kingdom; and there is no kingdom in which there is no space, either a greater or lesser kingdom. - D&C 85:9a

Curt and I got a high tunnel this summer. A high tunnel is something like a greenhouse. Ours is 60x80 which is larger than our house. We hope that after it is in full production you will visit us at the Farmers Markets that we will be selling at. This has been and is a lot of work and we are not yet in production. There is a lot of preparation beginning below ground. Before Curt, Sariah, and I moved to Bountiful, we began working on the soil. The land was converted from conventional corn and soybeans made sterile by the use of chemical herbicides and fertilizers. Seeding of grasses and clovers was done by us, and the Romans, by walking across the land with hand seeders. We spread lots of wood chips and unrolling large round haybales. We rejoiced when we found our first earthworm!

How are we going to obtain healthy, fertile, biologically active soil in our high tunnel? It has, to begin, with the unseen area below ground. Biologically active soil has mycorrhizae. It may be that mycorrhizae are more important to a plant than the roots. The roots of a plant extend below the ground in an approximate distance equal to the amount above ground. That may not be enough space to obtain proper nutrition. Mycorrhizae Definition from biologydictionary.net; Mycorrhizae literally translates to “fungus-root.” Mycorrhiza defines a (generally) mutually beneficial relationship between the root of a plant and a fungus that colonizes the plant root. In many plants, mycorrhiza are fungi that grow inside the plant's roots, or on the surfaces of the roots.

If the conditions are right, there will be mycorrhizae that will sense what the plant needs and will search out those minerals, moisture, and nutrients and then transport them to the root of the plant. In turn, the roots produce exudates, or as Elaine Ingham says, the roots produce “cakes and cookies” that nourish the mycorrhizae. The soil also needs bacteria which in turn feeds the arthropods, tiny insects, and earthworms. It is truly a jungle or another kingdom underground. A proper soil is balanced for the plants growing on it. (Are we preparing good soil?)

Hymn Meditation: “O God, with Thanks Unfeigned” #600

Prayer Thought: Lord, may we seek Thy hand in the varied growth efforts that we endeavor to make in this life, both temporally and spiritually.

Northern Lights

Saturday February 29

Part Three

By B.J. Thomas

1-I will praise Thee, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will show forth all of Thy marvelous works. 2- I will be glad and rejoice in Thee; I will sing praise to Thy name, O thou most high...10-And they that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee, for thou Lord will not forsake them that seek Thee. 11-Sing praises to the Lord, which dwelleth in Zion; declare among the people His doings. Psalms 9:1,2,10,11

My husband and I left this rousing performance of Northern Lights, with a greater appreciation for the youth of our community. What a wonderful night! We were entertained by the best musical students at Blue Springs High School Vocal and Music Departments. It was our special blessing that night. I gained a new appreciation for teenagers, with all their youth, energy and love for their teachers.

I truly believe God is blessing *all of His children*, that turn to Him; and it is so comforting to know some of these musical teenagers live in my city of Blue Springs, Missouri. Their vocal talents showed professional delivery, and we are blessed.

My appreciation for all the time, energy and love given so diligently and lovingly by music teachers has grown since that event.

God is truly blessing His people, and I am growing in the knowledge of His great Love for His Youth *in and out* of the church.

“Glorious the northern lights a-stream; Glorious the song, when God's the theme.” Christopher Smart

Hymn Meditation: *“Great and Marvelous Are Thy Works” #101*

Prayer Thought: *Lord, we thank Thee for diligent teachers and for all youth, wherever they may be found. We pray that they will come to serve Thee fully, using their youthful energy, talents and abilities to become as “Northern Lights” for Thee.*

The House of Bread

Thursday January 2

By Ralph Damon

Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? -Matthew 6:35

We have just come from the Christmas celebration time of each year when our hearts and minds find time to reflect upon the event of a special birth to this world so many years ago. Too often we might pay more attention to the secular part of this celebratory time than the religious part and we are often reminded of that danger from our ministries of these days. But to most true believers, in the purpose and intent of this time of year, we do hold dear to the worshipful time. Although that season has now past, there are some thoughts I'd like to share to perhaps help keep us focused on this coming year and our healthful spiritual life.

The Hebrew word for bread is ‘lechem’ and is used in Jewish prayers to represent food and sustenance. From our earliest days of youth, we each are taught the value of bread, the ‘staff of life’. It has become a basic necessity, sustaining mankind for eons, helping to keep us alive.

Another Hebrew word is ‘beit’, meaning a place or house. When these are combined together, they form the word ‘beit lechem’, meaning a place of bread or a house of bread. And what would we expect to find in such a place? Of course, bread. We would find that which sustains us, that which we need above all things.

So where can we find this ‘beit lechem’? Have you put the two words together yet? Having come from the Christmas season, we have already sung of this place. Bethlehem! The house of bread. The place where we find that which we most need, our basic spiritual necessity, was found in Bethlehem. If what we needed most was money, if that was the bread of our lives. We would find it in Bethlehem. If success in life was what was needed most, thus becoming the bread of our lives, it would be found there. If possessions, friendships, pleasures, all these and more were to be the desired bread of our lives, we would find it in Bethlehem. But we didn't find any of that in that little town, in that cold and dirty stable on a particular night long ago. What did we find? *HIM!* We found God had come down into our lives, revealing to us what we needed most, more than fame, fortune, or friends...we needed him! What we found in the ‘house of bread’ truly is the bread of our lives.

Hymn Meditation: *“O Little Town of Bethlehem” # 138*

Prayer Thought: *Lord, help me stop filling my needs and desires with that which is not bread. Fill my heart with the love, the presence, and the fullness of Your true bread, HIM.*

Northern Lights
Part Two

Friday February 28

By B.J. Thomas

1-Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; 2- And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for as a sweet smelling savor. - Ephesians 5:1-2

In the Remnant Church First Congregation we have a very talented and dedicated lady that has many talents other than playing her piano.

We discovered she is the inspiration behind the production, Northern Lights, Also, we learned the printed program had a paragraph from, *ALL THE STUDENTS* in the Blue Springs High School Music Program.

They stated the following: “they would like to dedicate these performances to Mrs. Linda VerDught, she has always been the driving force behind the swing choirs and Northern Lights performances, she has gone above and beyond this year. She puts so much time into these performances: it is truly amazing that she keeps coming back for more every year. We love you and we could not do this show without your imagination, work, and patience.”

Linda VerDught has been there for 30 plus years, and touched the lives of many, many teenagers. She brings out the professionalism in each youth of this community.

I believe that this was a beautiful tribute to a lovely lady that just loves teenagers, (a special talent of itself), *and most of all, she loves her God.*

Hymn Meditation: “We Are Called to be God’s People” #384

Prayer Thought: Lord, we rejoice at the work Thou hast done through Thy worthy and faithful servants who follow Thee and walk in Thy love. May Thy holy light continue to shine from them, showing unto others the light of Thy Kingdom.

Northern Lights Part I

Thursday February 27

By B.J. Thompson

Rejoice, O my heart and cry unto the Lord, and say, O Lord, I will praise thee forever; yea, my soul will rejoice in thee my God, and the rock of my salvation. -III Nephi 3:50

All my life I have loved children and have observed their beautiful actions and enthusiasm for life. Especially young children. I know they are not perfect yet, but somehow, I always see the good in each child.

I am totally aware there is always some little something that needs working on, but, after all, they are young and have time to improve. We can help them along the way.

Recently my husband and I attended the musical, Northern Lights, A Choral Variety Show at Blue Springs High School Performing Arts Center and Auditorium. We were very impressed and enjoyed the production immensely.

It was well attended and supported by parents, grandparents, neighbors and friends. We never realized just how many good and talented people are working and supporting the high school students. Our eyes were open to see the love these music teachers have for teenagers in high.

The teachers are doing a fantastic job with *advancing the talents God has given* these boys and girls.

Hymn Meditation: “God, the Source of Light and Beauty” #110

Prayer Thought: Lord, we praise Thee and thank Thee for the beautiful actions of our youth and the talents that they develop and share. Thank-you for the teachers that carefully help them to use those talents to glorify Thee.

The Day I Saw My Angel

Saturday January 4

By Jim Gates

Because thou hast made the Lord, ... thy habitation, For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. -Psalm 91:9-12

On December 17, 1997, I was driving to work at 5:30 A.M. It was an extremely foggy and dark Louisiana morning. I traveled on LA28 E, which is a four-lane highway.

I was going about 35 MPH when I saw the traffic light turn green. What I didn't see was the dim tail lights on the trailer of the 18-wheeler that had stopped at the light. At the last second, I attempted to swerve to the left to avoid the collision, but it was too late. The right front of my car struck the left rear of the truck.

The accident report stated my car traveled three feet after impact. The final position of my car was perpendicular across both east bound lanes of traffic. The car's headlights could not be seen by oncoming traffic.

After the air bag deflated and I realized my situation, I tried to open the door. The door would not open. That's when I saw my angel. She was standing beside my car facing the oncoming traffic. I could see she had a light which she was using to signal a warning of danger ahead. I was also comforted by her voice of warning as she was screaming for the cars to stop.

After I climbed over into the back seat to exit the car, she was gone. No one in the convenience store at the intersection saw my angel. I saw her and thank God for the protection.

Hymn Meditation: “God Will Take Care of You” #386

Prayer Thought: O Lord, may we ever give Thee thanks for the many times we have been protected by Thy love for us.

A Remembrance and a Challenge

Sunday January 5

By F. Howard Gilliam
(Reprinted with permission of his family)

But let a man examine himself and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that wine. - I Corinthians 11:28

In partaking of the bread and wine we remember Christ. We remember His faith, His love, and His humility. We also are reminded of His suffering and of the great sacrifice He made that we might have life everlasting.

And we are challenged to look at our weaknesses and to strive to be like Him. This is what we mean when we bless the emblems, vowing to take Christ's name upon us and promising to keep His commandments. We promise to share, to work, to live, to suffer and to offer our lives if necessary. And as we remember Him, and desire to be like Him, we are given the strength necessary to help us overcome the weaknesses that exist in our earthly natures.

As we begin this New Year, may the Lord continue to bless us as we seek for opportunities to work and serve in the Masters' name.

Hymn Meditation: "According to Thy Gracious Word" #249

Prayer Thought: Lord, as we humbly take upon us Thy holy name this day, may we strive to meet the challenge of living as Thee and of overcoming our earthly weaknesses.

The Fruits of the Spirit Help us to See Clearly

Wednesday February 26

By Leo Gussman

(Reprinted with family permission from "Living by the Promises of God.")

... If any man shall say unto you, Lo! here is Christ, or there; believe him not. For in those days, there shall also arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if possible, they shall deceive the very elect, who are the elect according to the covenant. Matthew 24:22-23a

The Fruits of the Spirit are qualities of works by which the righteous are identified and known. As stated above in Matthew 24:22-23, there will arise many false Christs and false prophets showing themselves great signs and wonders which will, if possible, deceive the very elect. John, in Revelation 21:7-8 states that those who overcome shall inherit all things and he will be their God and they shall be His Sons (daughters), or in other words, the elect.

The Fruits of the Spirit are manifestations which alone can bear witness as to where each one stands in this process. The greatest of the fruits, is love coupled with humility... It witnesses it is sent forth of God's acceptance and approval. Such... does not come through words but through power.

As Love is developed within man's soul, he begins to bear, or show forth, fruits of holiness. These fruits are Love, Gentleness, and Humility and are the attributes which Christ demonstrated when he identified himself as the vine and man as the branches. As we see in nature, fruit is produced on the branches, while the vine supports and nourishes them. And so, we can see that as we, the branches, bring forth the real Fruits of the Kingdom, they are brought forth through joy, in selfless service, for the glory of God and the benefit of men.

... The fruits enable us to see through spiritual eyes. Through them, we are made able to see on a higher spiritual level... as we are enabled to partake of this special gift of vision, nothing is hidden. As we reach the perfection of selfless love and humility, the veil will be completely removed, and we will see clearly.

Hymn Meditation: "Open My Eyes, That I May See" #410

Prayer Thought: O Holy Father, teach us, through Thy fruits, to see clearly and then to implement Thy clear vision in the bringing forth of Thy Kingdom.

Adrift in the Bay

Tuesday February 25

By Jim Gates

And he spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine and go into the wilderness after that which is lost until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors and saith unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. - Luke 15:3-6

As a young boy my Dad lived with his family in Terra Ceria, Florida. His father raised vegetables to support the family of four sons and a daughter. I remember the story of the day his father was sick and restricted to the bedroom. When my Grandpa looked out the upstairs windows, he saw my dad and his older brother in a boat far out in the bay. He realized the strong outgoing tide was carrying their boat further out into the bay. My Grandpa quickly dressed and went to the dock to get his boat. He rowed out to bring his young sons back to shore. Their mother was at the dock to make sure they were alright.

Have you ever felt the joy of being united with someone very dear to you? Perhaps it was a child returning home from military service or college. It doesn't take much to cause our hearts to leap with joy whenever a loved one returns into our presence. At this time, we cannot fully comprehend the love God has for us, but the above parable helps us to appreciate more fully the depth of His love.

Hymn Meditation: "Will Your Anchor Hold" #393

Prayer Thought: Almighty God, may we never stray from the fold of your care. Thank you for your love that is so strong that you gave your only begotten Son to die for us. Reach out and bring us home O Lord.

A Rebellious Child

Monday January 6

By Jim Gates

And he said, A certain man had two sons; And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods which falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. - Luke 15:11 -13

In 1969 I returned to Gainesville to attend the University of Florida Graduate School. We had three daughters under the age of 6. While I spent many long days on campus or working on my thesis project, Barbara was tasked with running the household and caring for our daughters.

One day I came home and saw that one of the girls (who will remain nameless) had left her shoes on the floor in the living room. I asked her to take her shoes to the bedroom. After being ignored for a few minutes, I then told her what she had to do. Getting no response, I picked her up and placed the shoes on her chest. Then I carried both into the bedroom. I returned to the living room only to hear something hit the floor behind me. I turned around to see the shoes on the floor and our little darling standing in the doorway with an "I said no" look on her face. Lucky for her I was laughing so hard on the inside that I couldn't take any further action.

How many times are we like the Prodigal son rebelling against the will of our Heavenly Father? Take comfort in the knowledge He is waiting and watching for our return home. May we not be that rebellious child doing what we want rather than yielding to the will of our Heavenly Father.

Hymn Meditation: "All to Jesus I Surrender" #429

Prayer Thought: Loving Father, may we be obedient to Thy law and as Your Son, may we say, "Thy will be done" throughout this new year.

A Gentle Breath of Fresh Air

Tuesday January 7

By Cindy Patience

And the spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life. - Job 34:4

We have a special member at the Tuesday Morning Women's Prayer and Study Group at First Branch. Her name is Kaitlin and she comes to class with her Grandmother Glennis, who loves her very much. Kaitlin sits so quietly and attentively as we learn and pray together. Kaitlin is beautiful, and those who know her recognize that she is a lovely Downs Syndrome child. She is a wonderful gift that has been given to all of us, from God.

One Tuesday morning, at class, she was asked to offer the opening prayer. Trustingly shaking her head affirmatively, she bowed her head, and without hesitancy, sweetly shared with the Lord the thoughts of her heart. The room was quiet except for her sweet young voice. The Good Spirit was present as she prayed. It was very clear that she *knew* that the Lord was listening to her thoughts and requests. As she continued to pray, the Holy Spirit continued to fill our classroom with a soft gentle peace. Although we may not have understood everything that was said, we did understand the faith in which Kaitlin's prayer was given, and I believe that we all prayed quietly along with her. If there had been any worry, concern, or hurt at all, they all dissipated as Kaitlin prayed. The spirit of the Lord was in our midst. It was a sacred moment. *It was like a gentle breath of fresh air!*

Sometimes God sends us ministering angels in the form of special persons like Kaitlin. I hope that we will all stop to appreciate the simple and pure ways in which God works through them to minister to us. When we listen with our hearts, these precious children of God can open the windows of heaven and let in the *fresh air* that can only come from Him. May we clear our minds of clutter, open our spiritual windows to purify our souls, and breathe in the fresh air of His mighty cleansing love today.

Hymn Meditation: "Breathe on Me Breath of God" #542

Prayer Thought: Lord, as we take a deep breath, and begin a new year and a new day, help us to pause, and hear Thy voice through those around us. Thank-you Lord for giving us special angels, whoever they may be, to remind us of Thy pure and gentle love.

Read, Study and Obey

Monday February 24

By Jonna Patterson

Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saveth them out of their distresses. He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions. Psalms 107:19-20

In an earlier testimony I have shared how beneficial my prayer journaling has been to me. I know that it has opened some understandings for me and provided a closer walk with My Heavenly Father. I had been praying for those things and I was feeling His approval as I sought Him out. One night, (during this period of journaling), I had a dream. I was sitting in a circle of friends discussing something. My husband was in the group and looked directly at me with a piercing look and said, 'You need to spend more time studying your scriptures.' Now, I have to tell you, that my first thought in my dream was ***not***, "*Why, thank-you dear, for that observation,*" because no one's criticism stings (constructive or not.) as my husband's does to me.

I was embarrassed to be called out on the carpet in front of my friends. I was also embarrassed to admit that there was more truth in the statement than not. I do study for a church school class that I teach, and sometimes quite a lot, but recently my study time was beginning to match the effort that my students were putting forth. We had all begun to slack off, but I am the adult in the class, I needed to do better.

Later that morning, as I was working on my morning devotions, I was truly convicted that the message in my dream was not from my dear husband. but a gentle invitation to do what I had been asking the Lord to do in my life. I was to move closer and incline my ear to his counsel by spending more time in His word.

The scripture in the devotion that morning encompassed Psalms 107:10-21. As the devotion went on, I learned that God sent His word not to heal someone from the ravages of physical illness, but from a different illness, *rebellion against God*. ***Rebellion doesn't have to manifest itself in something radical.*** The definition of rebellion is the "***drawing back,***" ***from God***. We simply may not be taking His word and counsel seriously and may not be seeking direction in His word; ... ***that*** is rebellion and we suffer. I realized as I went on reading that the closeness that I had been begging the Lord for, He was gently offering me by way of this prescription. I needed to harbor a greater love for His word and to be reminded that, if I want greater direction and a closer relationship with Him, I need to....

READ, STUDY AND OBEY.

Hymn Meditation: "Thy Word is Like a Garden" #321

Prayer Thought: Lord, when our rebelliousness pulls us away from Thee, gently pull us back through Thy Holy Spirit and through Thy marvelous word.

The Parables of Jesus

Part Two

Sunday February 23

By Wayne Bartrow

Behold, you have not understood; you have supposed that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought, save it was to ask me; behold I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind. - D.&C. 9:3a.&b.

The parables of Jesus are a rich source of instruction from God. As Joseph Smith Jr. grew in His calling to be a prophet of God, he was granted line upon line and precept upon precept. It was not revealed to Joseph in a grand endowment, such as some are expecting the priesthood to be bestowed with. In D.&C, section 9:3 a.& b.(above) we are reminded that we must ask and study.

In this last dispensation before the return of our Lord, there is no excuse for procrastination. This is the time that the Lord is providing us to prepare for His return. If we do not use our time wisely, it will be time wasted and good for nothing. Alma 16:229 should serve as a reminder to us of what has happened in the past. *“Now as I said unto you before, as ye have had so many witnesses, therefore I beseech of you, that ye do not procrastinate the day of your repentance until the end.”* This is the time to prepare.

It is God’s will that we live with Him for eternity, but the choices that determine whether, or not we will inherit that life *are ours* to make. Learning the lessons that are taught in The Parables of Jesus can help a great deal to prepare us to make the right choices in life.

Hymn Meditation: *“Thy Word is Like a Garden”* #321

Prayer Thought: *Lord, help us to make the right choices, through the careful study of Thy blessed word.*

Prayer & Priesthood Administration Corrected Our Son’s Problem (Part One)

Wednesday January 8

By Dawn Hoover

...ye must pour out your souls in your closets, and in your secret places, and in your wilderness, Yea, and when you do not cry unto the Lord, let your heart be drawn out in prayer unto Him continually for your welfare, and also for the welfare of those around you.- Alma 16:221-222

It was the first year at Center Place Restoration School. Many people had worked hard for this to occur. Jared was in 2nd grade and Sue Petentler was his teacher. Brother John A. Smith was the first principal there. The children that attended were there because they wanted to be there. It was great! Days began with prayer. Sue shared that it was common that when hearing sirens, the children would stop and pray. The children had great faith. The prayers of the second graders were great.

Jared had a reading problem. He just couldn’t do it. Sounding out the words was a laborious exercise. One day, Jared asked his teacher for permission to go to the office. When he got there, Brother Smith was not available, and a time was set for Jared to return. At the appointed time, he again asked permission to go to the office and shared the reason. Jared’s class said prayers for him during this time. Jared was administered to by the elders in the school office and then returned to his class.

The next day and it was reading time! Jared had his turn to read. The class and Sue Petentler waited expectantly. And I am sure that Sue held her breath. *Jared read! Praise God!* Curt and I had no knowledge of this until it was all over. Jared had not talked about this with us. This decision was made with no urging from us. It was such a grown-up decision and resulted in a great blessing for him and the rest of his classmates and his teacher. We were so proud of him. It was the start of his journey on the road to becoming a man. *Do we allow God to assist us in our daily decisions and activities?*

Hymn Meditation: *“Let Us Pray for one Another”* #78

Prayer Thought: *Lord, let us not forget to ask Thee to assist us in our everyday walk with Thee.*

Prayer and Priesthood Administration

Part Two-Jared's Teacher's Testimony

Thursday January 9

By Sue Petentler

Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you; seek me diligently and ye shall find me; ask and ye shall receive. D&C 85:16 b, c& d

(This is a testimony is among many that I can share from during the time period that I had the privilege to teach at the first school in the city of Zion.)

All teachers have students with many different levels of strengths and weaknesses. I chose not to separate the children by their levels but to combine the readers, it is a form of "peer teaching" where many times the children learn from one another.

One of my students, Jared was having a great deal of difficulty with his reading. He knew all of the letters but could not blend the sounds into words. When it came time for reading group, the other students would try very hard to help, to no avail.

One morning in October he came to me and asked if he could go to the office. I asked him if he was ill. Did he have a note for the office? He replied, "No, I need to be administered to for my reading." When he left the room, the children were very quiet, they heard his request. A hand went up and they all wanted to have prayer for Jared, and we did.

Jared was back in about five minutes later. He said, "There was only one Elder in the office, and you know, you must have two." He asked if he could go again to the office at two o'clock, during recess. I agreed.

Two o'clock came; the class went to the playground and Jared went to the office. Twenty minutes later Jared came to the playground to join his friends in playing soccer, and nothing more was said.

The next morning, our reading groups met. I called on each student and then it was Jared's turn. As the others breathed a quiet sigh, *Jared read every word without hesitation!*

Immediately several hands went up. One boy asked if I thought it might be a good time to offer a prayer of thanksgiving. At that point the, without hesitation, whole class dropped to their knees and two of his friends prayed a prayer of thanksgiving.

Hymn Meditation: When We Walk with the Lord #450

Prayer Thought: Father, Thank-you for your blessings that come from prayer and from the gift of administration. Thank Thee for the simple faith and trust of our children.

The Parables of Jesus

Part One

Saturday February 22

By Wayne Bartrow

All these things spake Jesus unto the multitudes in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them. That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world. Matthew 13:33-34

A parable is defined by Webster's as "a short, simple story, usually of an occurrence of a familiar kind, from which a moral or religious lesson may be drawn." I agree with that definition, and it is made all the more noteworthy to me because it is the only definition offered. Certainly, the parables of Jesus would be identified as fulfilling the definition offered. Unfortunately, I also think His parables have lost some of the significance they once held, because we are so unfamiliar with the customs and traditions that made them easily understood. We are foreigners trying to grasp concepts that they could identify with and understand but which are not common place in this country or time we are living in.

In the gospel of Matthew 13:33-34 (above), it says that Jesus always spoke to the people in parables. It is important that we take the time and effort to study the parables with the intent of learning the lessons that Jesus taught. They continue to be a mystery, only to those who do not make, an effort, to acquire the key that opens the door to greater knowledge and understanding.

Joseph Smith Jr. is an example of how this search for understanding can transform us. Joseph was not a learned man, but he wanted to learn about God and to understand more. God revealed it to Joseph as he searched and fulfilled Luke 11:10 "I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and the it shall be opened unto you."

Hymn Meditation: "Open My Eyes, That I May See" #410

Prayer Thought: Lord, we thank Thee for Thy messages given to us in parables. May we make them a matter of study and prayer, and may our understandings be opened as we ask, seek and knock.

“No, It Is Not Alright”

Saturday February 21

By Jim Gates

And thou shalt do that which is right and good in the sight of the Lord, that it may be well with thee ... - Deuteronomy 6:18

I had the opportunity to be with my sister, Diana, the last days of her life. About three weeks before she died, I went to be with her daughter, Allison, and beautiful granddaughter, Destini. It wasn't long before we were joined by daughters Andrea and Valerie. We took turns caring for her and supporting one another. It is a time I will always remember.

During my many years as a hospice volunteer, I was taught that hearing is the last sense a dying person will lose. As it became evident her battle with cancer was lost, she slipped into a coma. That last night her daughters and I gathered around her bed. It had been several hours since Diana had spoken or even opened her eyes. I encouraged the girls to talk about the many memories they had as a family. We discussed Christmas mornings and gifts; birthday parties; vacations and many other topics.

Another thought taught by hospice was some individuals need permission to die. With this in mind I said, “Diana it is alright to leave us because you have done a beautiful job with the girls. They will be just fine.” After I repeated it a couple of times, one of her daughters said about the same thing. In a loud clear voice, Diana said “***NO IT IS NOT ALRIGHT***”. Those were her last words spoken on November 3, 1996.

Those who are older have seen the decaying morals in our country. Think of what was seen in the movies/and on TV in the 60's compared to today. As Christians we must say it is not alright. Maybe we cannot change the views of the world, but we can change our daily actions. Whenever you find you are straying off the path of righteousness, will you stop and say, “No it is not alright to.....?”

Hymn Meditation: “Yield Not to Temptation” #438

Prayer Thought: *Dear Heavenly Father, we need Thee to direct us in the path of righteousness. Give us the strength not to yield to the temptations of this world that we face daily.*

Into the Deep Part One

Friday January 10

By Ralph Damon

...4-He said to Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your net for a draught....6-And when they had done this they enclosed a great number and their net brake of fishes, ...10- And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not from henceforth, for thou shalt catch men. - Luke 5:4-10

Jesus had just spent some time teaching a number of people, while in a boat owned by Simon, (later to be called Peter.) After the time of teaching, he then instructed Simon to venture out a little farther from the shore, to launch out into the deeper part of the lake and let his net down into the water to catch fish. It is recorded that there were so many fish in the net that the net began to break. This was after Simon had spent the entire night fishing with very little to show for his effort.

What might we learn in this experience of Simon's? That it is wise to listen to the Master? Yes, even when what we might be instructed to do seems to be unusual or misunderstood. With Simon, the first thing Jesus asked him to do was to launch his boat out into the deep, to get away from the shallows where there is likely very little fish to catch. He didn't promise Simon that a great catch was waiting for him; he let the experience fulfill Simon's response to his direction. But for those of us who are not commercial fishermen but are fishers of men, it may also mean that our blessings are not always to be found in shallow waters also. We likely won't find God's fullest blessings in the shallow waters of faith.

Hymn Meditation: “I Have One Deep, Supreme Desire” #427

Prayer Thought: *Lord, please guide me into the depth of Your love and compassion so that I might be able to experience the deepest part of You in all my life, today and in the days of eternity to come.*

Into the Deep Part Two

Saturday January 11

By Ralph Damon

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. - Matthew 16:25

There are many who call themselves Christians, or saints, but most dwell only in the shallow waters of comfort and ease. We stay by the shore, by that which is familiar and comfortable. We never fully leave the old ways of our lives, so we only know the shallow waters of God's promises. Others who are called by his name never fully launch out, never enter the deep. They believe with a shallow faith. Perhaps they study the scriptures, but only see the surface meanings of them, the shallow parts of the Word.

Perhaps they pray, but only in the shallowness of prayer, never spending time in deep and lasting conversation with God. And they may well know of God's love, but never enter, into the depth of it, so they never know how deep his blessings can be.

But if we ever want to receive, fully, the blessings of God, we must leave the shallows and launch out away from the shore, its distractions, away from the old and the familiar, and into the deep...into the deep waters of faith, the deep waters of his presence, the deep waters of his Word, the deep of worship, the deep of joy, the deep of his Spirit, and the deep of his heart. That is where our blessings are waiting to be found. And miracles? Miracles so big that our nets will break. But only when we venture out into the deep.

Hymn Meditation: #427 *Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken* #428

Prayer Thought: *Jesus, I my cross have taken, all to leave and follow thee...even if it be into the depths of Thy truths.*

Seeking Better Understanding

February 20

By Monique Millet

.. by the power of the spirit our eyes were opened, and our understandings were enlightened... -D.&C. 76:3a.

Recently, we asked one of our children for help, because we knew that he had a gift to help us complete an important project. It appeared that our child did not have a desire to do what we had asked him to do. Their answer had been, "No, not right now." We hoped to be told, "yes", at least later.

Upon reflection, and silent prayer, the spirit revealed to me something about this child that helped me to see how pure his heart is. I, along with my husband, listened to our child share his heart and mind as far as he was able to find the words to express. We were able to understand his true intent. He desired to help us. He had been in the middle of working on another important project and had been willing to stop and listen when his name was called. But he became overwhelmed because he didn't have the ability to focus on his current project and our requested project as well. He did not want to be dishonest and say "yes" to something he didn't know he could help with and let us down. He didn't know how to express that he would be able to listen to our needs once he was done with what he was doing.

In another incidence, I said to my precious child, "I just realized the other day when I asked you to do something for our dog, your face shared with me that it was an uncomfortable thing for you to do, but then, without saying a word, you got up and did it. The reason for this was because it wasn't desirable for you to do that thing, but that you love me and your desire to help me was greater than your own desire. You struggled in this situation too, because you were misunderstood, and we thought you didn't desire to help. You really do want to help, you just didn't know how to express it and you did NOT want to let us down because you love us so much. At once, the anxiety in our child's body was replaced with peace and relief. He broke down and cried.... I know that God loves us, and He has given us the best tools possible to be the parents who God and our children need us to be. Through prayer, and a true desire to know our children, the Holy Ghost can help us to communicate with them. Then, we are able, to reason together and become more unified as parents and children, in our Savior Jesus Christ.

Hymn Meditation: "Open My Eyes, That I May See" #410

Prayer Thought: *Lord, we pray that our understandings will be opened that we may see the needs of those we love more clearly and love them as you have loved us.*

The Life of the Church Depends on Its' Union with the Spirit

Wednesday February 19

By Linda Evans

That was not that which was spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man of earth, earthy, the second man is the Lord from heaven. -I Corinthians 15:45

In seeking to give life to the world, we understand that Jesus must eliminate the carnal mind and substitute the spiritual mind within us. He must fit us to have union with the spirit, hence He introduced “the law of the spirit life” ... *the gospel*, to emancipate us from all things carnal. He came as “God manifest in the flesh.” with this intent. With the hand of His humanity He embraces the man. And with the hand of His divinity, He retains His hold upon God, and His purpose is to bring these two hands together in order to cover the distance of human carnality and effect a union that makes the spirit operative within us and gives us life divine.

Just as God breathed into Adam His breath of life, and Adam became a living soul and a channel of physical life to others, so Jesus “*breathed*” upon the organism called His Church, or spiritual body, and moved it with spiritual insight under this baptism of life.

The thought comes, that our interest should not be in the questions of time but in the work of preparation. It is likely that all the time that we will have will be necessary in the effort to get ready. If love for God impels our work, we will be diligent in sanctifying ourselves. If we are not moved by love, our work will be profitless.

Hymn Meditation: “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling” #103

Prayer Thought: Father, we would praise Thee without ceasing. Lost in wonder, love, and praise.

Keeping the Sabbath Holy

Sunday January 12

Pat Whiteman

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Mosiah 7:116

.....
For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it. Exodus 20:11

.....
And the inhabitants of Zion shall also observe the sabbath day to keep it holy. DC 68:4d

Several years ago, inspired study material included information about areas of life which were keeping members from being holy. In our quest for Zion, we were not keeping the Sabbath holy. Some people in our area started a concerted effort to make positive changes to set our lives in order.

We evaluated our Sunday actions and activities, trying to erase those things that were not necessary and replace them with visiting, study and activities which would guide someone else to the gospel.

We had to change mind set as well as actions. In some instances, those changes seemed burdensome; yet, in the light of the Gospel, those changes were the starting point to having a feeling of cleanliness that led to spiritual power and temporal blessings we had been denying ourselves.

Was it a one and done activity? No, some never changed; some changed for a time then went back to the comfortable ways; others are still striving to be what those three scriptures above instruct us to do.

Hymn Meditation: “This Is the Day the Lord Hath Made” #495

Prayer Thought: O God, the Eternal Father, bless us with greater understanding and will to truly keep Your day holy that Thy will may be done, and Thy Kingdom come as You have said.

Miracles Do Happen!

Monday January 13

By Adam Fullerton

(as written by his mother Mary Ann Fullerton)

For behold, I am God; and I am a God of miracles; and I will show unto the world, that I am the same yesterday, today, and forever; and I work not among the children of men, save it be according to their faith. Isaiah 29:25

When my special sister, Annie, was three years old, my mother had taken her to a Handicapped clinic to check on her Downs Syndrome and the progress that she was making. Annie had a murmur in her heart. The Doctor who saw her, was alarmed because usually by the age of three, the hole that caused the murmur, should have closed on its own. The Dr. determined that the hole would need to be closed with an open-heart surgery.

Mom was very shook-up about the thought of her baby having to go through such a major surgery, but a date was set for that coming June. Mom was already grieving from the loss of her Uncle, who had died recently in a car accident. Mom said that she prayed and prayed that Annie would not be taken too.

One day Mom found Annie asleep on her bedroom floor. She got down on her knees and gently put her hand on Annie's heart, and prayed. She put her other hand up to heaven and said, "Father God, use me as a conduit of your healing power, and bless little Annie with a healing." Mom said that it was herself that was given the blessing of assurance, at that time, that all would be well.....

On the day of the scheduled surgery, there were a few tests that had to be done first, to determine exactly what the Dr's would need to do. They left Annie with Mom in the waiting room while they looked at the results of the test. Somehow Mom just knew, there would be no surgery. Then the Dr. came in to the waiting room, and watched Annie playing happily on the floor. She told Mom that Annie wouldn't be needing surgery after all, due to the fact, that in the past few months since her initial check-up that year, that the hole in her heart had closed. Then the Dr. shook Mom's hand and said this; "Miracles do happen!"

Hymn Meditation: "They Who Seek the Throne of Grace" #270

Prayer Thought: O God of miracles, we thank Thee for hearing our prayers and healing the hearts of those who love and trust Thee. May we ever seek Thy Throne of Grace.

Spiritual Protection Against Worldliness

Tuesday February 18

By Pat Whiteman

Love not the world, neither the things that are of the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all in the world that is of the lusts of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever. I John 2:15-17

My first year, teaching was in a northeastern Oklahoma town of about 1700 people. At that time, we began each week with a Monday morning assembly in which the high school students and faculty stood to salute the flag of the United States of America, hear a prayer, state the school pledge and sing the school song. The students listened quietly and respectfully while the principal listed the activities for the week. There were no school activities on Sundays or Wednesday night.

The superintendent was a Methodist; the high school principal was a Baptist and the janitor was RLDS. I used to chuckle when the superintendent and janitor discussed religion in the lounge. They enjoyed some lively discussions of doctrine but never changed the other's mind.

Fast forward to the end of my teaching career 29 years later to see that the last day I had students, we were locked down because of a bomb threat. We all know the decline of good and the rise of evil that has invaded our lives. Sadly, we suspect worse actions ahead.

What is our protection against the evil worldliness now on this earth? Zion – the city of **holiness**. May we be actively engaged in making the changes we must make that Jesus Christ may return soon.

Hymn Meditation: "These Momentous Days Are Filled" #591

Prayer Thought: O God, the Eternal Father, bless us with strength to make the changes that are necessary to be holy.

The Wooden Bridge

Monday February 17

By Jim Gates

For as the light of the morning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, and covereth the whole earth, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be ... But of that day and hour no one knoweth; no, not the angels of God in heaven, but my Father only ... Watch, therefore, for you know not at what hour your Lord doth come ... Therefore, be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh. - Matt 24:27, 43, 49, 51

Growing up in Florida our family home was in the country. In fact it was unusual for a car to pass by our house that wasn't a neighbor who lived farther up the road. About a mile before our home was an old wooden bridge across Cow House slough. I do not remember how it got that name but all knew the name of that little stream.

When a car would cross over the wooden bridge, we could hear it at our home. Often, I would look out to see if we had company or which neighbor was passing. My older sisters soon learned that the noise of cars crossing the bridge had another purpose. Our mom would know when they came home from a date. This was especially troublesome when it was after curfew and they were trying to sneak into the house. They soon learned if they stopped at the bridge and crossed very slowly Mom did not hear the "warning" that they were coming and would not know the hour they came home.

We know the Lord is coming again but as told in the scriptures we don't know the hour nor the day. He will come suddenly as a thief in the night. We don't have the luxury of an old wooden bridge to give a warning that He is coming. May we heed His counsel to be prepared and always ready to meet our Savior.

Hymn Meditation: "If Suddenly Upon the Street" #355

Prayer Thought: O God, may we be prepared and eager to meet Your Son when He comes again. May Thy Spirit reveal what we must do to be prepared and ready.

My Dad's Advice

Tuesday January 14

By Jim Gates

I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith; - 2Tim 4:7

Entering the seventh grade at Franklin Junior High School in Tampa, Florida, I decided to try out for the football team. When my parents gave me permission to play football, I was excited. I could hardly wait until the first practice. Little did I know what was ahead for me.

I found out it was one thing to run around the yard or playground being able to stop whenever you got tired and another when coach directed the practice. There were rounds of calisthenics, wind sprints, running and more running. Combine this with the hot humid summer days of Florida and it was overwhelming to a tender, out of shape, teenager. After a few days of practice my whole body ached. I hurt in places I didn't know existed in my body.

By the time our practice was over the school bus had left. My friend Frankie and I would hitchhike home. This was in a time when we thought nothing about standing by the road sticking a thumb out waiting for a car to stop and give us a ride. One day my dad picked us up.

This was the day I had decided to quit. When I told Dad, he was quiet for moment then said, "Well son, if this is what you want to do it is alright with me. I just want you to know if you give up and quit now because the going got tough, the next time you face a difficult situation it will be that much easier to quit. And next time after that it will be easier still." I played football throughout Jr. High, High School and two years at Graceland College.

When you face obstacles or difficulties in life whether it be on the job, in your marriage, with friendships, children or in whatever adversity you face, don't give up just because it seems hard. Even as Apostle Paul said, may we say, "I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course."

Hymn Meditation: "Fight the Good Fight" #353

Prayer Thought: Almighty God, we ask Thee for strength and wisdom to overcome barriers we often place in our lives and stay true to Your commands.

The People Prayed and the Lord Answered

Wednesday January 15

By David Tevebaugh

...pray upon the Lord, call upon His Holy name, make known his wonderful works, among the people... D.&C. Section 65:1d.

Beverly and I have a large yard with numerous trees and shrubs to mow around. So, this wet summer has created problems mowing in between rains.

I was rushing to finish mowing before dark as I swung around a Large Australian Pine Tree, I didn't duck quite low enough, so a limb smacked me in the face and a Pine Needle hit me in the corner of my Eye!

It hurt and watered, for a while, but I finished mowing and then later Beverly put eye drops in, and I thought I was fine. But the next morning my eye was sore and when Beverly looked and saw nothing but red where white should be, we both panicked.

I rushed to my Eye Doctor, sure that he could not look at me, and say "You need an appointment!" His assistant took me in to a chair, first thing. As he was preparing me for the Doctor, I suddenly felt the fear leave, and a calm feeling came over me.

The Eye Doctor explained that the blood in my eye is like a small drop of red paint on a white canvas. So visibly, it shows up, yet is not severe. My eye would clear up in about 3 weeks and no vision problems should occur.

When I got home, Beverly informed me she had already put me on the Prayer List, and had received a feeling I would be O.K.

I know now, why I suddenly felt the fear go away. People were praying for me and the Lord answered.

Hymn Meditation: "Let Us Pray for One Another" #78

Prayer Thought: Heavenly Father, we thank thee for servants who seek Thee out in fervent prayer and mostly for Thy mighty answers to those prayers.

The Touch of the Masters' Hand

Part Two

Sunday February 16

By Wayne Bartrow

I am in your midst and ye cannot see me, but the day soon cometh that ye shall see me and know that I am.... D&C 38:2b.

The hand I felt touching my right shoulder as I stood behind the podium to give the Invocation at Reunion was distinct, but I assumed it was our speaker, Richard, who had joined me to pray for our safety. It was a mighty prayer in which the wind was rebuked, and the thunder was silenced. A peace fell over the worship from that moment on. I marveled at how quickly everything had changed and thanked the Lord for His blessing upon us.

After the service was over, I thanked Richard for joining me in bringing the Invocation. He said that he had not done so. I asked whether he saw who stood beside me during the prayer. He said he saw no one. I asked others if they saw who, was beside me. No one saw anyone.

I am convinced that Jesus stood beside me that evening. Consider what the Invocation Prayer is asking. God not only heard my prayer that evening, He answered in a way that calmed the storm and restored peace to our worship in His Holy name. I had felt the touch of the Masters' hand. He could have accomplished it all without my being aware of it, but He allowed me to feel His touch. What assurance He gives. He is mindful of our needs and is prepared to meet them. Our ever-present friend, our Savior, Redeemer and Advocate before the Father in Heaven. It is Jesus, the first and the last, who will guide us safe home. We thank Him for all that is past and trust Him for all that's to come. Amen!

Hymn Meditation: "This God is the God We Adore" #61

Prayer Thought: Lord, we adore Thee and seek Thy touch in all that we do.

The Touch of the Masters' Hand

Part One

Monday February 15

By Wayne Bartrow

The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. -Psalm 34:7

The testimony that I would like to share took place at Geneseo, Illinois a few years ago. The Dietrick Family hosted a Restoration Reunion there every year and invited anyone associated with the restoration to attend without regard to affiliation. The result of the kind generosity was that Saints would come from far and wide to share together without rancor or disagreement. On the day that this experience took place the sky had appeared dark and foreboding all day long. The weather report for later in the evening warned that we should expect heavy rainfall and accompanying strong winds. As nightfall came, we gathered in the sanctuary for the worship service. We could hear the loud thunder and see the flashes of lightning outside. As was our custom, the priesthood men who were serving that evening met for prayer, and then came out onto the rostrum. Everything was in readiness, however the storm outside was becoming worse by the minute.

Although I did not ask the man presiding that night, I would imagine he was wondering if we should all move to the basement for shelter or remain where we were. My duty was to bring the opening prayer. The preacher that night was Richard Smith from Maine. He and I were seated together. In your mind's eye, please try to visualize the scene. The announcements were made. We sang an opening hymn and we remained standing for the Invocation to follow. I was standing behind the pulpit and was about to open my mouth when a hand was laid upon my right shoulder. I could feel it distinctly. My eyes were closed but someone was standing beside me.... (cont'd tomorrow)

Hymn Meditation: "Holy Spirit, Come with Power" #210

Prayer Thought: Lord, make us worthy of Thy Holy Spirit's power and the ministering of Thy angels among us.

Thursday January 16 **The Stranger-** Part One By Erlyne Gress

I would that ye should be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in good works. Mosiah 3:21

On Sat. p.m. Oct.19/19 I had completed my shopping at Walmart and began searching for a place to check out when a most unusual event occurred. I had avoided the self-check-outs as I had fruit and vegetables which had to be weighed. However, I am now aware that the Lord had a hand in directing me to the aisle I chose. This aisle had three customers, a lady in first place with a large order, a gentleman with a few items, and then me.

While we were waiting, the gentleman turned to me, greeted me pleasantly and we began to talk about the bison candy on the counter. I asked him if he thought it really contained bison meat. He assured me that it really did and that it was pleasant to eat as well as nutritious. I told him that I had seen bison animals at a close view as my daughter resides in the North, amidst the Rocky Mountains. We agreed that these mountains are one of the most striking examples of God's creations. "Yes", he said, "They are most beautiful." For some reason he told me that he was going on a trip and he added some bison candy to his small order.

While we were talking, the check-out belt was moving and he reached into my cart, lining my groceries up ever so neatly on the conveyor belt. He told me, "You will be blessed" and he further placed my packaged parcels back into my cart when they had been through the check out.

I wished him a good trip and began to go into my wallet to pay the cashier. He leaned toward me and quietly said "Your order has been taken care of." When I looked up, he had disappeared. I moved toward the near-by exit doors, hoping to thank him, but he was gone. The cashier affirmed that she had never seen him before and did not see him leave. She told me that he gave her the exact amount of my order even before she had punched in the last item. We were both astounded. (cont'd tomorrow)

Hymn Meditation: "Rich and Golden Blessings" #356

Prayer Thought: Lord, we thank Thee that Thy love that ever surrounds us and that Thy angels are often near us, to remind of us of Thy tender care.

The Stranger -Part Two

Friday January 17

By Erlyne Gress

***Ye ought to impart of the substance that ye have one to another. -
Mosiah 2:36.***

(Cont'd) As I drove home, after meeting the mysterious stranger at the check-out line, the man's image remained clear in my mind. He had very deep blue eyes and a warm smile. His hair appeared to be grey and of a medium length. I began to pray, asking the Lord for help with my wondering mind.

These words came to me, "In as much as ye have done it unto the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Matt 25:41 The message from Matt 25:36 was also in my thoughts, "I was a stranger and ye took me in."

I began to wonder if I had been in the presence of one of the three Nephites or an angel from the courts of heaven. I knew I could not be sure as I read 1Cor.2:11 "The things of God knoweth no man except he has the Spirit of God".

No final answer has come as yet, but I testify that I was in the presence of someone other than mortal man. In searching the Scriptures there burns on my heart the words "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Acts 20:35

It is a matter of the heart and I thank God for the time with the stranger. We cannot say we are unable to share. King Mosiah told us, "I give not because I have not, but if I had I would give." Mosiah-. 2:40

Hymn Meditation: "Behold, the Savior at Your Door" #449

Prayer Thought: Dear Father, may we open our hearts to a stranger, willing to listen, and share with him.

The Love of God



Friday February 14

By Joyce M

(Reprinted with her permission)

Now, behold, I say to you, my brethren, If ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, Can ye feel so now? Alma 3:46

February is a time of expressing love for those around us. Most of us do this by giving those we love gifts, such as flowers, cards and chocolates, coming with lovely messages from the heart. God has given us countless lovely gifts and sent us many messages of love. Hopefully, these gifts of love that we receive from the Lord result in a change in our hearts. In Max Lucado's book called "Just Like Jesus" he says,

"Never forget: God loves you just the way you are, but he refuses to leave you that way. He wants you to be just like Jesus. God's love never ceases. Never. Though we spurn Him, ignore Him, despise Him, disobey Him, He will not change."

But we do change when we accept the love that God sends to us. God loves us so much that He changes our hearts to be more like Jesus. So, we should not be surprised if some of the gifts we receive from God may not come in lovely boxes or flowery vases. His gifts may come in the form of lessons learned and difficulties allowed us, in order to teach us to overcome, through His grace. And when this happens, don't forget to thank Him and then to answer his messages of love by responding to that love with these words, "I love You, Lord."

Hymn Meditation: "Thy Love, O God" #456

Prayer Thought: Lord we love Thee and desire to be like Thee and to love as Thou hast loved.

LOVE ONE ANOTHER

Part Three – Janine’s Friend

Thursday February 13

Shared by Bonnie Noland

And in the garden of Eden gave I unto Man his agency, and unto Thy brethren have I said, and also gave commandments, that they should love one another, and that they should choose me, their father. - D&C Section 36: 7b

I heard a third testimony about the importance of love from my friend, Janine, a nurse, who was caring for a lady in the hospital who had lost her leg to diabetes. Janine and her patient bonded because they both loved the Lord. After a while the lady was sent to rehabilitation and was not seen or heard about for a long time.

Then one day while Janine was walking down the hospital hallway, she felt a tug on her uniform. She turned around and saw her friend in a wheelchair and she was missing her other leg. The lady said to her, “Janine, I have something wonderful to tell you! While I was in surgery, I left my body and went to see the Lord! He told me it wasn’t my time yet, and I was to return and tell everyone to Love One Another! That is what I am doing now! He wants us to tell others to ***“Love One Another!”***”

Two weeks later Janine’s friend died. God had verified his message to “Love One Another” again. ***This is of utmost importance in the world today. Praise the Lord!***

Hymn Meditation: “O Thou Who Gavest Power to Love” #316

Prayer Thought: Lord, help us to learn to fully love one another.

This Is to be Shared

Saturday January 18

By Robert Beeman

Verily, verily I say unto you, I give unto you to be the light of this people; a city is set on a hill cannot be hid. 62. Behold do men light a candle and out it under a bushel? Nay, but it giveth light to all that are in the house; 63. Therefore, let your light so shine before this people, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven. 113. The light of the body is the eye, if therefore thine eye be single, the whole body shall be full of light. III Nephi 5:61-63 and 113

As I look back on my life I have been blessed and protected many times. But not more than anyone else. I consider myself blessed more than lucky. Many times, we call our blessings luck, not giving our Heavenly Father credit for blessing us. I would share an experience I had several years ago. At the time I was preparing for a sermon. These are the times I feel closest to my Heavenly Father, always asking Him to help me. I’m the type of person who likes to ride in the back seat, not being comfortable being in front of people. The Lord knows this and is always working with me to give me more confidence in this.

It was on a hot Saturday summer afternoon. My wife Andrea and I had been working in the yard all day and it was getting late. Andrea asked if I would cook hamburgers on the grill. I started and realized that I was out of propane gas. I grabbed the tank off the grill and took off to a little place on 24 highway where I got my tank filled. Hoping to get there before they closed. When I arrived, I asked the owner if I was to late to get my tank filled. He told me I had plenty of time. An older woman was sitting down by the counter and looked up as I was talking to the owner. She asked if I was a minister. I hesitated for a moment and told her who I was and a little about our church. I paid my bill and as I left, I asked her why she asked me if I was a minister. Her reply, was quite shocking She said, ***“I saw a glow about you.”*** Here I was hot and tired in my dirty work clothes, not at all feeling or looking like a minister. I was quite shocked. How do you reply to something like that?

I struggled with this, quite a while. I wasn’t sure how to tell my wife and others what had happened to me. How do you tell someone about having an experience like that? A lady I didn’t know saying she saw a glow about me, and asked if I was a minister? But it was made known to me that I was supposed to share this experience with others. In so many words; ***“if I didn’t want you to share this, you would not have received it. It is not to be hid or pushed away like it never happened. This is to be shared!!”***

Hymn Meditation: “Send Forth Thy Light, O Zion” #559

Prayer Thought: Lord, may we be ever prepared to “show the glow” that comes from Thee. May we share of Thy love with those around us.

We Are More Than the Things We Own

Sunday January 19

By Jonna Patterson

Behold, are ye stripped of pride? I say unto you, if ye are not, ye are not prepared to meet God. - Alma 3:50

Today while I was cleaning up the Living Room, dusting and vacuuming the area, lifting up rugs, dusting under knick-knacks, fluffing pillows etc., I was reminded of how much stuff we had accumulated over the years. While these things make my house more comfortable and to me more attractive, I have to remember that they are just things and shouldn't be too important to me.

My mind was taken back to a time in my life (about 40 years ago) when Dennis, my husband, and Dani, my oldest child, and I, were living in a furnished home trailer in Cherry Point, North Carolina. We were waiting for base housing to open-up. It was a process that took about six to eight weeks, but for me it seemed a life time. Dennis had re-enlisted in the Marine Corps, hoping to give us a better life, and perhaps interesting travel and an earlier retirement, as well.

The sparsely furnished trailer was clean and in decent condition. The place was just void of warmth and personality. The 1970's era fake leather furniture was easily sanitized between tenants but didn't speak of a cozy residence to me. In spite, of the heat, of North Carolina's late summer, this trailer was cold; it didn't seem like home.

I remember really struggling at that time. I was not just lonely for my home_(we had moved 1,000 miles away from families) I was also lonely for our "Stuff", as well. If someone had come into our trailer, they would not know that we were not nomads who had Nothing! (I never said this out loud, but this was my thought, and the root of my sadness). With most of our worldly possessions in storage and with only what we could fit into our 1965 Corvair with us, I felt like I had lost part of my identity. It was like the things that we owned defined who we were and our worth. It is funny to me as I think back, because at that point in our lives almost everything we had were hand me downs. They would be of little worth to anyone else. The bottom line was, I was proud of our hand me downs. They would and the things that I owned separated me from people who had nothing!

I would like to think that I have grown up some since then, but I know that I am still proud (or maybe just attached to) to our stuff. We are much more than the things we own, and I know that every good gift that we have comes from the Father above. There is not any room in this life of a Christian for pride of any kind, and if we want to be part of the kingdom, we must remove pride from our lives. Alma 3:50-62 addresses what we need to do. It is a good read and worth pondering on often, and obeying. For those who are willing to obey the counsel given, Our Heavenly Father extends His arms of mercy towards us.

Hymn Meditation: "All Things Are Thine" #479

Prayer Thought: Lord, we thank Thee for all that we have been made stewards over. Help us to remember to see all things as Thine and not let pride overcome us.

LOVE ONE ANOTHER

Part two - Spencer

Wednesday February 12

Shared by Bonnie Noland

...you will teach (your children) to walk in the ways of truth and soberness; you will teach them to love one another and to serve one another. Mosiah 2:25

Another special boy that I taught at reunion was also very interested in the class and in the scriptures, just like Anthony who we heard about in yesterday's devotion. His name was Spencer.

After Spencer got home from reunion, he went to a friend's house and misbehaved. His mother was not happy with him when he returned home, and she told him to go upstairs to his room and ask God for forgiveness and not to come back down until he had done that.

He was gone for about an hour and when he finally came down, he told his mother to gather everyone in the house together because he had something to tell them.

When they were together, he said, "God told me he forgave me." (God had spoken to him!) "God is not pleased with our family and we need to do something different!" (Spencer used the same words as Anthony!) He also said, "God said that I should tell you, Mom, to tell everyone to love one another. This was another clear message from God to repent and love one another.

Hymn Meditation: "Love Divine, All Love Excelling" #103

Prayer Thought: Lord, we hear Thy call to love each other, Lord, even as Thou hast loved us. May we listen and do as Thou hast said. May we be found a people abounding in Thy love!

LOVE ONE ANOTHER

Part One – Anthony

Tuesday February 11

By Bonnie Noland

“This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you.” John 15:12

Several summers ago, I was teaching the 3rd and 4th grade class for the Geneseo Reunion. The class was learning about principles of the gospel. Some of the assignments given were to do things throughout the week at camp like giving service to others and studying the scriptures. Each day the children were given gems for every assignment done. They put them in a pouch until the end of the week. On Friday they made a gold crown out of cardstock and were able to glue their gems to the crown. Then we read the following scripture from II Timothy 4: 6-8

(6) “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. (7) I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; (8) Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.”

One of the boys that was in my class at reunion was, Anthony. He had been recently baptized and had received a set of scriptures from his grandparents. He loved his new scripture books and carried them around with him all week, looking up scriptures as we studied in class. His grandparents were praying for him and his parents as they were not church goers. On Friday evening when there was a talent show at the camp, he chose to read from his set of new books, the above scripture (II Tim 4:6-8) as his talent! After camp he returned home and said to his Mother, “Mom, God is not pleased with us, we need to do something different!” His grandparents were so happy that Anthony’s heart had been touched by the Lord and he wanted to follow Him.

Hymn Meditation: “O My Children, I Am Your Shepherd” #458

Prayer Thought: Dear Heavenly Father, we thank Thee for the loving messages you send to us and especially for the wonder of knowing that they have come to us through Thy blessed little ones. May we heed Thy message to love one another.

Whack-a-Mole

Monday January 20

By Francis Petersen

Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. - II Nephi 13:29

Sometimes, it is good to share a bit of Godly humor in our associations. Just like sermons, it can edify others. So, today, I thought I might share with you about a recent phone conversation I had with a good friend which gave me quite a chuckle. She humorously made the analogy that our health, as we age, is like the game called “Whack-a Mole.” If you have ever played Whack-a-Mole at an arcade, you are aware that the game consists of 6-8 mechanically controlled moles that pop up randomly out of holes in a large gameboard. The goal of the game is to eventually hit the moles all down with the attached plastic club. The tricky part, however, is that each time you hit one mole down, another two or three pop up, again. I couldn’t help but laugh, because life *can* be like a game of Whack-a-Mole. You just address one problem, or ailment and several more pop up.

My friend made the point, that this can be true of our spiritual battles, as well. We just begin to learn one important truth and have that down, and another issue to learn from, pops up, or a new awareness of sin in our lives shows itself and requires our repentance.

The wonderful thing about the real Whack-a-Mole game, is that you do make positive points each time you hit one mole down. It is worth playing, even if you can’t hit all of the moles down, all of the time. Even more importantly, you can eventually catch up with those pesky moles, as you practice and become faster at the game.

Even though life can seem like an endless game of Whack-a -Mole. The truth is, we are learning valuable lessons as we keep trying to do our best. Hopefully, with time, we will have knocked down all the moles of sin and unbelief in our lives. Don’t get discouraged, press forward with hope, because eventually that last mole will permanently be pushed down and away, where it belongs, with the Lord’s help!

Hymn Meditation: “Never Be Discouraged” #443

Prayer Thought: Lord, we humbly ask for Thy help as we press forward. Help us to meet each new challenge as it comes, knowing that the battles that come our way each day can make us stronger, and that You, Lord, will always win the game.

The Three-fold Conditions for Zion

Part One

Tuesday January 21

By Cindy Patience

The Lord called his people Zion because they were of one heart, and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there were no poor among them. Genesis 7:23

Our goal and our mission statement is to build Zion! But what conditions must we meet? Enoch's people found a good plan, but it must have taken humility, forgiveness, insight, sacrifice, and hard work for the people to meet those conditions. In the scripture above we are given a glimpse or a key into the spiritual conditions that brought about a Zion state among the people of Enoch.

- 1-They became unified in one heart and mind.
- 2- They became a righteous and holy people.
- 3-They effectively shared, until there was no poor among them.

It is **three-fold**. Interestingly, in the Hebrew faith, the number three took on an important meaning. It was often referred to as the number representing mediation. In the Torah it is used to mediate between two opposing or contradictory values. The third value mediates, reconciles and connects the two opposing values. (as our Lord does for us) Three connotes a complete unit by embracing an item, its opposite, and the middle ground between those two. To illustrate, three parts make a complete form (such as the triangle), by **joining** the end with the beginning. *Three has a unifying element and can be a representation of unity... just as the first condition of Zion refers to.* (Read on tomorrow.)

Hymn Meditation: "Now Is the Hour of Zion's Fulfillment" #558

Prayer Thought: *Oh Father, Thou art the Beginning and the End; the Great 'I Am' in whom we have our being and in whom we are unified and made holy in preparation for Thy Zion. May we fully humble ourselves before Thee and work diligently to learn and master the conditions that will bring Thy Zion once again upon this earth.*

Monday February 10

The Trinity of Love

By Ralph Damon

Behold I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me. Isa. 49:16

It seems that within the past ten to twenty years, numerology has become a greater subject of many peoples' studies, both in our temporal and spiritual lives. Devising what numbers mean in the scriptures, as they may perhaps relate to our religious past and future, as well as within the Jewish language and our scriptural understanding – all these have seemed to generate a great interest into how numbers affect and effect our lives. I have several books on my bookshelf which are written expressly with the intent to explain the Bible code and allow readers to come to a better understanding of its 'hidden' secrets. But read as I might, it still remains just numbers to me. But there are three numbers which do hold my interest in an expanding manner.

If I were to ask you "What is the number of love", how would you answer? Perhaps you might respond with, "I don't know." I might then ask you "How many numbers do you need to have love?" and you might even mention, "At least more than one." And so our discussion would continue. Being a people who do love and for many who have loved, we have experienced that love must have a source, the one from whom the love comes, the one who does the loving. So, there must be at least one number signifying love. But one truly isn't enough. You cannot have love if there is nothing or no one to love. If you love nothing, then you truly don't experience the full effect of love.

So what else is needed for love to exist? An object of that love, the one to be loved. Now we understand that love must have at least two numbers, the source of the love and the object of that love. But as our understanding deepens, we must also have the expression of love itself, the love between the two, the love which joins the two together. Now, translating love into its most basic sentence, we find that it needs a subject, the 'I', and object, 'you', and a verb, 'love'. And when we put this sentence together, what do we find: "I love you." Three, simple words.

And yet at the same time, love is one. Love is one and love is three...it is one and three at the same time. It becomes a triune. The Scriptures speaks that 'God is love.' If God is love, then God is triune as well, one and three at the same time. Who is the source of love, the 'I'? The Father, the source of all love. Who is the object of his love, the 'You'? The Son of God, the Messiah, who is called in scripture, 'the Beloved.' And the love which emanates from the Father to the Son, the expression of that love? The Spirit. The Lover, the Beloved, and the Love itself...the trinity of love...both three and one at the same time...the trinity of God. Perhaps we can get lost in the 'numbers' of understanding, but it is difficult to get too lost in three numbers...the trinity...the triune of heaven who loves...and loves...and loves...without end or beginning...and without ceasing, regardless of our behavior or our display of returned affection and love.

Hymn Meditation: "There's No Love to Me Like the Love of Jesus" #187

Prayer Thought: *Dear God, allow me to partake of the trinity of your love. As You have made me the object of Your love, allow all those whom You have created to become the object of Your love as well.*

Jesus is My Friend

Sunday February 9

By Pat Whiteman

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. John 15:13-15

The picture of Jesus standing at the closed door, knocking was used in a worship setting in the sanctuary in September when the theme was “Jesus Awaits His kingdom, Even Zion.” Hymn #449, Behold, the Savior at Your Door was played during the meditation music before the eleven o’clock service.

Both the picture and the song brought thoughts of what Jesus has done for us. I realize Jesus has been waiting patiently for us to be obedient to His commandments so that He may fulfill his purpose: to bring to pass the immortality, and eternal life of man. (DC 22:23b)

Do our actions show that we are a friend of Jesus? Do our lives reflect that Jesus has told us all he heard from His Father; we know what He does. He asks us to love one another and keep His commandments so that he may make us immortal. Are you showing daily that Jesus is your friend?

Now is our time to act.

Hymn Meditation: What a Friend We Have in Jesus #543

Prayer Thought: O God, the eternal Father, thank you for being a friend who never forsakes us.

The Three-fold Conditions Required for Zion

Part Two-Unity

Wednesday January 22

By Cindy Patience

Zion shall be redeemed with judgement and her converts with righteousness. Isaiah 1:27

Three is also, the number that represents permanent truth; it is holy. It is consistent in the Godhead, the First Presidency, the atonement of our Lord (three days), and the three-way relationships between men, others, and God. If we could learn to fully master the three steps that brought the City of Enoch to a Zion level by practicing and mastering these “three” unifying principles of the kingdom, Zion could come to fruition.

Enoch’s City was called Zion *because* they had realized the three righteous conditions that we looked at yesterday. Only after the people of Enoch’s City raised their standards, did they become the example of what a Zion people should be. In our desire to build up God’s kingdom we may gain by also focusing on these three goals. As we take another look at these three goals keep in mind that these goals require the concept of full consecration to Gods Kingdom and to one another starting with unity.

1-Unity: Unity, not as the world interprets it, but a unity of heart within the parameters of God’s righteousness. This requires a laying down of our own wills, discerning what Gods will might be for each of us and working together to unite within His will. It requires self- evaluation, forgiveness, constant reevaluation, and continuous new beginnings. It could be the most difficult and soul-searching work we have ever done. Yet it could also be the most rewarding and joyful endeavor that we have ever experienced in its results. It would not mean that we give up the individual characteristics that God gave to each of us, but it does mean that we listen to one another with discernment and respect without preconceived ideas or judgements. It would mean always carefully considering the thoughts and ideas presented by others when they reflect the goodness of God. It would mean regularly listening and talking things out together; making agreeable and peaceful goals towards the greater good of all. It would require that we learn that it is not “all about ourselves” and that *God loves us all equally*, even if we may have different backgrounds, education, income levels, interests etc. This requires forbearance on ***everyone’s*** part.

Hymn Meditation: Thy Kingdom Come, O Lord #561

Prayer Thought: Father, please unite our hearts to the furtherment of Thy Glorious Kingdom.

The Three-fold Conditions Required for Zion

“The Second and Third Conditions.” Part Three

Thursday January 23

By Cindy Patience

The work of preparation and the perfection of my Saints go forward slowly, and Zion's conditions are no further away nor any closer than the spiritual condition of my people justifies. D.&C. 1409:5c.

The next of the conditions met by Enoch's people were those of holiness, or righteousness, followed by that of eliminating poverty. Today, we will explore how we might be able to begin to live out these conditions:

2-Becoming Holy- This requires hard work, through study, personal prayer and full submission to God's will. It calls for sacrifice of worldly desires and humbly standing on God's turf, away from the influences of the world around us. This requires a true and living day to day walk with the Lord and with His people. It will take great humility and perhaps some pain to honestly look at our own faces in the mirror and make the spiritual adjustments needed to become the truly pure and holy people that God wants us to be. We will come closer to holiness if we remain humble and penitent, always depending on Christ's atonement. We will draw nearer to Christ when we continually remember to love, forbear and forgive one another, even as He has shown us love, forgiveness and forbearance. **3-Eliminate Poverty Among Us-**What would it take to eliminate all poverty from among us? Could it be simply a realization that we all are equally dependent on God and sharing what we have been given freely. It is through giving freely of our substance that we can learn somewhat of the sacrifice that was given by Our Lord. In doing so we can draw closer and closer to Heaven and to each other because we begin to understand and know better the selflessness of the Lord whom we serve. We can joyfully give and receive in humility and love. Everyone benefits.

Praise God! May His Kingdom come to fruition as we choose to learn and follow the three conditions that Enoch's people embraced. May we someday soon become one in unity, holiness and sacrifice, as did they.

Hymn Meditation: “O My People Saith the Spirit” #295

Prayer Thought: *Father, teach us to live together in unity, to be holy even as Thou are holy, and to promote loving equity among Thy people. We pray to live as You have shown and put into practice Thy plans for Zion. And to You Lord, be the glory!*

Walking on Water

Saturday February 8

By Francis Petersen

And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus, But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and began to sink, he cried, saying, Lord save me And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said, “O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?” Matthew 14:25-26

Recently I heard a light-hearted story about three men who wanted to cross a small pond. Two of the men, who happened to be men of faith, walked out into the water, and with total assurance, walked across the entire pond without sinking. The third man was in awe. Being also, a man of faith, he stepped out in the water hoping to do the same. But as soon as he did, he felt himself sink into the water. He was puzzled about why he had not been able to walk on the water when his friends had moved out and done so with such confidence. One of the two men who had crossed safely looked at the other sheepishly as they went to pull their poor wet friend out of the murky water, and said, “Do you suppose we should have told him about the stepping stones?”

Our Lord truly did walk on water and his faithful follower, Peter did the same, until he lost faith and found himself sinking. How true this is of all of us, at times. We strive to follow the Lord but fail to use faith and sometimes, just as in the story above, we simply fail to get our facts straight and are not aware of the stepping stones put in place for our help.

Walking on water is a miracle and has taught us an important lesson on faith, but how much more can we learn, when we use our faith to follow the stepping stones. The Lord wants us to step out in faith, but the next time we do, I hope that we will make sure that we will study and gain a sure knowledge of the “stepping stones” that are already set out for us in His word. May we “doubt not”. **He will not let us sink!**

Hymn Meditation: “Be Gone Unbelief” #388

Prayer Thought: *Lord, may we ever seek Thy truth and follow Thy stepping stones.*

Friday February 7

Blessing or Cursing

By Wayne Bartrow

The tongue can no man tame; it is unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. James 3:8-10

I have had association in the past with men for whom cursing is habitual. In particular I remember one who would invoke God's name in almost every utterance and not in a reverent manner. I knew better than to talk to him about it in public, but one day the two of us were alone and I saw an opportunity. I told him that I couldn't help but notice that he called on the Lord a lot, but that he didn't seem to really mean it. I added that the same time might come, when he, "actually wanted" God's help, but it would be interpreted as just another false alarm. Habits are not inherited, they are acquired through association with other people who they then try to be like. There are "good habits" and "bad habits." Like most people, I have acquired a few of both, over the course of my lifetime. If we hope to become like Christ, our bad habits need to be eliminated and replaced with good ones.

One of the sayings I have repeated, is that everyone has the capacity to be a blessing or cursing. The third verse of Hymn # 358 in the Hymnal of the Remnant Saints addresses this topic. It advises, "*Talk of the beautiful, talk of the true: Tongues full of poison are whispering to you: Answer them not with a tale bearing word. Only in blessing the voice should be heard: Talk of the beautiful, talk of the Lord.*"

The scriptures remind us of the importance of words in Matthew 4:4, "*It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*" Words can have the ability to convey heartfelt feelings. A simple statement such as, "I love you" has tremendous implications in the lives of other people. The scriptures tell us that the word of God became flesh when Jesus, condescended from Heaven and took upon Himself the sins of the world. He is our Savior and Friend.

Our natural tendency is to respond in like kind when people hurt us. But according to Matthew 5:40-41, that is not God's way. Here the Lord told us to turn the other cheek. We have a hard time accepting that those who use us badly should be given another chance. Yet that is what Jesus tells us is necessary. He did this Himself from the cross of Calvary. (Luke 23:25) Blessing them that curse you and praying for those who spitefully use you (Matthew 5:44) is keeping the royal law. (James 2:8,) It is the law by which Jesus lived and died. It is the law of love for all.

Hymn Meditation: "Look for the Beautiful" #358

Prayer Thought: Lord, may we learn to open our mouths to speak only Thy loving words; always looking for what is good and true. Help us to be a blessing to others through what we say, and never a curse.

Making Our Days Godly

Friday January 24

By Pat Whiteman

And they said, Come, go to, let us build us a city, and a tower whose top will be high, nigh unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. Genesis 11:3

As I read an article from a Book of Mormon publication, the above scripture caught my attention because "the people building the tower wanted to make a name for themselves." Is that not what we see in the worldliness of our lives every day: people wanting to make a name for themselves in reality TV, on social media postings, in print, and aloud on the street for news media to report.

The scriptures give purposes various ones were put on the earth: Genesis 3:5 gives us the purpose the devil was put on earth: *to deceive, and to blind men.* DC 76:4g tells us Jesus came into the world to *be crucified for the world, and to bear the sins of the world, and to sanctify the world and to cleanse it from all unrighteousness.* DC 28:2 tells us that *ye are chosen out of the world to declare my gospel with the sound of rejoicing . . . and ye are called to bring to pass the gathering of mine elect.*

"Changing Our Days to Be More Godly Like Unto the Sabbath" is the theme for February. Perhaps we should ponder the purpose for which we were put on this earth then ask: Is what I do every day fulfilling my purpose here on this earth? Am I supposed to make a name for myself, or am I to *be about my Father's business?*

Hymn Meditation: "The Kingdom, the Hope, His Church" #333

Prayer Thought: O God, the Eternal Father, speak to my mind to show me the worldly things I must shun that my days may be filled with holiness as you would have us observe the Sabbath.

Lost in Georgia

Saturday January 25

By Jim Gates

***For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.
- Luke 19:10***

While attending the University of Florida's School of Forestry, I had a summer job working for a company which owned large tracts of forested lands. My duty station was in Milledgeville Georgia. I worked by myself the whole summer. Each day I would drive to an area I was assigned and performed my duties.

I remember one afternoon while deep in the forest a severe thunder storm hit the area. First the wind began to blow through the tree tops. The clouds got so thick and black that it became very dark. As the very heavy rain began to fall, the winds increased to the point that tops of trees started to snap off falling to the ground all around me. At this point my only thought was to avoid being hit by a falling tree top and trying to find a safe place to wait out the storm.

After, what seemed like an hour, the storm finally stopped. By this time, I had lost all sense of direction. It was time to head back to my truck. I started off in one direction for a while only to discover I didn't see any familiar landmarks. I didn't know where I was. I was lost. About this time, I remembered the compass in my vest pocket. All I wanted to do was find the road on the south side of the timber stand where I was working. It was nearly dark by the time I spotted the beautiful sight of my truck.

How many times have we been lost forgetting we have a compass, the Holy Scriptures, to point us in the direction we should go? Look to Jesus and remember the words of the hymn, "I once was lost but now am found".

Hymn Meditation "Amazing Grace" #604

Prayer Thought: O Father, may we ever come unto Thee seeking Thy presence and resting in the arms of your love.

Center Place of Zion

Thursday February 6

By Ralph Damon

***Therefore, I would that you be should be steadfast and immovable,
always abounding in good works, that Christ, the Lord God
Omnipotent, may seal you his...- Mosiah 3:21***

Sometime in the early part of this past summer, President Terry Patience asked if I would be open to accepting the presidency of the Center Place of Zion organization and doing what I could to lead this endeavor. In that discussion, we understood that it would require another change in my ministry designation, resulting in my leaving the Order of Patriarchs and returning to the ministry of a high priest. I had no objection to his request and was ultimately set apart as the President of the Center Place of Zion.

Now the work begins, and I am so fortunate to have four extremely gifted and able branch pastors to assist me in this work. Over the several meetings that we have had together, as well as meeting with various leadership groups, we all have come to a clearer understanding that it will take a great effort from everyone if we are to achieve the goals and expectations of what this organization can become. The work of just a few hearty souls will not be enough. The effort of many saints will be required to attain the success that lies before us.

I am reminded of a brief "story" about four people: Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, and Nobody. There was an important job to be done and Everybody was asked to do it. Everybody was sure Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry about that because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought Anybody could do it, but Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn't do it. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when actually Nobody asked Anybody.

If the Remnant Church, and the Center Place of Zion, are to grow into the powers required to affect the world we live in, it will take the greatest of effort from all of us. So, rest assured, saints, that we (Somebody) will be asking you (Everybody) to do what you can do to assist us this year and on into the future. God's blessings to all.

Hymn Meditation: "A Charge to Keep I Have" #352

Prayer Thought: Lord, may we extend ourselves consistently and fervently to Thy service that our lives and our church will affect the lives of others for good. And this to Thy glory.

Reconciliation

Wednesday February 5

By Jim Gates

... if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, Leave thou thy gift before the altar, and go thy way unto thy brother, and first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. - Matt 5:25 - 26

While in elementary school my best friend was Glen Summers. We rode the same bus to the small school in Thonotosassa Florida. Even best friends at times do not see things or circumstances the same way. I remember more than once on the bus ride home we would start picking on one another. First it would be words then maybe a push or a shove. Soon we would attract the attention of the bus driver. He would pull over to the side of the road and call us forward. He would then open the door and tell us to go outside and settle our differences because he did not want to hear it. After we were out, a punch or two may have been thrown but usually we got into a bear hug trying to get the other on the ground. We would roll around on the ground until we got tired. And then back on the bus to finish the trip home. There were never any serious injuries nor can I remember so much as a bloody nose. By the time we got off the bus all was well. By the next morning, once again we were best friends.

Maybe this is an example why Jesus said, *“Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven”*. The words of Christ used as the scripture above tells us the importance of reconciliation. It does not matter if the conflict is minor or of the utmost importance to us. We are commanded to forgive and or ask for forgiveness. If disagreement separates you and a loved one, now is the time to act. You must guard against allowing any differences to become insurmountable.

Hymn Meditation: *“How Gentle God’s Command!”* # 378

Prayer Thought: *All mighty God may we search our hearts to find those whom we have offended and ask their forgiveness. Father forgive us.*

Zeal

Part One

Sunday January 26

By Wayne Bartrow

“The rise of the church of Christ in these last days...by the will and commandments of God working in the fourth day month and sixth day of the month which is called April.” D.&C. Section 17:1a.

It was the *zeal* of the Saints that were converted to the gospel that characterized “The rise of the church of Christ in these last days.” When I read the testimonies and feel the fervency with which they bear witness of God working in their lives, I can’t help but wonder whether we are truly convinced that this is the Church that Christ built.

The shifting sand of our society today makes it hard to tell whose side we are on. The Declaration of Independence declares, *“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed with certain inalienable rights”* Our nation’s founding fathers signed their names to that document knowing that they were risking being executed for it. They were not ambiguous about who their God was. Why are we so hesitant to speak out and testify of what God means to us?

I offer as evidence of our declining zeal for the Gospel, the fact that the Church grew from six members in 1830 to an estimated 200,000 by the time of Joseph Smith’s martyrdom in 1844. The early Saints saw the power of God at work with their own eyes. They heard the Gospel preached by unlearned men who themselves were hearing it for the first time. It got their attention and they responded to it like a parched man would to living water. Many ceased sinful habits and devoted themselves from then on to do the will of God. (cont’d tomorrow)

Hymn Meditation: *“Arise and Shine”* #575

Prayer Thought: *Dear Father, renew Thy love within our hearts that we may serve Thee with the true zeal that was demonstrated by our forefathers.*

Zeal

Part Two

Monday January 27

By Wayne Bartrow

Behold, verily I say unto you, that those are the words of the Lord your God; wherefore, labor ye, labor ye in my vineyard for the last time call upon the inhabitants of the earth, for in my own due time will I come upon the earth in judgement; and my people shall be redeemed and shall reign with me on earth; for the great millennial, which I have spoken by the mouth of my servants...” D.&C 43:a.-c.

If you can't tell when you were converted, perhaps you have not been converted yet. Having a conversion means you can never be the same again. You have a new perspective on everything and everyone in your life. In Alma 3:23 we read, “*according to his faith there was a mighty change wrought in his heart*” Zeal is synonymous with Passion. Whatever we are most passionate about in life comes first.

This is the only time we will have, brothers and sisters, to do our part in bringing to pass the kingdom of God on earth. Some have already been called home when their time was over. Some were prepared and some were not, so shall it be at the coming of the Son of Man. Those who still labor in the fields are called with a greater urgency than ever before, because the time is short, and time of harvest is fast approaching. The tares are even now being bundled. Isaiah 37:32 tells us, *Out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of Jerusalem shall come up upon Mt. Zion; the zeal of the Lord of hosts shall do this.*” The zeal of God is not diminished in the slightest. What about ours?

Hymn Meditation: “My People I Have Called You” #582

Prayer Thought: Lord may the zeal and the passion of bringing to pass the conditions of Thy Kingdom burn brightly within our souls, in this the last of days.

HOW TO MULTIPLY BREAD- Part Two

Tuesday February 4

By Ralph Damon

Praise the Lord of hosts; for the lord is good; for his mercy endureth forever unto them that shall bring the sacrifice of praise unto the house of the Lord. Jeremiah 33:11

Giving thanks is crucial to a life of fullness and blessing. Whenever we first give thanks for our blessings, it provides us and God, together, with the power to perform miracles of multiplication. We don't need to look at how little we have or how big our problems are or how impossible the situation might be. We don't need to panic, complain, or become discouraged over not having enough. We take what little we have, whatever good there is, no matter how small or inadequate it is, and do what Jesus did. We lift up our burden or our blessing to the Lord and give thanks for it. And the more we give thanks, the less we will hunger, and the fuller and more blessed our lives will become.

Thus, in order to perform miracles, give thanks. Whatever we have, no matter how little, give thanks for what is not enough, and it will multiply to become what is enough...and what is more than enough. It may be too late for me to fully understand how letters and numbers can combine to make meaningful sense, but I certainly have come to understand the power of multiplication. Now comes the more difficult part – learning how to give thanks for the weakness of my life and allow it to grow into strength.

Hymn Meditation: “When Thy Heart with Joy O'erflowing” #505

Prayer Thought: Lord, help me to stop seeking for more and stop living in the world of “not enough.” May I practice, beginning today, giving thanks for everything and see your blessings multiply.

HOW TO MULTIPLY BREAD- Part One

Monday February 3

By Ralph Damon

And he took the five loaves and the two fishes looking up to heaven he blessed and brake and gave the loaves to the disciples and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat and were filled...And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children. Matthew 14:14-18

No one could ever testify that my strong strength in my educational growth was in math. In fact, it was a part of my learning that tended to be on the 'slow train' side of my life. Only with the help of a good friend who took pity on me and allowed me to study at his elbow did Algebra ever become a passing grade. But over the years I've come to understand that there is a unique power of multiplication present whenever attention is paid to the divine power available from heaven and our heavenly Father. This is most evident on the experience where at least 5,000 souls were fed by the least amount of food.

Jesus was ministering to a large number of people one day when a crisis arose. It was late, the people were hungry and there was no food available. All that could be found were two fish and five loaves in a small boy's basket. With no other alternative, Jesus took those seven pieces of food, lifted them up toward heaven, gave thanks, broke them, and gave them to the disciples to pass out among the people. Everyone ate their fill and the disciples then collected from the remains of that repast another twelve baskets of leftover food. This was the miracle of multiplication! Starting with just two fish and five loaves, they fed thousands of people. So, the question might be asked: "How did he perform that miracle?"

The recorded event gives us a definitive clue. Listen again to the words: "And looking up to heaven, he blessed and brake and gave the loaves to the disciples..." Jesus gave thanks and the miracle happened. That is the secret and the key to all miracles, giving thanks. (cont'd tomorrow)

Hymn Meditation: "O God with Thanks Unfeigned" #600

Prayer Thought: O Father, we thank Thee for the multitude of blessings You have given us and still yet will extend to us, Thy children, if we but live in gratitude to Thee.

Type and Shadow

Tuesday January 28

By Wayne Bartrow

An angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam, saying, Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord? And Adam said unto him, I know not, save the Lord commanded me. And then the angel spake saying, This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father which is full of grace and truth. Genesis 4:6

In the Book of Mormon, the term "type and shadow" is used to describe something that has similarity to something else. For example, in Mosiah 1:11 it is recorded, "many signs, wonders, and types and shadows shewed he unto them, concerning his coming."

In modern revelation, we are told in D.&C., Section 43:6c., "How oft have I called upon you, by the mouth of my servants, and by the ministering of angels, and by my own voice, and by the voice of thunderings, and by the voice of lightnings, and by the voice of tempests, and by the voice of earthquakes, and great hailstorms, and by the voice of judgement, and by the voice of mercy all the day long, and by the voice of glory and honor, and riches of eternal life, and would have saved you with an everlasting salvation, but ye would not?" The hand of God is still stretched out to us, but we still reject it and will not repent. Genesis 6:29-30 warns, "Wherefore, they have forsworn themselves, and by their oaths they have brought upon themselves death. And hell I have prepared for them, if they repent not."

In a similar fashion, the gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark and Luke compare what living in the period just before the great flood was like, with what living in these last days before the return of Christ is like.

Types and Shadows are all around us for those who have eyes to see. Unfortunately, there are many who are blinded, by the things of the world that clamor for their attention. In 2008, Section R-152:5 was accepted as the mind and will of God by the Remnant Church. "How soon you, my Saints, have forgotten counsel given not so long ago regarding economic adversity, political unrest, decline in morality, and natural calamities. These things have now come to pass and are with you." Since this revelation was given conditions have worsened. (The implications, once again are, plain!)

Hymn Meditation: "Ye Wondering Nations, Now Give Ear" #300

Prayer Thought: Father, may we seek to understand the types and shadows that have been revealed to us and thus pay attention to their warnings, becoming the people You want us to be.

Mercy Versus Justice

Wednesday January 29

By Joyce M.
(Reprinted with her permission)

Do not endeavor to excuse yourself in the least point, because of your sins, by denying the justice of God, ... let the justice of God, and His mercy, and his long-suffering, have full sway in your heart; let it bring you down to the dust in humility. Alma 19:114

I ran across this humorous story awhile back. The author was anonymous, but he shared an important truth about hasty choices and the consequences that come with breaking God's laws:

A man parked his car in a no-parking zone in a large city and attached the following message to his windshield: "I have circled this block 10 times. I have an appointment to keep. "Forgive us our trespasses."

When he returned to his car, he found this reply attached to his own note, along with a ticket: "I've circled this block for 10 years. "If I don't give you a ticket, I lose my job, "Suffer us not to be led into temptation."

While mercy is extended to each of us, justice must be served, and sadly sometimes mercy and justice can come in the form of a ticket. The justice shown to the man in the story was having to pay a ticket, the mercy was that he still has the privilege of driving and that he had learned a valuable lesson. Perhaps next time, this man will be more careful not to be so hasty! Precept upon precept, line upon line, this is how we learn. Hopefully we will choose not to learn the hard way! Praise God that His great mercy never fails to be extended to those who seek it.

Hymn Meditation: "Have Thine Own Way, Lord!" #464

Prayer Thought: Lord, as we go about our days, let us remember to let Thy justice, Thy mercy, and Thy long-suffering have full sway in our hearts. May we move forward in humility, as clay to the potter.

I Will Remember Thee

Sunday February 2

By Francis Petersen

And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Luke 22:19

Lord, as I come to remember Thee, and bow on bended knee.

I think upon Thy sacrifice, so freely given me.

As I take the broken bread and drink the cup of wine.

I pray that I will honor Thee, with this poor heart of mine.

Knowing of Thy mercies, so graciously given me,

May I now remember, Lord, to share Thy love so free.

As I now humbly bow, may Thy grace on me endow,

So ne'er will I forget Thy love, nor fail to share Thy power.

Hymn Meditation: "Here at Thy Table Lord" #253

Prayer Thought: Heavenly Father, may we always remember Thee and the gift of Thy Eternal Son.

What Kind of Soil Will Your Soul Have? - Part Two

Saturday February 1

By Dawn Hoover

.....; and unto every kingdom is given a law; and unto every law there are certain bounds also, and conditions. D&C 85:9b.

It might be easier to just go out and purchase some topsoil and have it delivered, then to go through the process that I described to you in my devotion, yesterday. But it might not be the right thing for our property. And it is just another expense. We are building our soil one wheelbarrow load at a time. Grass hay bales were spread over the entire surface. That purpose is to kill the existing greenery. I don't use the word "weeds" as that implies something undesirable. Those "weeds" serve purposes. We marked out beds and placed more hay in those areas. On top of that, we have moved chicken yard compost to those beds. On top of that we are placing loads of partially composted wood chips. That might be enough to bring a mixture of bacteria and mycorrhizae. But we will take it one step further by watering in some purchased microbes. This however, is just a start. Organic matter in the form of wood chips, leaves and chicken yard compost will be added on a continual basis. As a result, it is our hope that we will be able to produce nutritious food because of the proper biology and chemistry in the soil.

Right now, you are probably asking what is the point of this? Soil and soul are so similar in so many ways. Mycorrhizae is like the holy spirit in our lives. We have to build up our lives and provide the right conditions that will feed it. If we provide the right conditions, then the Holy Spirit will feed us. The Holy Spirit knows what we need in our lives and will bring it to us. We can take it into our bodies, and we will grow in strength, physically and spiritually and become that people that God desires us to be. Or, we can surround our lives with undesired conditions, which will kill the Holy Spirit. The choice is ours. What kind of soil will your soul have?

Hymn Meditation: *"God's Great Harvest Home Draws Near" #599*

Prayer Thought: *Heavenly Father, may we turn to The and Thy spirit to implement the right conditions required in our souls to bring about Thy kingdom.*

Seeing Others Through God's Eyes

Thursday January 30

By Jonna Patterson

Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering... Forbearing one another...and above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. Colossians 3:12-14

Recently the Lord helped me see an individual through His eyes rather than my own. It was a Friday morning like most other Friday Mornings. I was on my way to the Clothes Closet praying about the people who I was going to help that day. I asked Him to help me be kind to all I had opportunity to assist and not get impatient with anyone. I wanted to witness to people of His love., not my lack of it. So, my prayer went like this, "Please Lord help me to see people more like you see them and less like I see them with my blind eyes."

First, on my appointment list, to serve that day, was a lady who had been a client of Lunch Partners for years and had pushed the buttons of most all, of our crew on the serving line. She was known for her rude demands and ungrateful attitude." Ok Lord", I said to myself, "I definitely need, your help TODAY!" This, little older lady has a bad back, but she pushes a cart all over town full of free stuff she has accumulated. She lost her hearing in her adult years It was a good sign when she came upstairs wearing a smile, instead of her usual scowl. That was a good sign because if it starts out surly, it is hard for me to remain pleasant. She was a pretty good lip reader so as I positioned myself with my lips in her view, where she could read them. I could feel the wall that I kept up with her eventually come down, as she smiled, and even laughed at something I said to her. She confided with me about a bill she had to pay that had to be paid in person. I helped her to think of ways to deal with the problem and she went on to say that she wished that she could get hearing aids. She asked for my help in finding someone to help her. She used her most charming voice and tone.

I thought about how hard it must be, to not be able to hear and to always be out of the conversation. I thought of how mean people can be and how difficult this must be for her. When I looked at her little face, I didn't see the woman I had seen for years, and I sent her off that morning with not only some nice clothes, but with the assurance that I would start the search for her hearing aids. That going the extra mile was not a sacrifice at all on my part because the Lord had answered my prayer and given me my first glimpse into the broken little person that she was. She needed my help not my judgement.

Hymn Meditation: *"If Suddenly Upon the Street" #355*

Prayer Thought: *Lord help us to see as You see, and to love as You have loved.*