

“Discipleship and Our Ministry”

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Those of us who are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints find it difficult to understand why so many today say that we are not Christians. They attempt to explain away our faith and our commitment to the Savior by telling us that we don’t really worship or follow Jesus because our revealed understanding of the nature of God the Father, His Son, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, differs from theirs.

The most obvious and compelling answers to these criticisms are probably not found in a detailed discourse about our doctrine, although the faithful and articulate women of the Church could provide such responses. The answers, instead, are found in the Savior’s instructions to those who followed Him during His lifetime.

Prior to the agony of Gethsemane and the brutality of the cross, those closest to Jesus were met together for the Passover supper. After that meal, Jesus washed their feet, including the feet of Judas Iscariot, and taught them, “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:34–35). Then he explained, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). Jesus also taught that “by their fruits ye shall know them” (Matt. 7:20).

Succinctly our Savior outlined the sum of Christian worship; it is to love Him, to love each other, and to keep His commandments. From these fundamentals flow all the other Christlike virtues. This is why, when President Hinckley was asked, “What is the symbol of your religion?” he replied, “the lives of our people must become the most meaningful expression of our faith and, in fact, therefore, the symbol of our worship” (“The Symbol of Our Faith,” *Ensign*, April 2005).

After recounting the Savior’s life, teachings, suffering, and ultimate resurrection, President Hinckley concluded, “And so, because our Savior lives, we do not use the

symbol of His death as the symbol of our faith. But what shall we use? No sign, no work of art, no representation of form is adequate to express the glory and the wonder of the Living Christ. . . . As His followers, we cannot do a mean or shoddy or ungracious thing without tarnishing His image. Nor can we do a good and gracious and generous act without burnishing more brightly the symbol of Him whose name we have taken upon ourselves. And so our lives must become a meaningful expression, the symbol of our declaration of our testimony of the Living Christ, the Eternal Son of the Living God. It is that simple, my brethren and sisters,” President Hinckley said, “and that profound and we’d better never forget it.”

In 1982 an important addition was made to the title, *The Book of Mormon*; it was “Another Testament of Jesus Christ.” If our lives are to be a meaningful symbol of our devotion to the Savior, then we must come to the determination, in soul, heart, and mind, that we too will be another testament of Jesus Christ; that by our fruits—our thoughts, our words, our deeds—others may know Him whom we love, whom we strive to follow, and whom we try to obey.

Early in His ministry, many were impressed by Jesus’ miracles, including the feeding of the five thousand, and they followed after Him, hoping for continual bread and fish. Jesus tried to explain that he was offering them the way to eternal life, not a daily meal. Consequently, “from that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him” (John 6:66) because it was “an hard saying” (John 6:60). When Jesus saw those who had deserted Him, He asked the Twelve, “Will ye also go away?” Peter’s answer was, “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life” (John 6:67–68).

Like Peter, our decision to be a disciple is founded on the simple truth that Jesus Christ has the words of eternal life. Where else would we go? One of the definitions of disciple is “any follower of Jesus Christ,” and the word “follow” means to accept another as a leader, a guide, an acceptable authority, someone to use as an exemplar. Jesus is our exemplar, and we started on the road to discipleship when we were baptized and took upon us His name, recognizing that “there shall be no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent” (Mosiah 3:17).

We elevate our discipleship to another level when we make sacred covenants in the temple. By making and keeping these covenants, we bind ourselves “to act in all holiness” (D&C 43:9) and gain access to His power and blessing in our lives. In direct revelation to Sister Emma Smith, the Lord said, “all those who receive my gospel are sons and daughters in my kingdom” (D&C 25:1). And receiving His gospel is accepting that wonderful absolute truth that Christ came to do the will of the Father; that He suffered immense agony in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the Cross of Calvary and then arose from the tomb and conquered death and hell; that because of this epitome of charity we can become changed creatures, alive in Him, and return to His presence and enjoy a life like His, with the sociality of our loved ones, friends, and fellow servants

in His work. In return for our willingness to bind ourselves to Him, He has promised us that in His strength we can do all things; and that through Him we can find peace; and that in His promises we can find hope and comfort.

These are the truths that offer us sanctuary in times of persecution, assurance when we have moments of doubt, conviction when our courage may be tested, resolve when we face difficulties, and mercy when we feel alone, discouraged, or that somehow we have not “measured up.”

Ours is not a religion that is merely contemplative. If it were, thinking about tithing would be just as beneficial as paying it. Analyzing chastity and virtue would be the same as being chaste and virtuous. Studying all the many aspects of charity would be the same as being charitable. And dissecting all the pros and cons of service would be the same as actually doing deeds of service.

Consequently, our discipleship is most often manifested not in our thoughts but in the things we do and the traits we develop. In fact, our discipleship is made manifest in our ministering. One definition of ministering is acting as the agent or the instrument of another. Our discipleship is demonstrated in the ways we are the Lord’s instruments and when we act as His agents. Sometimes we accept callings and assignments to be the Lord’s instruments. We teach classes, we prepare activities for youth, we preside in organizations, and we visit teach. Sometimes we are the Lord’s agents in the roles we have as mother, aunt, grandmother, sister, niece or cousin. And many times over we are the Lord’s agents because we are trying to be like Jesus, and we’re trying to be in tune with His voice and reflect His Spirit in our lives at home, at work, and in our neighborhoods.

Women are not always featured in the scriptures. But I believe the words Jesus spoke to women in the scriptures affirm how well He knows and loves His disciple daughters and how much He wants them to understand the gospel plan and follow Him.

Three of the women Jesus knew best and loved the deepest were Mary, His mother, and His dear friends, Mary and Martha. The New Testament records the experience the family of Joseph and Mary had when they discovered Jesus was not with them on a return trip from Jerusalem. His absence caused His mother grave concern, and she reacted like any mother would. When she found Him, she let Him know they were worried! He’d caused His parents some problems! His gentle answer was “wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” (Luke 2:49). In other words, did His mother remember His important mission and allegiance?

Later, during His ministry, he visited the home of his good and dear friends, Lazarus, Mary, and Martha. All of us can relate to Martha’s growing exasperation with her sister. My guess is that it had happened before. Martha’s talents lent themselves to serving, and Martha is slugging it out in the kitchen alone, perspiring over a hot fire, clanging pots and pans, juggling the preparation of the food, wanting it to be just perfect for a favored guest, and getting more and more frustrated, and building up a good head of steam about her

sister, who was not helping. Jesus understood Martha and her feelings. He acknowledged those feelings when He told her that he knew she was worried about many things. And then he gently reminded her that choosing “Him,” choosing the “good part” (Luke 10:42), was the most important.

In these exchanges with the women He knew best and had the most tender feelings for, we can see that the Savior understands women. He knows they worry. He knows they “sweat the small stuff.” He knows they want their labor in caring and worrying and being cumbered about, to be acknowledged and appreciated. And He also knows that they will be happier if they learn to choose the “good part.”

I recall a devotional I attended at BYU when I was a student (one of the few I recall from my time as a student). Sister Elaine Cannon described a time when her husband was a bishop. It was Fast Sunday. The ward meetings were over, and she was home preparing dinner. Her husband was supposed to come home at a certain time for dinner, but did not. She described how, as the roast got drier and drier and the vegetables got soggy and tougher, her frustration with her husband grew.

She was near volcano proportions when these thoughts entered her mind: “My husband has been fasting too. He is a big man. He’s probably really hungry. If he could have, he would have been home by now.” These thoughts calmed her troubled and frustrated heart. When her husband finally did come through the door, he immediately apologized and then told her about a sweet and wonderful spiritual experience he had just had with a ward member. She then told us how grateful she was that she had reined in her frustration before he arrived, because had she not, she would have spoiled the tender, spiritual sharing moment she had with her husband.

I also believe that Jesus understood that women can magnify their imperfections far better than they often magnify even their callings. Women can dwell on their mistakes and churn in the tide of guilt and inadequacy over many things, believing they will never be good enough or that they can never be restored to the good person they really wanted to be.

But Jesus offers women hope when they struggle with these feelings. He has the power to help us turn our weaknesses into strengths. He offers a helping hand, a way up, not a condemnation that keeps us down, perseverating on our shortcomings. You see, He doesn’t want to lose any of us. Why do you think He tells the parables of the creditor and the debtors, or the lost sheep, or the prodigal son? He’s trying to tell us that He isn’t grading on the curve and He wants all of us to pass mortality with flying colors.

Remember Martha, who judged and complained about her sister Mary? She learned to choose the good part. She relied on the encouragement Jesus gave her. When Lazarus died, she met Jesus with a changed heart. He was not just a family friend. She knew that He was “the Christ, the Son of God.” And sometime later when Jesus visited their home, we’re told that while Mary anointed Jesus’ feet with ointment, “Martha served,” no longer troubled by her hurt feelings (John 12:2).

Jesus wanted women to know that their faith would be rewarded. Remember the woman who had suffered from a hemorrhage for 12 years? She didn't expect special attention or even a formal blessing. She simply said "within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole," or free from disease. Jesus felt her touch, the touch of a faithful woman, and responded to her, saying, "be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole" (Matt. 9:21–22).

Jesus understood that women like to know their efforts are good and acceptable. And He especially wants them to know they can be acceptable to Him. He knew that women want to be seen as making good decisions. And I think that's why some examples of Jesus' interactions with women found in the scriptures are there to confirm that the careful choosing of Him and His doctrine will always be acceptable, no matter what someone else does or says.

We see this in His rebuke to His disciples who chastised a woman who had poured precious ointment on Him. They thought it was a waste, that the ointment should have been sold to help the poor. He instead said, "Why trouble ye the woman? For she hath wrought a good work upon me. ... Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her" (Matt. 26:10, 13).

In other words, when the world tells us that we're nuts for raising children in the gospel, trying to have scripture study, family prayer, and family home evening; for trying to fit in a temple session when we could have been shopping or working out to maintain our body beautiful or attending a "pay attention to me" night instead; for learning every trick in the book to keep hems at the knees and necklines in the right places instead of being fashionable and chic; for taking the time to visit teach that sister who is so hard to catch rather than watching the latest popular show on television; for giving up grandchildren and the Winnebago to make a difference as a senior missionary couple; for working hard to follow the new handbook even when many sisters are demanding to just keep doing things the way they've always done them—all we need to do is remember that the Lord said, "for them that honour me I will honour" (1 Sam. 2:30).

Because the original Twelve Apostles were called disciples, we may imagine that we have to occupy an important position or have a highly visible ministry in the Church to really be disciples. Nothing could be further from the truth. While those who are general authorities and officers of the Church and serve in leadership positions in wards and stakes are often the most noticeable or prominent examples of the heart and soul of discipleship, it is really in the regular, salt-of-the-earth members, who go about their daily lives with faith, hope, and charity, that we see discipleship in action. These members have the faith to know that the Savior did what He said He would do. They have the faith that through the plan of salvation and the Atonement, all that God has will eventually be theirs. They have the faith that through repentance they can be acceptable to God and receive all of His blessings in eternity. That faith, a confidence in the King of Kings, is a wellspring of courage and security and motivation. And with it comes hope, a

perspective on the present and the future that is bright and open, and seeking for the light, no matter what the circumstances are. As hope endures, faith increases. And as faith and hope grow and develop, we begin to experience a “change of heart.” We feel “to sing the song of redeeming love” (Alma 5:26). And when this happens we receive His image in our countenances.

Discipleship is about emulating Jesus. There are many stories of Jesus healing the sick and afflicted. One I especially like is “when Jesus was come into Peter’s house, he saw his wife’s mother laid, and sick of a fever. And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose...” (Matt. 8:14–15).

Jesus saw a need and responded. He didn’t wait for Peter’s mother-in-law to send a request for a blessing to the bishop. He didn’t wait for someone to call the Relief Society president, who would then assign visiting teachers to bring in a meal and report back. He didn’t check the Church *Handbook* to see if it was His place to help or whether the problem should be turned over to someone else. He didn’t assume that someone else would surely show up, sooner or later, and provide aid. He simply met the need He saw.

Disciples invest in others when they meet needs. How many stories have we heard about members who help sponsor a missionary; of priesthood holders who make sure the sons of single mothers are included in outings and other priesthood functions; of those who just see a need, like my dear neighbor Jared, who shoveled the snow from my driveway far more often than being a good neighbor required.

I have experienced many such investments by willing disciples. One was Sister Gwennie Webb. I was called to play the organ for Sunday School when I was in junior high. Sunday School in those “olden days” was a 90-minute meeting with talks and singing time along with the lessons. Sister Webb was the chorister who believed in teaching us how to follow the chorister. She loved to change tempos. She loved to change volume. And I was the very inexperienced organist. I could play the piano, but I had never tried to play the organ. There were three basic things a Sunday School organist needed to have: hands to play the keyboard, feet to play the pedals, and eyes to follow the chorister. That first Sunday I was having such a hard time with the hands and feet part that I was abysmal on the “eyes to follow” part. I was not a success by any stretch.

After my wretched performance, Sister Webb asked if I would like to learn to follow. She said she could teach me to follow the chorister, and she could also teach me to be an accompanist. Little did I realize there is a difference between being a pianist and being an accompanist. She invited me to come to her home one day each week after school where she taught me and tutored me in following the chorister and in accompanying groups or soloists. I don’t think that was part of her Sunday School assignment—but she definitely saw a need and was willing to make a sacrifice to make an investment in a young, 13-year-old sister.

I have learned that true disciples do anything to find a way to be obedient. They never look for excuses or a way out of an obligation. They just find a way to be obedient. One

of my dearest fellow missionaries was Sister Perla Manuel. She was a schoolteacher at the time of her conversion, supporting her aging parents, who had many health problems. She wanted to obey the law of tithing, but all of her salary went for the care of her parents. Her strategy was to crochet. She would come home from school, attend to her parents, fix dinner, do what was needed around the home, and then stay up late into the night crocheting. She would then sell those doilies and table runners, and with the money earned, she paid an honest tithing. She found a way. Think of how this applies to so many things in our lives—visiting teaching, temple worship, scripture study, family prayer, magnifying callings, missionary efforts. Did I say visiting teaching? Disciples always find a way.

True disciples also embody charity, the “pure love of Christ,” which motivates them to love others and extend charity and goodness to them. Charity has two sides. One side is our love for our Savior and Redeemer, and this love is the foundation of our discipleship. And the other side is His love for us, manifest in His atoning sacrifice and His patience and compassion and care.

Elder Marvin J. Ashton observed, “Perhaps the greatest charity comes when we are kind to each other, when we don’t judge or categorize someone else, when we simply give each other the benefit of the doubt or remain quiet. Charity is accepting someone’s differences, weaknesses, and shortcomings; having patience with someone who has let us down; or resisting the impulse to become offended when someone doesn’t handle something the way we might have hoped. Charity is refusing to take advantage of another’s weakness and being willing to forgive someone who has hurt us. Charity is expecting the best of each other” (“The Tongue Can Be a Sharp Sword,” *Ensign*, May 1992).

Disciples are kind and considerate. And they are patient and long-suffering. And they bear with hope their afflictions. But they also reach out to help others bear up as well. I think of the story of President Kimball helping that frazzled mother in an airport who had a tired and crying child. And just as the priest and the Levite walked by the wounded man on the road to Jericho, the other passengers waiting to board the plane were either too embarrassed to connect themselves with the miserable mother and child or just too protective of their own time and comfort. President Kimball instead was anxious to provide care and compassion.

Another hallmark of a true disciple is the capacity to have mercy, a capacity that includes kindness and pity, and benevolence, and generosity and tolerance, but especially forbearance and forgiveness. We’re under injunction in the Doctrine and Covenants to forgive all because all of us are in need of forgiveness, especially from God. And yet forgiveness may be difficult for us to offer.

The parable of the unmerciful servant is one that often pricks my own conscience. Peter asked the Lord how often he was supposed to forgive, suggesting that seven times would be his limit. Jesus responded that “seventy times seven” was a more accurate number. Then he gave the parable of the unmerciful servant. A servant owed his master 10,000

talents and could not repay the debt. Consequently the master ordered that he and his family be sold into slavery and all that he had confiscated for the payment. The servant begged for patience and mercy, and it was granted. Now here comes the sad part.

“But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.” When the master learned of this, he called the unmerciful servant “wicked” and asked, “shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?” Then the master “delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him” (Matt. 18:28–34).

Jesus made sure that no one could misunderstand the parable, saying, “So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses” (Matt. 18:35).

Years ago I was in a very difficult situation where I felt criticized and undermined, and I felt I could do nothing to change the situation. I began to harbor harsh feelings. I could feel the resentment, the anger, and the frustration building up inside of me, and I knew it wasn't good.

Later, in preparing for an assigned talk (isn't this the way it always works?), I was led to the scriptures in the Doctrine and Covenants and in Matthew that I have just quoted to you. I began to count the many times I had gone to my Heavenly Father begging for his forbearance and forgiveness for my sins and shortcomings. I recalled the times when I had needed to go to others to ask for their forgiveness. Now I admit that my first thoughts in this situation were not merciful; they were selfish. I said to myself, “Well, this is certainly a bummer of a deal. If I can't forgive these people who are making my life miserable, I give them power to keep me from being forgiven, and I don't want those jerks to have that kind of power over me.” Not exactly charitable or merciful, but somehow it was the beginning of breaking the chains I had been wrapping around myself so I could eventually “let go” and be free. And that's when I learned that forgiveness is a gift you give yourself as much as a gift you give another.

Sometimes the things we are asked to forgive are large and significant and may include abuse, infidelity, dishonesty that creates economic hardship and loss, injustice, withdrawal of a loved one, or the suffering of a loved one. But more often, we're asked to forgive smaller, pettier offenses that simply hurt our pride. But I testify that in either case, the Lord will help us do it.

Disciples also never think they “have it made.” They endure to the end in humility and hope. They are never armed with self-righteousness. Let me give an example to illustrate this point. When I was a Laurel, my class decided that we wanted to go to general conference. We had car washes and bake sales to try to earn the money to travel from Arizona to Salt Lake City. Seven of us, our Laurel teacher Analee Westover Hunsaker,

and her husband Theo and the baby, crammed ourselves and our luggage into a station wagon for the trip, leaving after school on Friday. We faced a huge snowstorm on the way, and arrived in Salt Lake around 2:00 a.m. We checked into one of those small motels on South State Street, with plans to wake up at 5:00 a.m. in order to get seats in the Tabernacle. But we were so exhausted we slept through the alarm, and we didn't arrive on Temple Square until about 7:30.

We had just missed the first wave of seating in the Tabernacle. And so we stood in line in our Arizona Easter dresses and sandals, hoping to be among the few that finally made it into the building. It was snowing, it was wet, it was cold. It was April conference. And we were freezing. But there was a good-natured camaraderie in our line.

After about 30 minutes, a good brother, who had a seat inside, came to the doorway and gazed down at us. He smiled broadly as he told us that he already had a warm seat inside. He shared with us the one thing that none of us had ever thought of—if only we had come earlier, we too, like him, would be inside where it was warm. Then he went back in, only to return regularly to repeat his message. I remember one person in our line muttering something about the Zoramites and a Rameumptom. The ushers tried to keep our spirits up, and one did suggest to the man that he might be safer if he just stayed in his seat. Ultimately, we finally did get in at the last minute and sat behind the choir. The thrill of being in the presence of prophets, seers, and revelators was sweet warmth for our frozen toes and healing balm for our resentment of the man with the early seat.

But since that Saturday just over 44 years ago, I have often reflected on this experience and used it as a yardstick of my own behavior. Has there ever been a time in my desire for righteousness that I lost sight of the Living Christ as the one I should be emulating? Was there ever a time that I stood in the warmth of the doorway and “looked down” in judgment on someone who was standing in cold, wet snow?

At the beginning of His ministry, Christ attended the synagogue in his hometown of Nazareth. As was the custom, He was invited to read the scripture passage for that day, which came from Isaiah. He read, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.” He then announced, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears” (Luke 4:18, 21).

This is our charge—to preach the gospel, His gospel, in the way we live each day; to demonstrate in our lives our love for the Lord and our devotion to His Holy Name and to His cause, which is the cause of righteousness. We are here to do His work, to be His instruments. And like Him, we are here to heal, to deliver, to recover, and to set free. Our lives are the most powerful sermons that we can ever preach—especially in our families and our homes, but also to our neighbors and our communities. In fact, they may be the only sermons some will ever hear. And we're never “off duty” when it comes to being disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are poor in pride because we are humbled by the grandeur of the gospel and the magnificence of the Atonement and our own constant need to beg at the mercy seat. We are humbled that our Father offered His Only Begotten Son to heal us and bring us home, and so we want to reach out to others who feel lost, wounded, forgotten, troubled, or misplaced.

We rejoice even when there are times to mourn because we know He offers peace and comfort, and we want to extend that same compassion to others.

We are meek because we recognize the source of our strength and know that we “can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth” us (Philip. 4:13), especially when it involves caring for those within our circle of watchcare and ministering.

We hunger and thirst after righteousness because we know if we will open our minds and hearts, the Holy Spirit will teach us—teach us of Christ, and will help refine, and justify, and purify and sanctify us as we are covered by His power.

We are merciful because we know He is merciful toward us and how much we are in need of His mercy.

We are pure in heart because we know that personal cleanliness in heart and mind, in motivation and in deed, is the key to having the Lord’s Spirit with us always and being able to enter into His presence.

We are peacemakers because we know that Christ’s light and influence does not come where there is contention and that by following His light we can ultimately be like Him and always be with Him.

We are willing to be persecuted for righteousness’ sake because we believe His promises to us are sure, and that the Kingdom of God offers far more than any other, worldly enticement.

Not long ago, because of another assignment, I was asked to read a book called *Half the Sky*. It is a positive book about attempts to help women in the world, but it is also a chronicle about the oppression of women around the globe. It is stories of women who are treated like chattel, who are bought and sold into slavery, who are seen as the spoils of war. It is a chronicle of how Satan views women—nearly worthless. When I had finished the book, I walked out of my office and laid it on the desk of my assistant. And I noticed the contrast with the two books that were now side by side on her desk.

We have been given a marvelous new resource that tells us how God feels about women, and how much the Lord loves His daughters. This book, a contrast to how Satan would like the world to feel about women, shows us the principles, precepts, and patterns that lead us to a life of discipleship in following the Savior, Jesus Christ, because God our Father loves us and our Savior loves us deeply. *Daughters in My Kingdom* is a testimony that the Lord’s servants have vision, because it has come forth in a time of confusion and

misrepresentation about who we are and what we are worth as women, and what should be important to us, and about what the Lord needs us to do to be part of His work. It testifies of His love for us. It teaches of our grand capacity. It is a template for virtue and service. It tenaciously affirms that He will bless us with strength, wisdom, revelation, spiritual gifts, and charity as we serve Him through our service to others in and out of the Church. And it tenderly reassures us that He knows us well, that He needs us to provide earthly watchcare in charity to each other.

It is a triumphant message that the covenant women of the Church, “armed with righteousness and the power of God in great glory” (1 Nephi 14:14), can prevail—can prevail over any and all mortal challenges. It has come “for such a time as this” (Esther 4:14) so that we will understand the incredible role women have in the Lord’s holy work as they increase in faith and personal righteousness, strengthen home and family, seek out others and provide relief.

As they were leaving Nauvoo and their beloved temple behind, a group of our Latter-day Saint forebears wrote this message on a wall in the temple: “The Lord has beheld our sacrifice: Come after us.” Now let us do the same for the next generation. Through our sacrifices as His disciples, let us “bring forth the blessings of heaven” for our day and our time. Let us be the kind of people Jesus will want to claim as His. Let us love Him more. Let us feed His sheep. Let us care for His lambs.

Then we will be disciples who are “more fit for the kingdom,” and our fruits will testify that we are His, true Christians in heart, soul and mind. May He bless us in this effort to follow Him, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.