

Eternal Values

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(Mormon 9:19).*

Our values should be based on the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Introduction

Our values determine the importance we assign to everything in our lives. They dictate our attitudes and actions toward our families, our friends, our material possessions, our Church activities, and all other facets of life.

Sister Barbara Winder said, “Our values in life influence everything we do with our time, energy, resources, and how we interact with others. In short they give direction to our life. . . .

“Every day we are confronted with circumstances and choices that test our personal values and require decisions that will either strengthen or weaken these values. We must evaluate influences on our values and goals” (“Righteous Standard,” devotional address given at Brigham Young University, 12 Nov. 1985).

Our values can be dictated by the unstable and transitory standards of the world or they can be determined by the unchanging and eternal standards of the Lord. Because we sometimes fail to be committed to Christ-centered values, our lives are subject to uncertainty, confusion, and error. We are often influenced by the shifting philosophies of men and are perplexed by diverse and unsure values.

Elder Royden G. Derrick explained, “[The Lord] says, speaking of mankind, ‘For they have strayed from mine ordinances, and have broken mine everlasting covenant.’ Then he says: ‘They seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way’ [D&C 1:16]. That is so true. When everyone makes his own determination of what is right and what is wrong, we have so many different value systems that we could not possibly be one, as Jesus Christ commissioned us to be. . . .

“How many people do we have throughout the world who attempt to make up their own rules, set their own value systems,

and determine what is right and what is wrong regarding the true philosophy and gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ?" ("The True Value System," in *Devotional Speeches of the Year, 1979* [Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1980], p. 111).

This multiplicity of worldly directions and values is doubtless a source of confusion in our lives with which we must learn to deal. While other people and ideologies can influence our values, every individual is responsible for the values he adopts and practices.

Eternal Values Do Not Change

Regardless of the influences of the world, we as Latter-day Saints should understand that when we choose values consistent with the gospel of Jesus Christ, we will have a sure foundation for our lives, a foundation of eternal, unchanging values.

It is common knowledge that solid foundations are essential to stability in the construction of buildings. Anciently, large stones were used to provide this needed stability. The large stones joining corners were known as cornerstones, which furnished additional support. President Gordon B. Hinckley explained that the Church is built on solid cornerstones: "We have basic cornerstones on which this great latter-day church has been established by the Lord and built, 'fitly framed together.' . . .

"These great God-given gifts are the unshakable cornerstones which anchor The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, as well as the individual testimonies and convictions of its members: (1) the reality and the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God; (2) the sublime vision given the Prophet Joseph Smith of the Father and the Son, ushering in the dispensation of the fulness of times; (3) the Book of Mormon as the word of God speaking in declaration of the divinity of the Savior; and (4) the priesthood of God divinely conferred to be exercised in righteousness for the blessing of our Father's children.

"Each of these cornerstones is related to the other, each connected by a foundation of Apostles and prophets, all tied to the chief cornerstone, Jesus Christ. . . .

". . . [This Church] is immovably established on a foundation of Apostles and prophets, with cornerstones of unshakable firmness put in place by him for the accomplishment of his eternal purposes, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1984, pp. 67, 70; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1984, pp. 51, 53).

We must therefore consider these vital questions: How can a knowledge that Jesus Christ is the Son of God give our values an

eternal perspective? How can the Prophet Joseph Smith's vision of the Father and the Son help us understand eternal precepts? How can the scriptures, witnessing of the divinity of the Savior, give us insight into everlasting principles? How can the priesthood bless our lives as we seek for those values which are unchanging? The answers to these questions can teach us that there are eternal principles and values upon which we can base our own. We must base our personal values on gospel values to establish a firm foundation for our lives. Because we can look to gospel standards for our unshakable and eternal values, we need not be bewildered by uncertainty. We can rely with assurance upon those standards based on gospel principles.

President David O. McKay emphatically states: "No matter what physical, material, political, industrial and other changes may occur, no matter how theories of governments may change; how fashions, customs, and ideals may be accepted and abandoned, there remain unchanging verities eternally operative in the universe, ever contributing to the spiritual progress, to the peace, to the happiness of the individual and of the race.

"With this recognition would come certain fundamental questions, the answer to which can be found only by reference to eternal truth. . . .

"The world needs fundamental truths that never change—the eternal truths of the Gospel of Jesus Christ" (*Stepping Stones to an Abundant Life* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1971], pp. 238–39, 246).

A Book of Mormon prophet gave similar assurance: "And behold, I say unto you [God] changeth not; if so he would cease to be God; and he ceaseth not to be God" (Mormon 9:19).

Eternal Values Provide Guidance for Our Lives

Through the scriptures and the words of the living prophets we are provided with the basis for the guidance we need to determine our values. President Marion G. Romney declared: "By revelation the Lord has set forth for our guidance eternal principles of truth. . . .

"Contained [in the scriptures] are principles of eternal truth which, if adhered to, will guide men safely through mortality and into life eternal. . . .

"The world at large has not accepted these revealed principles as guides for their living, but we, the members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, have so accepted them. It therefore seems to me that everything we do should be done in

light of our understanding and testimony of these eternal principles" ("Eternal Principles of Truth," *Ensign*, Dec. 1978, p. 3).

One of our scriptural guidelines is found in Moroni 7:16–17, where we are told that each of us has been given the Spirit of Christ so that we can know good from evil. This passage tells us that we "may know with a perfect knowledge" that good is of God and that the devil "persuadeth no man to do good." Such teachings as recorded in the scriptures and as spoken by the living prophets provide a sure guide upon which we can base our personal values and our decisions and actions.

After we have established our values based on gospel principles, we must apply them to our lives in practical ways. The daily application of our gospel knowledge is an unrelenting challenge. We must ask ourselves how we will apply what we know to how we live. Elder M. Russell Ballard has questioned: "Have you set your priorities? Are they clearly defined in your minds? Were they clear when you got up this morning, and will they be clear tomorrow morning and each morning? . . .

" . . . We are faced at this moment with the question 'Is it worth it?' Is it worth keeping all of the commandments? Is it worth being morally clean? Is it worth living the Word of Wisdom? Is it worth being honest, honest in your work . . . and in all your dealings? Is it worth paying your tithes and offerings? Is it worth serving faithfully wherever you are called?"

Elder Ballard offers a straightforward reply to these questions: "As we understand a few of the insights the Lord has given to us in the scriptures, we can easily come to the conclusion, 'Yes, it is worth it.' . . .

"Each moment of each day we are faced with making decisions based on the training we have received in our homes and through the Church. The guidelines are clear, and our vision should be riveted on the long-range goal of qualifying to inherit the highest degree of glory in the celestial kingdom" ("Is It Worth It?" *New Era*, June 1984, pp. 39–40).

One sister has asked some questions about our priorities: "As we look at ourselves, then, what should our primary concerns be? They are not the ones we often hear today: Should I be jogging five miles a day? Am I a perfect housekeeper? Should I have a career? Am I really fulfilled? These concerns are clearly secondary. Our primary concerns must be these: Do I know that Jesus is the Christ, the literal Son of God? Do I believe and follow the living prophets? How do I respond to the challenges of daily life? Am I usually trying to please the Lord, other people, or myself?"

(Sydney Smith Reynolds, "Teaching Values—A Mother's Commission," *Ensign*, Mar. 1984, p. 22).

Elder Boyd K. Packer has observed: "Our lives are made up of thousands of everyday choices. Over the years these little choices will be bundled together and show clearly what we value" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1980, p. 29; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1980, p. 21).

We cannot anticipate all of the penetrating questions that we must undoubtedly answer at some time in our lives. Without the guidance of gospel-based values, our search for such answers will be difficult. Questions that arise in times of adversity can be difficult to answer—such as those that have to do with disappointment, rejection, failure, accident, illness, abuse, unemployment, family discord, other kinds of contention and dispute, financial loss, reversals of anticipated plans, or deaths of loved ones. Questions about how to give of ourselves when others have deep needs can be difficult—such as those that have to do with giving of our time, abilities, energy, and means in circumstances that might be inconvenient or seemingly impossible and that offer no apparent reward or sense of fulfillment.

Not all of our decisions and tests of our values have to do with adversity and trial, but most of us will experience exacting tests of our values. Gospel guidelines will help us meet the challenges of those tests. By following gospel guidelines, we can also demonstrate eternal values in the daily functions of our lives. We can demonstrate these values in how we greet each day, how we interact with family members and friends, how we care for our bodies, how we meet our responsibilities at home and in our employment. We can demonstrate the influence of eternal values in how we choose our friends, how we use our leisure time, how we spend our money, how we use and care for property, how we respect civil law and authority, how we spend the Sabbath day, and how we serve in the Church and elsewhere.

When we base our daily thoughts and actions on eternal values, we can enrich the lives of many and progress toward goals that are eternal.

Eternal Values Help Us Become Christlike

When we allow God's eternal values to take effect in our lives, we are patterning our lives after the Savior. Elder William R. Bradford said, "The Master Jesus Christ has set the pattern in all things. He has called all men to follow his pattern with this decree:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, this is my gospel; and ye know the things that ye must do in my church; for the works which ye

have seen me do that shall ye also do; for that which ye have seen me do even that shall ye do' [3 Nephi 27:21]" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1976, p. 145; or *Ensign*, May 1976, p. 97).

Elder Mark E. Petersen also admonished us to pattern our lives after the life of the Savior: "The meaning of complete salvation is that we become like the Savior in word and thought and deed. We can measure our progress toward salvation merely by determining how Christlike we are. If we are not becoming more like Him in our everyday living, we are not advancing toward salvation as we should.

"Becoming Christlike is a matter of daily spiritual growth. As a flower develops from a seed, as a mature adult develops from a tiny child, so we can grow spiritually day by day, eventually into Christlike personalities. . . .

"Jesus the Savior is the supreme example of how we should build our souls.

" 'What manner of men ought ye to be?' He asked, and then replied, 'Even as I am.' (3 Ne. 27:27.)

"Becoming like Him is not something we can achieve overnight. It is a lifelong and an eternal process, nothing less. In every hour and every day we must strive to become like Him" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1982, p. 21; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, p. 16).

Our challenge to pattern our lives after the Savior is indeed a lifelong process. It requires that we strive to become like him. His values, unchanging and eternal, must ultimately become our values.

Conclusion

Worldly values change from time to time, but the Lord's values never change. They are eternal. We must assess our personal values and place them within the framework of the gospel. Gospel truths, as taught by the scriptures and by the living prophets, provide a firm foundation on which we can base our personal values. If we follow gospel guidelines, the Lord will help us as we try to live our lives in a Christlike way.

Elder Derrick reminded us: "When we understand the Lord Jesus Christ, we can understand our potential better than we ever did before. . . .

". . . He sets the standards and makes the rules by which we live. He established the true value system; and if we will conform thereto and assist in building his kingdom in his way, we will receive rewards far beyond our fondest hopes and dreams" ("The True Value System," p. 114).

Additional Resources for Home and Family Use

Joe J. and Barbara K. Christensen, "Nurturing Gospel Values at Home," *Ensign*, Oct. 1984, pp. 32–35.

"Handbook for Families: Teaching Children to Govern Themselves," *Ensign*, June 1986, pp. 36–37.

Ardeth G. Kapp, "Stand Up, Lead Out," *New Era*, Nov. 1985, pp. 22–26.

Spencer W. Kimball, "Render to God," *Messages from the Presidents*, audiovisual resource (PMSI0847; cassette 7, side 2; 11:06).