

*“Replenishing and Fortifying our Spiritual Reserves”*

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It’s good to be with you. I’ve had a wonderful experience, thinking about the theme and pondering the meaning of our theme for this particular session, “Replenishing and Fortifying Our Spiritual Reserves.” I’ve thought so much about spiritual reserves and wondered what it meant. And I’ve decided that it means that we feel like we have “enough and to spare” of spirituality. So what is spirituality?

Years ago I was invited to speak at a Sunday evening fireside. And I got there a little bit early, and the woman who had invited me was the only one I knew, and she wasn’t there yet, so I just sat at the back and tried to be reverent. And two older women were sitting right in front of me—they were probably at least in their 40s. And I heard one whisper loudly to the other, “Who is speaking?” And the other one said something like this: “Well, her name is Mary Ellen Edmunds, and I hear she’s really spiritual.”

And so I thought, well, I wonder what that means. That I pay tithing? Yes. That I go to meetings? Yes. That I attend the temple as often as I can? Yes. That I have a glow about me? No.

But I think spirituality is a lot more than I had thought it was. Simply stated, I think spirituality is the desire and an increasing ability to seek and recognize and respond to the Spirit, the Holy Ghost. It’s doing what we need to do so that we may have the Spirit with us always, as we hear each week when we partake of the sacrament, that promise. Spirituality leads to godliness, to personal goodness, to a great change, a mighty change of heart—to a sweeter relationship with our Heavenly Father and with the Savior, and also with each other.

I love the way Alma speaks about spiritual rebirth as an awakening. He tells us that with some, God “awakened” them, and they “awoke unto God” (Alma 5:7). The awareness of God, and a sensitivity to what is sacred with the help of the Holy Ghost, is the essence of spirituality. (See Nephi Jensen, “What Does It Mean to be Spiritual?” *Improvement Era*, 1940.)

The guidance of the Holy Ghost can sometimes help us in extremely important ways in our lives, both spiritually and temporally, and it can also help us to help others. One of my friends who

avoids going to the doctor had an impression a few years ago that that's exactly what she needed to do; she was experiencing some unusual dizziness. Well, she found out that she had a life-threatening cerebral aneurysm, and had she not followed the prompting and received the help she needed, which in this case was surgery, she may not be with us today.

A Primary chorister noticed that a little girl who had been attending Primary regularly suddenly stopped going, probably because no one in her family besides her had any connection with the Church. They didn't participate in anything. So the chorister had this impression to go visit her, which she did. And she said to the little girl, "I've missed you. We don't have anybody to sing the high notes." Well, the little girl came back, and she never left again. And it changed her life for good—and eventually she was singing the high notes in the Mormon Tabernacle Choir!

Spiritual growth comes from spiritual sources. Each time we respond to the Spirit, to the Holy Ghost, to the promptings that come, we increase our spirituality, and we replenish our spiritual reserve.

From the *Bible Dictionary*, "The gift of the Holy Ghost is the right to have, whenever one is worthy, the companionship of the Holy Ghost. More powerful than that which is available before baptism, it acts as a cleansing agent to purify a person and sanctify him from all sin. Thus it is often spoken of as 'fire'" (*Bible Dictionary*, 704).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie said, "Above all talents—greater than any other capacities, chief among all endowments—stands the talent for spirituality" (*The Millennial Messiah: The Second Coming of the Son of Man* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1982], 234).

So if you're in a talent show, you can just get up and be spiritual and you'll win.

Actually, I think what it means is that if it's a talent, it's something we can improve. We can increase our ability to be aware of the Spirit guiding us, and the strength and courage to respond. Jacob teaches, "Remember, to be carnally-minded is death, and to be spiritually-minded is life eternal" (2 Nephi 9:39). And from the Apostle Paul, "to be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Romans 8:6).

Part of what being "spiritually minded" means, I think, is to follow His invitation to think of Him in every thought. (See D&C 6:36.)

Elder Dallin H. Oaks said, "The first of the Ten Commandments—'Thou shalt have no other gods before me' (Exodus 20:3)—epitomizes the nature of spirituality. A spiritual person has no priorities ahead of God" ("Spirituality," *Ensign*, Nov. 1985).

No priorities ahead of God. That may be a key to help us as we try to prioritize all of our many responsibilities in our busy, busy lives. President Ezra Taft Benson said, "We must put God in the forefront of everything else in our lives. . . . When we put God first, all other things fall into their proper place or drop out of our lives ("The Great Commandment—Love the Lord," *Ensign*, May 1988).

One thing that came to my mind as I was pondering about spiritual reserves was reservoirs, where we hold in reserve water that we will need. And one thing we don't like to have happen is a drought. And in our spiritual reservoirs, one thing we don't like to have happen is a doubt. You'll remember President Uchtdorf teaching, "Please, first doubt your doubts before you doubt your faith" (Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Come, Join with Us," *Ensign*, Nov. 2013).

Avoid drought in your spiritual reservoir; avoid doubt in your spiritual life.

Our personal spiritual reserve is compared to oil in the scriptures. We all remember the story of the 10 virgins. Five of them had oil and were wise, and five didn't have enough. So what is the oil? What does it represent? The oil is the Spirit—the oil is the Holy Ghost. It represents the depth and the strength of our testimony of Jesus Christ—the "condition" of our spiritual reserve. The five wise virgins had prepared really carefully for the Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, to come. They filled their lamps with oil and they had extra. They had fortified their spiritual reserve with good works, love, obedience, and with being true and faithful. In this parable, the Lord uses oil to represent spiritual preparation. And that is something which cannot be borrowed at the last minute.

President Spencer W. Kimball: "I believe that the Ten Virgins represent the people of the Church of Jesus Christ. . . . [The five who were foolish] had the saving, exalting gospel, but it had not been made the center of their lives" (*Faith Precedes the Miracle* [Deseret Book, 1972], 253–54; see also Matthew 25:1–13).

It's happifying to me to come to Women's Conference and be surrounded by women and men who do put the gospel of Jesus Christ at the center. You have come to replenish your spiritual reserves. You have come to have your lights lit brighter. And I appreciate that in you, and I thank you for it.

President James E. Faust said, "Spirituality is like sunlight: it passes into the unclean and is not tainted. May our lives be such that the spiritual within us may ascend up through the common, . . . the evil and sanctify our souls" ("Strengthening the Inner Self," *Ensign*, Feb. 2003).

Elder Oaks: "We should seek after spiritual gifts. They can lead us to God. They can shield us from the power of the adversary. They can compensate for our inadequacies and repair our imperfections" ("Spiritual Gifts," *Ensign*, September 1986).

So we seek the best gifts in order that we may use them in kindness to lift and help others. President David O. McKay said, "The development of our spiritual nature should concern us most. Spirituality is the highest acquisition of the soul, [of] the divine in man" (*Pathways to Happiness*, comp. by Llewellyn R. McKay [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1964], 377).

There are no limitations to our faith when it's built on the foundation of spirituality—when we add oil to our lamps and to our lives, drop by drop every day. Talk about essential oil!

Well, how do we keep oil in our lamps? How can we replenish our spiritual reserves? By keeping the commandments of God, and by living our religion with all our hearts.

Wilford Woodruff said this: “When we are laboring for the kingdom of God, we will have oil in our lamps, our light will shine and we will feel the testimony of the spirit of God” (*The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, 124–125). I remember being in that meeting when he said that.

Well, here are a few suggestions (three of you got that!) as to how we might replenish and fortify our spiritual reserve, add oil to our lamps and have extra oil on hand. As I share these things, I hope the Spirit might just remind you of one thing you could do that would make a difference in your life, that would happyfy you, that would make your life better. And as always, the Spirit will teach you a lot more than I will. And I don’t have these in any particular order, so for you, the last may be first, or whatever.

Number one: **Think deeply.** Ponder and meditate more. These are significant, wonderful ways to increase our spirituality. Find a time and a place in the season that you’re in right now where you can do this for at least a little while, hopefully every day. Maybe it will be while you’re driving, or walking, or folding laundry, or chasing chickens, or driving the children someplace, rocking a baby—or sometimes just making a time when you can make your mind be still and invite the promptings of the Holy Ghost. These can be refining experiences.

President David O. McKay said, “We pay too little attention to the value of meditation, a principle of devotion. . . . Meditation is the language of the soul. It is defined as ‘a form of private devotion, or spiritual exercise, consisting in deep, continued reflection on some religious theme.’ Meditation,” he said, “is a form of prayer” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: David O. McKay* [Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society course of study, 2003], 31, 32).

Often, meditating becomes a time when we do more listening, when we give our Heavenly Father a chance to communicate to us things through His Spirit. My personal times of meditation and pondering have brought me sweet spiritual experiences.

Two, **pray earnestly.** Do what you need to do to make your communication with Heavenly Father matter more and be more enjoyable. Communicate honestly and often. There is a huge difference between “saying our prayers” and actually communicating, counseling with our Heavenly Father—which means that we do give Him a turn! It’s not all about us. We have a chance to feel what’s on His mind. Prayer is the opportunity to turn to the spiritual things in life, contemplate them.

Three, **search the scriptures.** Put these meaningful, wonderful thoughts and words and reminders in your heart often, and you will have oil for your lamps—and you will have the light that you need. Studying the scriptures increases our ability to have the spirituality we need to receive personal revelation to help us with the challenges that we face in our lives.

The law of the fast is a wonderful source of spiritual strength. Read Isaiah chapter 58 again. Some of the most beautiful, tender promises made in all of scripture are in Isaiah 58 in connection with the law of the fast. Feast on the scriptures. You’ll have plenty of things to think about.

Four, **follow the prophet.** Recently, most of us probably had the opportunity to raise our hand to the square, our arm to the square, when we were presented with Thomas S. Monson as the President of the Church and the current living prophet. And he and 14 others we sustained as “prophet, seer, and revelator.” What does it mean to sustain? What did that mean when we raised our hands, our arms?

Elder David B. Haight said this: “When we sustain the President of the Church by our uplifted hand, it not only signifies that we acknowledge before God that he is the rightful possessor of all the priesthood keys; it also means that we covenant with God that we will abide by the direction and the counsel that come through His prophet. It is a solemn covenant,” said Elder Haight (“Solemn Assemblies,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1994).

Well, if you want incredible resources about things to ponder, read again, and study and ponder, the things that have been spoken by these 15 and all the other speakers at general conference. President Marion G. Romney after a general conference session said this: “We have heard enough truth and direction in this conference to bring us into the presence of God if we would follow it. We have been taken on to the spiritual mountain and shown visions of great glory” (*Conference Report*, April 1954, 132–33).

And President Howard W. Hunter said this: “Our modern-day prophets have encouraged us to make the reading of the conference editions of our Church magazines an important and regular part of our personal study. Thus, general conference becomes, in a sense, a supplement to or an extension of the Doctrine and Covenants” (“The Heavens Are Open,” from *Come unto Me*, Church video, 1988).

Number five, **express gratitude often.** Being thankful and expressing thanks is a healthy thing to do. From Psalm 92, verse 1, “It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord.”

President Ezra Taft Benson: “The Prophet Joseph [Smith] said at one time that one of the greatest sins of which the Latter-day Saints would be guilty is the sin of ingratitude. I presume most of us have not thought of that as a great sin. . . . sometimes I feel we need to devote more of our prayers to expressions of gratitude and thanksgiving for blessings already received. We enjoy so much” (*God, Family, Country: Our Three Great Loyalties* [Deseret Book, 1974], 199).

And then President Romney: “It is perfectly evident from [Doctrine and Covenants, section 59, verse 7] that to thank the Lord in all things is not merely a courtesy. It is a commandment as binding upon us as any other commandment” (Area Conference Report, San Jose, 1977:12).

Six, **come to the temple!** I know many people live a long ways from the temple. But if you live close enough, this can be like a spiritual reservoir—even if we can just go and be on the grounds for a little while, or go sit in the foyer for a while, just to get our souls “filled” as often as possible. The temple provides a unique setting for understanding spiritual things.

President Benson: “I promise you that, with increased attendance in the temples of our God, you shall receive increased personal revelation to bless your life” (“The Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants,” *Ensign*, May 1987).

“There is a power associated with ordinances of heaven—even the power of godliness—which can and will thwart the forces of evil if we will but be worthy of those sacred [covenants made in the temple of the Lord]. . . . Our families will be protected, our children will be safeguarded as we live the gospel, visit the temple, and live close to the Lord” (Atlanta Georgia Temple Cornerstone Laying, June 1, 1983; quoted in Dean L. Larsen, “The Importance of the Temple for Living Members,” *Ensign*, April 1993).

From President Gordon B. Hinckley: “Who in these times of stress would not welcome an occasional opportunity to shut out the world and enter . . . the Lord’s house, there to ponder quietly the eternal things of God?” (“Why These Temples?” *Ensign*, Aug. 1974, 40–41).

“I am satisfied that if our people would attend the temple more, there would be less [of] selfishness in their lives. There would be [more] love in their relationships. . . . [and] more [of] love and peace and happiness in [their] homes” (quoted in “Missionary Service, Activation, Temple Work Emphasized in Conference Leadership Meetings,” *Ensign*, May 1984).

From Elder Boyd K. Packer: “Our labors in the temple cover us with a shield and a protection, both individually and as a [church]. . . . Blessings there will not be limited to our temple service. We will be blessed in all . . . our affairs . . . both spiritual and temporal” (Boyd K. Packer, *The Holy Temple* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980], 265, 182).

Seven, **let your heart be filled with love.** Pray with all the energy of heart, as we’ve been asked to do, to be filled with this love, with this charity! Without charity, without pure love, we are nothing!

Charity never faileth. It getteth tired. Sometimes it getteth frustrated, and sometimes it getteth impatient, but it never fails to do something.

President Kimball: “One can learn to be loving. If one patterns his life in the mold of love—if he consciously and determinedly directs his thoughts, controls his acts, and tries to feel and [consistently] express his love, he becomes a person of love, for ‘as he thinketh in his heart, so is he’ (Proverbs 23:7)” (*Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, p. 245–46).

Don’t you love experiences like if somebody asks, “How are you?” and then they wait to hear what you say? Then you say, “Who wants to know?”

President Ezra Taft Benson: “When we have the Spirit, we will love to serve, we will love the Lord, and we will love those whom we serve” (“Seek the Spirit of the Lord,” *Ensign*, April 1988).

There is a need for us to be filled with the Spirit, with oil for our lamps, and to cherish the gift of the Holy Ghost so that our lights may shine for others and we can help in the hastening of the work of bringing Heavenly Father’s children back to Him.

A Church leader told a group which I was a part of about an experience he had where he went visiting members with another leader in the stake after they had had a little workshop on helping

the less active to come back. Well, they went to the home of a woman who was described as a “porcupine.”

When she saw them on the doorstep, she just literally screamed, “Well, I know who you are and I know why you’re here!” And he said, “Why are we here?” You know, she’s seeing them in their suits and all. “Why are we here?” And she said, “Well you’re here to get me back to church.” And he said, “Oh, that had not even entered my mind.”

That kind of caught her off guard. “Well then, why *are* you here?” And he said, kindly and lovingly, “May we come in and tell you why we’ve come?”

Well, now’s she’s curious, I think. So she invites them in. So when they get in and sit down, he said to her, “This evening the two of us knelt in prayer, and we asked Heavenly Father who needed us to visit them. And your name came to mind. Can you think of any reason why Heavenly Father would want us to come and see you?”

With that, she burst into tears, poured out her heart and her story. She had been for a long time in a spiritual drought and surrounded by doubt. What followed was a tender time of comfort and healing. And as they were ready to leave, he asked if they could leave a prayer in her home. And she immediately said yes, and then said, “I can’t even remember the last time a prayer was offered in my home.” And following that, as they left, she wept and thanked them for their visit.

President Benson: “This latter-day work is spiritual. It takes spirituality to comprehend it, to love it, and to discern it. Therefore, [we should] seek the Spirit in all [we] do. That is our challenge” (“Seek the Spirit of the Lord,” *Ensign*, April 1988).

Brothers Richard L. Bednar and Scott R. Peterson shared the following: “Trivializing spiritual activity is a major stumbling block to cultivating true spirituality. As long as we call activities spiritual when they are not, true spirituality is blocked and frustrated . . . . If we trivialize spiritual activities, we can easily take for granted what could be truly spiritual activities by executing them in a half-hearted way and still calling them spiritual, even though the Spirit is absent. Either way, we have sacrificed . . . substance for its much more evident, yet empty, form” (*Spirituality and Self-Esteem: Developing the Inner Self*, [Deseret Book, 2010], 127).

The loss of spirituality is immediately evident, and spiritual death is probably one of the most tragic and terrible of deaths.

President Gordon B. Hinckley: “It is not enough”—for us, you and me, now, in our time—“to simply be known as a member of th[e] Church. A solemn obligation rests upon us. . . . We must live as true followers of . . . Christ, with charity toward all . . . . Be grateful,” he said, “and above all, be faithful” (Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Dawning of a Brighter Day,” *Ensign*, May 2004).

President J. Reuben Clark Jr. said our faith must not be difficult to detect (“The Charted Course of the Church in Education,” rev. ed. (1994), 7).

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland shared this: “Drawing upon my vast background of children’s bedtime stories, I say you can pick your poultry. You can either be like Chicken Little and run [around] shouting ‘The sky is falling; the sky is falling’ or you can be like the Little Red Hen and forge ahead with the productive tasks of living, regardless of who does or doesn’t help you or who does or doesn’t believe just the way you believe” (“Terror, Triumph, and a Wedding Feast,” CES Fireside for Young Adults, Sept. 12, 2004, Brigham Young University).

From the Doctrine and Covenants, section 11, verses 12 through 14, “And now, verily, verily, I say unto thee, put your trust in that Spirit which leadeth to do good—yea, to do justly, to walk humbly, to judge righteously; and this is my Spirit. Verily, verily, I say unto you, I will impart unto you of my Spirit, which shall enlighten your mind, which shall fill your soul with joy; And then shall ye know, or by this shall you know, all things whatsoever you desire of me, which are pertaining unto things of righteousness, in faith believing in me that you shall receive.”

I want to share the words of one of my 100 favorite hymns. It’s number 143, and the title is “Let the Holy Spirit Guide” (*Hymns*, no. 143). Now I’ve changed the words just a tiny bit; I hope you don’t mind.

Let the Holy Spirit guide; Let him teach [you] what is true.  
He will testify of Christ, Light [your mind] with heaven’s view.  
Let the Holy Spirit guard; Let his whisper govern choice.  
He will lead [you] safely home If [you] listen to his voice.  
Let the Spirit heal [your heart] Thru his quiet, gentle pow’r.  
May we purify our lives To receive him hour by hour.

Our seasons of life are different—yours and mine, everybody in the room, everybody on the campus, everybody on the planet. We’re in different seasons. Our lives are different. We each have some burdens. I know there are some heavy burdens here today. But may we do all that we can in whatever season we’re in to replenish and fortify our spiritual reserves—our spirituality, our ability and desire to seek and to recognize and to respond to the Holy Ghost, to the Spirit. I am convinced that as we do this the best we can, the theme of this conference will come true in our lives: “no good thing will [be withheld] from them that walk uprightly” (Psalm 84:11).

From the Doctrine and Covenants, section 45, verses 56 through 59, “And at that day, when I shall come in my glory, shall the parable be fulfilled which I spake concerning the ten virgins. For they that are wise and have received the truth, and have taken the Holy Spirit for their guide, and have not been deceived—verily I say unto you, they shall not be hewn down and cast into the fire, but shall abide the day. And the earth shall be given unto them for an inheritance; and they shall multiply and wax strong, and their children shall grow up without sin unto salvation. For the Lord shall be in their midst, and his glory shall be upon them, and he will be their king and their lawgiver.”

I know that is true. I know Jesus Christ is our Savior and Redeemer. I know that He is the Holy Son of our God. And I know that He will return again as soon as He can. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.