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Truth Restored

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My dear brothers and sisters, Brigham Young University has always been a very special place to our family. When our children were teenagers, they attended the different summer programs on the BYU campus. And my wife, Harriet, and I went to a course called Especially for Parents, aimed to improve parenting. We never dared ask our children whether this class really improved our parenting. I have to admit, however, that they turned out to be great kids anyhow. I account this to the goodness of their mother and the tender mercies of God.

In those younger years, my wife and I enjoyed very much the opportunities to occasionally come all the way from Germany to attend BYU Campus Education Week. Back then we stayed at Helaman Halls, and for this short period of time we felt like real BYU students. We met great people and had a wonderful time. My wife was super-perfect in planning our days. Because we wanted to learn as much as possible, she scheduled each of us for different lectures. Then, during lunch breaks and in the evenings, we exchanged notes and shared our impressions. We still have many books filled with notes—unfortunately never again to be looked at after we left the campus. But make no mistake—it was a great experience; and we will always treasure these wonderful memories very close to our hearts.

Sister Uchtdorf and I are so happy to be with you today and feel of your wonderful spirit. We are grateful for your testimonies and for

your dedication as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. You are living witnesses of the truth restored. We thank you for your exemplary lives as mothers and fathers, single adults, single parents, and grandparents. We know that many of you have come from far away and at a significant sacrifice. I also would like to thank all who have organized this education week and all who will teach and are teaching.

I am especially grateful for this year's theme—Seek Learning—which is taken from the Lord's injunction to “seek learning, even by study and also by faith” (D&C 88:118).

The restored Church of Jesus Christ has always encouraged its members to pursue knowledge and education through study and also by faith—line upon line and precept upon precept.

For us, knowledge is understood to be an active, motivating force rather than simply a passive awareness of facts. Indeed, certain truths must be understood and applied because they are essential for salvation and eternal life (see John 17:3; 1 John 4:7–8). The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that “a man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge, for if he does not get knowledge, he will be brought into captivity.”¹ His words build on the Savior's commandment, “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).

It is knowledge of truth that makes us free to exercise our moral agency and freedom of choice (see Helaman 14:30–31). God Himself defines His glory in terms of light and truth. In modern-day revelation, we read, “The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth” (D&C 93:36). Perhaps this is why “pure knowledge . . . shall greatly enlarge the soul” (D&C 121:42). The more knowledge of truth we have, the better we can progress spiritually.

The scriptures encourage us to seek deeply and broadly to gain knowledge of both heavenly and earthly things (see D&C 88:77–80).

What is this knowledge, this intelligence, this light and truth that our Heavenly Father would have us receive? Certainly it is found in the scriptures and in the words of the living prophets. But it also includes what we consider to be secular. Some of the early Apostles had little secular learning, whereas others were highly educated in the eyes of the world. Regardless of their different backgrounds in secular education, all the Apostles knew the weightier matters of life; all of them knew the path to eternal life.

We are wise, therefore, to keep a balanced and eternal perspective when seeking and studying all knowledge—revealed and secular. If we proceed on this path, we will learn to master ourselves, which in turn

enables us to master this beautiful earth and its vast opportunities. And it will help us to become a more effective tool in the hands of the Lord. It will help us to become peacemakers in a world of wars and rumors of war.

My dear brothers and sisters, let us remember that all truth, all pure knowledge, can be circumscribed by the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. Of all the treasures of knowledge, the most vital is the knowledge of God—of His existence, His powers, His love, and His promises. This is why the Restoration of the gospel is such a tremendous blessing and of such great importance for every one of us. Every gift and power and grace of God that was available when Jesus Christ walked the earth has been restored in our time.

Through the knowledge of the Restoration, we learn that God has a plan for us that will enable us to both enjoy the beauties of life and cope with its sorrows and disappointments. This divine plan was established before the foundation of the earth and can enable us to return to our Heavenly Father one day. The sacred knowledge of this plan brought us joy when we accepted it in our premortal life, and it gives us an eternal vision as we follow it in this life.

The Restoration opens doors to glorious sources of knowledge and wisdom. Jesus taught, “The Spirit of truth . . . will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13). And the Book of Mormon, a tangible witness of this Restoration, speaks to us through the prophet Moroni, that “by the power of the Holy Ghost [we] may know the truth of all things” (Moroni 10:5).

Secular knowledge alone can never save a soul or open the celestial kingdom to anyone. Life itself, the gospel and God cannot be understood through research alone. For that understanding, we must be taught from on high. Jacob reminds us, “To be learned is good if [we] hearken unto the counsels of God” (2 Nephi 9:29). The ancient word *hearken* means to listen and to pay attention to God’s words given through the scriptures and by the living prophets. Faithful application of gospel principles is the key. Applying knowledge of divine truth leads to wisdom.

Our learning, even by study and also by faith, when directed toward the Restoration, will give us supernal knowledge and wisdom to cope with the challenges of daily life and prepare us to receive all the blessings of eternity.

Therefore, I would like to make this message my testimony of the “restitution of all things” (Acts 3:21)—meaning, of course, the restoration of all things. God lives, and He speaks today as He did anciently.

This is the message and the testimony we as Church members need to have in our hearts and in our minds and carry into all the world.

As we share our testimony with others, I hope we will have the same convincing power and enthusiasm the members had who brought the message to Brigham Young. He said: “The brethren who came to preach the Gospel to me, I could easily out-talk them . . . ; but their testimony was like fire in my bones; I understood the spirit of their preaching; I received that spirit; it was light, intelligence, power, and truth, and it bore witness to my spirit, and that was enough for me.”² Please allow me at this point to give special thanks to my wife, Harriet, for her witness and testimony of the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And let me share with you the story of how my wife’s family became converted to the gospel many years ago.

One Sunday when I was a teenager attending the Frankfurt Branch in Germany, the missionaries brought a young mother and her two beautiful daughters to our church meetings. At that age, I had no real interest in girls; however, I still remember the impressions I had when I saw those two young girls walking into our chapel. The older daughter especially, with her large brown eyes and beautiful black hair, immediately caught my attention. I thought, “These missionaries are doing a really great job!” Little did I know that this young lady would later bless my life forever.

But I’m getting ahead of the story. Let me go back and start with how this young family met the missionaries.

In the fall of 1954, two missionaries were ringing the doorbells inside of an apartment building in the city of Frankfurt. Beginning with the doors on the main level, they gradually worked their way up the floors without any success. No one invited them in or wanted to listen to their message. But these were dedicated and faithful missionaries, and they did not give up or try another, perhaps more fruitful, apartment building. Finally, they rang the bell of the last door on the fourth floor. It was opened by young Harriet Reich, who immediately asked her mother to invite them in. Sister Carmen Reich initially hesitated, but after some additional pleading by Harriet, she finally invited Elder Gary Jenkins from California and his companion into their home.

These two missionaries were truly guided by the Spirit, not only in where to go but also in what to say. After briefly explaining who they were and what the message was they wanted to share, the missionaries left a Book of Mormon with the mother, asked her to read the marked scriptures, and departed with a prayer and a blessing. Two days later they returned. This time the missionaries received a friendly welcome

and were invited in quickly. When they asked Sister Reich if she had read the marked scriptures in the Book of Mormon, she answered without hesitation, “I read the whole book, and I feel that it is true.”

Sister Carmen Reich was only thirty-six at the time, a widow with two daughters. Only eight months before, she had lost her husband, a renowned musician, to cancer. The family had always lived in good circumstances and had no need for financial help even after the loss of their husband and father. But after his unexpected death, they struggled with a number of unanswered questions: Is there a purpose in life? Is there anything after death? And if so, what? Why are we born? Did we live before this life?

Representatives of a number of different religions approached them, trying to be of help. However, Sister Reich never felt a need for their assistance. The answers they offered were not new to her and not very helpful.

Let me make it clear that Sister Reich was a religious person. She loved to read, and the Bible was one of her favorite books. She was always seeking truth, even by study and faith. She believed firmly that Jesus is the Christ, and she taught her family to follow His teachings. They accepted Peter, Paul, Matthew, Mark, Luke, James, and John as Apostles and regarded their teachings highly. This family had always been happy. They were good, honest people, and even the loss of their husband and father could not take away their strong feeling of family.

However, when Sister Carmen Reich read the Book of Mormon cover to cover in two days, she felt something she had never before experienced. By her own account, it was “the spirit of revelation.” Her experience was consistent with Joseph Smith’s description of personal revelation; she said she could “feel pure intelligence flowing” into her, giving her “sudden strokes of ideas” about the things of the Spirit of God.³ These ideas related to her special circumstances. The Spirit was able to teach her, for she was open and receptive to truth and light. As the missionaries taught her the plan of salvation and the other doctrines of the Restoration, she continued to grow in the principle of personal revelation. All the good things she had learned in her Lutheran faith received a new and a deeper meaning, and all of a sudden life itself had a totally different and divine eternal perspective.

It was not that she felt any disdain for what she had believed for so many years. She still loved many of the hymns she had sung at church. One of her favorites was (and continues to be in our family) “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God,” by Martin Luther.⁴ She was also glad that she had learned to quote and internalize many key scriptures of the New

Testament. But when she heard the message of the Restoration, a door was opened into a world flooded with light and filled with love and hope. Looking back, she described her experience this way: It was as if something of great importance had been lifeless and inert but was now resurrected to life, beauty, and activity.

Sister Reich, my dear mother-in-law, represents in many ways the multitude of converts who are coming into the Church every day from other religions—both Christian and non-Christian, and even from no religion at all. One characteristic is true of all of them—they are willing and pure enough to believe when God speaks.

Sister Reich was baptized on November 7, 1954. In December, only a few weeks after her baptism, the missionary who baptized her asked if she would write down her testimony. Elder Jenkins wanted to use her testimony to help others feel the true spirit of conversion. Fortunately, he kept her handwritten original for more than forty years and then returned it to my mother-in-law as a very special gift of love. Sister Carmen Reich passed away in 2000 at age eighty-three.

Let me read to you parts of her written testimony. It shows what she saw, at this time of her life, as the key points of the Restoration. Please bear in mind that you are listening to a sister who was taught and had accepted the restored gospel only a few weeks earlier. Before the missionaries came, she had never heard anything about the Book of Mormon, and she knew nothing about Joseph Smith or Mormons in general. Also keep in mind that in 1954 there were no temples outside the United States except in Canada. And remember that Sister Reich had recently lost her husband. This is the English translation of her handwritten testimony:

Special characteristics of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that are not present in other religious communities include, above all:

Modern revelation given through the Prophet Joseph Smith.

Sacred priesthood authority as in the time of Christ, with a living prophet today.

Next, the Book of Mormon in its clear and pure language, with all its instructions and promises for the Church of Jesus Christ—truly a second witness with the Bible that Jesus Christ lives.

Faith in a personal God—that is, God the Father; God the Son [Jesus Christ]; and the Holy Ghost, who facilitates prayer and guides us personally.

Belief in a premortal life, the premortal existence. Knowledge of the purpose of our earthly life and of our life after death. The plan of salvation is so clearly laid out in the restored gospel that our lives receive new meaning and direction.

The Word of Wisdom as a guide to help us to keep our body and spirit healthy and improve them. This is our goal because we know that we will take our body up again after death.

Temple work, with its many sacred ordinances enabling families to be together forever. This doctrine, totally new to me, was given through revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith.

How grateful I am for Sister Reich. How grateful I am for the missionaries. How grateful I am for the families who have prepared these missionaries. How grateful I am for the Restoration.

The key messages of the Restoration have the power to bring divine feelings to the heart and mind of the earnest seeker of truth, irrespective of the person's cultural or religious background. There are no geographic or cultural boundaries for the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is not restricted by space; neither is the Spirit restricted by time. We all have witnessed the power of the Spirit, and the scriptures testify of it: "[Jesus Christ] manifesteth himself unto all those who believe in him, by the power of the Holy Ghost; yea, unto every nation, kindred, tongue, and people" (2 Nephi 26:13).

My dear brothers and sisters, many of you have served as missionaries or have sent sons and daughters to lands and missions with names you might have never heard before and geographic locations you may have had a hard time finding on the world map. Thank you for this wonderful service of love. At the same time, may I invite you to take a good look into the future. Your children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren may be serving in countries and areas of the world with cultural and religious backgrounds totally different from your traditional mission fields. Your firm belief in and your willingness to testify of the Restoration today will prepare the ground for the successful service of future generations of missionaries. These future missionaries, prepared by you, will be a great blessing to individuals, to families, and to the peoples of the world.

As members of the Church of Jesus Christ, we have a responsibility to extend the message of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, as guided by the Spirit, to every corner of the world. Sometimes this corner may be located in our own home—perhaps in our own family. And we have a special privilege and responsibility to prepare our youth for this service of love by building their personal testimonies. That responsibility should not overwhelm us. Let us be humbled by it but not overwhelmed.

It may be helpful to recall the Savior's charge and the promises He gave to His disciples. They are still applicable to us today. Jesus said:

“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 alway, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:19–20; emphasis added).

“Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem . . . and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

You and I have the same responsibility and promise today. Members of the Church live in all parts of the world—sometimes in the uttermost parts of the earth. To one person, Germany may be the uttermost part. To someone from New York City, the uttermost part of the earth may be the town of Preston, Idaho. Or New York City may qualify as the uttermost part of the earth for those who have lived all their lives in Manti, Utah. Wherever we may be, we are expected to invite our neighbors, friends, and acquaintances to come, see, and experience what the restored gospel is all about. We can invite them to our homes and to our church meetings.

As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we invite people of all backgrounds—many of which are very different from our own—to come unto Christ. We should not hesitate to invite those of other religions. Many of these good people have been seeking for the truth, even by study and also by faith, for a long time. We need to reach out to them in a courageous way with a sweet boldness, with love, and with a pure desire to share the truth from which they have been kept “because they know not where to find it” (D&C 123:12).

President Gordon B. Hinckley said: “We do not stand out in opposition to other churches. We respect all men for all the good that they do, and we say to those of all churches, we honor the good that you do and we invite you to come and see what further good we can do for you.”⁵

The Prophet Joseph Smith explained: “We don’t ask any people to throw away any good they have got; we only ask them to come and get more.”⁶

President Howard W. Hunter quoted President George Albert Smith and then expanded on his words:

In our humble efforts to build brotherhood and to teach revealed truth, we say to the people of the world what President George Albert Smith so lovingly suggested:

“We have come not to take away from you the truth and virtue you possess. We have come not to find fault with you nor to criticize you. We have not come here to berate you because of things you have not done; but we have come here as your brethren . . . and to say to you:

‘Keep all the good that you have, and let us bring to you more good, in order that you may be happier and in order that you may be prepared to enter into the presence of our Heavenly Father.’” (*Sharing the Gospel with Others*, comp. Preston Nibley [Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1948], pp. 12–13). . . .

Ours is a perennial religion based on eternal, saving truth. Its message of love and brotherhood is lodged in scripture and in the revelations of the Lord to his living prophet. It embraces all truth. It circumscribes all wisdom—all that God has revealed to man, and all that he will yet reveal.⁷

The Restoration in its fulness completes and enhances the truths found in the religions of the world.

Latter-day Saints are occasionally accused of being narrow-minded or unwilling to consider the beliefs of others. Such accusations may be true of Latter-day Saints who do not understand their own religion, but those who know the position of the Church regarding the beliefs of other people willingly allow all to “worship how, where, or what they may” (Articles of Faith 1:11).

In a conference address in 1921, Elder Orson F. Whitney described many religious leaders as being inspired. He said:

[God] is using not only his covenant people, but other peoples as well, to consummate a work, stupendous, magnificent, and altogether too arduous for this little handful of Saints to accomplish by and of themselves. . . .

All down the ages men bearing the authority of the Holy Priesthood—patriarchs, prophets, apostles and others, have officiated in the name of the Lord, doing the things that he required of them; and outside the [limits] of their activities other good and great men, not bearing the Priesthood, but possessing [depth] of thought, great wisdom, and a desire to uplift their fellows, have been sent by the Almighty into many nations, to give them, not the fulness of the Gospel, but that portion of truth that they were able to receive and wisely use.⁸

The First Presidency has clearly stated: “The great religious leaders of the world such as Mohammed, Confucius, and the Reformers, as well as philosophers including Socrates, Plato, and others, received a portion of God’s light. Moral truths were given to them by God to enlighten whole nations and to bring a higher level of understanding to individuals.”⁹

The religion into which a person is born may be incomplete, but it can still serve as a foundation for the reception of the fulness of the gospel. We are wise when we show respect for the beliefs of others.

Just as we recognize and support the privilege of others to worship God Almighty according to their conscience, so we claim the right to declare our faith and our testimony of the restored gospel of Jesus

Christ according to our beliefs: “We talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins” (2 Nephi 25:26).

To share the message and the redemptive power of Christ and His Atonement with our friends and neighbors all over the world, we need to declare with courage and with clarity the events of 1820 and thereafter. These events and the revelation that attended them are what distinguish us from other religions and from any people with good intent.

The Restoration was foreseen by those with priesthood power and keys at the meridian of time. They understood why a restoration of truth and priesthood power would be necessary.

The Apostle Paul, writing from Corinth to the Saints in Thessalonica, prophesied: “Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first” (2 Thessalonians 2:1–3).

If Paul knew that there would be a falling away, surely Jesus knew. But although Jesus knew that the church He established during His mortal ministry would be lost, He still established a divine pattern because He also knew that future generations would be able to recognize the very same priesthood authority and structure when it was restored centuries later.

Eusebius, a historian of the Christian church in the fourth century, wrote about this divine pattern: “Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, not very long after the commencement of his public ministry, elected the twelve, whom he called Apostles, by way of eminence over the rest of his disciples. He also appointed seventy others beside these, whom he sent, two and two, before him into every place and city whither he himself was about to go.”¹⁰

And Eusebius, quoting Hegesippus, also wrote about a falling away: “When the sacred choir of apostles became extinct, and the generation of those that had been privileged to hear their inspired wisdom had passed away, then also the combinations of [immoral] error arose by the fraud and delusions of false teachers. . . . As there was none of the apostles left, henceforth [they] attempted, without shame, to preach their false doctrine against the gospel of truth.”¹¹

Without the Prophet Joseph, we would still be in this same state of confusion and darkness. Some fifteen hundred years after Eusebius,

Joseph found himself in the midst of a “war of words and tumult of opinions” about religion. He asked himself, “Who of all these parties are right. . . . If any one of them be right, which is it, and how shall I know it?” (Joseph Smith—History 1:10). Then he read James 1:5. And Joseph, this courageous fourteen-year-old, chose to “do as James directs, that is, ask of God” (Joseph Smith—History 1:13).

Joseph went into the woods near his family home to offer his first vocal prayer to God. He had barely begun to offer up the desires of his heart when a power of darkness so overcame him that he could not speak (see Joseph Smith—History 1:15). This was not an imaginary power but the power of some actual being from an unseen world trying to destroy him. Joseph later testified: “[After] exerting all my powers to call upon God . . . , I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me. . . . When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*” (Joseph Smith—History 1:16–17; emphasis in original).

From that day forward, the heavens were open again. Joseph learned line upon line, precept upon precept. He studied the scriptures, and he communed with angels. Apostles and prophets from ancient times came to confer on him sacred priesthood authority and keys. Heavenly messengers taught him the ordinances of everlasting life and the mysteries of the kingdom of God. Revelation flowed from on high.

Evidences of this revelation are many. Among them is the Book of Mormon, which Joseph Smith translated by the gift and power of God. Through him the Church of Jesus Christ was established again on the earth with the same structure and the same priesthood authority the Lord’s Church had anciently.

In a revelation given in 1831, the Lord stated the reasons for this Restoration:

Wherefore, I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments;

And also gave commandments to others, that they should proclaim these things unto the world. . . .

That faith also might increase in the earth;
That mine everlasting covenant might be established;

That the fulness of my gospel might be proclaimed by the weak and the simple unto the ends of the world. (D&C 1:17–18, 21–23)

Having the fulness of the gospel should not lead any of us to feel arrogant or harbor a holier-than-thou attitude. We should simply be grateful with all our hearts for the truth restored and for the privilege of bringing this truth and these eternal blessings to our brothers and sisters.

What a great time to live in! We are living in the dispensation of the fulness of times. The gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored. Future generations will look upon you with gratitude and appreciation for how you used your opportunities.

Do not fear! Trust the Lord! Be courageous! Seek learning! Have faith!

Brothers and sisters, let us never be ashamed to testify of this wonderful Restoration, the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, “for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Romans 1:16).

Let us never be ashamed to testify that Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God and that we have a living prophet today.

The keys of the kingdom of God have been restored again, and they are held by Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ. The President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, who is the senior Apostle, holds all the keys necessary to preside over all the organizational and ordinance work of the Church. President Gordon B. Hinckley has this authority today. He stands as the prophet of God—the most recent in an unbroken succession of prophets and Apostles from Joseph Smith to our own day. This is my apostolic witness of the reality of the Restoration and the truthfulness of this great work.

May God bless you and your loved ones, today and always, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. **RE**

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Notes

1. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957), 4:588.

2. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses* (London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1854–86), 9:141; see also *Deseret News Weekly*, October 1861, 177.

3. Smith, *History of the Church*, 3:381.

4. Martin Luther, “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God,” *Hymns* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), no. 68.

5. Gordon B. Hinckley, *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 667.

6. Smith, *History of the Church*, 5:259.

7. Howard W. Hunter, “The Gospel—A Global Faith,” *Ensign*, November 1991, 19.

8. Orson F. Whitney, in Conference Report, April 1921, 32–33.

9. Statement of the First Presidency regarding God’s Love for All Mankind, February 15, 1978; included in James E. Faust, “Communion with the Holy Spirit,” *Ensign*, May 1980, 12.

10. Eusebius Pamphilus, *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Christian Frederick Crusé (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1955), 40; book 1, chapter 10.

11. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 118; book 3, chapter 32.