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Lessons from the Lamb of God

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Elder F. Enzio Busche is an emeritus Seventy. This address was given at the BYU Easter Conference on April 7, 2007.

I feel honored and humbled to be invited to speak at this year's BYU Easter Conference. I also feel overwhelmed in light of the inspiring and educational talks that we have heard this morning, and my heart is still filled with the words from the mouths of our beloved leaders at general conference last weekend.

For the entire Christian world, celebrating Easter means celebrating the victory of Jesus with His crowning triumph of life over death and His message of the "good news" and the Redemption of mankind. Because of my service in the First Quorum of the Seventy, I have been a witness to the unfolding of many recent achievements of the expanding Church. And my joy is growing because the Lord is willing to reveal unto us how to grow in our understanding of what it means to "behold the Lamb of God" (John 1:36).

In the last couple of years, I have had more time to better understand the importance of meditation and of pondering, not only about life but also about the many revelations that came with the Restoration of the gospel. I now understand that when we want to have a clearer understanding of the still, small voice with which the Lord talks to us, we need to take time for the process of communication. The result of this communication is an increase of joy in our soul, the joy that comes to us when we are under the influence of the Spirit of the Lord. When we grow in our personal state of enlightenment, the veil that separates us from God becomes thinner, and we feel more of His light and His love, which finally takes away our fears.

Since the time of my conversion to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, a question in my mind has never left me alone: why did it take two years for me to embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ? I also wonder why it is so difficult for many in my own country and other countries of the world to open their hearts to the beautiful message that Jesus has for all of Heavenly Father's children.

I have learned that the Master Teacher is always trying to move us to open our eyes to see Him standing at the front of our lives, trying to communicate with us. As we read in Revelation 3:20: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come into him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

One principle seems to be clear: Jesus has deep respect for our agency. He does not push us to open our eyes, but He knocks and waits patiently. It is our responsibility to understand that our life is built on our own decisions and that we basically have one choice: either to live in fear or to live under the influence of divine love. As the scriptures tell us, these two choices are polar and incompatible opposites. We cannot have fear and love at the same time. As we read in the Book of Mormon and in the New Testament, "Perfect love casteth out all fear" (Moroni 8:16), and "He that feareth is not made perfect in love" (1 John 4:18).

Jesus, the Master Teacher, always knocks at our door, and when we are wise we will sharpen our senses and open our eyes. We will learn that He *always* wants to communicate with us, that He *always* wants to give us suggestions to help us make better decisions. And as we follow His suggestions, we will be filled with joy and energy and ever more confidence.

The Influence of the Spirit

In the beginning years of my membership, I was a member of a tiny branch of the Church. After a short time, I was called to be the branch president. From my viewpoint today, I can see that I was a little naive, with not much understanding and maybe even some pride. I thought that because of my experiences in the business world and my educational background, it would be easy for me to change that small, struggling branch.

I put in many, many hours—sometimes every free minute outside my life in the business world—to activate many who were not active and to create the place for many conversions. Week after week I was disappointed when in sacrament meeting the few active members were the only ones participating and so many who had promised to come did not.

One Sunday when I was again deeply disappointed, as I sat ready to start our sacrament meeting something happened that became a turning point in my life. The missionaries had brought a young couple with their five-year-old boy, and they were sitting in the first row directly in front of me. Suddenly, the young boy, having the freshness of innocence that only a child has, spoke loudly enough that everyone in the room could hear it, “Mom, what is the man with that mean face doing up there?” He pointed at me. I was completely shocked.

With all my endeavors and all my hard, dedicated work, to this little boy I was only a man with a mean face. And I learned that I needed to evaluate what I was doing and that I would never succeed merely by trying to do anything just my way, using my capabilities according to my strategic plan. I had obviously forgotten that the most important element—wanting to convert a soul—has nothing to do with programs, organizations, and industrious busyness. We can do nothing unless we are under the influence of the Spirit, therefore radiating joy, light, and love in our countenance.

From then on, I concentrated on changing my attitude. I was not offended anymore by anyone’s failure to keep promises. My wife and our little children came to the understanding that the only thing that was important for us was to be filled with the Holy Ghost and to overcome our ego. As we did so, we were free to rejoice about each person who came.

Soon after that, people who had never shown up began suddenly to come back to our meetings. We had a period of revival with accelerated growth, and after a relatively short time we had all the numbers we needed to begin considering building our own chapel.

That little boy became a constant reminder in my life to know what matters most: to be under the influence of the Holy Ghost, always by subduing our lower self, or ego, under the higher, or divine, self and in so doing, connecting with the divine source.

Self-Awareness and Honesty

It is a constant surprise to me that in this dark, sinister, unpredictable world where dangers lurk in every corner, so few people seem to search or even yearn for a better understanding of life. With all the suffering, pain, agony, heartlessness, and fears in the history of mankind, many of our fellow citizens have lost their feelings for the reality that Jesus the Christ has been resurrected and is alive and that He is ready to reveal Himself to everyone who is open to listen, showing the way to a rewarding, exciting life.

After reviewing my own conversion, I have to confess that in spite of the missionaries' plain, fearless caring and selfless love for me and for my family, it took a relatively long time to overcome my skepticism and to bring myself to the scary walk on the lonesome, less-traveled road toward self-awareness and honesty. Without self-honesty, it is not possible for truth to come through to us.

To give you a feeling for what I'm talking about, I want to share a letter I wrote for the mission newsletter four years after my baptism:

How little was I prepared for this message as I saw myself in comparison to the ultimate demands of this message. I could see myself too far away, with too many casual attitudes and bad habits. I accused myself of being too lazy to even read a book to the very end. There seemed to be an abyss over which no bridge could be built between my own life's performance and the vision of the complex message of the missionaries. I began to pity these boys. I even warned them and told them that there is no hope; that they would waste their time, not only with me but with everyone else that I knew. The vision of a fight in me to get to the acceptable level was so much without hope that I did not even start.

I was blessed with missionaries who had patience with me. They were very effective because they did not teach with an air of superiority, but they taught with respect for my personal space and my opinions and with invitations to learn how to grow.

The missionaries had a natural capacity to cause the Holy Ghost to become my teacher by seeing only the good in me and by overlooking my many weaknesses and shortcomings. The missionary who finally baptized me was not shocked by my pride and arrogance, my constant nay-saying. When I finally told him that I never would be baptized in the Church, he jumped for joy, clapping his hands and shouted, "That is wonderful!"

I was so surprised by his reaction that I asked him what was so wonderful about my never becoming a member of the Church. He just laughed and said with an enthusiastic voice, "That is what everyone says before he is baptized."

I could do nothing else but ask him, "What makes you so sure?"

He looked at me with a big grin on his face and said with strong conviction, "Because you are an honest man."

The thought struck me: "Me, an honest man?" In that moment, the Holy Ghost became my teacher, and spiritual lightning of tremendous power pierced my soul, enlightening every cell of my body. I saw myself in my haughtiness, in my arrogance, and in my pride, and

I wished with all my soul that I would be worthy of the judgment of honesty from that missionary. Only by achieving true honesty would I be capable of receiving the courage and the self-assurance I had always felt I was missing. Thus, the missionary became the catalyst for my wife's and my own conversion.

This experience instilled in me a desire to know more about the source of this message. I was guided to find more material about the Prophet Joseph Smith. I was stunned when I read some of his statements that showed me the grandeur and the truthfulness of his vision. I feel I should share some of his words that amazed me. I quote from the words of Joseph Smith: "God hath not revealed anything to Joseph, but what He will make known unto the Twelve, and even the least Saint may know all things as fast as he is able to bear them."¹ He added: "The only way to obtain truth and wisdom, is not to ask it from books, but to go to God in prayer and obtain divine teaching."²

These statements from the Prophet Joseph Smith are so unique and so full of promise and light.

Our Eternal Identity

When I review the situation which mankind is in today and even when I look back to the time when I was investigating, I realize there are only three essential questions in the soul of each human being. These questions are so essential that a human being cannot fully function unless he has convincing answers to them.

The first question is, who am I? Answering this question convincingly breaks through to a long-hidden truth inside of us. We have always known it, but we never dared to think in that direction. Our Western culture has taught us that we are sinners in the hands of an angry God—fallen, unclean, and incompetent. What is the answer to this question, who am I? The answer is simple to Latter-day Saints because we have been taught this message from the beginning of our lives: we are all children of a loving God. For me, this is one of the key messages Jesus gave in all of His teachings, either directly or indirectly. When we finally understand this message, we feel to exclaim, "Behold the Lamb of God!"

When someone understands the full meaning of this reality, it is as if the arms of heaven have come to pull us out of the mire and the darkness of the world, and we begin to see light. Suddenly we cannot question ourselves anymore. God's creations are perfect, and even when we are still young and not mature, all of us have the innate potential to become like God. It is good to know that we are children and

not hirelings. The deeper understanding of this reality will continue to grow inside of us and will lead us to the security of belonging—not only to the Creator but also to every other child of God.

It gives us knowledge of our many unused talents and capabilities and an urge to closer to our divine origin. God wants to make sure that in our urge to seek we will be able to find our way, and so God gives us revelations, or ideas, about where to search. In the Doctrine and Covenants section 50, verses 23 and 24, we learn what to expect from God: “And that which does not edify is not of God, and is darkness. That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day.”

According to the New Testament, Jesus reminds His audience what is written in their scripture: “Is it not written in your law, . . . Ye are gods?” (John 10:34).

The Purpose of Life

When we have become enlightened by the awareness that we are children of a loving God—one of the most important truths restored by the Prophet Joseph Smith—we are in a position to find an answer to the second most important question that every human being seems to have: what is the purpose of life?

When we understand who we really are, we will not want to identify any longer with the lower part of our existence. According to the prophets, “The natural man”—the ego, or the flesh—“is an enemy to God” (Mosiah 3:19). With this understanding, we comprehend why we were born on this planet—this planet is a planet of polarity. Only in a situation of polarity are we capable of exercising agency. That is the only way we can really learn.

The life and teachings of the Lamb of God show us the answer to the second question, what is the purpose of life? The purpose, according to Jesus, is found in His first and second commandments: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:37–40).

Jesus obviously is teaching us that to keep these commandments is not an option. It is the key for a successful life, independent of where we are living and of whatever circumstances we may be in. These words have been taught to us many times in our lives and in the history of

Christianity, but I think only when we are totally focused on fulfilling these two commandments do we have the key to overcoming all fear. Fear has been and will be the bane of our life until we have filled our soul with divine love.

Jesus the Christ, the Lamb of God, wants to make sure that we understand clearly what He means when He calls us to love. It is obviously not the love that the publicans had. Let me quote from Matthew 5, beginning with verse 38:

Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:

But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also.

And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. (Matthew 5:38-48)

I have the conviction that Jesus wants us to look at love with more than romantic eyes, giving love only to the ones who love us. We have to remember that we live on the planet in which polarity still rules. We have been sent to this planet to learn. Learning and understanding go hand in hand with experiencing opposition. A big breakthrough will come when we have learned to embrace this commandment from Jesus to love as He did. Forgiveness is a form of love, and when we forgive it helps us to understand the meaning of the Atonement of the Lamb of God. We are able to say with greater reverence, "Behold the Lamb of God."

When we open our door to Him, the Savior will perhaps whisper to us, “Until you can empty yourself completely of all negative and detrimental thoughts and feelings toward your fellowman, you cannot be refilled with faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity. When these qualities have been put in place, you will have no desire to be negative or critical, expressing unloving thoughts toward your fellowman.”

When we take seriously the invitation of the Lord Jesus Christ to learn to love as He did, it will be a stretch to be filled with this love, maybe for all of us. But when we trust Jesus and see in Him the messenger of our Father to bring us the keys of the mysteries of godliness, we will be able to have the vision of how to bring peace on earth, goodwill toward all men, as the angels proclaimed when the Lamb of God was born. It would not surprise me if faith and trust in Christ are the same conditions required to temper the elements, thus calming the fear in the hearts of many.

The Lamb of God is inseparably linked to love, as Nephi learned: “And the angel said unto me: Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father! Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw? And I answered him, saying: Yea, it is the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men; wherefore, it is the most desirable above all things” (1 Nephi 11:21–22).

When we love as the Savior did, we become partakers of the fruit of the divine tree, which is the most desirable above all things. It is then that we are able to answer the second question and fulfill the very purpose of our lives.

In my years of service, I have had the opportunity of meeting many members collectively and individually. I was always puzzled to find how many people were afraid of God instead of loving Him. The only answer I could find was that they really did not know God. When we know God, we are illuminated with love and light, and our soul is burning with the desire to shout and to praise His name.

In a recent talk to my own ward about this subject, I suddenly heard myself saying under the influence of the Spirit, “Do you know where fear comes from, how it can develop in people who have lived their whole lives full of goodness and wholesomeness?” I mentioned that in our premortal existence when we lived with God, we were created in perfection; we were pure, filled with joy, righteousness, and a desire for everything good. In our earthly experience, however, we became connected with the matter of this earth, and the natural man,

according to the prophets, is an enemy to God.

Becoming connected with this earthly matter—the earthly flesh and the divine spirit—is like pouring ink into clear water. Suddenly the clear water looks dark and ugly. We feel the darkness in our subconscious and react by feeling guilty. These feelings of guilt arise from our innate awareness that nothing unclean can come into the presence of God. This is one of the reasons the Lamb of God came to this earth—to wash us clean through His atoning sacrifice. When we see this, our gratitude for Him grows and we are filled with love for Him and for others.

When I was a young member in Germany, I was assigned as a home teacher to a woman who was recently baptized. I knew that she was baptized without her husband, who, I was informed, was an alcoholic. I was warned by the sister to come when her husband was not home because he could be very violent. As we visited her on a regular basis, she complained over and over about her husband. With all of our sympathy for her, we wanted her to grow and no longer be a victim but to become a master of her own destiny.

One day we asked her if she could think of something positive about her husband. At first she was upset. She tried to convince us there was nothing good about him, that he was a bad man and that she stayed with him only because of her financial dependence. We kept asking her, repeatedly, to think about him on a deeper level, and finally she smiled and told us something. We asked her to think of something else, and she was finally able to come up with ten good points.

I asked her when was the last time she told her husband that she loved him. She asked me how she could love a man like her husband! I said I did not ask her to love him, just when was the last time she had told him she did. She said it was fifteen years ago. I felt prompted to ask her another question, “Sister, could you do us a favor? The next time you are with your husband and he is sober, can you tell him at least one of the good things you think about him?” She again wanted to rebel but finally agreed to try.

The next Sunday I arrived early to Church and saw her walking up the stairs with a big smile on her face, radiating happiness, even bliss. She was wearing a new dress and looked at least ten years younger. When she saw me, she said:

Brother Busche, there is something I need to tell you. Last Friday evening he was home and sober. I came into the kitchen, and there he stood fixing himself a sandwich. As I looked at him, I saw his extremely

unhappy face. I saw how he had a hard time with his clumsy hands, and I felt compassion toward him. I felt inspired to praise him with one of the things I had written down on the paper. He reacted like he was hit by a whip. The fearful countenance turned toward me, and he saw in my eyes that I meant it.

Then the miracle happened. He began to cry like a little boy. He said that he didn't deserve the accolade. He accused himself for all of the things I had earlier accused him for. He said he wasn't good, he was terrible, and he was not worthy to be my husband. He fell on his knees in front of me and cried. Finally, he asked if I could forgive him and whether I would assist him with his commitment not to drink again so he could become the man I had married.

She said they embraced, both tearful and overcome by joy. They had the most beautiful evening together in a very long time. Yesterday he bought her a new dress and other things that he felt she needed. Above all, he had brought her to church and said he would pick her up when church was over, saving her at least two hours of traveling time.

You cannot imagine what joy came over me to see the kingdom grow. It did not necessarily occur because of programs and organizational acts of duty but because a heart changed under the influence of the Spirit from harshness to love. And it happened to a woman who came to understand what it means to be a daughter of God, learning of the divine core of her being. She continued on her way with a promise to be a creator of her destiny under the influence of the Spirit and the guidance of the Lord.

Our Eternal Reward

Nothing is impossible for those who believe in Jesus the Christ, for Christ came to take the veil of forgetfulness from our soul, to bring to our understanding a knowledge of who we are and what the purpose of our life is. When we know both, we truly behold the Lamb of God and find the answer to our third question: what happens to us after this life?

When we come to know we are children of a loving Heavenly Father and when we learn to live our life under the influence of the light and love of God, we will not need to wonder what will happen to us after our mortal life. The veil will be parted, and we will know that everything will be fine. In fact, as the Apostle Paul revealed, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9).

I feel humbled and overwhelmed to speak with you about this sacred subject, our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ. I know that He lives. I am a living witness of His being alive in all my cells and in every fiber of my being. I feel the joy and the vibrancy of that knowledge. **RE**

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Notes

1. Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 149.
2. *The Words of Joseph Smith*, ed. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1980), 77.