

Zion's Advocate

*"And blessed are they who shall seek to bring forth my Zion at that day,
for they shall have the gift and the power of the Holy Ghost...."
1 Nephi 3:187*

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"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." —1 Peter 3:15

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ZION'S ADVOCATE IS...

To promote Jesus Christ as our only Saviour;
 To promote His Teachings and His Church, the Church of Christ;
 To be a voice of warning to His people; to be Zion's advocate.

ARTICLE



Elder Brandon Tarbell

I believe we live in a day and time where the Lord has called us to be very strong and courageous...a day in which we will resist the temptations that so easily beset us, endure and grow from the fiery trials we go through, stand up as ambassadors of Christ and conquer fear!

Courage: the quality of mind or spirit that enables a person to face difficulty, danger, pain, etc., without fear.

As the Lord spoke to the children of Israel before they went into the promised land...

[Joshua 1:7] *Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law,*

which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.

[Joshua 1:8] *This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do*

according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

[Joshua 1:9] *Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.*

God was teaching the children of Israel for 40 years as they wandered to understand that COURAGE would be needed because they would face great difficulty, danger, and pain that could cause fear as they went into the promised land.

Did the children of Israel have courage? Did they take the action they were called to do, or did they let fear be the victor? They were commanded to go in and take the lands given them, meaning they would have to take action and destroy the people living there who were worshiping strange gods. In some instances they did, and in others the fear was too great and they did not.

The comparison is in our lives; we too have fears that are so great they cause us to

not take the action we need to take:

[2 Corinthians 4:7] *But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.*

[2 Corinthians 4:8] *We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;*

[2 Corinthians 4:9] *Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;*

Courage is looking to God to strengthen us, to strengthen our minds and our hearts, to take our fears, and cause us to not just desire but take the action necessary.

- *Take COURAGE in your core convictions*
- *Take COURAGE to stand up to fears*
- *Take COURAGE to declare*
- *Take COURAGE to defend*
- *Take COURAGE to be an example...even when we fall*
- *Take COURAGE when all is lost*
- *Take COURAGE in contentment*
- *COURAGE to endure*

Take Courage in Your Core Convictions

First, you must have convictions, core convictions that you believe in with all your heart, that you are not willing to compromise in. It is the foundation of having courage, which is the ability to act despite our fears.

You must be willing to hold them close, no matter what. **NO COMPROMISING!**

The core convictions I'm talking about are the ones that each of you believe in personally. Being brothers and sisters in Christ we probably share most of them. They are found in how we live our lives, in our marriages, in our families. Those things we won't compromise, no matter what.

Core convictions are like guardrails on the road. They help keep us on the road and take us to our destination; they help us define and become who we will be.

I want to encourage us to have the courage of our convictions, to act in accordance with our beliefs, especially in spite of criticism.



Take Courage To Stand Up to Fears

David and Goliath (1 Samuel 17:23-48).

I love this example of David. Take courage! Through the Lord, the fear was gone. *"This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand."*

"A SHIP IS SAFE IN HARBOR, BUT THAT'S NOT WHAT SHIPS ARE FOR."

Ships were designed and made to handle big storms and rough seas. They are only at the harbor to fill back up with fuel, food, supplies and the cargo to deliver.

"Picture people in pews."

We were made to endure trials and temptations, the storms of life. We are only in pews to recharge, re-strengthen, be encouraged, be enlightened!

[John 17:18] *As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.*

Christ sent us out into the world, knowing we would face challenges that cause us to fear. But just as He did for David, He will strengthen us to face challenges courageously!

EDMUND BURKE: "EVIL PREVAILS WHEN GOOD MEN DO NOTHING."

Take Courage To Declare

Moroni and the title of liberty (Pg. 469, Alma 21:40-43).

Moroni went and put the title of liberty up at every tower in all their lands and made a declaration!

At our Church in Akwesasne we have a sign, a sign where my mom puts up "a Godly saying" every week. I believe it's a beacon in our community, everyone drives by it, I'm sure everyone sees it and even reads it. It changes every week and people comment about it often. It's our way of declaring to the community.

A few weeks ago we awoke one Sunday morning to see that someone had spray painted white lines through the words. At first there was anger—who did this, why did they do this? Then sorrow—they probably never felt the spirit of God in their life. They have no idea of what they don't know.

Declaring the word of God takes courage.

Lehi example (1 Nephi 1:18-22).

Samuel the Lamanite example (Helaman 5:109-112).

So, what does that look like today? What does declaring the word of God look like today? Is it when we see someone standing in the street, saying "Praise God" or "Repent, the time of the

Lord is at hand"? Maybe it is. I can remember a time when I would say, "This guy is nuts." Now I find myself saying, "If I only had the courage like this guy."

[1 Peter 3:15] *But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:*

Is it having courage to invite a friend to Church? Is it when we hear from a friend of ours about someone ill, and we take courage and opportunity to say, "I'm going to mention you at Church for prayers"? Can it be as simple as setting a Godly example to others?

The answer, I believe, is "yes" to all, but I would challenge us all today that fear holds us back from taking action we want to take. We lack that courage....

I struggle with sharing my belief with others. Fear usually is victorious. I have found one area that I have been able to build upon, it's an example that my dad has taught us. When we are having a meal with someone, no matter who it is (business associate, friend, family, guest, total stranger), we say a prayer together over our meal. I have found it to be a great way to share our belief and gain courage to say more.

I think sharing the word of God can be done in so many forms today, we just need to

take action and share God's word. God can give our minds the courage to take action.

Take Courage To Defend

[Luke 22:33] *And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.*

[Luke 22:34] *And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.*

Although we declare our support to Christ, do we fall back into the "shadows" when persecution mounts, when we are left alone to represent, to be an ambassador of Christ?

"THE PAIN OF REGRET VS THE PAIN OF DISCIPLINE: WE MUST ALL SUFFER ONE OF TWO PAINS IN THIS LIFE, EITHER THE PAIN OF DISCIPLINE WHICH WEIGHS OUNCES, OR THE PAIN OF REGRET WHICH WEIGHS TONS!"

"IN ESSENCE, YOU MAKE YOUR CHOICES, AND THEN YOUR CHOICES MAKE YOU."

"CHOICES ARE AT THE ROOT OF EVERY ONE OF YOUR RESULTS. EACH CHOICE STARTS A BEHAVIOR THAT OVER TIME BECOMES A HABIT."

Take courage to stand up to defend. This will begin to set a pattern in your life and growth of courage.

Take Courage To Be An Example Even When We Fall

Acts 9:1-28.

This is an excellent example of Paul's courage to change his life, then go and declare to all that saw him as he previously had been.

"YOUR PAST DOESN'T DEFINE YOU, IT PREPARES YOU."

Even when we change our ways, we can fall subject again to those same sins that so easily beset us. Have courage to repent and show others you're not perfect and are going to try harder the next time.

"HANG OUT WITH THOSE WHO HAVE A COMMON FUTURE, NOT A COMMON PAST."

We love our families, but sometimes those are the ones we need to be careful of.

"You get started by taking one small step, one action at a time." Paul had to start with his first declaration of his belief in Jesus Christ, and then another and another. People didn't believe him at first, it took time...

Take Courage When All is Lost

Job 1:13-22.

I can't even begin to comprehend what this would have been like for Job...to have everything taken away from you.

"THE ULTIMATE MEASURE OF A MAN IS NOT WHERE HE STANDS IN MOMENTS OF COMFORT AND CONVENIENCE, BUT WHERE HE STANDS AT TIMES OF CHALLENGE."

We all face the fiery trials in different ways. We go through different circumstances but similar pains we bear and endure. Take courage brothers and sisters; fear not for God is with us. It is in the time of trial that we have opportunity to grow and improve.

Take Courage in Contentment

Compare the word to the seed (Matthew 13:18-23).

...He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

"GARDEN YOUR HEAD – PULL OUT THE WEEDS OF EXCUSES AND PLANT THE SEEDS OF GREATNESS."

There is a story of man looking for paradise: There was a man looking for paradise, and he left his home one day, opened the fence and walked until dark. He took his shoes off and pointed them in the direction he was walking and went to bed. When he arose he carefully slid into his shoes and continued all day to walk in the direction he was going. That night he did the same thing, took off his shoes and pointed them in the direction he was going. When he arose he carefully slid into his shoes and continued all day to walk in the same direction he was going. That night he did the same thing, except after he pointed his shoes, he accidentally hit them with his foot and turned the shoes 180 degrees. He again arose, carefully slid into his shoes and continued all day to walk, now in the opposite direction he had been going. He walked all day until dark, took off his shoes and pointed them in the direction he was going. When he arose he carefully slid into his shoes and continued to walk all day. He then came upon a small town where he heard people call him by name; he opened a fence where he walked into a home and smelled his favorite dinner cooking, children coming up and wrapping their arms around his legs, and a woman who embraced him and kissed him and said she loved him. He said, "I

have finally found it...paradise!"

Contentment: a state of happiness and satisfaction.

"CONTENTMENT IS AN ATTITUDE THAT SAYS, I WILL BE SATISFIED WITH WHAT GOD HAS GIVEN ME."

Have Courage To Endure

"Lehi's vision" (I Nephi 2: 41-92).

There is an exercise we have done at youth camp: A rope is strung through the woods, around trees and obstacles. The campers are blindfolded and directed to hold onto the rope (a symbolic rod of iron) and not to let go as they endeavor to reach the end. As they walk, there are not only physical obstacles, but also people who are trying to convince them to let go. Often, many of the campers do let go, and as they find out they've failed the exercise, they are devastated. But they want to try it again and when given the chance they are successful; not letting go of the rope until they reach the end.

[1 John 2:15] *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

[1 John 2:16] *For all that is in the world, the lust of the*

flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

[1 John 2:17] *And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*

This is my great challenge...to hold on to the rod of iron constantly. The world has so, so, so much to offer. It's enticing, and it's moving at a fast and changing pace. Technology is evolving so quickly, and we are going to see things change even more rapidly.

The Lord wants us to have COURAGE, the willingness to act in spite of fear!

The essence of courage is not the absence of fear. It is the presence of fear, the understanding of the consequence and the deliberate choice to fight; to move forward in spite of danger and pain is courageous.

We must be intentional with our lives, by being courageous and taking the action God has called us to do.

[John 16:33] *These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*

The Kingdom
of Heaven is at
Hand

- Part 1 -

Apostle Roland Sarratt

As Jesus commenced His ministry He said, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17). The name, "Kingdom of Heaven," brings a special reality to our minds. We are brought to a sense of a higher kingdom than what normally exists on earth. It also indicates a heavenly King, even Jesus Christ, Himself.

Like many words in our English language, the words "kingdom" and "king" are usually thought of as being of this world, and often would arouse a feeling of dread. World history reveals many controlling monarchies limiting the freedoms of the people. The world has suffered through many such kingdoms, with tyrants and dictators favoring those who would dominate and strive to control the masses of humanity for their evil purposes. When the people obeyed the Lord's commandments the Lord would bless them with a righteous king for as long as they would heed His voice, but many generations suffered because of the wicked kings.

It wasn't until the little group of freedom search-

ers, who dared to cross the great waters to escape the captivity of their mother Gentiles, that the realization of such freedom might come about in these latter days. We have been blessed in being part of a great nation that pioneered a society with the high standard of freedom for all, even the thousands of immigrants from all over the world.

This does not tell the whole story.... What is the purpose of freedom? Its purpose is to choose the life you wish to live. In today's world, there are so many lifestyles that it would be almost impossible to name them, but that was not what our forefathers were seeking. They were seeking freedom of religion, or a choice of religion. They wanted to worship God and follow the teachings of Jesus Christ as they understood His gospel. The Lord blessed them in their efforts, and they established a nation that promoted that great standard.

Looking at our nation today we can hardly see evidence of our forefathers' original efforts, but not all is lost. The Lord has yet a great work to do, and we are a part of that work. Just as our forefathers had the vision of freedom, so

have we; not only the vision of freedom but the very source of that freedom, the Kingdom of Heaven or the Kingdom of God. That which had come to earth in Jesus' day (the New Testament period), has come to earth in our day and we, through the providence of God, have the opportunity to choose the gospel of Christ and the opportunity to obey the gospel of Christ. We have the opportunity to put on Christ, to be like Him, to follow Him.

Am I sounding a little too idealistic and not realistic? Well, call it what you want, but that is what this gospel is all about. It is not a religion of personality choices; it is a religion of one personality, the personality of Jesus Christ. In other words, the true Christian era has been restored and will be victorious in these last days.

A prevalent attitude in the world today is to express one's personal views and complaints in an effort to "be your own self." Certainly we can agree that we don't want someone domineering and subjecting us to their limited lifestyle as was done in the old days of king dictatorships, but neither do we want to open the choices to include the many

types of characters that have made their appearances on this precious land of promise today. In reality, we have available the best of the best qualities in the person of Jesus Christ. We are to pattern ourselves after Him by keeping His commandments. This is available to us in His word and in His Spirit. This is an essential part of the Kingdom of Heaven as it was restored in these latter days.

What do we know about the kingdom of heaven? Daniel was shown the great future of this kingdom along with its very beginning:

“And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

“Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure” (Daniel 2:44,45).

This kingdom was cut out of the mountain without hands, according to Daniel. That surely would indicate a great miracle. What then do we say is that great miracle? It is the restoring of the gospel of Christ to the earth and the establishing of the Church of Christ in these latter days. We claim that this church, the Church of Christ, is the true church today, and that we have the true structure as given in the scriptures. No mortal man occupies the place of Jesus Christ. He alone is the head of the church. He has never given that position to any man or set of men. His apostles in His time were His followers. The same is true today. All ministers are servants of the Lord and do not form as an individual body independent of Him. There is no exaltation or elevation of position, such as lords, over the people. Therefore, all ministers are servants to the Lord and to the people.

Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, which means it was near or present and available to those who would seek the kingdom of heaven. When He said “repent,” we take it to mean

that repenting of one's sins was a requirement to enter the kingdom of heaven. The means of entering the kingdom was by baptism, and Jesus led the way by being baptized of John the Baptist, His forerunner.

Later, Jesus sent His disciples out to declare His gospel, and He said:

“And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 10:7).

The coming forth of the kingdom of heaven was a great event to be broadcast to all the Jews (or all of Israel in that area), that they might avail themselves of the opportunity of entering that kingdom. Jesus also told His disciples:

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matthew 28:19, 20).

Jesus gave His disciples and all His followers a certain standard of righteousness that they must have:

“For I say unto you, That except your righteousness

shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20).

Apparently, the teachings and the lifestyles of the scribes and Pharisees did not make them worthy to be examples for the followers of Christ.... Their righteousness was not good enough for them to enter into the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, the righteousness of His followers must be greater than the religious teachers of the Jews. We might wonder if our righteousness is to exceed the righteousness of other churches today to be able to enter into the kingdom of heaven:

Jesus also said, "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).

Contrary to what many people say today, the word "do" (doeth) goes with the word "believe." If we truly believe the Lord and His word, we will do what His word says. Jesus called some of the Jews hypocrites because they were pretentious. And so it is with us: just believing in Him and calling Him Lord won't gain us entrance into His kingdom; we must obey His commandments. Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

Jesus did declare unto them that there would be those who would be gathered into the Kingdom of Heaven:

"And I say unto you. That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 8:11).

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were leaders of the Is-

raelites that God favored by various spiritual experiences. We, in turn, recognize them as men of God because Jesus has declared them as being worthy of being accepted into the Kingdom of Heaven. They may not have always lived up to what we might expect a person should do, but they were accepted of the Lord in His kingdom.

Jesus also spoke to the people in parables describing the kingdom of Heaven by saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a certain king, man, etc. It was a subject of great importance then, and so it is now. But only a few were able to understand what Jesus was talking about and, in fact, Jesus had to explain them to His disciples at times. Supposedly, we know what the parables mean, but do we take them seriously enough?



GENERAL SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

The General Sunday School Association (GSSA) is providing portions of lessons for several age groups on a common topic. Please visit the Church of Christ's Audio Visual Aid (AVA) committee website at www.cocsermons.net and click on the "Resources" tab to view all complete lessons & studies for children & adults. Contact Susan Porter at: porter_susan@sbcglobal.net, or 9 Market Street, Middleville, MI 49333, for more information. **The GSSA has a private Facebook group for all members; to be added contact Betsy Trudgen at trucooking@yahoo.com.** Sunday School teachers post their ideas, very helpful to many!

Need a Sunday School class?

You can join a virtual class (ages 12+) by contacting Stephen Stratton at Stratton125@gmail.com.

Class is held on Sundays (except Sacrament Sunday) from 10-11:00 am EST.

God's Direction

When you think about what direction God wants you to take, ask yourself these questions:

- 1) What are you doing for God?
- 2) What are you supposed to be doing?
- 3) Are you doing it?
- 4) What are you going to do about it?

From The Flippen Group: Capturing Kids Hearts, <https://www.ckhfoundation.org>

- In order to find the direction that God would like you to go you might have thought about the need to increase your scripture study time. If so, to help you go to www.churchofchrist-tl.org, click on Resources. You will find videos, sermons and lessons for Children, Middle/High School and Adults.
- Recently added is a set of 36 lessons by Deb Haines: Book of Mormon Lessons for Young People. For example, Lesson 9: **THE BEAUTIFUL BALL** on next page.

- 1) Read the story
- 2) What questions do you have?
- 3) Would you like to discuss them with other kids and a teacher?

Join the Bradley Local Skype Class by contacting Stephen Stratton! Stratton125@gmail.com

The Beautiful Ball

Deb Haines

The Lord spoke to Lehi in a dream commanding him to again take his people and travel into the wilderness. They were to depart the very next day. To Lehi's surprise, upon leaving his tent the next morning he saw upon the ground a round ball of curious workmanship, made of fine brass. Within the ball were two spindles, one pointing in the direction that they should travel. It was their compass, but not just an ordinary compass, for it was made by God! Lehi told his group about the dream he had the night before and explained that they must leave immediately for the wilderness. Everyone quickly made preparations for the trip.

They packed belongings and began their journey, crossing the River Laman, following the direction that the ball led them. For four days they traveled in a nearly southeast direction, coming to a place they called Shazar. There they rested and gathered food for their families. Continuing their journey, the ball led them into portions of the wilderness that were more fertile. They noticed that there was writing on the ball which changed from time to time. The writing taught them in the ways of the Lord. This priceless ball was theirs to have and to hold. They discovered that the more faithful they were to the writing, the more they learned and the more they were guided. Those who were weak in faith were given comfort by looking upon the ball. They were given comfort that God was near to those who put their faith and trust in Him. The ball confirmed their faith and reassured them of God's great love for His children.

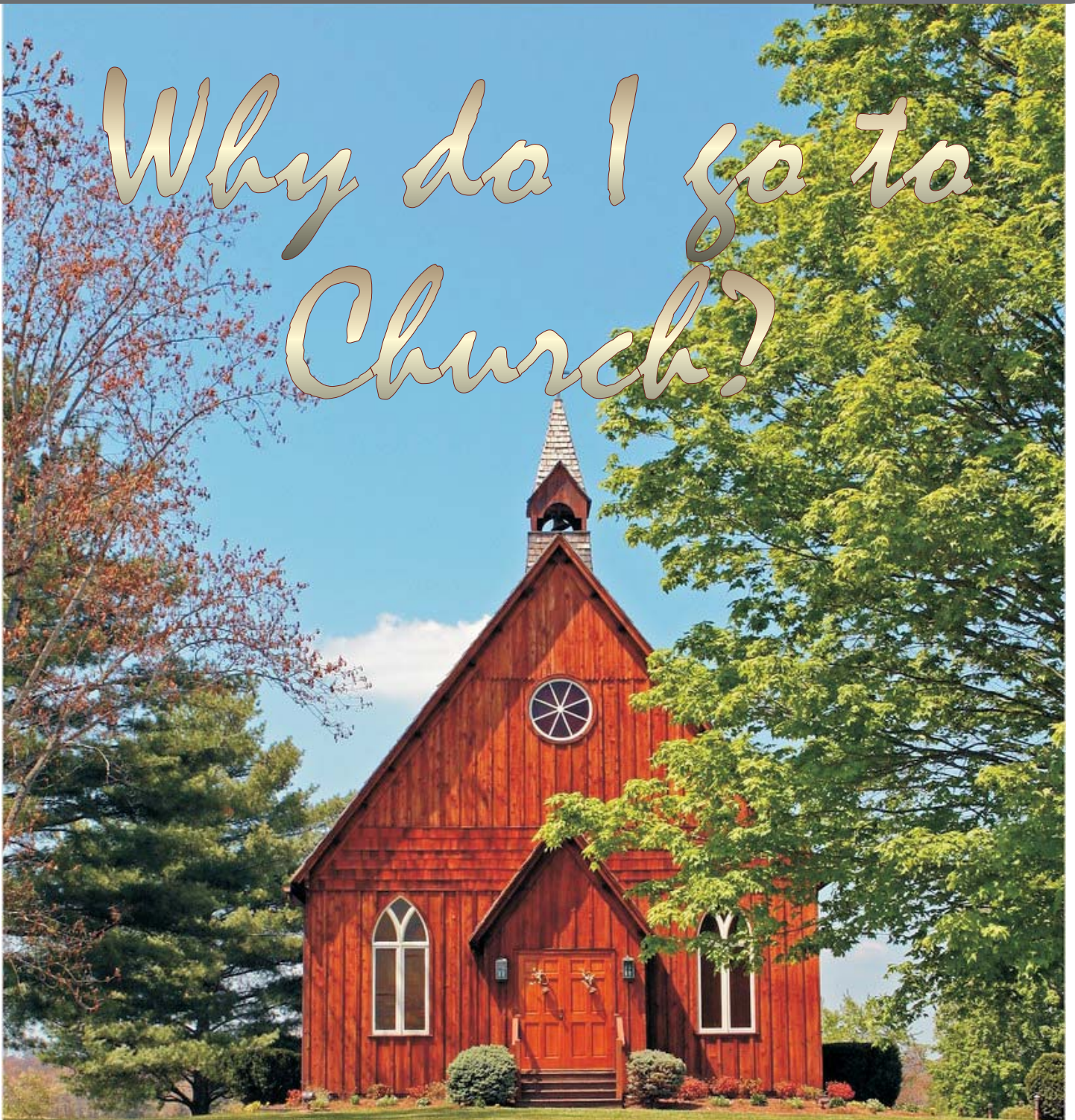
Truly, the Lord had said that He would lead them to a promised land. Many times Lehi's colony had despaired of ever finding food or water. But over and over, when they prayed, the ball would lead them to more fertile parts of the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. The Lord said, **"I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert...because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen"** (Isaiah 43:19-20). The Lord also said, **"Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field: for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength. Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God: for...he will cause to come down for you the rain...And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the vats shall overflow with wine and oil"** (Joel 2:22-24).

When the people of Lehi had faith in God and obeyed the instructions that were written on the ball, He blessed them.

References: 1 Nephi 5:10-18, Isaiah 43:19-20, Joel 2:22-24

ARTICLE

Why do I go to Church?



I read an article the other day about the changes to modern churches, the main point of it being that churches need to stop their

focus on physical gatherings and embrace fully the technology of our day and age through websites, blogs, livestreaming, podcasts,

message boards and so on. It mentioned how physical meetings are less important than ever and becoming more and more unnecessary.

I couldn't agree less.

I've heard all sorts of statements about me when I mention that I go to church Sunday morning and evening, Wednesday nights and any activity that occurs additional to those. Aren't you going a little overboard? Are you that weak? Doesn't God only require one day?

We've heard the statements from people—I can find God anywhere. I find God in nature; I don't have to go to a building. I don't want to be around all those hypocrites, so I worship God where I want. The sermons are too hard for me to follow. I don't understand the scriptures...

One thing all who are believers should consider is one of the main points found in scripture—it is all about being together.

John 17:20-24: *“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; **That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. Father, I will***

that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world” (emphasis added).

John 14:3: *“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; **that where I am, there ye may be also”*** (emphasis added).

Now clearly the argument can be made that Christ is talking of the eternal sense of togetherness. But we find the call throughout the scriptures—Isaiah tells us the people will call each other to go to the mountain of the Lord. Throughout the Bible and Book of Mormon is the call for Israel to gather. Entire cities, communities and countries became converted and together became distinct bodies of believers. We read in Hebrews 10:25, *“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”*

What day approaching? The day of the Lord, the day or time of trouble and trial. And trouble or trial can mean anything, we are challenged every day, from physical troubles, to financial, to families struggles. All these are valid and important reasons to gather together. The word “exhorting” means to call near or to

invoke. We call each other near; near to God, near to each other in prayer, in encouragement, sharing burdens, joys, cares, injuries, blessings and so on.

Of course, we find additional support for the physical act of being together in Moroni 6:6, *“And the church did meet together oft, to fast and to pray, and to speak one with another concerning the welfare of their souls: and they did meet together oft to partake of bread and wine, in remembrance of the Lord Jesus;...”*

Clearly we find here something that you cannot do alone in nature or over the internet or via social media; the act of taking sacrament in remembrance of Jesus Christ. As I write, I fully understand that there are some reading this who are isolated and unable to gather together regularly or to regularly partake of sacrament. Before this article is finished, I will further address this issue, and I sincerely hope my thoughts thus far haven't caused offense.

I could list out many other scriptures about the how's and the why's we meet together, but I wanted to write about why I personally go to church as often as I am able...why it personally matters to me.

I desire fellowship with like-minded people.

I understand not all of us are incredibly social, and some may even be uncomfortable around groups, but this isn't me. However I have had occasions due to my attitude or burdens of life when I had not wanted to be at church and around "those people." Sometimes I have given in and not attended, sometimes I have fought through and gone, and my testimony is that when I have been able to force myself to attend (because I believe there is something for me in **every** service), I have left with something positive.

The desire to be around like-minded people is basic. It is the foundation for innumerable groups, unions, organizations and so on. The gathering of like-minded people toward some shared goal is basic. We all know that not all those groups and goals are positive—gangs, political associations, hate groups, etc. But something draws people together; it is the desire to be around those with the same goals, values and ideals as you.

Church is and should always be a positive gathering, goal and experience. Positive doesn't always mean pleasant, just like a hard workout to gain strength may result in some pain and exhaustion...but the results are positive.

I have no shortage of hobbies, desires and interests but, overall, I have found my time with like-minded people is best spent if our overall goal is to work

toward living a positive, godly life here and investing in our eternal future. So why do I go to church? I desire to be around like-minded people.

2 I have close friends and loved ones at church.

I spent many years as a police officer. In that time I built relationships that I have to this day; they are important and I never want to lose them. They were built through time together, they were built through our literally spilling blood with each other, and some through the tragedy of taking lives, through shared loss and pain. They are deep....

But there is a deeper bond I have with my brothers and sisters in this church. No matter how close the bond with those men I worked with, fought with and suffered with, we never held the same deep goals and values which formed our lives. Our shifts ended, and they still didn't understand why rather than hit the bar for a couple drinks with them, I would rather go kneel in prayer for an hour with my church family. While any of them would be willing to go to nearly any length for me, few would be willing to fast and pray with me, or even try to understand why. They aren't bad, they just aren't the family of Christ.

It is one thing for a group of

people to work for a common goal together, such as building a house, or police officers protecting a city. Their success in that thing is often based on each other. But it is an entirely different matter for a group of people to come together to work on a person's soul (something that is hard to quantify success or failure with so often), when their own may also require work for that eternal success. As a police officer, my squad might drop our current assignments to assist another squad with a project when it is mutually beneficial. If it doesn't benefit what we were tasked with doing, we probably wouldn't deviate. Yet in this church there are people who will go out of their way to help, pray, encourage, give offerings, give time and so much more, when often there will be nothing temporarily coming their way in return. What is that? That is part of why I go to church—I have close friends and loved ones there.

3 I want to be encouraged.

How much money is spent by people going to self-help seminars, buying books about how to do things better, hiring personal trainers not only for physical fitness but also financial and mental fitness? Part of being human is wanting to be positively encouraged to do what we have no

choice but to do—to live. We want to live well.

I have never seen someone pay to go to a seminar that makes them feel like garbage. Maybe it exists, I don't know. In general, we want to live life well, to be happy, and to feel and experience success. In my career, I went to schools and trainings to learn to shoot better, interview people more successfully, and learn the tactics I used as a SWAT team member. In these trainings there were times of instruction, correction and encouragement. Those things helped me to shoot better, interview criminals more successfully, and use more efficient tactics. But all of those things would eventually be of no value to me. I would eventually not need to stay proficient as a shooter or tactician, and the only interrogations I would be conducting were to see who broke the cabinet door in my house (Not Me seems to do everything, whoever he is!).

I go to church because there I find encouragement to overcome the struggles I have each day. I remember in one service the scripture was read in Proverbs 15:1: *"A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger."* Within the next week, I was faced with a situation at work that I wanted in my heart to react to with anger. I remembered that scripture, humbled myself as the scripture advised, and the whole situation changed for the better. I had been encour-

aged to do it the right way....

I have found great encouragement in the testimonies of others as they have tackled trials. I have learned to avoid certain pitfalls and failures in decision-making because of the experiences of others. Those experiences were given to not only praise God, but also for me to gain from. I go to church because I want to be encouraged.

I believe that God speaks, moves and directs.

I am not saying God only moves, only speaks, only interacts with us while at church, but I do think there is something to be said about Him moving when we are assembled together. Even Christ told His disciples as much, Matthew 18:20, *"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."* Again, I write this with the understanding that there are those who are unable to gather together, but again, I will address that.

I find some things to be interesting in scripture about what God does when the people are gathered. God proved Himself through the prophet Elijah when the people were gathered together. Thousands were fed miraculously when gathered together. Christ showed Himself in the midst of a praying people and

prayed for them Himself, an experience that was only described as indescribable. And the scriptures are full of many more... there is something to be said for the combined faith, the combined effort of separation, and the combined desire and hope of a group of believers to welcome God to speak and move.

I personally have had many experiences where an answer to a question or a resolution to a struggle was given in a sermon. My wife has had an answer specifically given to her of a question she had never vocalized. The minister began the sermon by saying he had a sermon prepared but God told him he was to preach something else, and that it was for someone specifically, but didn't say who. That person was my wife. I know of others who have experienced the same things.

I feel like as a people we are probably pretty good at being thankful but probably could use some help in the area of praising. One way we express our thankfulness, our awe, our humility, and our sense of gratefulness in the face of our nothingness is through song. Not everyone is a singer; trust me, I've heard! But God hears us and knows what comes from our heart. For me, one way God speaks to me is through song. I have had such comfort, direction and assurance given through songs we sing. I have seen an entire service change because of a song that is sung. I

have seen a song invite and welcome such a peaceful spirit...being a minister and able to sit up front to see the faces of those gathered I have watched as the Spirit moved through the congregation as we have sung.

I wrote earlier about testimonies, and we can never diminish or underestimate their power. I will share one quick experience, not mine, but one that has made me consider how God moves through testimonies. Sometimes, as a congregation, we begin to know what someone is going to say before they say it. It doesn't diminish in my mind the value or importance of a testimony, even if we have heard it a hundred times, but sometimes we can all be guilty of tuning someone out when "we've heard that before." As was this experience, a testimony that had been shared before was shared again as we sat in a service. But something happened... That testimony that had been shared so many times invited the Spirit, which rested upon a man, and those words we had heard so many times touched his soul. He knew at that moment he had neglected his responsibility to be baptized, all from God moving upon his heart through the testimony of another.

I go to church because I believe God speaks, moves and directs.

There is something about united prayer.

I can't explain prayer. I mean, I can in the mechanical way—pray to the Father, pray in faith, pray in Jesus' name. But I can't explain how it works. How does my prayer have the ability, or sway, or effect in my life or the lives of others? I don't know. But I know prayer is important, and I know prayer works.

But I have seen something else: the benefit, blessing and effect of united prayer. I preached about this not long ago, and one thing I felt led to consider was the account of when Christ was with the people here after His resurrection, specifically when He was praying. He told the group to kneel and pray, and they did aloud. He then knelt down and He began to pray. The account was that there was no way to describe how they felt and the effect it had to hear Him pray for them. I believe He prayed for each and every one who was there, by name and by need. There was something to it, something that united them and knit them all together.

Likewise, there is something to the audible prayer and the hearing of your name and need being lifted up unto God by those gathered around you. I can't explain what it does, but it knits us together. Certainly we can and

should pray alone and in our families, but the gathering together to pray is so important.

I go to church because there is something about united prayer.

Church is a community, I belong.

I know this feeling isn't universal. It saddens me to know that there are some who don't have that feeling at church, that sense of belonging or community. I would like to think that within our church, there is some relationship and bond for everyone. We can and should work to make our church locals feel more like a community, a close family, where everyone has a part.

I can't relieve myself of my own responsibility for this. I have come to recognize all the different personalities within our church. Not everyone is outgoing like me, and willing to visit or invite. And I probably don't do all that I can or should in that aspect. Likewise I shouldn't be upset or feel rejected when others don't make a specific effort to approach me. We all have different personalities, and that is okay. But I do believe that for all those who make the effort to gather together, they do it because they want to be a part. And also, while they may not run to greet others, or invite to dinner, most everyone there wants others to feel a part and a be-

longing.

One thing I've heard before is the criticism that church people know too much about each other and are always in each other's business. Of course that also happens at work and in circles of friends and families outside of church too. But the way I see it is I would rather have people who see me as family, who care for my soul, to know the details of my life, rather than groups of people who lack a commonality aside from a job to get a paycheck. Sure, we sometimes rub each other the wrong way. I have yet to be in any organized group where everyone saw exactly eye to eye and never bumped into each other. One thing I hope is that even though we may be critical of others from time to time, we are always mindful of our true desire for each other's welfare.

How many of us have our "assigned seat" at church? As creatures of habit I'm sure there are many. It's one way we keep track of each other week by week. "Anyone know what's wrong with Frank? He's not in his seat!" Have you been in your church after one of those members passed away, and no one wanted to sit in "their seat"? Why do we think that? Because that person belonged there... they were a part of the group, a part of the body, an organ which helped to sustain life. Even now I can look in our chapel and see those who have passed on sitting

in "their seat". I hope I have a place in our church, that I am a part which adds to, that I belong.

I went on a missionary trip to Africa a few years ago. I flew there alone, spending the hours in the terminal waiting for the next flight, trying to sleep without sliding out of those miserably hard plastic airport seats. But on the way back I flew with Apostle Brian McIndoo, who **belonged** to the Delta Diamond Club, having flown all the hundreds of thousands of miles to earn it. And what did it earn? Hot, fresh food, comfortable chairs to wait in, internet, power outlets to charge your electronics, nice bathrooms with showers, and the privilege to board the airplane sooner so as to get overhead bin space! That belonging had benefits! Without him I couldn't just walk into the Delta Sky lounge; I didn't belong.

Well, we all can belong to our church, we can all have a place there. All that has to be done to "earn" it is to come, to attend, to want to be a part. You are welcome, you are important, you have a place. No one is stopping you at the door, and the pews are pretty comfortable too! You are part of a family, a body, a body that is stronger when you are making efforts to be a part, a body that is weaker when you aren't there...a body that, like our own physical body, moves to heal and strengthen the weak and damaged parts and, likewise, expects your ef-

forts to heal and strengthen the other weak and damaged parts. I go to church because it is a community to which I belong.

Are there other viable alternatives? None that I have found. I can join all sorts of professional organizations, hobby groups, committees and the like but, unless they are ultimately established and guided by the desire and need to prepare for eternal life with God, they can never be what church is.

Are other churches viable alternatives? I am not going to say that they are not, however...I am a part of this church because I have found there is no other church that is like ours in doctrine and belief. Does that matter? It has to. Does that mean my friends who belong to and are faithful in other churches are evil or going to hell? I can't say that. But I can say that while I can find great strength, hear amazing testimonies, pray together and praise with them, we still aren't on the same page. I don't believe "once saved always saved." I don't pray to Jesus. I do believe we have an obligation to follow God's commandments and, if we don't, we can't count on things going well for us when we stand before Him. It can be close, but it isn't the same as my church family, as my church.

We crave fellowship, togetherness and belonging; for those reading this who are isolated, I understand that this article may bring a multitude of feel-

ings within you. There are many avenues today to fellowship and be at “church” as you can, even when many miles separate you. There is a Tele-congregation, where isolated members from all over the nation call in every Sunday morning for Sunday School and preaching. They sing, they pray, they fellowship, and there is a connection.

Services are live-streamed every Sunday, mornings and evenings, to include song services. I encourage you to “tune in” and participate in services. For those who are sick and unable to attend, it is a real benefit as well. But if you have the opportunity to attend in person that should always be the priority. You can find the directions to access these avenues in the back of this publication, *Zion's Advocate*.

If you are an isolated member, you are encouraged to contact the apostles in charge of where you live and ask to be visited. You have a right to ask for someone to bring you sacrament or to administer to you. Every effort will be made to provide that visit to you; it isn't a hassle or a

pain. For the ministry and missionaries, you are the work and not a hassle.

As I draw this article to a close, I think again of two more common criticisms I've heard concerning my church attendance: the church is full of hypocrites. Ah yes, we've all probably heard that one. Well, a hypocrite is someone who says something with no intention of following through, or who pretends to have certain virtues, morals or religious beliefs they don't actually possess or believe. I feel strongly that isn't you and it certainly isn't me. What I am is not a hypocrite; what I am is a continual failure in need of forgiveness. I fail even though I don't intend to, and when I fail I don't think it was good or right. I'll bet you are in the same boat. I'm not interested in keeping up appearances, as I've found that those are thin veils, easily seen through. I'm more than happy to fellowship with all the other continual failures who are working to overcome. I hope you are willing to share a seat in church with this failure that is me.

And the second common thing: are you really so weak you need to go to church, to go so much? Absolutely. I am weak. Sometimes it amazes me how weak I actually am. I go to church because I realize that weakness, and many of the things I've listed above, are why I know my weakness can be made strong by attending church.

I hope I've given you some things to think about. Your list may be longer or shorter than mine. But I do want you to think of this—the church on earth is to be symbolic of what it will one day be like eternally—a group of like-minded believers, part of a community to which they each belong, united together in joy and love, under the care of and a part of our Savior and Father, together **with** them and each other, forever.

*May God bless you in your walk,
Elder Aadam Yates*

NOTICES

CCEG

The Church of Christ Email Group is a church member-only (and spouses, even if not a member) email communication group existing to keep the general church membership informed about prayer needs, blessings, and more. It does not have officially elected management (member volunteer only), although it regularly functions for the Church of Christ for missionary news and various announcements, like state rallies and reunions.

If you would like to become a member of CCEG, or if you are an existing member and are not currently receiving emails as expected, please email the CCEG manager at:

RHEA HOUSKNECHT
CCEG Manager
ccegmgr@icloud.com

THE HOPE of ZION

The Board of Publications has made available a copy of the report from the Committee to Study Zion entitled, *The Hope of Zion*. Contact Elder Robert Oldham at rwoldham1@sbcglobal.net, or any member of the Board.

AVA WEBSITE

On the Church of Christ AVA web site you will be able to access media such as archived sermons in video and audio formats, past issues of *Zion's Advocate*, searchable Bible and Book of Mormon studies and Sunday School lessons. Real time live streamed sermons are broadcast every Sunday at 11:00 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. central time, which can also be accessed from the site. We invite you to take a look and discover what a useful tool this site can be in expanding your knowledge and faith. The address is www.cocsermons.net.

CORRESPONDENCE COMMITTEE

The General Church Correspondence Committee would like to extend the opportunity for any who wish to communicate through written correspondence to contact one of the following three committee members:

DEBBIE VOGEL (Chairman)
403 W. Colonel Drive
Independence, MO 64050
SUE PORTER
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Phoenix, AZ 85075

PRIESTHOOD VISITATION

If you or someone you know (member or non-member) would like to be visited by a member of the Priesthood of the Church of Christ, please call or write to the Council of Apostles at Church Headquarters in Independence. The phone numbers and addresses are listed on the inside front cover.

REPORT

2019 Church of Christ Solemn Assembly and General Conference Report

Friday morning, March 29, our Solemn Assembly began with a prayer and testimony service. Apostle Michael McGhee was in charge; Elder Ronnie Gill assisted. Br. Mike told us that we are to be led by the Spirit (Moroni 6:6-9). We are to sanctify this time and call on Him for His will to be done. He read Psalms 51:12-17. Our testimonies and witnesses speak of Him. It takes a repentant heart to come back to God's mercy. Sin, removed from us, frees us—each should have witness. Our faith, our hope and our love give us power. Open hearts to Him, honor and praise Him. Br. Mike led us in a season of prayer in which many voices were lifted to our Heavenly Father, then the service was opened to testimonies:

- ▶ A brother told us they returned from the Philippines two weeks ago. Two times on this trip he felt earthquakes. In years past he'd felt them twice; once in Vietnam as mortars came his way, and another time on their first trip to the Philippines. He told us that in the world we have no firm foundation; we rely on Jesus Christ—as long as we follow His footsteps we're okay. He guides us. Flesh is only the flesh. Do our footsteps mirror the strength of Christ?
- ▶ A sister testified that when we sing the song, "My Times are in Thy Hands" she always feels the Spirit. She remembers when her sister Jennifer and husband Kyle went to adopt Van they had to go to North Vietnam to the orphanage. Van was five months old...and very ill with pneumonia. The doctor there had to okay him "fit for travel by plane." He diagnosed Van with Thrush and



Jesse and Chris

an ear infection... besides the pneumonia. The doctor couldn't approve him for flying. Her mother, Marlene Cobb, sent out prayer requests. The doctor said there was no way that he could be well enough in the morning to pass the exam. In the morning they returned to the doctor and the doctor found him completely healed! He was approved for flying. God did that, and Van has been such a blessing!

Friday evening Solemn Assembly was opened by Apostle Jeff Oldham with Elder Bob Oldham assisting. Br. Jeff asked, "Why are you here tonight?" He then read the "purpose statement" which was given by our apostles. He read the definition of *solemn*: Deep sincerity. Are we in anticipation for something good or something bad? Br. Jeff read Philippians 4:4-7. We are here to unify our hearts and minds—in anticipation for what the Lord will give or direct us. Br. Bob led us into a season of prayer and the service was opened for testimonies. Here is just one:

- ▶ A sister told us she came here to be lifted up. She came to Solemn Assembly and Conference to feel the presence of Christ. She told us the year that the Temple Lot Church burned (1-1-1990-djh) they met elsewhere—her feelings were hurt. She



Dolly Smothers

prayed for forgiveness. She had a vision; she was outside and saw Christ. She saw herself pushing her children up front so they could see Him. She felt such love coming from Him. It was a powerful love. She wants to be by Him and feel that again!

On Saturday afternoon, March 30, our next Solemn Assembly took place—Apostle Buzz Brickhouse was in charge with Elder Aadam Yates assisting.

Br. Buzz read Isaiah chapter 55. We are told to hearken diligently to do the will of the Lord. Seek Him for His will to be known. His promises are sure and everlasting. He's the same forever. Approach Him in prayer, testimony or song; invite His Spirit to guide us. These are just a few of the testimonies:

- ▶ A brother praised the Lord for lifting him up. He has deep concerns for the mission in Nigeria. There have been many Christians murdered by Muslims there. We are blessed in this nation. Please pray for the



Women's Group

missionaries everywhere. It's heavy on his heart. They need the Lord's protection from the evils of the world.

- ▶ A brother expressed his love and appreciation to us, concerned about his wife's condition. He said she is gaining strength. He told us that his son had a near accident; a wheel came off a truck ahead of him and hit his vehicle. There was no damage, even though he had felt the impact. He had thought it would be totaled. Please pray for his son, as he is possibly losing his eyesight. He reminded us that just in the blink of an eye, God can change us. We have to trust God. Just when you've given your all, it seems God gives you more strength. We have so much more to learn. He will lead us—His people, His body—this established Church. He will not forsake us.
- ▶ A brother told us as he listened to others... he wants to warn us not to take the Lord's protection for granted. He has learned from it. A local in Merida doesn't exist anymore. They haven't recovered from the loss of a family killed in an accident. A man had been whispered to by the Lord and told not to go, but he didn't listen... and went

anyway. The Pastor and his wife both died in the accident. They hadn't listened when told, "don't go." We are fragile. We need everyone we have. Your prayers are of great value.

- ▶ A brother told us it has been a great blessing to have been able to travel a lot the last few years. He has learned we are the same church—all family—and love each other. He was able to teach teens in Honduras and Mexico Youth Camps. He has a great hope that God will take care of us. He urged us to study each day.
- ▶ A brother testified he has been greatly blessed. We have freedom here in this nation—but it feels like things are closing in on us. A curse on America—the killing of our babies... and to profit by it. We need to pray and teach about this more to others. Do whatever you can do...
- ▶ A brother described a recent experience: Two vehicles on the road were apparently involved in road rage. One came up on each side of his truck—going down the road. The man on his right jerked his wheel and his vehicle dived at our brother's. His reaction was to jerk the other way, to the left, and he

hit the other man on his left. There was damage to his truck and his trailer. He was 1500 miles from home and had twelve families to visit yet, and he did. Meanwhile the police put an APB out on the driver that ran into him. He was able to drive his truck and pull his trailer all the way home. He took them to the shop for repair and learned that his two truck axles were not even connected to each other! For 1500 miles they floated as he pulled his trailer home! Their prayers were answered; God held it. The cost of repair on his truck was \$9,500; including his trailer the total cost was \$17-18,000. He was thankful to have insurance, but mostly thankful to our God who protected him.

Sunday Morning Sacrament Service, March 31.

Sacrament Service began with Apostle Jay Moser in charge, with Elders Bob Hedrick, Dennis Trudgen, Thomas Gill, Martin Addie, and Aadam Yates assisting.

Br. Jay read 1 Timothy 6: 1-14 and then read the prayer that would soon be read over the bread. He told us to let this be our confession to all... to serve and to remember. He told us that yesterday our tes-

testimonies ministered to him to trust in God and obey only Him. We are here to confess and profess Him. In God's time He'll show those blessed all the honor and power. Be not high-minded. He read the rest of Timothy, to verse 21, and Psalm 18: 1-3.

Brother Jay led us in a season of prayer and following that there were eight administrations. The service was turned over to us as the Spirit led; here are just a few of the testimonies:

- ▶ A brother informed us that he had a heart spell on a recent missionary trip. He went to the ICU in Oklahoma, and they ran tests. They sent him back home to see his cardiologist. On March 8th he had three stents put in. He wondered if he was doing what God wants.... Later, the Spirit reassured him that he did what he should have.
- ▶ A sister testified she is thankful to God and to us...her brothers and sisters. There is nothing too big or too small for God. The night before she went out for dinner and lost her cell phone somewhere. She panicked, feeling cut off from her family and the world. Two sisters with her helped her look for it. They first went to the car and prayed for God's help. They came back to the church, retracing their steps. No phone. They prayed more. They went back to her apartment and waited on the Lord. Soon they learned that another sister had found the phone in the parking lot at church! She is so grateful to be in the family of God.
- ▶ A brother told us the story of two little boys born to parents in this church. One was Martin, who was diagnosed with Hemophilia. A second little boy, James, was born years later, and he was also diagnosed with Hemophilia. Grandpa Rollo Addie administered to them many times. James began participating in a gene therapy study in July; it's working. Martin didn't qualify to be in that study, but now there's another, and he will be trying it. The medication will

be more like a form of insulin. He asked for an interest in our prayers for his baby great-nephew, his brother and himself.

- ▶ A sister told us she had a feeling on their way here today...she thought of her daughter who she hasn't seen much of. She excitedly exclaimed, "She's here!" The Lord brought her here today, and a great-grandson that she hasn't ever seen. Her daughter joined her. She thanked God for bringing them both here today.

Sunday Afternoon Special Music Service.

Elder Dan Lawrence opened the Special Music Service, with Sr. Manon Lawrence in charge.

We enjoyed offerings from Dolly Smothers; Tiny Tots; Junior Choir; The Men's Group (5); Women's Group; David and Becky Rudd; Darin and Corinna Crull; Large Choir (Women's Group plus Men's Group of 8); Chris Moran on guitar and Jesse Lawrence on Violin; Neva, Gary and Milo Housknecht; and The Men's Group (8).

Sunday Afternoon Sermon given by Apostle Brian McIndoo with Elder Mike Bevaart assisting. A Special was given by Jesse Lawrence on the violin and Chris Moran on the guitar.

Br. Brian asked—Do we, members of the body of Christ have a responsibility to God's word? He told us we do have — DUTY, UNITY and HUMILITY (the 3 T's).

DUTY—Mosiah 9:40. Stephan was full of faith, did great wonders and miracles among the people. Acts 7: 54-60. His stoning happened in Jerusalem—just outside of a city gate. He wasn't an apostle. Now they call this gate "Stephens gate." He glorified God and did his job. Rev. 14:6-7, Daniel 2:44—This kingdom is never going to be destroyed or left to other people.

Br. Brian asked if we've heard of apologetics—which means to be ready to give an answer. Cell phones have so much

information now, right at our finger tips. They have more information than what anyone can keep in their homes—because of the connection to the internet. We can transfer masses of data in seconds to share with others. It's a resource.

He read Ephesians 6:15—“And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.” Don't fight against progress. Learn how to use it as a tool—so we can grow.

He told us when a group went over to Jerusalem years ago they took a boat ride and sailed across the Sea of Galilee. To Capernaum...the town of Peter's home, where Christ lived with Peter and Peter's mother for a time. Old town (ruins) of Capernaum is where Jesus walked. Mark 1:21-22, heard Christ's words. Matthew 11:23-24, they had the best, but they didn't receive it or keep it. Matthew 25:14-30, We've been given a great treasure of the Master; what are we doing with it?

UNITY—At Gettysburg Abraham Lincoln said—“A house divided cannot stand”...which is also in the Bible, Luke 11:17. Gettysburg was a sacrifice for unity. All things pointed to the Union losing. God reached out to make us a nation so we could take the gospel to the world by preparing a place for the church to be restored. Ephesians 4:11-15, 1 Corinthians 12:25—no divisions. He realized that he “couldn't change the wind's direction, but I can adjust my sails so I can continue.”

We need to have **HUMILITY**. While in Jerusalem they visited the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. This church holds six different congregations in the same building. Monks are militant with each other. They applied a rule to this site—they have to all agree before they do anything to this building. Br. Brian showed us a photo of a very old ladder propped up high on a ledge because they couldn't agree on how to take it down.... It was last used in 1785. This lad-



der stands as a testimony against them...for being prideful. Proverbs 29:23, Philippians 2:3-8. Be a living sacrifice. Years ago someone suggested the church getting an app. It was uncomfortable to change, but we needed to reach out.

PRIORITY... We have to be committed to this obligation. It needs be a priority. Hot or cold, not lukewarm. We want to be acceptable to Christ so He can use us to do His will.

Monday Morning Prayer Service.

M Elder Randy Sheldon read Luke 18:1. Reminding us that HE is the vine and we are the branches. We need to link up and send our prayers up to God. He led us in a season of prayer. Many prayers were lifted up to our Heavenly Father.

Monday Evening Song Service began with Apostle Buzz Brickhouse opening the service and Sr. Manon in charge. We were blessed with a special by Sr. Leigh Ann Malone (*Beyond the Sunset*) and a special by brothers Ronnie and Cameron Gill.

Monday Evening Sermon was given by Elder David Rudd, who was assisted by

Apostle Jeff Oldham. There was an administration and then we were blessed with a special song by Elder Donald Gill: *Amazing Grace*.

Br. David urged us to use technology for the good. Psalm 118:24. Start with the Lord every day. He read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-23. We need to have boldness for the Lord. Boldness comes from confidence in Christ. Talking about boldness—yet he's afraid? No, God took it away. He read song #162, *Dare to Do Right*. Stand strong.

He read Alma 16:218; Joshua 1:5-9; 2 Nephi 3:57-66. We were at our strongest when we were baptized. He read 2 Nephi 13:14-32. He read Daniel 3:10-25; Galations 6:9-10; John 15:7-14; 1 Timothy 4:12; and Mosiah 2:13-17. If ye believe these things, see that you DO them.

Br. David told us his company gave him 60 days notice that they were closing. He went to a job fair in Topeka and met a possible future employer. He trusted God. The company was interested but they were too far away. They said they would work with him but later decided he'd have to come there every day to work. He continued to trust God. Within an hour he got a job offer,

then a second offer, and then a third. All three companies wanted him to come to work for them.... He got to choose which one out of the three! God blessed him so much!

Br. David said they were concerned that they'd miss out on a lot with their daughters living across the country but with Tony's job they see them quite a bit. David mentioned that he has type two diabetes and with his new job he's gained 10 pounds (lots of food in their breakroom!).

Br. David mentioned song #205, *He Lives*. Let Christ live within our hearts! He read Mosiah 3:21 in closing.

Tuesday Morning Prayer Service—

Priest Bruce Haines was in charge with Priest Stephen Kimball assisting. Br. Bruce told us that scripture exemplifies the need for unity. A great division is coming upon our nation. Powers of darkness are leading the nation in a bad direction. We're told as long as we serve His Son this won't happen—but it's sliding that way. He told us that a month before the 2016 election a woman received a revelation—that Donald Trump would be elected president; not



Jr. Choir

that Trump would save or unify the country, but to give His people a little more time to prepare. This nation is divided—His church cannot be. The Lord commands us to be united. Br. Bruce reminded us that there were three “T’s” in Br. Brian’s sermon Sunday afternoon, D.U.H. (“DUH!”). Unity requires we recognize our duty and exercise humility. We’re called to love one another. We are few. Don’t be discouraged. The Lord always does great works with small things. He read Mark 3:24-25; Ephesians 4:1-6 (Be patient with one another and be at peace); Mosiah 9:52-54 (no contentions); Psalms 133:1-3; Book of Commandments 40:22 (Be ye one; and if ye are not one, ye are not mine). The Lord always protects His people.

Names were taken for the prayer list, and Br. Bruce led us in a season of prayer. Following, the service was opened for testimonies; here are a few:

▶ A brother related that while on a trip out West, headed to the Phoenix Reunion, he and his wife received a nudge from the Lord telling them to go to Michigan. They felt the direction was for them to be with his 96-year-old mother through the hard Michigan winter. They were there only six days and knew that his wife had to return home to do all she could to care for their daughter and her family as she had begun

having serious problems with her pregnancy. He took his wife home to Missouri and returned to his mother’s in a couple days. He told how proud he was of their daughter in doing all she could to carry the baby to term. Her tiny baby girl was born early anyway and only lived for 12 hours. We must now endure to the end to be privileged to see her. His time with his mother was very different—he shoveled a lot of snow. She is planning to come down here in October to at least spend the winter here in Missouri.

▶ A brother told us in Honduras they’ve had a home rescue for teens for many years now. He told us the social aspect is much different down there. His Jacob wants to court a girl; she won’t let Jacob meet her parents. Couples don’t get to know each other down there; they just run off. It’s a cultural problem. There are a few couples down there that do it right—the devil is smart—he tried to divide he and Nana; then, from their own children; now, community from church. When they first arrived there were no marriages—just couples living together—even pastors. They need prayers. . . .

▶ A sister said that years ago she was walking her horse. A truck roared past and her horse reared. She was thrown down on a rock. She saw her horse’s hooves up over her head. God prevented her from injury or even death. God is our everything!

▶ A sister confided she was in a bad place last summer. Depression runs in her family. Her sisters in the church took her to a place to get help. She witnessed to others (she had taken her Bible and Book of Mormon with her). As in Honduras, our young people are not responsible here either, she observed. Grounding in the Bible and the Book of Mormon is what brought her back. She found people were noticing and asking what things mean. Even when you’re at your worst—you can still help someone.

▶ A brother testified that the word “Unity” had been given to him, IF he was given the opportunity to speak. He asked if any of us would share a scripture that we use wrong but still continue to use (no one did). He pointed out that we know we are not all exactly right about all things. He read Matthew 16:8 where Christ asked, “Who am I?” Peter answered. (Br. Brian used this verse). The world has taken this to prove the legitimate position of Pope. Ephesians speaks of Unity. When we were looking at Logos yesterday and we eventually chose one we had oneness. Callings given and revelation given—our Elders are working through this now at their meeting. He read Hebrews 11:1, 3, 6. He told us some people don’t understand what faith is. . . what they mean is knowledge. We have to be able to give things up. The Lord will cause us to



Men's Group of 6

change. We have to be willing to submit to the Lord and allow Him to change us. We desire unity. Trust in the Lord. Let the Lord work with us. Put faith in the Lord—He chooses presidents, leaders and kings. Don't put your own ideas first. He added— We all can trust in God more. . . .

Tuesday Evening Song Service was opened by Elder Bob Hedrick. Sr. Manon Lawrence was in charge. Glenn Gill did a song on his guitar. Gary, Neva, Oliver and Milo Housknecht sang a song, Oliver also on piano.

Tuesday Evening Sermon was given by Elder Brandon Tarbell, with Priest Stephen Kimball assisting. A Special was done by Br. Aadam Yates and Sr. Cynthia Lawrence, with Sr. Kate Malone on piano.

Br. Brandon greeted us and reminded us we have a bond that we've formed with each other. It's what's in the heart that matters. He read 1 Samuel 16:7-12. Our hearts are vital to the body. It determines life or death. He read Matthew 13:22; 3 Nephi 5:110-112; 1 Timothy 6:6-11. Satan

is a great deceiver. It's getting more intense. Keep your eyes on God. . . . "Ships are safe in the harbor, but that's not what they're made for." He read John 16:33—Be of good cheer. . . . Sometimes things look daunting. . . just take one step at a time. Persecution will mount. What will your heart be set on?

Br. Brandon read Romans 6:6, 12:2; Ephesians 4:24 and Colossians 3:5. Ask yourself, "Are my desires rooted in Jesus Christ?" Music, TV, movies; the "old man" creeps back in. He read 3 Nephi 5:29. People argue about baptism. We need to be careful about lying to ourselves. 2 Nephi 1:71-77. Is your heart broken? 3 Nephi 4:49; Psalm 51:10. Clean your heart, renew a right spirit within you. . . .

Wednesday Evening after a Song Service we enjoyed a Sermon given by Elder Ronnie Gill, who was assisted by Elder Randy Sheldon. There was a song special given by Sr. Chris Moser.

Br. Ronnie told us this sermon is the second part of last Wednesday's sermon, about a dream given to a sister in Mexico.

He told us any time someone says the "End Days" he sees a vision of a freight train and being part of the team. There's a freight train moving—we can be on it—or we can be off. No one's on it by force.

Br. Ronnie read 1 Corinthians 15:16-28. The end is not an end. . . it's a change. There is a transition coming. In verse 25 it tells us—"For He must reign, till he hath put all enemies under His feet." ALL enemies will be placed under His feet. We need to take the church up to the next level. We need passion, a purpose—there's work to be done—by everyone. He read Philippians 3:4-17; 2 Nephi 12:87-99. We are in the middle of this prophecy. God smites the earth with truth—someone has to take it. There's a knowledge that's going out. All things will be revealed. Satan will have no more power, not for a long, long time.

Br. Ronnie read 1 Nephi 7:51-64. The people that need to fear are not part of His Kingdom. There will be one fold. Don't live in ignorance. . . take time for your family, to teach them. Righteousness will remove Sa-



Men's Group of 8

tan's power over us. We must repent. He read 1 Thessalonians 5:1-7. We need to put away our fears and study prophecy... Isaiah. We're paying attention—so He won't come as a thief in the night for us. If we're on a train we want to know where we're going. How can we take the church up to the next level? Everything we heard from our ministry we heard the last few days. The three T's (D.U.H.)!

#1- Strength of self-control—He read 2nd Timothy 2: 15—We don't have the right to interpret prophecy by our feelings. We must rightly divide the word of truth. 2 Peter 1:19-20—No private interpretation. Prophecy is a lamp to our feet. Only God has a right to say what prophecy means. 1 Timothy 3: 1-13—He's calling us up. Self-control doesn't always mean sin. Paul points at wine. It's an example of why we need self-control. It's measurable to watch people "loosen up" just by knowing they'll get a drink. Body chemicals change; their character changed before they took their first drink. We need self-control to get up to the next level. Self-control for all. Raising good children requires patience and teaching. James 1:19-25—Put what we've learned into practice.

#2- Strength of Action—he read Exo-

dus 28:30 and Numbers 27:21. Think symbolically: on the breastplate, what might be similitude for it? The Holy Spirit? We need to work out with the Holy Spirit. We need communication with the Holy Spirit. We haven't been in touch with the Holy Spirit enough. We need to have God direct us—if not, then we're asleep. Jacob 5:7-8. Things happening around us to tempt us to walk away. Jacob had communication. He could distinguish between the Holy Spirit and other voices. "Grab fast to the bar." We need to have unshaken confidence. Daniel 10:1-14. Bring it up another notch; he kept going until he got his answer. We've got to get across the finish line. It takes self-discipline. Moroni 7:20-42. We'll be surprised what we'll be able to accomplish when we need to. God will make it possible. Strong faith and firm will. We can do it. Not cease because of unbelief.

#3 Strength of Relationships—Br. Ronnie read Matthew 20:20-28. We have difficulty here. Human nature—we like to be the top dog. On this freight train the greatest people are those that are serving others. God's calling us to serve. It's a hard job. Do we get to give up and let someone younger do it? Serve until our last breath. John 6:60-69. It's hard to build up a

church, a perfect church. New people have to grow. There are problems. Newer one's don't understand. It isn't easy. Freight train weighs tons. Work out problems. Someone else needs to grow. We bend and help each other weather storms.... No other place to go. Other churches—may be easier. Matthew 19:13-14. We need to have relationships with young people—teach and understand. We have different problems, so have patience; God wants them. Leave the 99 to go find the one that's lost. The power of numbers... invite two people, they'll invite more, and they'll invite more. The freight train is running—be on it.

This concludes the Conference Report for the year of 2019. We need to take the information presented and prepare ourselves and our loved ones for whatever the Lord has in store for us to come. May God bless you and yours.

Your Reporter, Debra Haines



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