


Sermonettes for Chaplains

A Compilation of Short Sermons from
"Music and the Spoken Word"

A silhouette of a chaplain in profile, wearing a cap and standing at a pulpit, set against a warm, golden sunset sky. The chaplain's hands are resting on the pulpit.

Brandt Peacock

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from “Music and the Spoken Word”

Authored and Compiled by Brandt Peacock

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Introduction

“Music and the Spoken Word,” a weekly radio and television program, has most likely influenced millions of listeners over the course of its history. With its fluid sermon style and narrative approach, this weekly broadcast has encouraged, and inspired many with its messages. Military chaplains, like the program Music and the Spoken Word, also strive to nurture individuals, especially those in the Armed Forces concerning their spiritual journey. To this end, this project was developed to give chaplains sermonette resources. Sermonettes from Music and the Spoken Word have been compiled for easy chaplain access in sermon preparation, and for materials and ideas for devotions, homilies, and preaching resources.

Military Chaplains are frequently asked by service members, staff, and commanding officers to give brief devotionals, spiritual thoughts, and sermons. This work is a compilation of two-hundred sermons from “Music and the Spoken Word” organized into categories drawn from “The Ecumenical Daily Appointment Planner.”¹ These categories were selected based on major events; holidays, holy days, and other topics the compiler felt would be applicable to military chaplains. “Music and the Spoken Word,” messages provide a unique opportunity for Military Chaplains and especially LDS Chaplains to utilize a message from their own faith background that is specifically tailored to fit a diverse Armed Forces audience. The messages are ecumenical in nature and can be delivered to a wide range of service members either verbatim or in selected portions, depending on the needs of the audience. The chaplain may also be able to draw from specific quotes or stories in the development of their messages. All sermonettes from Music & the Spoken Word are under copyright of Bonneville Communications © and the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, 1980-2014. Each of these messages is under copyright protection and should be cited and acknowledged in any speaking, preaching or writing done.

How to Use These Materials

This booklet has a table of contents that is laid out in six sections: Civic and Military Holidays, Protestant/Ecumenical Observance Days, Christian Feast Days, Jewish Holy Days, Additional Important Dates, and Other. Within each of these sections are sub-headings that include the actual holiday, event, or themed message. The actual sermonette titles are listed below each sub-heading in the table of contents, and can be found at the top of each individual page.

The formatting of the booklet follows a similar format of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints manual, “Preach My Gospel.”² Each of the six main sections is introduced by a title page that includes the title name, e.g., Civic and Military Holiday—a single colored background, and a picture. These pictures were taken either from the public domain or from the personal collection of the compiler. Each of the six main sections was assigned a specific color (matching the title page of the section) which runs across the top of each page. In the corner of this colored header is written the name of the section in a white colored font. Directly below this header is a small tab (1 ¼ inch) that lists the subheading titles of the section. The subheading titles listed in these tabs have been organized in alphabetical order, as opposed to the chronological order listed in the “The Ecumenical Daily Appointment Planner.” These tabs have also been assigned a specific color and remain the same color throughout the whole section. Directly below this small tab is a “Notes” section that is also (1 ¼ inch) thick and runs vertically down the entire page. Horizontal lines have been provided for easier note taking purposes. A lighter, transparent shade of the original section color has been placed over the notes section to give more color and variety to the page. The sermon title is located in bold lettering at the top of the page, and the actual body of sermon texts follows directly below it in block paragraph form.

The table of contents and the clear marking of sections by color should make it easy for chaplains to find a particular sermon in a fast and efficient manner. The notes section can be used to write down personal thoughts, sermon ideas, and sermon outlines, dates on which the sermon was preached, or any other use the chaplain sees fit.

The sixth section of this work entitled “Other,” was not taken from the “The Ecumenical Daily Appointment Planner,” and represents topics that the compiler thought would be beneficial to chaplains in their ministry. These sections are also listed in alphabetical order and are only a handful of a greater number of topics that could have also been included.

1. Ecumenical Appointment Planner, (St. Louis, MO: Catholic Supply, 2014).
2. Preach My Gospel, (Salt Lake City, Utah: Published by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2004), 225.

Historical Overview

History of “Music and the
Spoken Word”

History of Music and the Spoken Word

In 1929 KSL radio offered their first radio broadcast of, *Music and the Spoken Word*. While many scholars have written about this historical program, including its presenters, much of their emphasis has been placed on the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. While this is an essential component of this program, it will be the purpose of this literature review to examine *The Spoken Word* portion of the broadcast, identify the official announcers and explore their unique preaching styles, forms, preparations and contributions to this world famous program. This historical overview will also explore the historical underpinnings of Christian preaching, specifically the creation and metamorphosis of the sermon throughout history.

Music and the Spoken Word has now been broadcast for well over eighty years. Over the course of this time there have been three official announcers: Richard L. Evans, J. Spencer Kinard, and Lloyd D. Newell. Each of these presenters has spent significant time in this calling. It is only natural that each would have his own way of developing the sermonettes that make up *The Spoken Word* portion of the broadcast. Each announcer’s contribution to this program is evidence of their faith and willingness to make the program a success, and an uplifting experience for those who watch and listen. It is also a witness of their faithful and diligent service to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The first unofficial announcer of *Music and the Spoken Word*, Edward B. Kimball, (known as Ted), was only nineteen years old when he was asked by his father, Edward P. Kimball, a Tabernacle Organist, to announce which songs the choir would sing.¹ The first broadcast took place on July 15, 1929. Of this event Lloyd Newell explained, “KSL ran a wire from its control room to an amplifier more than a block away in the Tabernacle, where the only microphone KSL owned had been suspended from the Tabernacle ceiling to capture the sound of the choir.”² Ted Kimball’s job was merely to announce the songs. This was the first form of “the spoken word” in this broadcast. To some it may seem a simple thing, but it took more effort than one would think. The single microphone that hung from the Tabernacle ceiling had to be located above the choir, so as to get the best sound clarity from the choir. Lloyd Newell continues, “Ted Kimball. . . climbed a fifteen-foot stepladder to speak into the microphone and announced the songs. NBC headquarters informed a KSL engineer by telegraph when to start the program. Hand signals to Ted Kimball

marked the cue to begin. The microphone was live throughout the broadcast, and Ted stayed perched on the ladder for the duration of the broadcast.”³³ To stand quietly on a fifteen-foot ladder for the whole program could not have been the most comfortable of experiences.

Ted Kimball was preparing for church missionary service and was soon called to labor in the mission field. At nineteen years old, it is hard to imagine that Ted knew the impact and magnitude this program would have on the Church, and on the world. He was there at the conception of something truly special. Speaking about announcers Lloyd Newell explained, “Several others followed until June of 1930, when a twenty-four-year-old announcer from KSL, Richard L. Evans, was chosen to announce the music for the program.”³⁴

Richard L. Evans was born on March 23, 1906 in Salt Lake City, Utah. His early life was filled with trials. Only months after he was born, his father was killed in a streetcar accident. His mother was left to raise nine children by herself.³⁵ When Richard was eleven years old he suffered a significant trauma. While “playing ‘war’”³⁶ with some of his neighborhood friends, he was shot in the left eye with a BB gun. His eye could not be saved and had to be removed. Richard L. Evans, Jr. explained the impact this event had on his father. He wrote, “For a time he could not accept the permanence of what happened, and he implored the Lord to restore his eye. He anguished, too, over what effect the loss would have on his life.”³⁷ He rarely disclosed this event to others unless he found that it would show some kind of empathy or understanding.

Some may wonder what these tragic events have to do with Elder Evans unique style as the announcer of *Music and the Spoken Word*. Latter-day Saint theology places a premium on the worthiness and moral standing of the person preaching. Doctrine and Covenants 42:14 states, “And the Spirit shall be given unto you by the prayer of faith; and if ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach.”³⁸ The words “teaching” and “preaching” are often used interchangeably in Latter-day Saint doctrine. In this way, the speaker has a moral obligation to be worthy of, and to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit before delivering a message. Regarding his father, Richard Jr. wrote, “Actually his accident may well have sparked a spiritual growth he could otherwise have lacked. He was naturally gifted with keen intellect and unusual powers of oral and written expression. At twenty one he wrote in his diary that, though he had always had to work hard and under handicaps,

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he had always been able to come out on top in school or in any other desired endeavor, and he confessed that he found it hard at times to be as humble as he knew he ought to be. The loss of his eye undoubtedly helped him to develop greater humility before God and greater compassion and understanding for people, a deeper empathy for others who needed strength to overcome their sorrow or discouragement.”⁹

The struggles of his life seemed to echo from his soul to those who heard his broadcast. Richard Jr. continued, “Oppressed by various burdens, many of his broadcast listeners sensed that here was someone who had also carried a load and learned how to do it without complaint.”¹⁰ The power and even style that Richard L. Evans emanated through his speaking was a product of his own personal experiences, spirituality, and convictions.

Part of Richard L. Evans’ personal experience in writing messages came while serving as a missionary in the British Mission. While serving in the east midlands of England, Richard met with Elder James E. Talmage of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Under the instruction of Elder Talmage, Richard began to write articles for the British Mission magazine, *The Millennial Star*.¹¹ He was a very competent writer and through hard work and the tutelage of Elder Talmage, Richard achieved the position of associate editor.

After his mission Richard returned to his studies at the University of Utah and soon after applied to be an announcer for KSL radio station. He was given the job and, “In the spring of 1930, only about seven months after he began working at KSL. . . he was given a new assignment as part of his station responsibilities at the station—announcing the weekly nationwide Tabernacle Choir radio program which had begun broadcasting. . . only about ten months earlier.”¹²

This was the start of a long and successful relationship with *Music and the Spoken Word* that would span forty-one years. During these years he won best radio broadcaster of the year for 1933,¹³ was called as a member of the quorum of seventy at age 32 in 1938¹⁴, and was called as a member of the quorum of the Twelve Apostles at the age of 47 in 1953.¹⁵ He also helped bring “*Music and the Spoken Word* to a television audience in 1962.”¹⁶ He fulfilled these and many other duties while still announcing this weekly broadcast.

As the first official announcer and voice of *Music and the Spoken Word*, Richard had incredible influence to shape and

develop the program. Lloyd Newell expressed, “Truly, he was the individual who created *Music and the Spoken Word* as we know it today. His indelible contribution is still imprinted on each broadcast.”¹⁷

Richard L. Evans started his term as announcer much the same way Ted Kimball had left it. Lloyd Newell explains, “When he began as announcer, Evans simply announced the titles of compositions and gave the station identification as his predecessors had done.”¹⁸ Early on in this process of announcing, Richard made a change that directly affected how the *Spoken Word* portion was presented. This seemingly simple change would grow and progress over his lifetime and develop the form that the program continues to follow today. Newell continues, “In time he began to relate the title of a song to some point of philosophy or moral profundity. These short thoughts flowed from the music and evolved into two- to three-minute nondenominational sermonettes.”¹⁹ Richard, Jr. also explained the change and progression that occurred in those early years, he wrote, “Behind the scenes he was constantly analyzing the program and, especially during its early years, he made many changes as a result. Before he joined the Choir broadcast, the musical numbers had been announced in a conventional manner. But he began to weave through the music a moral and spiritual thread of spoken messages which soon became an inseparable part of the program. He evaluated and revised the format for years before arriving at what seemed right to him regarding the length and approach of his ‘Spoken Word’ comment.”²⁰

These messages were well received by his audiences, and Elder Evans continued to form and refine his messages over the course of his life. Part of this refining includes his writing of the most identifiable phrases from the program. Richard, Jr. wrote, “For nearly twenty years too he changed and refined the wording of the opening ‘welcome’ and the conclusion or ‘sign off’ portion of the broadcast, finally settling on the phrases that became almost his trademark throughout America: Each week he welcomed listeners with – ‘Once more we welcome you within these walls with music and the spoken word from the Crossroads of the West.’ Half an hour later he bade them farewell—‘Again we leave you within the shadows of the everlasting hills. May peace be with you, this day and always.’”²¹ These words have been used by every announcer since the death of Elder Evans. These sermonettes, meaning small sermons, were heard by millions and likely had a profound effect on the lives of many people. Elder Evans was truly

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the creator and developing force behind the actual “Spoken Word” portion of the program.

While Elder Evans’ influence on the creation of the “Spoken Word” is of great importance, his actual messages and delivery of those messages are what inspired his audiences. In his time as the announcer of the program, he gave “over 2000 of his sermonettes.”²² The creation and form of these messages was left to the discretion of Elder Evans. They were his creations and each sermon carries his imprint. Concerning the creation of these messages Elder Evans once wrote, “It has been a demanding, confining, challenging and gratifying effort to bring Music and the Spoken Word to a nationwide (and international) audience with great and meaningful music and some simple statements concerning some great and timeless truths, and the problems of people.”²³ Elder Evans ability to speak these “timeless truths” is evident in his sermonette titles. Some of these titles include: “What is Truth,” “Tolerance Without Compromise,” “Counting on Character,” and “On Beginning Where We Are.”²⁴ Richard, Jr. wrote, “Here was inspiration and motivation; nothing theoretical or academic, but a piece of practical counsel, not for some vague future time but here and now, today.”²⁵ He wanted to give hopeful and uplifting messages that might help others in their daily lives.²⁶ While continuing to reflect on his father’s sermonettes, Richard, Jr. wrote, “Simply phrased and expressed, they portrayed profound truths in a form universally understandable.”²⁷

Lloyd Newell wrote of the timeless and ecumenical nature of these sermons by saying, “His Spoken Word Messages are still having an impact today.” Lloyd Newell has also taken opportunities as the current announcer to revisit some of Elder Evans messages during the weekly broadcast.

Richard, Jr. also recalled that his father “deliberately avoided missionary-type allusions.”²⁸ Elder Evans was not vying for more converts to join the Church through these sermons. The sermons were specifically prepared for a wide audience. This fact was recognized on a national level when, at the time of his death, *Time Magazine* reported, “The show was not considered a proselytizing effort, and Evans’ low-key sermonettes stuck to ethics, rather than religious doctrine. As a result, many of the show’s faithful listeners did not realize that Evans was a Mormon: They considered themselves followers of ‘Richard Evans’ church.”²⁹ The fact that many of his listeners put him in a pastor-like role, and were not aware of his religious affiliation, speaks to his ability

to remain ecumenical.

Elder Evans thrived on the pressure that came from writing and delivering these small sermons. Richard, Jr. explained, "His wife, who saw and partially felt the tenseness as he ran down to the wire each week, occasionally suggested that he get a dozen or so scripts prepared in advance so as to avoid always facing a deadline. He replied that he had little time to prepare for the broadcast and that he worked better under pressure. So he purposely kept the pressure on."³⁰ Richard Jr. further explains the preparations his father made while being under such pressure. He wrote, "The preparation consisted of dictating his thoughts, having them transcribed, dictating a revised version, boiling them down. He repeated the process as often as necessary to compress the material to three minutes of air time or somewhat less. . . . Regardless of when he began to prepare his Spoken Word comment, he continued to revise and edit it right up to broadcast time."³¹ J. Spencer Kinard went on to explain that, "While the program was still only a radio program, he would continue to make corrections throughout the whole program, when TV came along he couldn't do that anymore because people could see him."³²

Perhaps one of the reasons for Elder Evans' last minute preparations and constant revisions was his belief that there was a unique feeling to every week. His son recounts, "Furthermore, the 'feeling in the air' at the time, occasionally in relation to a national event, was more likely to inspire the comment, the nuance of thought appropriate to the occasion, than a leisurely advance preparation could have done."³³ In this way, Elder Evans tried weekly to connect with his audience in real time. This unique style and preparation were part of his creative process. This style worked for him and helped him become perhaps the most well known announcer in the history of *Music and the Spoken Word*.

On November 1, 1971, Elder Evans unexpectedly passed away at the age of 65. His messages continue to live on, and are a source of faith and inspiration to many.

The death of Elder Evans left *Music and the Spoken Word* without an announcer. J. Allen Jensen, who had previously acted as a substitute for Elder Evans, continued in his stead for a short time while auditions were held for a permanent replacement. J. Spencer Kinard was a thirty-one year old reporter working for KSL at the time and had been covering all of the different "Mormon events, including the death of Richard L. Evans."³⁴ During this time, Paul Evans approached Kinard and asked him if he was

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interested in doing the *Spoken Word*. Kinard replied that he had not really thought about it. Kinard expressed, “Paul Evans turned my name in unbeknownst to me, and in January of 1972 I got a call from President Gordon B. Hinckley asking me to audition.”³⁵ When Spencer expressed to President Hinckley that it would be scary to replace Elder Evans, President Hinckley replied, “Spence you’ve been scared before, you’ll get over it.” Spencer agreed to audition and was then instructed to bring one of his own sermons and one of Richard L. Evans sermons to read at the audition.

The auditions went well and Spencer felt comfortable because he knew the production crew from working with them at KSL, but by February he had still not heard anything back from the decision committee. Spencer continues,

I got a call saying that Allen Jensen had announced that he would not be doing *The Spoken Word* anymore and that someone else had been chosen. I wanted to know who was going to do it because as a reporter, I wanted the story. I went to Arch Madsen who was President of Bonneville International and told him that I wanted the story and wanted to find out who it was going to be. Arch Madsen called N. Eldon Tanner of the First Presidency and told Elder Tanner that I wanted to know who was going to be the next announcer. Arch looked at me and handed me the phone. I thought, ‘I’m either going to get the story or get chewed out. President Tanner said, ‘we want you to do the spoken word starting next Sunday.’³⁶

In light of this life changing news Spencer said, “My heart sank and I couldn’t report the story because it was me.” That Sunday Spencer went to the Tabernacle and received a blessing from Elder Tanner, but was never formally set apart to act in that capacity. He then, for the first time, announced *Music and the Spoken Word*. He used his audition piece entitled, “You are what you think.” Of this experience he humbly expressed, “Here was this thirty-one year old, wet behind the ears reporter, stepping in for a beloved Apostle. It was scary.”³⁷ Kinard soon received a letter from the First Presidency officially asking him to be the announcer. Of this letter, Kinard said, “They spelled my name wrong, and it appeared that they didn’t know if I was the right one or not. The letter also said that they wanted me to take the assignment on a

somewhat temporary basis."³⁸

In the summer of 1972 the Prophet Joseph Fielding Smith passed away and Harold B. Lee became the 11th President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Spencer Kinard recalled, "I had set up an interview with Harold B. Lee. President Lee said, 'Spence, do you know how you got called to do the spoken word? There was a committee to look at those audition tapes. I was the chair of that committee. We looked at all the video tapes. I told everybody to take out a piece of paper and write down the name of who you think should do the spoken word. Spence, the same name was written on every paper.'³⁹ The committee had agreed unanimously that Spence Kinard was supposed to be the announcer.

Concerning the way that he would perform the spoken word, President Hinckley instructed him, "We don't want you to start over; we want you to pick up where Elder Evans left off."⁴⁰ With this in mind, Spencer Kinard began to write the weekly messages. At first he wrote every spoken word message, as Elder Evans had done. He employed the help of an editor, who also happened to edit all of Neal A. Maxwell's written material. Of this early writing process Spencer recalled, "I would draft or write the *Spoken Word* during the week, and I would type it up and get a copy to the editor and he would edit it and send it back to me. I would usually get it back on Friday. We didn't have copiers or email and so it was a more time consuming process."⁴¹

The weekly routine of writing these spiritual messages seemed to contrast with his life as a news reporter. Spencer expressed, "I was covering murder and mayhem Monday thru Friday and preaching peace and love on Sunday. I wasn't really sure at that time what I was going to do for a career."⁴² While doing the continuity announcing for the April General Conference, Arch Madsen went to the basement of the Tabernacle and asked Spencer if he would accept the position of Corporate News Director for KSL radio and TV. Spencer of course accepted the job offer. Of this event Spencer said, "Within 6 weeks I had started doing the *Spoken Word* and became corporate news director. I kept both jobs for the next 19 years."⁴³

Of his actual sermon writing Spencer expressed, "I patterned my sermons after those of Richard L. Evans because he was the only one who had ever done the thing. . . As a reporter I covered Richard Evans as an Apostle and as President of Rotary International. I never asked him about the *Spoken Word* because I

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never thought I would be doing that.”⁴⁴

Although he patterned his sermons after those of Elder Evans, Spencer had his own unique way of preparing his messages. He explained, “I started with prayer then I would just look at any source for an idea. I would look at quote books, I read the news, and I looked at the music the choir would be singing. Often I would look at the music and an idea would come to me. For instance maybe the choir was going to sing ‘Sunrise Sunset,’ I would start thinking about that and then I would think, ‘I should do something on relationships, children, or growing older. Then I would look through quote books to find a quote that might be foundational for that subject.”⁴⁵

While Spencer was able to develop ideas and find quotes, the actual writing process was often more difficult. Of this difficulty Spencer said, “I would say a prayer, put a piece of paper in the type writer, put my hands on the keys and then say, ok Lord. Nothing came and so I had to start really studying and searching. It would come to me later as I worked at it. I would think, ‘I have never had an idea like this in my life. It was a painful process. You really have to work at it.”⁴⁶ Spencer continued in this “painful process” for five years. He expressed, “Between *The Spoken Word*, the news and my job, I was burning out so we finally decided to get writers to help me.”⁴⁷ Two writers were initially hired to help him, and three others eventually joined, bringing the total to five. Each writer was assigned a different week and they continued to rotate on a scheduled basis. When asked if bringing in writers had diluted his style, Kinard expressed, “I would collaborate with the writers and then take their piece and rewrite it to fit my style. Some of them didn’t like it. Some of them were very proud of their work. It worked for me though and so there was never great deviation from what I originally wrote or what I did as a rewrite. I stayed with a moral values type of theme. There is a lot on families, prayer, obviously the holidays, basic values.”⁴⁸ These themes are further illustrated in Spencer’s book, “A Time for Reflection: from the Spoken Word.” The book includes themes such as: enjoying life, happiness, success, adversity, faith, prayer, love and many others.⁴⁹

Like Elder Evans, Kinard believed that he was supposed to write an ecumenical message that could be enjoyed by people of many different faiths. He was never forced to produce a certain type of message. Speaking to this point, he expressed, “Nobody ever saw the writer or the editor I worked with. Nobody ever told

me what to say or not to say, or asked to read a script before we went on the air."⁵⁰ It was his decision of what to say and he deliberately wrote his messages to appeal to a wide audience. Kinard also stated, "We don't preach just a Mormon message, we are not diverse from Mormon thought, but it is not Mormon doctrine. It's inspirational thought that anyone can use for any religion. The things I did were clearly Christian. I never went contrary to any LDS teaching or church doctrine. Even those things that were clearly Christian were relatable to all Christians. The other messages could be related to people of all religions." This precedent had been set by Elder Evans over the course of his forty one years as announcer of the broadcast

Spencer Kinard continued to write his own sermonettes on occasion, but mainly used the process of employing writers and then adapting the writings to fit his style and voice. He continued as the announcer of *Music and the Spoken Word* until 1990 when he resigned after eighteen years of service. His unique talents and abilities helped to carry on the legacy that Elder Evans had started. Lloyd Newell expressed, "As broadcast outlets expanded across the country during Spence Kinard's eighteen years of service, more stations began to carry *Music and the Spoken Word*. Meanwhile, the program continued to receive awards and strengthen its reputation as a national treasure."⁵¹

Lloyd Newell, a talented thirty-four year-old news anchor was chosen to take the place of Spencer Kindard. He had previously been asked to "audition for the position of Spence Kinard's backup."⁵² Newell recounted his own calling to become the announcer of *Music and the Spoken Word* by expressing,

In October 1990, Spence Kinard resigned from his position as announcer of Music and the Spoken Word, and I was asked by choir president Wendell Smoot to fill in for him 'until further notice.' In the meantime, the position was opened for Churchwide auditions. Hundreds of people applied, and more than seventy-five formally auditioned in front of the camera in the Tabernacle. All the while, I continued to do the weekly announcing. In January 1992, based on the recommendation of the search committee and a final decision by President Hinckley, I was officially called and set apart as the 'voice of the Spoken Word and announcer for the Tabernacle Choir.'⁵³

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Lloyd Newell was set apart to this position as his church calling. He explained, “People are surprised to find out that I’m not paid for my service.”⁵⁴ The other announcers also performed this duty as a service to the Church.

At first Lloyd Newell continued to use the different writers that had been employed to help Spencer Kinard. As time went on, he became more and more comfortable writing his own messages and the number of writers employed decreased. Newell continues to write most of his messages, but asks writers on a regular basis to write messages as well. Through his writing of these messages, Newell found his own unique style and voice and he has moved the Spoken Word into the 21st century. Given new modes and outlets of broadcast production, dissemination, and expectations, Newell’s style deviates slightly from that of his predecessors in that it is more narrative based. Speaking of this change Newell explained,

We’ve tried our hardest to stay true to the legacy and heritage of the beloved, historic broadcast, and at the same time take it into the 21st century. Also, the outlets and platforms are very different today than ten, thirty or seventy years ago. We’re now on YouTube, we live-stream the broadcast....etc. Twenty years ago the 2,000 radio and television stations that carry MSW were about 25% TV and 75% radio. Today it’s 75% TV and 25% radio. The future will bring even more interesting changes.⁵⁵

The messages of Evans and Kinard focused more on directly examining some virtue or value whereas Lloyd Newell employs the use of stories to teach a principle.

This can be seen in a short comparison of Spencer Kinard’s message entitled, “Facing Problems,”⁵⁶ and Lloyd Newell’s message entitled, “Sailing By Ash Breeze.”⁵⁷ The difference in titles is an example of this more narrative approach. Kinard’s title leaves little room for question about its contents. Newell’s title implies that there is a story behind the title. Both messages are about overcoming adversity. Kinard writes, “Ease was not promised us as one of the conditions of mortality. If we are to be happy, it must be despite the fact that life presents challenges—not by fooling ourselves that someday they will go away.”⁵⁸ In this way the subject is directly addressed and is made explicit by the author.

Part of Lloyd Newell's message reads, "In the days when sailors depended upon wind to carry them to their destinations, it was not uncommon to hear that someone was 'sailing by ash breeze.'" The phrase referred to the fact that when winds died out, sailors often progressed toward their destination by rowing. Oars at the time, were made of ash wood; therefore, the term 'sailing by ash breeze' meant progressing by one's own toil and labor."⁵⁹ Newell's approach seems more implicit and allows the reader to interpret the story for themselves. Both authors have used both of these styles at different times, but it appears that Newell uses, and continues to use this narrative approach more frequently. Both styles can be equally effective and meaningful to the listener.

Concerning the process by which Newell creates his *Spoken Word* messages, he expressed that he constantly listens, reads, and looks for stories. He also expressed that he has never found it hard to find material for his messages; the challenge is in the writing.⁶⁰

Another contribution during Lloyd Newell's time as announcer has been in the timing of the program and how the announcements are presented in the present age. Spence Kinard explained the changes by saying, "*The Spoken Word* is now about two and a half minutes long, when I did it, it was always three. I always announced every song, but today the announcements are grouped together. It's just a change in the pacing of the program."⁶¹ Newell's sermons are now prepared earlier than what was required of Evans or Kinard for printing, translations, and production purposes.⁶²

For the last twenty-four years Lloyd Newell has continued as the announcer of *Music and the Spoken Word* and the Tabernacle Choir. During this time the broadcast has received numerous awards and recognition on a national and international scale. Writing about these awards Lloyd Newell expressed, "Perhaps its most remarkable accomplishment is its longevity. In a world so noisy and full of distraction, *Music and the Spoken Word* is a welcome reprieve, a faithful companion, a trusted friend."⁶³

For eighty-five years *Music and the Spoken Word* has continued to broadcast to listeners around the world. This long running broadcast has only had three official announcers in the course of its history. Each announcer has brought his own unique life experience, sermon preparation, and style to the program. Their contributions and service to this program have touched the lives of thousands and continue to bring an ecumenical mes-

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sage to people from all walks of life. Richard L. Evans set the standard for how the *Spoken Word* was written and delivered. J. Spencer Kinard continued Evan’s legacy while also making his own unforgettable contributions of voice, speaking style, and sermon development. Lloyd D. Newell continues to honor the past announcers legacy, while simultaneously bringing in more current forms of preaching, while making his unique impact as writer and announcer. In all of their different approaches, they have all ended the broadcast in the same way. “Again we leave you within the shadows of the everlasting hills. May peace be with you, this day and always.”⁶⁴

The creation of *Music and the Spoken Word* is a fascinating story that depicts not only the creation of the program itself, but the style, form and personal touch of its announcers. Each announcer presented homilies (short sermons) via radio and television broadcast that sought to uplift and inspire the human heart. While this program is truly a historic treasure it is hardly the first attempt to spread the values of Christianity through preaching. It is therefore necessary to explore the historical underpinnings of Christian preaching, specifically the creation and metamorphosis of the sermon throughout history.

Preaching and the Sermonette

Countless authors in countless literary works have written and published on the subjects of preaching and homiletics.⁶⁵ The purpose of this chapter is not to show an in-depth historical account, but rather a brief survey of material in order to help the reader understand the tradition of which *Music and the Spoken Word* originated from. Some may argue that *Music and the Spoken Word* is a product of the Restoration and is therefore a new Mormon creation separate from mainstream Christianity. While the announcers of *Music and the Spoken Word* are clearly influenced by their LDS faith tradition, they are products of a Judeo-Christian world in which preaching has played a vital role. It should also be noted that throughout this chapter the words, preaching, homily, and sermon are used interchangeably.

The Bible is filled with sermons and preaching from various prophets. The New Testament of course offers us the very first Christian Preaching, because it was Christ himself who taught the people through sermons and preaching. While this may seem to be an obvious fact, scholars argue that no real preaching or sermons have survived from the New Testament. Many believe that Jesus' sermons are summaries of things he taught but not the actual sermons he gave. One scholar, O.C. Edwards explained, "Thus, while it is certain that preaching was the main form of communication employed by the founder of Christianity, none of his actual sermons are available to be studied for insight into the nature of Christian preaching."⁶⁶ Some would argue that Paul of Tarsus has filled the New Testament with sermons. Edwards continues, "Paul makes it very clear that he had a strong sense of vocation to preach to the Gentiles the gospel of Christ crucified and risen, and he nowhere gives any indication of a similar sense of vocation to write letters to distant congregations. Yet the letters are what remain and not his missionary, catechetical, and presumably liturgical sermons."⁶⁷ Scholars will continue to debate these points, but it is clear that preaching was a part of Christ's church and much can still be learned from the remnants of their sermons or letters.

Ironically, the origins of Christian preaching begin with a man named Origen. It is believed that Origen was born around 185 AD in Alexandria.⁶⁸ When Origen was only seventeen years old, his father, a devout Christian, was persecuted and ultimately killed for his belief in Jesus Christ. Origen was also almost martyred at this time but escaped with the help of his mother. With

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his father gone, Origen was left to take care of his mother and “six younger brothers.”⁶⁹ Through the generosity of others he became educated and a grammarian. His religious zeal could not be hidden and “the bishop of Alexandria, Demetrius, placed him in charge of preparing catechumens for baptism.”⁷⁰ Origen went on to write his seminal work, *On First Principles*, which is the first known attempt at creating a systematic theology. Origen’s popularity in preaching and writing grew throughout the Christian world, which brought tension between Demetrius and Origen. One scholar explained, “Such fame could not have helped relations with Demetrius and Origen’s journey to Greece via Caesarea in Palestine was, very likely this time, an attempt to scout out a new place to live.”⁷¹ Origen relocated to Caesarea where he was ordained by the Bishop of Caesarea. As a result of this new ordination he was allowed to preach.⁷²

Origen’s former experience as a grammarian influenced the way he preached. He understood that the text he was using, the Septuagint, was only a translation. In order to create a more authentic text to preach from, he turned to the Hebrew Bible and created a side-by-side translation that allowed him to correct the mistranslations in the Septuagint. In order to do this effectively while preaching, he created a coding system that allowed him to recognize words that appeared in both texts. He also included other Greek translations in this collection and it soon became known as the *Hexapla*. This ingenious creation allowed Origen exegetical license through different texts and translations.⁷³

While Origen’s scholarly knowledge was vast, he was mindful of the education level of the congregations he taught, and continually urged them towards greater knowledge. Joseph Trigg wrote,

As a teacher, Origen recognized that he was not speaking to the learned audience at the Eucharistic gathering, but, as a teacher, he also sought to make his hearers a bit more like himself by initiating them into the transformative study of Scripture. He therefore sought to provide them an example of a reverent and, above all, prayerful approach to the Bible that they could apply themselves. His preaching style was therefore ‘homiletic’ in the root sense of the word, that is, conversational.⁷⁴

This conversational form of preaching presented com-

plex spiritual ideas in a form that Origen's congregation could understand and implement in their personal lives. Most people during this time did not have the education that Origen had and they relied upon their preachers to teach them how to understand God's words.

Origen strongly believed that his preaching was meant to reveal the spiritual meaning behind the actual words of the text. Christian scholars John Franke and O.C. Edwards both labeled Origen's process as "allegorical exegesis"⁷⁵ and "allegorical interpretation."⁷⁶ Another scholar explained, "Origen's procedure was to go through a passage that had just been read and explain it, roughly verse by verse, while drawing out its moral implications."⁷⁷ Origen did not want his preaching to be a stale reading and explanation of the text. Instead he wanted his preaching to have a deep spiritual meaning and impact on the congregations that heard him. One scholar explained, "So the goal of exegesis is to expose the spirit, to translate the biblical words into a spiritual gospel, for the edification of many."⁷⁸ This form of preaching was problematic and not always popular amongst Origen's congregants. Origen himself believed in controversial doctrines and often imposed them on the text he was preaching. Some of these controversial beliefs include the idea of pre-mortal souls, and "ultimate salvation for everyone."⁷⁹

While this form of preaching was not always popular, for Origen, the idea of biblical exegesis was not just an effective way to preach, or a spiritual experience, it was also a way to know God Himself. Writing on Origen's exegetical process, Wai-Shing Chau explained, "The final goal, however, is not to know Jesus, nor even the word, but God the Father, the supreme mind, exegesis is the way of ascent."⁸⁰ For Origen, exegesis was the way that people came to understand their relationship with God, and this exegesis could be given through the preacher to the common man. While allegorical exegesis was not Origen's creation, his contribution to Christian preaching is immeasurable.⁸¹ Over two hundred of his homilies have survived to this day and continue to be analyzed by scholars and preachers.

Another key figure in the early history of preaching is Augustine of Hippo. Augustine was born in 354 A.D. in what is now modern day Algeria.⁸² He converted to Christianity, and at one point traveled to Milan and became a Catholic catechumen (one receiving instruction).⁸³ Eventually he returned to Africa and became the Bishop of Hippo Regius, which happened to be the

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second largest city in Roman occupied Africa.⁸⁴ Augustine was forty-three years old when he attained this prestigious position and he held this calling for the next thirty-five years.⁸⁵

Like Origen, Augustine was a firm believer in using allegorical exegesis in his preaching. Through the exploration of the scriptures the reader could come to understand the hidden mysteries of God. Expressing Augustine's thoughts, one scholar explained, "The Bible had been similarly 'veiled' by God in order to 'exercise' the seeker . . . only the profound man could grasp the deeper meaning, the 'spirit'."⁸⁶ In this way, Augustine believed that the scriptures could be explored over and over and new meanings and conclusions could be drawn out and revealed by the spirit. More than this, he believed that through this process a person could move from "hint to hint, each discovery opening up yet further depths."⁸⁷ The extent to these depths could not be fathomed by the human mind.

Augustine's contributions to early Christianity and early Christian preaching are astounding. While Origen set the stage for preaching, using an allegorical interpretive style, Augustine's major contribution comes in the form of one of his most famous written works. His book entitled, *De Doctrina Christiana*, more commonly referred to as *On Christian Doctrine*, or *Teaching Christian Doctrine*, is credited with being the first real text book about homiletics.⁸⁸ The first parts of this seminal work are dedicated to the art of preaching, and how to interpret the scriptures for homiletical use. Augustine explains in this work that there are "things" and "signs." "Things" are the literal part of the text and should only mean exactly what they say, while "signs" have meaning beyond the literal interpretation.⁸⁹ Augustine believed that certain signs could be ascertained from the text and allegorically expounded on while preaching. O.C Edwards explained, "So goes a fairly typical sermon by Augustine. One could have read over six and a half verses of the psalm and never thought they contained so much. Nor would they if Augustine had not been an interpreter of signs."⁹⁰ Augustine's works continue to play crucial role in understanding homiletics in early Christianity.

Both Origen and Augustine used an allegorical exegetical style of preaching in order to help their congregants discover the mysteries of the kingdom of God. This tradition continued for hundreds of years with different variations, additions, and theological purposes, but during the time of the Reformation, preaching took on a whole new meaning.

Martin Luther was born in 1483 in the town of Eisleben Germany. His father wanted him to become a lawyer, but Luther was struck by a bolt of lightning in 1505 and vowed that if God would save him, he would serve God the rest of his life.⁹¹ Luther took his vow seriously and became a monk and took his monastic vows, and eventually became a priest. Luther left the monastic life and became a professor of theology at the university in Wittenberg, and also became a preacher at a local church in Wittenberg.⁹² During his time as a professor Luther became appalled by the Catholic Church's sale of indulgences (remission of sin). He wrote his famous ninety-five theses disputing the sale of indulgences and posted it on the door of Wittenberg's castle church.⁹³ Luther's defiance would spark the Reformation and transform the history of Christianity forever. Luther continued to offer scholarly and religious ideas about reformation. He reduced the seven sacraments of the Church to only two, communion and baptism. In 1521 he appeared before the Diet of Worms and refused to retract his writings and statements that encouraged reform within the Catholic Church. Luther was excommunicated, but sought refuge in Wartburg castle and continued to spread the message of reformation.⁹⁴ This ultimately resulted in the start of the Lutheran faith.

To Luther, preaching was not simply a way to interpret the scriptures or find spiritual meaning, it was the most important thing a person could do.⁹⁵ With his focus on grace, Luther believed that preaching was more important than offering sacraments for the congregation. Luther expressed, "Therefore, whoever has the office of preaching imposed on him has the highest office in Christendom imposed on him. Afterward he may also baptize, celebrate mass, and exercise all pastoral care; or, if he does not wish to do so, he may confine himself to preaching and leave baptizing and other lower offices to others."⁹⁶ Luther also believed that preaching was even more important than praying, because prayer was a part of preaching.⁹⁷ Lest we mistake the importance that Luther has placed on preaching, he also wrote, "Where there is no office of preaching, none of the others can follow."⁹⁸ Edwards also commented, "For Luther, preaching is as fully the Word of God as the incarnate Lord and the written Scripture."⁹⁹ The weight that Luther placed on the importance of preaching is astounding. To have preaching as important as the incarnate Lord implies that preaching is not only for religious study, but also provides a means for salvation, for that is exactly what Jesus Christ provides. It also assumes that when the preacher is speaking, he is conveying the

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actual Word of God.

While it is important to understand Luther's emphasis on preaching, it may be of equal importance to know why he felt this way. Luther believed strongly in the principle of grace, and that this grace came through the power of Jesus Christ. When a person came to exercise faith in Jesus Christ they became justified and saved through their faith. This faith was not brought about by works, but by the workings of the Holy Spirit in-side each individual.¹⁰⁰ Preaching becomes essential to this mission, because if one does not know about Jesus Christ, they cannot gain faith in him and receive his redeeming grace. Luther himself explained, "For just as in legal disputes whatever judgment is passed on the basis of the reports of witnesses is arrived at by hearing alone and believed because of faith, since it cannot be known in any other way, neither by perception nor by reason, so the Gospel is received in no other way than by hearing."¹⁰¹ To be able to have the message of Jesus Christ and his redeeming grace, one must be able to hear the gospel preached to them. Another scholar explained, "This word of salvation through Christ has to be grasped as 'for me', here and now, in order for it to be effectual and the relationship with God established. Thus this word has to be preached and heard in faith." Luther believed that preaching was so important, because without it, no one would even know how to pray, be baptized, or enter into a relationship with God. Once a person receives the word of God through hearing it, they can then act in faith and become justified in Christ.

It is no surprise then that Luther's preaching centered around the topic of salvation in Christ. All of his scriptural exegesis was intended to help the congregant enter into a relationship with Christ. Scholar Wai-Shing Chau wrote, "For the mature Luther, it is generally agreed that Jesus Christ, the word of God, is the center of hermeneutics. By this Luther means that the subject matter of the entire Scripture is salvation through Christ."¹⁰² Chau continues to explain the goals of preaching by saying, "The goal of exegesis is to present this work of Christ clearly, so that through the spirit the word of the Scripture becomes the living word of God, and a living relationship is created between God and humans."¹⁰³ For Luther, the only way to gain access to the grace of God was by hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ preached and to receive it through faith.

Luther also developed a style of preaching that was unique to his time. It was similar to Origen and Augustine in that

he engaged in exegesis, but he did not look at the text word for word in order to draw out hidden meaning. Instead, Luther looked at passages of scripture and tried to find a central theme that was relevant for his congregation.¹⁰⁴ He studied the scriptures that he would preach on, and used them in a fashion that was not always orderly, but that conveyed his main point to the congregants.

Not all of the reformers agreed that a preacher's words were the actual Word of God, nor did they assign as much importance to preaching as Luther had.¹⁰⁵ Throughout the next centuries, preaching took on countless different styles, meanings, and purpose, but Luther's views on preaching have left an indelible mark on preaching and continue to influence the modern era.

Luther believed that preaching was essential to salvation, because it was the form in which people came to hear and know of Jesus Christ's gospel. In the early eighteen hundreds when America was still a young budding nation full of promise and adventure. In 1803 the United States was eager to obtain the port city of New Orleans in order to control the trade routes of the Mississippi River. While America had been in negotiations with the French for the purchase of the city of New Orleans, Napoleon grew desperate for capital to fund his military campaigns. Napoleon offered to sell all of the French owned territory at a price that America could not refuse. On April 30, 1803, the United States of America acquired 828,000 square miles west of the Mississippi River.¹⁰⁶ With this new expansion of territory, many people from the east began to flock to the west in search of new land. It was in this setting that one of America's key preaching movements occurred. Some scholars refer to this era as "The Second Great Awakening."¹⁰⁷

It was during this time of change that Americans began to feel that the old Puritan religions were no longer meeting their needs. Puritanism was very strict and required obedience to clergy, because of their education and training. More people were beginning to feel that the old traditions no longer held value, and they needed something new to meet their spiritual needs. There was also a rejection of the old Calvinistic ideas of pre-destination, and people believed that they could find salvation if they would trust in God.¹⁰⁸ The result of the changing needs of the people came in the form of revivals and camp meetings.

Some greeted these camp meetings with mixed emotions. Edwards explained, "To those who were in favor of them, they appeared God-sent. To those who opposed them, they were of

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infernally inspired. The issue at stake was whether souls would be saved or damned for all eternity.”¹⁰⁹ With an emphasis on salvation or damnation, thousands of preachers flooded the expanding American countryside in hopes of saving the souls of those moving west. There were two great movements that developed at this time: the Presbyterian movement of the south, and the Methodist movement of the more northern states. It is important to note that these two movements were not separate from each other, but had prominence in different parts of the country.¹¹⁰

The Presbyterians in the south were the first to start some of the major revivals and camp meetings. The purpose of these meetings was to provide a place where many congregants could partake of communion, but quickly turned into spiritual outpourings in the form of physical manifestations. Edwards explained, “In addition to weeping, shouting, and fainting, the physical manifestations of religious emotion were so varied that taxonomy had to be created to classify them.”¹¹¹ The preaching done at these functions was usually impromptu, and aimed at creating an emotional release in the congregants. These revivals also included multiple preachers preaching at the same time, giving exhortations and emotional appeals to be saved.¹¹² While many different denominations held revivals, the Presbyterians seemed to have the most animated and emotionally volatile worship services of the time period.

The second large movement of this time period was the Methodist movement. One scholar expressed, “Starting from scratch just prior to the Revolution, Methodism in America grew at a rate that terrified other more established denominations. By 1820 Methodist membership numbered a quarter million; by 1830 it was twice that number.”¹¹³ Edwards explained the reason for this growth by writing, “The reason for this rapid increase of Methodists is that they had the infrastructures that enabled them to grow with the westward expansion of the country.”¹¹⁴

The Methodists had two major forms of communicating their message to the people. The first was in the form of circuit riders. Circuit riders would identify pioneers who were moving west, that would be out of the reach of a formal congregation. They would find groups of these small families and arrange set times in which they could teach, pray, instruct, and read scriptures with the family members. If the preacher’s circuit was large and included many families, he might only stop to visit once a month. Other senior preachers supervised these circuit preachers and conferences

were held annually to create a sense of unity and organization.¹¹⁵ Perhaps one of the most famous of these circuit riders was Bishop Francis Asbury. The famous theologian John Wesley sent Francis Asbury from England to America for the purpose of establishing the Methodist faith. While this kind of circuit preaching was dying out in England, Francis Asbury had magnificent success and the church grew in leaps and bounds.¹¹⁶ Asbury traveled hundreds of thousands of miles, taught tens of thousands of sermons, and ordained thousands of preachers.¹¹⁷ Circuit riders were committed to bringing their brand of Christianity to the masses.

The second form of communicating the Methodist faith to the people was done through the use of camp meetings. Other denominations used camp meetings as well, but Methodists used them far more than the other sects.¹¹⁸ The camp meetings were held during the summer months when they could still be held outside. Edwards described these meetings by explaining,

The meetings would occupy a four-day weekend or sometimes a long period. The days would begin early with family prayers and breakfast, followed by a marathon of preaching that lasted into the night. Preaching rotated among the clergy present, with the better known and more accomplished taking the prime times. The intervals between sermons were filled with exhorters and the singing of emotional revival music.¹¹⁹

The meetings were long and filled with almost constant preaching. The preachers spoke extemporaneously and believed that reading from a text or script was a signal that the spirit was not working within the preacher. One scholar explained the purpose of this preaching by writing, “Most, but not all, of the sermons were evangelistic in the sense of calling upon those who heard them to escape hell and accept salvation. Yet many other sermons were preached to the converted, telling them how to live the new lives they had received.”¹²⁰ It was also common for preachers to preach against the faith beliefs of rival sects.¹²¹ Preachers used these unique camp meetings to inspire large crowds to come to Jesus and be saved, through their own flavor of religion.

Regardless of sect, one scholar wrote of this time period, “The wave of popular religious movements that broke upon the United States in the half century after independence did more to

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Christianize American society than anything before or since.”¹²² This era of American preaching was important in bringing Christianity to thousands of Americans.

This era of preaching is very important to those of the LDS faith. It was in this setting that the prophet Joseph Smith was born into. While many in his family had joined the Presbyterian faith, Joseph was sympathetic to the Methodist faith yet remained unaffiliated. Of this time Joseph wrote,

Some time in the second year after our removal to Manchester, there was in the place where we lived an unusual excitement on the subject of religion. It commenced with the Methodists but soon became general among all the sects in that region of country. Indeed, the whole district of country seemed affected by it, and great multitudes united themselves to the different religious parties, which created no small stir and division amongst the people, some crying, ‘Lo, here!’ and others, ‘Lo there!’ Some were contending for the Methodist faith, some for the Presbyterian, and some the Baptist.¹²³

Joseph visited camp meetings often and listened to the messages of these different faiths. Joseph also observed the battle between sects that ensued because of these camp meetings and the confusion felt as a result. Joseph wrote,

For, notwithstanding the great love which the converts to these different faiths expressed at the time of their conversion, and the great zeal manifested by the respective clergy, who were active in getting up and promoting this extraordinary scene of religious feeling, in order to have everybody converted, as they were pleased to call it, let them join what sect they pleased; yet when the converts began to file off, some to one party and some to another, it was seen that the seemingly good feelings of both the priests and the converts were more pretended than real; for a scene of great confusion and bad feeling ensued—priest contending against priest, and convert against convert; so that all their good feelings one for another, if they ever had any, were entirely lost in a strife of words and a contest about opinions.¹²⁴

Joseph expressed that the goal of the preachers he met was to have everybody converted, but that the different denominations seemed to argue and cause strife with each other. The hypocrisy and contention Joseph saw ultimately inspired him to inquire of the Lord concerning which faith group to join. Seeking God in sincere prayer, Joseph had a remarkable vision in which he saw God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. This remarkable vision led to Joseph's call as a prophet, and started the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ.¹²⁵ The preaching climate of Joseph's day was instrumental in his own personal search for God. It was the intent of preachers at this time to save souls and gain converts. While Joseph's spiritual journey would lead him away from mainstream Protestantism, the Church he restored to the earth would also seek to spread their message of the gospel of Jesus Christ through preaching missionaries.

Both Martin Luther and the extemporaneous preachers of the early eighteen hundreds believed that the message of Jesus Christ needed to be spread to the masses through preaching. The idea of spreading the word of God to the masses continues today with the use of modern technologies. Through the use of radio and television, televangelists have seen greater accomplishments in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the masses than ever before. These programs have encouraged people to proclaim Christ as their Savior and be saved through his grace. Most evangelicals believe that this world is a place where the forces of good and evil are in a huge battle with each other and it is the job of the evangelist to spread the word of God before the end of the world comes.¹²⁶ Radio broadcasting had started earlier in the 1920's and many religious groups were already taking advantage of this medium. It was in this era that *Music and the Spoken Word* was born, and was one of the first to take advantage of this form of media.

With the invention of the television more and more people were able to hear the good news. Edwards explained, "Television's potential for reaching the widest possible audience is seen in the way that Billy Graham's Hong Kong telecasts were translated into forty-eight languages and heard nightly by one hundred-million people."¹²⁷ Through these new technologies, more people were able to hear the voice of a single preacher than ever before.

The Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ has provided Latter-day Saints with a similar concept. Missionaries are sent to preach the Gospel to hundreds of nations in countless

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languages. Through technology Apostles and Prophets are able to broadcast their messages to the world, declaring that the Gospel is restored and Jesus is the Christ. They also declare that through obedience to this gospel, one can gain salvation and eternal life. The purpose of preaching in this modern era is to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ to as many people in the world as possible.

While, *Music and the Spoken Word* pioneered a form of radio broadcasting with a religious message, it differed in the fact that it did not overtly prompt its listeners toward conversion. Instead, this program utilized another form of preaching called “the sermonette.” The sermonette is simply a short sermon that conveys an uplifting or faith promoting message. *Music and the Spoken Word* also used the beautiful music of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir to engage its listeners. In order to understand the use of these sermonettes we must first look at a few different movements of Protestant preaching that occurred during the 20th Century. It was in this century that preaching would begin to change at a rapid pace. Edwards, the author of *The History of Preaching*, explained,

The homily, after all, was nearly the only form available for well over half the Christian era, and the thematic sermon was the only other major development before the Reformation. During the era of Renaissance and Reformation there was a great deal of homiletical creativity, but since then most efforts could be subsumed under the categories of rationalistic, revivalistic, and romantic preaching. The trends treated in this section, therefore, should lead readers to conclude that preachers during the late-twentieth century tried to accomplish a greater variety of things through their sermons than any of their predecessors attempted.¹²⁸

It was in this era of change that *Music and the Spoken Word* developed. While this program was not affected by all the movements of the 20th Century, there are at least two that seem to be of critical importance.

In the first part of the 20th century most preachers were still following the homiletical teachings of John A Broadus. Broadus was a preacher in the 1870's who believed that a congregation needed to not only understand the applicable nature of a sermon, but needed to act on the teachings that the preacher conveyed to

them.¹²⁹ This idea of preaching lasted up until the end of World War II, and was then superseded by a new focus in preaching. This new focus came in the form of pastoral counseling. The preacher would choose a topic that his congregation was struggling with and then encouraged them to live the correct principle.¹³⁰ For example, if the congregation seemed to be struggling with honesty, the preacher would emphasize the importance of being honest, and then encourage the congregants to be more honest in their dealings. The early messages of *Music and the Spoken Word*'s announcer Richard L. Evans seem to follow this similar kind of pattern. Some of the titles of these sermonettes include: "What is Truth," "Tolerance Without Compromise," "Counting on Character," and "On Beginning Where We Are."¹³¹ It was common in this era of the 1940's and 50's to take a moral principle and encourage people to live it. Richard L. Evans started the program in this tradition, and the program remained largely unaffected by America's other preaching movements until the early 1990's, when Lloyd Newell became the new announcer of *Music and the Spoken Word*. During this time a shift in the presentation of the sermonette occurred and can possibly be accounted for by the climate of Protestant preaching during this time. It may also be that because Lloyd D. Newell had grown up in a different era than his two predecessors, his writing and announcing style captured the new spirit of the times, the zeitgeist, of the 1990s and moving into the new century.

In the 1970's and 80's a crisis occurred in preaching. It is believed that this crisis came about because of the historical events of American history in the latter-half of the 20th century. Americans after World War II were faced with the uneasy feeling that at any moment a nuclear weapon might annihilate their civilization. With other wars and government scandals, Americans were left wondering who was worthy of their trust and where they should put their faith.¹³² Edwards commented, "There was even a loss of confidence in the ability of language to describe reality or to convey univocal meaning. Eternal verities were vanishing right and left."¹³³ The free love type of lifestyle of the 1960's encouraged relativism in all of its many forms. People were left wondering how they should make sense of the chaotic world they lived in. Unfortunately many abandoned the values they had once treasured and sought for happiness in the material world.¹³⁴

At this time preachers began to feel that the old styles of preaching were no longer as effective as they had been in the

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past. The people to whom they were preaching were somehow different than the people they had encountered in the previous generation. Edwards described this time period when he wrote, “In the anxious uncertainty that characterized this period, there was also widespread dis-ease among clergy about the effectiveness of preaching.”¹³⁵ Some preachers even doubted whether preaching could have a meaningful impact upon people’s lives anymore.¹³⁶ This spurred preachers into making a change that would benefit their congregations and help them make sense of the world they lived in. In order to make sense of someone’s story, preachers began to implement stories as a form of preaching. Edwards explained, “A number of Homileticsians’ suggestions about what should be done instead of preaching in the traditional mode have centered on some concept of story or narrative. All of a sudden in 1980, at least three proposals of this sort were made, suggesting that the time had come for the homiletical community to reap-praise the role of narrative in sermons.”¹³⁷ In other words, during the 1980’s there was a huge resurgence of narrative style preaching.

In 1985 the famous preacher Fred B. Craddock illustrated the importance of this narrative, sometimes called illustration, style by explaining, “Actually, in good preaching, what is referred to as illustrations are, in fact, stories or anecdotes which do not illustrate the point; rather they are the point. In other words a story may carry in its bosom the whole message rather than the illumination of a message which had already been related in another but less clear way.”¹³⁸ Other proponents of this style, and contemporaries of Craddock, include homileticsians like Thomas G. Long, Edmund A. Steimle, Eugene L. Lowry, and Richard A. Jensen.¹³⁹ In writing on the purpose of this style, Long wrote, “When a slice of contemporary experience, a story, a metaphor, or an image is brought into a sermon, it is in order to accomplish some particular task that contributes to the larger sermon objective.”¹⁴⁰ This narrative style allowed preachers to use stories and imagery to illustrate the spiritual points they were trying to convey to their congregants. Spencer Kinard, the second announcer of *Music and the Spoken Word*, had been following in the footsteps of Richard L. Evans in using the older methods of preaching, but upon his resignation it opened up a way for this now resurgent style to emerge through Lloyd Newell.

When asked if Newell was aware that he was following a greater movement in preaching, he replied that he was not aware

that he was part of a larger emphasis on such a preaching style. He expressed that he simply believed that it was effective to his listeners—a way to connect with people—and they responded well to it.¹⁴¹

Not all of Lloyd Newell's sermonettes involve stories or illustrations. He continues to use these narratives while also honoring some of the stylistic patterns of his predecessors. This is evident in his books, *May Peace Be With You: Messages From "The Spoken Word,"* and *This Day and Always: Inspirational Messages From "Music And The Spoken Word."* Lloyd Newell explained the purpose for his preaching of these sermonettes when he wrote, "This is not our 'worship service'; it's not a sacrament meeting. It's an inspirational program of music and message to feed a spiritually hungry world."¹⁴² The purpose of this program today is to offer the world uplifting music and messages that can help them along on their own spiritual journey.

One of the purposes of this review was to examine some of the key figures and changes in preaching that have occurred throughout history, in order to more fully appreciate the rich tradition and origins of *Music and the Spoken Word*. Through this process it has been shown that Origen and Augustine were the founding fathers of the exegetical homily. Through their contributions, Christianity found its first form of preaching in the form of allegorical exegesis. To Origen and Augustine, preaching was to be used to help their congregations come to understand the spiritual meanings behind the words of the scriptural text.

Martin Luther also used a process of exegesis, but placed a larger emphasis on preaching. For Luther, preaching was not just to reveal spiritual meanings, but it was the only way to reveal Christ Himself. Once the congregation could hear the word of God preached to them, they could accept the mercy of Jesus Christ and be saved through their faith on him. For Luther, preaching was an essential part of salvation.

The 1800's saw a spreading of Christianity in the United States on a magnificent scale through the implementation of revivals and camp meetings. It was the goal of these preachers to spread Christianity to all of the pioneers flooding the expanding United States. Many sacrificed their old religions for the newer religions that were coming of age at the time. The preachers of these religions promised salvation for the righteous and damnation to those who would not join.

In our modern era preaching is a way of bringing as

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many souls to Jesus Christ as possible. Television and radio broadcasting allow millions to hear the different messages of Christianity. *Music and the Spoken Word* is part of this tradition, and while not used directly as a tool of conversion, it presents a universal Judeo-Christian message to bring spiritual thoughts and inspiration to a world filled with chaos and doubt. This program like many other Christian media programs was aired using the sermonette as a style of preaching (narrative) with words of inspiration and music.

The contributions of those who use the sermonette have made a significant impact on the history of preaching, especially using the media (radio broadcasting and television) as vehicles to reach millions. *Music and the Spoken Word* follows in this tradition. The history and tradition behind it is rich and impressive. It will be interesting to watch for future developments in sermon styles, and to observe what impact they will have on this beloved program.

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Civic and Military Holidays

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Columbus Day

Notes

Curiosity

Have you ever noticed how innately curious children are? Just spend a little time with them, and they'll ask you questions about anything and everything. How does electricity work? Why is the sky blue? How can airplanes fly? Why does it get dark at night? And a hundred other questions.

Then, as we grow older, it seems that we stop asking, we stop being inquisitive, we stop wondering as much. It's certainly not that we now know everything; perhaps we just get too busy or distracted or worn out to wonder and ask.

Fortunately, some of us never lose that childlike curiosity. The drive to discover, to learn new things, to investigate, is the fuel of progress, of innovation, of science and exploration. Such people see something ordinary or interesting and ask, "Why?" They read or learn something new and ask, "How?"

Pulitzer Prize-winning historian and author David McCullough has written several books on a variety of topics. But he says that when he began each of them, he knew very little about the subject on which he was writing. It was his inquisitiveness that moved him. "I feel that each book is a journey," he says, "an adventure, a hunt, a detective case, an experience, like setting foot in another continent in which you've never traveled. That's the joy of it. That's the compulsion of it. And you're fired by what we human beings are blessed with, called curiosity. It's what, among other things, distinguishes us from the cabbages. The more we know, the more we want to know; curiosity is accelerative."¹

Curiosity is both an emotion and a skill, and we can develop it. Perhaps becoming more childlike and looking through the lens of awe and wonderment is how we begin. Then by reading, asking questions, taking a class, talking to others who know more, we can become more curious about life. We can experience amazing things if we will open our eyes and hearts to wonder.

Lloyd D. Newell

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Step Outside Your Comfort Zone

Notes

When was the last time you tried something you had never done before? As creatures of habit, we tend to eat the same foods, take the same route home from work, and surround ourselves with the same people every day. There's comfort in the familiar—that's why we call it our "comfort zone."

But how many of the world's great achievements resulted from playing it safe? Accomplishments—including personal growth—happen only when we lengthen our stride, challenge ourselves, and reach out just a bit.

The child who learns to ride a bike, the grandmother who takes up oil painting, the student who enrolls in a difficult class—all leave their comfort zones to fulfill a dream. As a result, their lives became richer and their outlook brighter.

A nurse once asked several terminally ill patients to share any regrets they had at the end of their lives. She found that many felt they had not become everything they could have been—that they had left too many songs unsung. They wished they had lived up to their potential.¹ By hanging back, afraid to try something new, we risk facing that same regret.

Often it's as simple as deciding to be a better listener or to perform a small act of service every day. Speaking a kind word to a stranger, lifting someone's spirits with a phone call—there are countless ways to try something new.

Once we take that step into the unknown—even if it's a small step—we discover that our comfort zone was actually holding us back. The satisfaction of conquering our weaknesses, the joy of expanding our ability to serve others, will more than make up for any "discomfort." We may even discover some truth in the phrase "Life begins where your comfort zone ends."

Lloyd D. Newell

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Program #4353

Civic and Military Holidays

Independence Day

Notes

Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness

In 1776, 56 men signed a document that put at risk their “Lives, [their] Fortunes, and [their] sacred Honor.” This document, the Declaration of Independence, boldly proposed a remarkable idea: that the king was made for the people, not the people for the king.

This was, indeed, a revolutionary document, for, throughout most of recorded history, it had been the king who decided who would prosper and who would not. And because people needed the bread, shelter, and security that the king provided, they often accepted a life of servitude and surrendered their freedom in exchange for these necessities.

But then something happened. The common man began to stir and awaken from his slumber. He began asking questions that had before seemed impossible, too dangerous even to consider: “Why should we forever be children, dependent upon another for our bread? Aren’t all men created equal? Can we truly choose our own destiny? Can we live free?”

From that day to this, the spark of liberty has grown into a bright flame that shines in the souls of millions of men and women throughout the world, inspiring them to create for themselves a life and future of their own choosing.

It is fitting that we remember those brave souls who planted the seeds of liberty. We who enjoy the fruits of freedom have a responsibility to future generations to uphold, protect, and preserve those self-evident truths that gave birth to a new era. Though separated by the centuries, we can stand with those who boldly declared that all people everywhere are “endowed by their Creator with [the] unalienable Rights [of] Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

Lloyd D. Newell

Program #4164

Perseverance and Spirit

Notes

In the summer of 1776, a small group of men from all walks of life—lawyers, merchants, farmers, doctors, and ministers—stepped forward one by one to sign their names to the Declaration of Independence. There was no fanfare, no trumpets, but the event was sobering if not ceremonious. Fully aware of the risk—treason against the crown was punished with death by hanging—these men pledged their lives to the sacred cause of liberty. Sixty-year-old Stephen Hopkins, a delegate from Rhode Island, declared with a shaking pen, “My hand trembles, but my heart does not.”[1]

These men paid a heavy price for their valor. One of the signers, Abraham Clark, a representative from New Jersey, had two sons serving in the revolutionary army. They had been captured by the British and were subjected to severe brutality because of their father’s position. Clark was offered his sons’ lives if he would renounce the rebellion and support the King of England. With resolve matched only by his personal anguish, he refused. His commitment to freedom still resonates more than 200 years later.

Not many observers gave the new nation much chance of survival. But it did survive. And it flourished.

The Founding Fathers would be proud of America today. They would see a people who are strong, decent, and good-hearted, who demonstrate the truth of George Washington’s statement early in the revolution, when the outcome was still in doubt: “Perseverance and spirit have done wonders in all ages.”[2] Year after year as we celebrate the birth of this nation, we declare that independence is much more than a document under glass. We add our names to the list of those who have shaped America, who say with pride and pleasure, “This is my country.”

Lloyd D. Newell

Program #4009

Civic and Military Holidays

Independence Day

Notes

Standing for Freedom

One of the disappointing facts of life is that things keep breaking. Furniture, dishes, and computers all break. Bones, health, and hearts can break. Laws and promises, contracts and treaties can be broken.

If the blessing of freedom is taken for granted, it could wind up being broken. Freedom's been bought with a price from those "who more than self their country loved."1 The Founding Fathers knew that the sacred rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness would be shattered unless safeguarded by each generation.

How do we keep freedom from breaking? We stand for what's good and honest and true. As one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence proclaimed, "Without virtue there can be no liberty."2 People standing for freedom will nobly bear the responsibility of maintaining liberty.

Even the smallest and most ordinary person can stand for great things. People are like flagpoles. Some flagpoles are very tall and prominent, while others are small. But the glory of a flagpole is not in its size but in the colors it flies. An insignificant flagpole flying the right colors is far more valuable than a very tall one with no flag at all.

Through the efforts of those standing for something noble and true, liberty will be preserved intact and unbroken.

Lloyd D. Newell

Program #3750

A Door of Opportunity

Notes

In the early years of the Revolutionary War, things did not look good for the fledgling American navy. In a period of three months, they had lost seven ships, including their two largest. In the midst of the gloom, however, was a shining light: Captain John Barry.

He was so successful with his first military command that he was promoted to captain a frigate still under construction. While waiting, he volunteered to serve in the army during a bitterly cold winter. But his frigate was never completed, leaving Barry a captain without a ship.

Meanwhile, enemy transports were sailing unchallenged along the Delaware River resupplying their forces. Not content to wait for another ship to command, Captain Barry proposed a daring plan—to take a few of the rowboats from some of the larger ships, mount small cannons in their bows, and challenge the enemy transports.

Many thought the idea of outfitting what they called “washtubs” and sending them against armed ships was foolish. But Barry felt confident he could do it, and he was right.

Because Barry’s boats were small, they were able to escape enemy fire. The cannons on the rowboats hit their mark, and Captain Barry’s brave little fleet forced three British ships to surrender.

By the end of the war, Barry had captured more than 20 ships. As a consequence of his bravery and leadership, he was later named chief naval commander and is widely recognized as the father of the American navy.

It’s easy to become discouraged when the storms of life bring misfortune or distress. But Captain John Barry knew that adversity often opens the door of opportunity. He recognized it, acted on it, and, as a result, became a national hero.

From him and many others like him we learn an important lesson: Often the very adversity that plagues our lives is, in disguise, an opportunity for greatness.

Lloyd D. Newell

Program #4099

Civic and Military Holidays

Independence Day

Notes

A Responsibility to Our Forefathers

In 1775, during the Second Revolutionary Convention in Virginia, a Virginia farmer rose to tell his countrymen, “I know not what course others may take, but, as for me, give me liberty or give me death.” Liberty, as expressed here by Patrick Henry, means the freedom to worship as we please, to speak and read without fear. It means the self-direction each one of us enjoys over our affairs—the choice of schooling, the choice of jobs, the choice of political party. It means the freedom to alter the government as citizens may desire at election time. One U.S. president, Harry S. Truman, said, “Liberty does not make all men perfect, nor all society secure, but it has provided more solid progress and happiness and decency for more people than any philosophy of government in history.”

Central to the whole fabric of our free society is the thread that runs through it all—the Constitution, a document creating a system of government that has endured the most traumatic events and tests. The U.S. Constitution guarantees freedom and liberty for the individual. Our early forefathers believed freedom and liberty were basic to an individual’s development and happiness. They were also convinced that each person has an obligation to society, a responsibility to assist with the machinery that helps guarantee freedom and liberty.

One such responsibility is to assist in the selection of government and community leaders, a responsibility the framers of the Constitution would not have us take lightly, a responsibility envied by countless other nations. It is through our participation in the election process that we validate the sacrifices of so many individuals throughout our country’s brief history. Said Thomas Paine, “Those who expect to reap the blessings of freedom must undergo the fatigue of supporting it.”

America is the only nation on earth deliberately created in behalf of an idea. That idea was liberty. The goal, above all, was to be free. Our Declaration of Independence proclaimed that purpose. The Constitution was written to assure it. We should never forget that original purpose and never take our liberty for granted.

J. Spencer Kinard

Being a Patriot

As America once again celebrates its nationhood, on this anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, our thoughts return to those early patriots, to those brave men and women who saw past the security of the moment toward the peace of the future. Our debt to all of them, and to the many patriots, both known and unknown, who have sacrificed life and the pursuit of happiness during the proud history of America is eternal. Our gratitude as their beneficiaries must extend beyond the picnics, the barbecues, and the firework displays; it can only be returned in kind: sacrifice for sacrifice, contribution for contribution, our own patriotism in payment for theirs. Thus, patriotism is not the right of the few but the responsibility of the many. It is a moral imperative for all who call themselves Americans.

To be a modern-day patriot is not so much different now than it was then. True, the world has changed much since 1776. Technology and electronic communications have given us a new appreciation for the contributions and ideologies of many races and nationalities. But being a patriot and friend to our country has never meant that we must be an enemy to the rest of mankind. Patriotism at its finest is not based on hate or bigotry; indeed, what some called patriotism is no more than unbridled mobocracy. Rather, love and faith are the building blocks of true patriotism: love—love for our fellow countrymen, to whom we are bound by common sympathies, needs, and aspirations; and faith—faith in the American ideal of democracy, an ideal that has brought happiness and prosperity to a multitude of contributing peoples and nationalities.

Being a patriot, then, is not merely a momentary thrill as the flag passes by. “I venture to suggest,” observed the late Adlai Stevenson, “that patriotism is not a short and frenzied outburst of emotion but the tranquil and steady dedication of a lifetime.” Regardless of our race, political preferences, or cultural traditions, we are indebted to the American patriot—and only our own patriotism can serve as repayment.

J. Spencer Kinard

Notes

Civic and Military Holidays

Independence Day

Notes

The Blessing of Freedom

People arriving in the New York harbor by sea are greeted by the majestic Statue of Liberty, her torch raised high in a symbolic salute to freedom. Millions more have visited that national monument to be reminded of the freedom of these United States and the love we have for it. When Americans say we love our country, we mean not only the beauty of its hills, prairies, mountains, and seas, but the love of an inner light in which freedom lives and in which an individual can draw the breath of self-respect.

Living in America is a blessing worth thinking about frequently, not just during the national holidays set aside for that purpose. It is a privilege many people throughout the world would be honored to share. This is the only nation on earth deliberately created not on the basis of geography, but in behalf of an idea. And the idea was liberty, the right to be free. Our Declaration of Independence proclaims it. The Constitution was written to guarantee it. Curiously, few Americans now recall that original purpose, and that means our liberty is too often taken for granted.

The fiber of our nation is strong, but the lessons of history should teach us that freedom is the most easily lost of man's possessions, that apathy is our greatest problem. No nation can endure without the support, dedication, and the enthusiasm of its people. We can fight apathy by remembering the blessings and privileges that come with citizenship, by expressing them openly, and by helping our children understand and appreciate these blessings. We should also have a spirit of godliness, for God and church have always been at the center of activity in America, tying family, community, and nation together.

Ultimately, nations are only as strong as their ideas. When a nation no longer represents an idea, its future is in doubt. Many citizens of the United States have affluence and prosperity, but show a tendency to attribute those conditions solely to personal achievement. That attitude can produce a dangerous pride, a hardness of heart, a false sense of self-sufficiency. Do we really have a right to take our comfort, prosperity, and security for granted when so much of the world lives with anguish, poverty, and fear? No!

The torch of freedom is held high by the Statue of Liberty. Our task is to keep the torch always burning to symbolically illuminate that stirring inscription at the base of the statue: "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free. . . . Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed, to me: I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

J. Spencer Kinard

Land of the Free

Notes

The pride and faith citizens of the United States of America have in their country is particularly evident each July as flags are unfurled and fireworks puncture the evening skies. It's a time when Americans contemplate their citizenship—a citizenship many people throughout the world would be honored to share.

The founding fathers of this country believed that the most important thing in the world is a government in which freedom and liberty of the individual is protected. They believed this freedom is basic to our individual development and happiness. They also believed that each person has an obligation to serve society, to assist in the machinery that helps guarantee our freedoms.

Of course, with freedom also comes responsibility. We must try to do the right thing as we see it, but be careful not to infringe upon the freedoms of others. Since no individual is perfect, freedom may be abused. That is why we have rules in our society—because absolute freedom is anarchy, and no society can survive in such a state.

The emphasis on the rights and dignity of each person occurs again and again in our great documents. We began by declaring: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” We live by this freedom theme and hold dearly to the sacredness and dignity of each individual. Ours is a government of the people, by the people, and for the people.

Ultimately, nations are only as strong as their ideas and people. And when citizens no longer pay attention to the first principles of a nation, the nation itself is weakened, and soon its future is in question. It is for these reasons that we welcome the pageantry and celebration that takes place each summer in thousands of cities and towns throughout this grand country. May it always be a strong and free country. And may we never take it for granted.

J. Spencer Kinard

Civic and Military Holidays

Independence Day

Notes

Patriotism that Stands for Love of People

Anniversaries, birthdays, holidays, and other commemorations are an important part of life. They give us a chance to mark our progress, celebrate for a moment our accomplishments and growth, and renew our bonds as a family, community, and nation. And so today we celebrate this land that we love.

As we do, we recognize that although we have much to celebrate, things are not perfect. Even as patriotic parades and picnics unfold and as dazzling fireworks burst in the air, we know that there are problems at home and abroad. But those troubles and challenges should not damper our fervent love of country, nor should they discourage our desire to do our part to make this nation better. Just as there have always been difficulties, things can always get better—as long as courageous people reach out to one another in love.

In 1968, Gerald Ford, then a member of the House of Representatives, saw true patriotism as the solution to the difficulties facing the nation. He said: “America now is stumbling through the darkness of hatred and divisiveness. Our values, our principles, and our determination to succeed as a free and democratic people will give us a torch to light the way. And we will survive and become the stronger—not only because of a patriotism that stands for love of country, but a patriotism that stands for love of people.”¹

Indeed, true patriotism is more than love of country—it is love of people. That is the torch that lights the way to our best future. Think of fireworks as celebrations of individual lives, past and present—each unique and magnificent. Think of parades and picnics as gatherings of love for the people who have made us who we are. We will survive and thrive as a nation as we love our country and as we love one another.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. In Suzy Platt, ed., *Respectfully Quoted: A Dictionary of Quotations* (1993), 246–47.
Program #4372

Joy in Our Labors

Notes

At the funeral service of his father, a middle-aged man stood to express his feelings. “Father provided well for our family,” he said. “He always made sure we had what we needed, but the greatest gift he gave me was teaching me how to work.” With tears in his eyes he continued, “Dad loved us, and he showed that love by helping us learn the joy of an honest day’s work and a job well done.”

Little of lasting value is accomplished without concentrated and often prolonged effort—just plain hard work. Much of the time, the real worth of an undertaking is directly related to how much work went into it. Whether the work is physical or mental or some of both, there is great satisfaction—even great joy—in seeing what comes of our own abundant efforts.

From the beginning of human history, our existence has depended on gaining our livelihood “by the sweat of our brow.”¹ It seems to have been divinely appointed that we should need to work for the necessities of life. Though that labor may be tiresome and sometimes feel like it’s more than we can do, the Father of us all knew that the benefits of daily labor would far outweigh the burden.

For young people, it may be schoolwork, work around the house, or a part-time job that requires their labor. Adults work at increasing their skills and making a valuable contribution to their employer and to society. And a parent’s work is never done.

Everyone can find joy in honest effort, and old age need not change that. As one man entered retirement, he had no intention of leading a life without work. “I’m not retiring from something,” he said. “I’m retiring to something.” For him, the type of work may have changed, but it did not go away. In fact, working will likely prolong his life and give him fulfillment until the end. The author Pearl S. Buck has been quoted as saying, “To find joy in work is to discover the fountain of youth.”

Work is a blessing and should be embraced with enthusiasm. May we find joy in our labors.

Lloyd D. Newell

Program #4381

Civic and Military Holidays

Labor Day

Notes

The Blessing of Work

More than 1,600 years ago, St. Augustine is said to have taught this timeless truth: “Pray as though everything depended on God. Work as though everything depended on you.”

Indeed, our willingness to work can make a big difference in life. A leader who worked for several years in a service organization with hundreds of young men and women observed that the defining quality of the best young leaders was their ability to work. Those who knew how to work were happier, more confident, and better able to adapt to new situations. They were problem solvers. And most often, those young people went on to have successful lives. From early on, work spelled the difference.

And so we celebrate work. In the late 1800s, the United States Congress designated the first Monday in September as Labor Day—a day to commend work and those who do it. It’s a day set aside to rest from labor, even as we remember all those who labor to build this nation: in the farms and factories, the offices and warehouses, the stores and schools—anyplace where honorable, honest labor is performed. Those who work fuel the progress of nations and the betterment of our communities. Truly, workers deserve a pat on the back and a heartfelt reminder of their importance in our society.

Work is good for the soul. It builds muscle and character, it strengthens hand and heart, and nothing gets done or moves forward without it. And though work is different today than a hundred years ago, it’s still essential to life and happiness. Good work satisfies the soul and makes the world go round.

And so, on this day when we praise work and workers, may we roll up our sleeves and celebrate the blessing of work.

Lloyd D. Newell

Program #4329

No Toil nor Labor Fear

We live in an age of disposable goods. It seems that so many of our material things are made to be enjoyed for a brief moment and then thrown away. If something breaks or loses our interest, we quickly toss it aside and run to the store for a new one.

It wasn't always that way. Not too long ago, many of our parents and grandparents did not have the luxury of throwing things away. You've heard the pioneer adage "Use it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without." The pioneers were recyclers long before recycling was trendy.

If an article of clothing became tattered or torn, they mended, patched, and wore it until it no longer fit—then they would cut it up and sew it into a quilt. When a dish broke, they crushed it and mixed it into plaster to make a building sparkle. They transformed husks of corn into dolls and human hair into intricate works of art. Old barrel rings and scraps of wood became toys. Everything had multiple uses; nothing went to waste.

Not only did they need all of their resources, they needed all of their people. Neither things nor people were considered disposable. Everyone from the young children to the elderly had chores, and the whole family depended on them. If eggs weren't gathered, they ate no eggs. If cows weren't milked, they drank no milk. If knitting and mending were not done, they had no socks or sweaters to wear. If dishes were not washed, they had no clean plates for dinner that night—paper plates were not an option. Everyone's role was important. Days were long and luxuries few, but they found happiness and a sense of purpose in their work and resourcefulness.

In our day of relative ease and plenty, the lessons of those pioneers are still relevant, though it may take more creativity to apply them in our families. Teaching our children to conserve resources and to fear "no toil nor labor"¹ may not be a matter of survival as it was for the pioneers, but it will certainly enrich our lives and deepen our happiness.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. "Come, Come, Ye Saints," Hymns, no. 30.
Program #4375

Civic and Military Holidays

Lincoln's Birthday

Notes

Remember the Gettysburg Address

It was only a two-minute speech, given 150 years ago, but as long as freedom is prized and those who fight for it are honored, it will never be forgotten. It was given on a rural battlefield in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, the site of the deadliest battle of the Civil War.

It was in this setting that President Abraham Lincoln traveled by train to help dedicate the Soldiers' National Cemetery on that 19th day of November 1863 before a crowd of 15,000 people. First on the program was the famous orator Edward Everett, a well-known former senator, governor, and president of Harvard. To thunderous applause, he spoke with a strong and authoritative voice for two hours.

Then, in sharp contrast, Lincoln raised what one reporter called his "sharp, unmusical treble voice" and began: "Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth upon this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal." In fewer than 300 words, he exhorted all to remember those who "gave the last full measure of devotion" for the nation; he spoke of a new birth of freedom, under God, that would bring true equality; and he said that "government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth." The president finished his speech before a photographer could even set up his tripod and uncap the lens, before the crowd "realized he was fairly launched on what he had to say." An observer noted the "almost shocking brevity" of the speech, and the initial response was underwhelming.

And yet, while the two-hour sermon that preceded him has largely been forgotten, the timeless truths Lincoln spoke that day persist in our memory and our way of life. There was, however, one statement he made in that short speech has proven not to be true. He said, "The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here." To the contrary, 150 years later, we still remember and even commit to memory the Gettysburg Address. More important, we live the spirit of those stirring words as we honor those who uphold liberty and join in what Lincoln called the "unfinished work" of unity, equality, and freedom.

Conquer with Kindness

Notes

President Abraham Lincoln led America through the ravages of the Civil War with dignity and grace. In his second inaugural address, as the South was collapsing in the last of the battles, Lincoln called for “malice toward none” and “charity for all.”¹ In essence, he spoke of showing kindness in the most difficult of circumstances.

Kindness is relatively easy to practice when all is going well. To show kindness at difficult and stressful times is to allow the heart to govern what we do. Kindness is a language of its own, a power, a strength of character, a way of life—and these days it seems so often in short supply.

President Lincoln did more than just speak publicly of kindness; it guided his private interactions as well. He once instructed an army commander regarding the punishment of a Confederate officer: “My dear General, . . . do nothing in reprisal for the past—only what is necessary to ensure security for the future. I remind you,” he continued, “that we are not fighting against a foreign foe, but our brothers, and that our aim is not to break their spirits but only to bring back their allegiance. Conquer them with kindness—let that be our policy.”²

Lincoln’s policy can be our policy. We can rise above anger and be gentle with the young, considerate of the aged, tolerant with those who rankle us, and patient with those who stumble or charge at lightning speed. We can smile rather than point fingers. We can offer a listening ear rather than a cold shoulder. We can forget about past wrongs and go forward shaping and reshaping relationships. We can proffer a compliment. And, yes, we can even let someone ahead of us on the road or in the grocery line.

We can “conquer with kindness,” and we will positively influence our corner of the world

Lloyd D. Newell

1. In Lewis Copeland and others, eds., *The World’s Great Speeches*, 4th ed. (1999), 317.
2. In David K. Hatch, comp., *Everyday Greatness: Inspiration for a Meaningful Life* (2006), 41 Program #4321.

Civic and Military Holidays

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

Notes

I Have a Dream

On a blustery winter evening in 1956, Martin Luther King attended a church meeting in Montgomery, Alabama, leaving his wife and baby at home. Near the close of the meeting, a man burst into the room and announced that King's house had been bombed.

King rushed home to find his wife and baby safe; the bomb had exploded on the front porch. But throngs began gathering, and trouble was brewing. Some in the crowd had guns in their hands and thoughts of retaliation in their minds. The police arrived to a situation quickly getting out of control. Then King stepped in front of the angry swarm and said, "I want you to go home and put down your weapons."

A hush fell over the group as he continued, "We must meet hate with love." The mood changed. One man shouted, "Amen," and another added, "God bless you," and eventually the crowd dispersed.¹

In the years to come, Martin Luther King led boycotts to desegregate busses; he marched to desegregate housing and schools, and he marched on Washington to press for civil rights legislation. His speech from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial still stirs us today. "I have a dream," he said, "that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."²

That dream helped change the hearts and minds of millions. And his vision continues to change things. Today, years after his death, Martin Luther King's words still mark the cadence of the "march to the realization of the American dream."³

Lloyd D. Newell

1. See Martin Luther King Jr., *Stride toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story* (1958), 125–28.
 2. "I Have a Dream," in Lewis Copeland and others, eds., *The World's Great Speeches*, 4th ed. (1999), 753.
 3. "Our God Is Marching On," in James M. Washington, ed., *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King Jr.* (1986), 229.
- Program #4296

Something to Live For

Notes

A deep commitment to something beyond ourselves is what gives meaning to life. Martin Luther King Jr. said, “If a man hasn’t discovered something that he will die for, he isn’t fit to live.”¹

What are you willing to give everything for? To many, our families, our children, inspire our greatest devotion. We teach and sacrifice and do our best for our loved ones—because we love them so much. In a sense, we give our lives for them in all of the small sacrifices we make. We stay up all night with our children when they are sick; we provide the necessities of life for them; we protect and guide them; we hope they’ll have a better life than we’ve had. Such selflessness will outlive us and, we hope, will inspire our children to do the same for their children.

Some have a passion for service in other ways. They’re willing to pay the price to see the fulfillment of their dream. History is filled with the lives of courageous men and women who have given their all for a worthy cause. The life mission of Martin Luther King Jr. was his nonviolent struggle for civil rights. His dream was that his four little children would “one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.”² His devotion to this dream of equality has left an enduring legacy.

These best efforts toward our loved ones, these deep commitments to causes greater than ourselves, transcend time and create a legacy that lives forever in the hearts and minds of generations to come.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. In Justin Kaplan, ed., *Bartlett’s Familiar Quotations*, 17th ed. (2002), 823.
2. In *Bartlett’s Familiar Quotations*, 823.
Program #4037

Civic and Military Holidays

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

Notes

Let Freedom Ring

Every one of us yearns for freedom like the breath of life itself. Our desire for freedom is as innate as our need to think or to feel. Even young children sense that something is wrong in the world when liberty is restricted to a select few and when their own lives are preserved only by the mercy of their enemies.

This craving for equality and justice permeates every land on earth, even those where slavery is still practiced. Martin Luther King Jr. said: "A piece of freedom is no longer enough for human beings. Unlike bread, a slice of liberty does not finish hunger. Freedom is like life. It cannot be had in installments. Freedom is indivisible—we have it all, or we are not free."¹

As technology brings information to the most remote corners of our planet, ignorance evaporates. People begin to realize that we are all made equal by a loving Creator and that no one has the right to oppress another human soul. We begin to see our world as a large, connected neighborhood where we watch out for one another.

Freedom is a gift from the Almighty, but it is a gift that we do not all enjoy. We see suffering, and we whisper, "There but for the grace of God go I." We know that we are no better than those who have been denied their freedom. Their struggles and fears could just as easily be ours.

We rejoice with a freed people when liberty comes at last. Tears of joy streak our own faces as we symbolically reach out our hands to clasp theirs in victory over oppression. Class distinctions are stripped away, and human equality is celebrated. We know that Helen Keller was right when she said, "There is no king who has not had a slave among his ancestors, and no slave who has not had a king among his."²

Lloyd D. Newell

1. In "Freedom and Liberty Quotes," www.ronholland.com/quotes/freedomquotes.htm.

2. In Raymond V. Hand Jr., ed., *The Harper Book of American Quotations* (1988), 76.
Program #3895

Let Us Remember

Scattered across the world are burial sites of those who have served well and even given their lives in defense of liberty and country. Whether they are found in a small hometown cemetery or a large military memorial, these graves serve as a reminder of the courage and commitment to duty of those who served in war and now lie in peace.

How can we say thank you to such heroes? How can we express our heartfelt gratitude for the men and women who have given so much in our behalf? Most of them were not seeking adulation, but there is something we can do that they would likely appreciate, a way to honor their memory: we can remember.

To remember is to build on the foundation of freedom they laid, so their loss is not a bitter end, but a beginning of better times. To remember is to read and share their stories, so their memory remains alive and fresh. Remembering means we strive to avoid making the same mistakes that made their sacrifice necessary. To remember is to think of them as they thought of themselves—not as heroes of extraordinary bravery but simply as regular people who recognized their duty and tried hard to do it.

In addition to an occasional flower placed by a headstone or an annual visit to a hallowed grave, we can reflect often on the price of freedom, the courage it takes to maintain it, and the men and women who had that courage and paid that price. Waving flags are beautiful, the call of the lone bugle is tender, and the sharp report of a gun salute is a great honor, but to be held in sweet remembrance is the finest tribute of all.

Lloyd D. Newell

Program #4263

Notes

Civic and Military Holidays

Memorial Day

Notes

To Fallen Soldiers Let Us Sing

To fallen soldiers let us sing
Where no rockets fly nor bullets wing;
Our broken brothers let us bring
To the mansions of the Lord. . . .

No more bleeding, no more fight;
No prayers pleading through the night;
Just divine embrace, eternal light
In the mansions of the Lord.¹

This stirring hymn was written by Randall Wallace and performed by the Armed Forces Chorus for President Ronald Reagan's funeral recessional in 2004. It is a song for soldiers—for brave men and women who give their all to uphold freedom.

Oh, that there can come the day when wars shall cease and peace shall reign on the earth. In the meantime, let us strive to be people of peace, and let us honor those who answer the call of duty to preserve that peace. Let us remember, on this day and always, the men and women who died while serving our country.

One family woke up early on Memorial Day to attend a sunrise service at the local cemetery. They braved steady rain and cold morning temperatures to see flags fly and to hear retired soldiers play taps. They listened to community leaders recall the sacrifices of those who had served their country so well.

They knew that this day of remembrance is so much more than the start of the summer vacation, more than picnics and parties and a day off work. It is a day to honor, to remember, and to cherish freedom and those who defend its cause. It is a day to recommit to our civic duty and to uphold the principles of freedom. It is a day to give fervent thanks for that eternal light and divine embrace in the mansions of the Lord, to which we have entrusted our beloved fallen soldiers.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. Randall Wallace, "The Mansions of the Lord" (2002).
Program #4315

Pause and Remember

Notes

There are few things more soul-stirring than to see veterans salute the flag they have honored and defended. Their salute reflects the kind of knowledge that can come only from experience, the humble pride born of defending the cause of liberty. To them, that flag represents freedom and duty, love of country, the fellowship and sacrifice of companions in a worthy cause, and a sure awareness of what makes this country great.

It is good to pause and remember, however, that too many of their companions did not survive long enough to be veterans. Theirs was the ultimate sacrifice. And it is well to set aside a day in their honor, to reflect on the cost of the freedoms we enjoy, to remember those who have sacrificed for our safety and well-being. If we truly remember and honor them, then the price they paid shall not have been in vain.

It is also well to consider, on our day of remembrance, the sacrifices of the loved ones of these heroes—the parents and spouses, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters who tearfully but proudly bid farewell to their soldiers, never again to see them in this life.

As Richard L. Evans observed decades ago on this broadcast: “Those who have been deprived of the association of their loved ones, need no day of special reminder. For them every day brings its own reminder. And to you for whom Memorial Day is a day of deep personal loss and of fresh sorrow: may He who gave us life give also to your troubled hearts His assurance of the reality that life is eternal, and that there is no one from whom we have parted here whom we may not know and cherish and live with yet again.”¹

Lloyd D. Newell

1. Tonic for Our Times (1952), 204.
Program #4367

Civic and Military Holidays

Memorial Day

Notes

Memories and Memorials

It has been said that “a land without ruins is a land without memories—a land without memories is a land without history.”¹ Each nation has its stories, its triumphs and tragedies, its battle scars and memorials. Not only do they define our past, they also shape our present and future. Without memories and memorials, we wouldn’t know where we came from, where we’re headed, or even who we are. Taking time to appreciate and reflect upon the past evokes feelings of gratitude and respect for so many who gave so much.

World War II veteran Colonel Jack Tueller recalls: “I didn’t want to talk about the war with my kids when they were growing up. It was too painful.”² For a long time, his only memorial of the war was his trumpet, the same one he carried with him in the cockpit of his fighter plane in the skies over Normandy. Its music brought him comfort during those dark days.

Now 89 years old, he still plays that trumpet, but he has changed his tune a little. “Veterans should not retire,” he now says. “They should tell everyone who listens or reads what a wonderful life this is, and what a wonderful country this is.... People have got to know why there are thousands of crosses [in the cemeteries].”³

We must not forget those who have shaped our history, our memories and memorials. As the noted 19th-century poet Father Abram Joseph Ryan wrote:

“Yes, give me a land with a grave in each spot,
And names in the graves that shall not be forgot;
Yes, give me the land of the wreck and the tomb;
There is grandeur in graves—there is glory in gloom;
For out of the gloom future brightness is born,
As after the night comes the sunrise of morn;
And the graves of the dead with the grass overgrown
May yet form the footstool of liberty’s throne,
And each single wreck in the war path of might
Shall yet be a rock in the temple of right.”⁴

Lloyd D. Newell

1. In Abram J. Ryan, “A Land without Ruins,” *Poems: Patriotic, Religious, Miscellaneous* (2007), 57.

2. In Doug Robinson, “Hitting the High Notes,” *Deseret News*, Apr. 14, 2010, A5.

3. In Robinson, “Hitting the High Notes,” A4-A5.

4. *Poems*, 57.

Program #4211

A Day for Reflection

Notes

As Memorial Day tributes cause us to reflect about those who have passed on, we should remember that all is well with them, that we are experiencing but a brief separation from them, and that the process of life and death has been designed by a loving Father in heaven. But even with the assurance that life itself does not end, as we know it, the separation of family and friends through mortal death is often a difficult experience. Consider, though, how magnified and tragic the grief must be for those who fail to understand the full purpose of life and death. As J. Reuben Clark said, “The world that is to come after is beyond all comprehension that we have. I think that when we undertake to measure it by the pageantry that we know, we envision scarcely a shadow of the glory of eternity.

Life does have purpose and meaning. And although there are many unanswered questions, they should not be a problem for us because of our knowledge of the resurrection. In a sense, we were born to die. Upon birth, we inherit the seeds of death, but it’s not something we should be fearful about. The length of stay does not matter as long as the time has been profitably spent. And it isn’t the work we do that’s important, but the way we conduct ourselves and the relationship we have with the God who gave us life. On the Judgment Day we won’t be asked about the positions we held or the honors and tributes we received. Only the works of our lives and the true intent of our hearts will be judged.

On Memorial Day, millions of Americans make their way to cemeteries and shrines to pay tribute to friends and loved ones. Surely there are moments of sadness as they recall fond memories and associations, as they remember those individuals who have made their lives richer and more meaningful. Memorial Day seems to bring two messages: the message of hope, the realization that life does not end with death but continues beyond the grave; and the message of encouragement to make the most of our relationships each day, to strengthen them, to give and receive from friends and loved ones while we are yet together in this life.

Perhaps the best thing we can do at this time is to reflect on our own future, whatever our age. Where do we go from here? One day we will follow the same path that has been marked for us by those who have already completed their earthly life. Perhaps reflections on Memorial Day will bring perspective into our own lives and encourage us to reexamine our own priorities.

J. Spencer Kinard

Civic and Military Holidays

Memorial Day

Notes

World War II Memorial

We stand at the nation's memorial to those who fought for freedom during the dark days of World War II. Nearly 60 years after the final surrender of the war—this magnificent memorial was built as a reminder of the price of freedom.

The memorial includes 56 pillars representing America's states and territories, which gave hundreds of thousands of soldiers to the cause of liberty. And "while the nearby Vietnam Memorial lists individual names of all [American] troops killed in that war, the World War II Memorial does not. It couldn't." Too many—more than 400,000—died. Instead it has a wall of 4,000 gold stars, each representing 100 soldiers who paid the ultimate price.¹

Some 16 million served in the armed forces of the United States during the war. Only 4 million are still alive, and they are dying at a rate of over a thousand a day.² In a coming day when these veterans are no longer with us, our collective admiration and respect for their service will continue to live. Our profound gratitude for each man and woman who fought in World War II will never die.

This memorial was designed to be a contemplative place, a place to commemorate the resolute spirit of America in a time of war, a place to remember the human cost in the triumph of freedom.³

This memorial honors all who cherish the cause of freedom during World War II. Men and women, families and friends were united in a cause that separated them across oceans. On the battlegrounds abroad and in factories at home, each did his or her part. Truly, sacrifices were made on all fronts, and so many families were forever altered.

Today this memorial pulls the generations together as we remember the lessons of the past and look with hope to the future. It honors millions of the willing brave who served and sacrificed six decades ago so that we might live in freedom.

A noted World War II historian, Steven Ambros interviewed hundreds of veterans and found that the reason they fought was they had learned as children the difference between right and wrong. They didn't want to live in a world in which wrong prevailed, so they fought.

The nation honors the courage and commitment of the soldiers represented here. May we also extend our hands and hearts to the cause of right, the cause of freedom, the quest for peace.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. See Lee Davidson, "WWII Memorial Marks Price of Freedom," Deseret Morning News, May 5, 2004, pp. A13.

2. See Deseret Morning News, May 5, 2004, pp. A13.

3. See Michael Janofsky, "WWII Memorial Opens in D.C.," Deseret Morning News, April 30, 2004, Program #3902

9/11: Rising Above

Notes

It's been ten years since 9/11. And yet we continue to tell stories of the children, parents, and families, airline passengers and air traffic controllers, the firemen and other first responders for they inspire and give us hope.

But how do we tell the story of the rest of America—those who watched the images and heard the accounts, and were forever changed? As they went through their own experiences with loved ones in war zones – and struggled with economic uncertainty at home – they never gave up. The story of America, ten years later, cannot be told in words and images alone. Join the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and Orchestra at Temple Square in a remembrance of 9/11—of a nation rising above.

In the last ten years, thousands of Americans have traveled to Ground Zero. For most, the experience is deeply moving, spiritual — comparable to a visit to Gettysburg or Arlington National cemetery. It is a sobering and humbling experience to reflect on the terrible loss of life and the irrational violence that caused it. But the memories of fearless bravery by ordinary fellow citizens fill us with awe and pride.

The memory of rescuers – civilians and first responders – the raw courage of the fight back passengers on United flight 93 – those are the images that endure. We wonder, “Would I be as brave?” Their sacrifice was a personal choice— to put others before their own well being. People of every religious persuasion recognize that this is grace: The willingness to give what has not been earned, and what may not be deserved—it is certainly the highest virtue and the deepest expression of love for others.

Irving Berlin's original God Bless America included the words, “Make her victorious on land and foam.” But victory is not on the battlefield alone. There is also the victory of the heart and faith and compassion. “God bless America” became the unofficial anthem of 9/11 because so many found comfort and guidance in its soaring stanzas. It bound together a nation in need of a common voice.

Today, with arms outstretched to one another, and hands willing to serve, America has come together once again. May it ever be so.

Lloyd D. Newell

Program #4278

Civic and Military Holidays

New Year's Day

Notes

Faith Points to the Future

Whenever we start something new—whether it's a new year, a new day, a new project, or a new goal—it typically means putting an end to something old. Even when it's a positive change, it can be hard to let go of the familiar past and step into an uncertain future. But while we certainly can't live in the past, we can always learn from it. Jeffrey R. Holland expressed this truth in these words: "We look back to claim the embers from glowing experiences but not the ashes. . . . Then we look ahead and remember that faith is always pointed toward the future."1

Faith is believing and hoping that no matter how things have gone in the past, they can get better. Faith is forward-looking; it empowers and inspires us to action; it moves us to do more and to become better.

This kind of faith is robust and realistic; it is not fairy-tale or make-believe. Consider the great challenges throughout history that have been overcome by courageous people—including yourself! Yes, you've made it through tough times and done hard things before. With that ringing endorsement from the past, you can face the future with faith. An overwhelmed new mother knows she can become a good mom because, if nothing else, she has learned how to love. A first-semester college student knows she can tackle a busy term because she has worked hard and managed her time before. A man bravely battles a crippling illness because he knows this is hardly the first challenge he has faced.

Even if the new year, new day, or new challenge seems more difficult than anything you've faced before, the fact that you've come this far reveals that you have it in you to succeed. Draw strength from the past, but don't get stuck there. Look to the future with faith, and remember that the seemingly small victories you collect now are laying the foundation of great success in the future.

Lloyd D. Newell

The Value of Change

Notes

Change is as inevitable as the turning of the calendar. And with the new year comes the new self. As surely as the tides roll upon the shore, as surely as the seasons redecorate the landscape, we will change. The question is whether the changes will be those we select for ourselves, or those thrust upon us by default and the passage of time.

That is why we make New Year's resolutions: to make certain the changes are positive ones. But forming new habits is like winding string on a ball. One must not drop the ball, lest the good work be undone. The unwinding is sudden; the winding is a slow, steady, gradual process.

Wise individuals understand and seek change slowly and carefully. They set realistic goals, achievable goals. They also work on self-improvement each day, not only at the beginning of the year.

Positive change is not as difficult as it may seem. The secret is to generate more reasons to change than to remain as we are. Then we must exercise the new behavior over and over again as we would exercise a stiff muscle. Soon the new behavior will become a habit, securely rooted in our lives, and the temptation to resort to less desirable behavior will diminish.

We can look to the apostle Paul for inspiration. Paul struggled constantly to improve himself, to overcome his weaknesses, to build upon his strengths. Sometimes he failed, but he never gave up. He never quit trying to improve. He taught us that there is no such thing as instant perfection. He showed us that change is not an overnight process but a lifelong endeavor, marked by occasional setbacks, yet rewarded by the knowledge that we have taken charge of our own lives.

Yes, Change is inevitable. It provides a chance for us to grow, to improve ourselves, to improve our families, to improve our marriages. But if we fail to change, if we fail to improve, then we fall behind in living, and our spirits begin to age.

Indeed, if we bar the door to change, we shut out life itself and deny ourselves the opportunity to choose our own goals, to follow our own stars.

J. Spencer Kinard

Civic and Military Holidays

New Year's Day

Notes

The Principle of Progress

With the new year comes also renewed hope –hope that this time we can be better, do better, live better. And, gratefully, one of life's great truths is that we can. We jest about broken resolutions, but the grand purpose for our very existence is change. Inherent in the seed is the flower. Every sunrise means a sunset. Change is a part of every minute of our life, and nothing says we have to do everything the same way we did it last year. Our weaknesses do not have to be perpetual.

But to be renewed, we have to understand the principle of progress. It is faith. If we did not believe the seed would grow, we would never plant it. The violin tune that the child struggles and stumbles over eventually becomes the intricate sonata beautifully played. The runner who is breathless at a mile can finally make it through the final line of a marathon.

It is faith that brings these transformations. Faith in oneself, of course, but of a far more lasting effect is faith in the Lord's love for us. He loves us in a way that may not always be comfortable. His love is something far more stern and splendid than mere kindness. Kindness asks only that its object not suffer. Love demands far more.

As C. S. Lewis said, "We may wish, indeed, that we were of so little account to God that He left us alone to follow our natural impulses – that He would give over trying to train us into something so unlike our natural selves."¹

But God's love for man is greater than we have for ourselves. It might be analogous to an artist's love for his work. "We are," Lewis said, "in very truth, a Divine work of art, something that God is making, and therefore, something with which He will not be satisfied until it has a certain character."²

The Lord loves us so much, then, that he not only asks our change into someone higher and better but will often instigate it for our own benefit. "And if men come unto me," said the Lord in one scripture, "I will show unto them their weakness. . . . if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them." (Ether 12:27)

So, with enough faith, this can be a year of change. Faith in oneself, of course, to take the first step, to plant the seed. But of more worth is faith in our Heavenly Father, who wants more for us than we could know to want for ourselves.

J. Spencer Kinard

1. The Problem of Pain (New York: Collier Books), p. 42.

2. Ibid., p. 44.

Opportunities for a New Year

Notes

This is the time when the year stretches ahead with delicious possibilities, every day yet untouched by grief or shadow or the ashes of broken dreams. In the first of January, anything is still possible. Resolutions may be accomplished, old habits discarded. It is a time to kindle new fires, hope, dream, renew our weariest parts.

The opportunities that will come this year will never be presented in quite the same way again. There is no time like now to cast aside fear and exhaustion and become the person we want to be.

The story is told of the artist Dante Gabriel Rossetti who one day was speaking with an elderly man in his studio. The man brought examples of his paintings and drawings and begged for Rossetti's candid opinion of them. Rossetti shook his head and reluctantly said he could see no value in them whatsoever.

Then the man drew from beneath his coat another set of sketches and spread them out before Rossetti. These, explained the man, were the work of a young student. Rossetti remarked at once that these sketches portrayed a keen and sensitive talent. He was delighted and declared without question that this young student would distinguish himself.

Then the old man said, "I was that student."¹

What is that gulf that lies between what we may be and what we are? Some say that the problem is in low aim. We underestimate ourselves and settle for less than we could. Yet, probably for more of us, the reason we don't achieve what we could is a problem of attrition. We wear out. The dream that glows before us like a light upon a hill dims and flickers with time. We are distracted by events around us and cannot focus upon the distant light when we turn back again.

And when our light goes out, we comfort ourselves with faint compensation. We say we've become more realistic, we see things more clearly, we understand our limitations.

Yet, there is a deep stirring within when we see someone who is brave enough to give all. As the poet Florence Ripley Mastin wrote:

I cannot help but love the knight who goes,
Unchampioned, derided by his foes
And friend, to seek the white star of his dream
In the black night. He only sees the gleam;
And heeding neither laughter nor the sneers
Of sane complacency, his course he steers
Into the starless skies.²

With a new year stretching ahead, may we steer a course guided by that gleam, the gleam that leads us to all that is possible.

J. Spencer Kinard

1. See Tanner, *Christ's Ideals for Living*, p. 14.

2. In Tanner, *Christ's Ideals for Living*, p. 15.

Civic and Military Holidays

New Year's Day

Notes

Resolutions

It is the time of year to put up a new calendar and with it new hope for a new life. It is the time when even under gray skies, things seem fresh and hopeful, and some hidden impulse to new excellence awakens in the soul.

And so we write resolutions and make goals – which we usually discard in a few days. Why? Because when we get right down to the nitty-gritty of everyday living, this year will seem much the same as last. Pressures will grind at us, commitments will chop at our time, and our goals won't be any easier to achieve this year than last. That's not to say they are not possible or won't be done; they just aren't any easier.

Those who really want and expect to do better this year will do well to adopt this operating principle: anything that is worthwhile will be difficult to do. Achievement always has and always will demand a high price. The butterfly who sheds its cocoon struggles, and so must we if we shed our character flaws – or even a few pounds.

It is when we think that the accomplishment of our goals ought to be easy that we give up at the first obstacle. We aren't geared for a battle, and are therefore surprised when we get one.

Forging new habits is not easy because the old ones, like cowpaths in the woods, have been trodden so many times. It is far simpler to follow a course of least resistance than to strain against it and forge a new way. No poem would have been written, no invention devised if their creators had given up at the least sign of difficulty.

Now, this reality should not discourage us but empower us. Anticipating problems gives us the insight and the power to meet them. Paradoxically, once we understand that the battle to master ourselves is difficult, it becomes less so. Then, when things do not fall easily into place, we do not become angry or bitter but tougher. And it is the tough ones who can make their best intentions realities.

For all of us who tremble before our good resolutions this year, wondering if we can ever achieve them, let us be heartened by the words of Lloyd Jones: "The men who try to do something and fail are infinitely better than those who try to do nothing and succeed."¹

We cannot be improved without first being proved.

J. Spencer Kinard

1. In *Leaves of Gold*, ed. Clyde Francis Lytle (Coslett Publishing Co.), p. 36.

The Invisible Hand of God

Notes

In the winter of 1777, Isaac Potts was passing through the woods near the American army headquarters at Valley Forge. On his way he heard a voice just ahead. As he drew closer, he was quite surprised to see the commander in chief himself on his knees in the act of prayer. Concealed by thick trees, Potts overheard George Washington giving thanks, and pleading for the liberty of his beloved country.¹

With all his heart, Washington believed that Americans would be preserved from their enemies through the will of Divine Providence. He often affirmed his trust in “the Invisible Hand which conducts the affairs of men.”² This kind of faith is still exerted in the lives of many citizens throughout America today.

When a young athlete volunteered to say the customary prayer before an important college track meet, the entire team was surprised. It was something he had only done once before in his life, and it took a lot of courage. In his simple but heartfelt prayer, he made a request that every team member would be protected from harm during the competition. Not long after the prayer, one of the other athletes accidentally threw a javelin toward this young man. The javelin pierced through his shoe, pinning his foot to the ground. It looked like the injury would be severe. But after the javelin was carefully removed and his shoe was taken off, it was found that the javelin had merely passed between his toes. Surprisingly, he was left unharmed. Within minutes the young athlete set a new school record in the high hurdles. He later expressed his assurance in the invisible hand that protected him.

A single incident such as this may seem like a coincidence. But a pattern of blessings through the years reveals the outline of a benevolent power outside ourselves. Deep within, we sense the divine origin of our good fortune. Extra money appears just as bills are due; sudden recovery from illness defies medical explanation; a flash of insight resolves a troubled relationship—these are miraculous headlines from the stories of faithful lives.

The congressional prayer room in the United States Capitol building honors George Washington’s example of faith. A stained-glass window at the front of the room portrays him kneeling in prayer. Surrounding him are the words of the Psalmist: “Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust.”³ Now more than ever we need the protection of surrounding ourselves with those words. And if we’re in harm’s way, or if we feel that we can’t possibly win our battles through our own merits, we can in full confidence reach up to grasp the invisible hand of God.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. See William J. Federer, ed., *America’s God and Country Encyclopedia of Quotations* (Coppell, Texas: Fame Publishing, Inc., 1994), 640-41.

2. Federer, 652.

3. Psalm 16:1.
Program #3727

Civic and Military Holidays

Presidents' Day

Notes

The Light of Home, The Smile of Friends

On a cold, threatening morning, February 11, 1861, Abraham Lincoln, president-elect of the United States of America, stood on the rear platform of a train that would take him from his home in Springfield, Illinois, to Washington, the nation's capital. The dreary weather was a fitting preview of what Lincoln would soon face as president—in just a few months, a civil war would split the country, and he would carry the burden of saving the nation.

To a crowd of 1,000 who had gathered to see him off, Lincoln said: "To this place, and the kindness of these people, I owe every thing. . . . I now leave, not knowing when, or whether ever, I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon [George] Washington. Without the assistance of that Divine Being who ever attended him I cannot succeed. With that assistance I cannot fail. Trusting in Him, who can go with me, and remain with you and be every where for good, . . . I bid you an affectionate farewell."¹

His parting words were not a victory speech or even a rallying cry but an expression of humble gratitude. He recognized the profound influence of family and friends, who stood by him through triumphs and failures. He acknowledged that only by placing full trust in God could he overcome the challenges ahead.

We each face challenges, and sometimes they seem insurmountable. But, as Lincoln noted, we have a sure foundation in the strength of those around us, and we have the promise of divine help to see us through. The words of a familiar Civil War-era poem are a stirring reminder of such reassuring comfort:

Thou gracious God, Whose mercy lends
The light of home, the smile of friends,
Our gathered flock Thine arms enfold,
As in the peaceful days of old.²

Lloyd D. Newell

1. In U.S. National Park Service, "The Lincolns in Springfield, 1849–1861," <http://www.nps.gov/liho/historyculture/springfield2.htm>.

2. Oliver Wendell Holmes, "Thou Gracious God, Whose Mercy Lends." Program #4222

Live in Thanksgiving Daily

Notes

A wise man who spent many years traveling the world serving others said in his ninth decade of life:

“Over the course of my years, I have met thousands of people. I have dined with the prosperous as well as the poverty-stricken. I have conversed with the mighty and with the meek. I have walked with the famous and the feeble. I have run with outstanding athletes and those who are not athletically inclined.

“One thing I can tell you with certainty is this: You cannot predict happiness by the amount of money, fame, or power a person has. External conditions do not necessarily make a person happy.... The fact is that the external things so valued by the world are often the cause of a great deal of misery in the world.

“Those who live in thanksgiving daily, however, are usually among the world’s happiest people. And they make others happy as well.”¹

It’s ironic to note that very often the simplest qualities of the heart are the most difficult to live by in consistent, meaningful ways. Gratitude is one of those qualities. We know we should be more thankful and express more gratitude, but we get caught up in the pressures of our lives, in the business of the day, in the heartache and difficulty we’re experiencing. Perhaps we let these things blind us to the many wonderful blessings that surround us.

Those with grateful hearts can affirm this remarkable truth: gratitude is one of the surest ways to happiness. If you’re feeling down, count your blessings; if you’re discouraged or overwhelmed, count your blessings. If life is good or bad, happy or sad, count your blessings. If we choose to live with gratitude in our hearts, if we choose to be thankful for life, for the gift of a new day, for loved ones, and for purposeful activity, we are bound to feel more happiness. And we’re sure to spread that happiness to others.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. Joseph B. Wirthlin, “Live in Thanksgiving Daily,” Ensign, Sept. 2001, 9.
Program #4256

Civic and Military Holidays

Thanksgiving Day

Notes

Thanksgiving

Today in this venerable setting of our nation’s capital, we remember with thanksgiving those who went before. We look back through history that we might more fully appreciate today’s blessings and tomorrow’s promise.

In this country we celebrate Thanksgiving every autumn. This holiday hearkens back to 1621 when the pilgrims of Plymouth invited their Indian friends to join them for a festival of feasting in gratitude for the bounty of the season.

More than 160 years later, the colonies, now a nation of united states, had won a revolutionary war of independence. The first president of the new country recommended a day of public thanksgiving and prayer. George Washington wrote that the purpose of his Thanksgiving Proclamation was “to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey his will, to be grateful for his benefits, and humbly to implore his protection and favor.”¹

Seventy-four years after that first proclamation, the nation was entrenched in a bloody civil war. Brother fought against brother as the nation struggled to survive. During these dark days of heartache and despair, Abraham Lincoln proclaimed Thanksgiving a national holiday to be celebrated each November. Lincoln knew that gratitude could help heal the nation’s wounds. Even though divided by ideology and conflict, our nation could be united in acknowledging the benevolent hand of God. In his Thanksgiving proclamation, President Lincoln wrote: “It has seemed to me fit and proper that [the gracious gifts of the Most High God] should be solemnly, reverently and gratefully acknowledged as with one heart and voice by the whole American people... [We] fervently implore...the Almighty Hand to heal the wounds of the nation and to restore it as soon as may be consistent with the Divine purposes to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquillity and Union.”²

These three historical periods—the pilgrims and Indians, George Washington and a newly formed nation, and Abraham Lincoln amid the Civil War—are linked by a common theme. Difficulty and discord call forth profound gratitude. Wisdom teaches that thankfulness has sustaining power that during hard times, at all times, we must look to the gracious hand of God and give thanks.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. In William J. Bennett, ed. *Our Sacred Honor*, (1997), 386.
2. Abraham Lincoln, *Speeches and Writings 1859-1865*, sel. Don E. Fehrenbacher (1989), 520-21.
Program #3875

Daily Gratitude and Thanksgiving

Notes

A few years ago, two researchers conducted what they called the Research Project on Gratitude and Thankfulness. They found through science what most of us know intuitively: gratitude makes people happy.

For the study, several hundred people were divided into three groups and asked to keep diaries. The first group listed the day's events in their diaries, the second group recorded any unpleasant experiences they had during the day, and the last group made a daily list of things they were grateful for.

The researchers found that the simple act of taking time each day to count your blessings makes a person more enthusiastic, determined, optimistic, and energetic. Those who expressed gratitude experienced less depression and stress, exercised more regularly, and made more progress toward personal goals. Researchers even noted a relationship between feeling grateful and feeling loved, and they observed how gratitude inspires acts of kindness and compassion.¹

Remarkable, isn't it? All this from daily gratitude and thanksgiving.

Of course, the best way to discover the benefits of gratitude is not by observing them in an academic study but by experiencing the miracle for ourselves: When we daily count our blessings, we feel better about life, even in the midst of adversity; we garner a strength of character and largeness of soul that will help us through hard times; and we see life as basically good, despite its challenges and heartaches.

Gratitude does not need to be reserved for holidays and special events. Every day is filled with miracles and blessings. If we open our hearts and look, we'll find reasons for gratitude and thanksgiving each day, all around us.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. See Robert A. Emmons and Michael E. McCullough, "Highlights from the Research Project on Gratitude and Thankfulness," <http://psychology.ucdavis.edu/labs/emmons>; see also "Gratitude Theory," http://www.acfnewsources.org/religion/gratitude_theory.html. Program #4132

Civic and Military Holidays

Thanksgiving Day

Notes

Abundant Hearts

At this season of autumn and harvest, we count our many blessings and give thanks.

Our thoughts turn to a thanksgiving and harvest festival celebrated four centuries ago by Pilgrims and Native Americans.

You're familiar with the story: The Pilgrims, new to this land, had survived their first winter in the New World; they had worked hard building homes and cultivating crops; and they were at peace with their Native American neighbors. The harvest festival would be a time of thanksgiving shared by the colonists and the Native Americans who had helped them survive. Had the Pilgrims been more self-centered, they might not have celebrated a day of thanks. Or they might have forgotten the generosity of the Native Americans and not invited them to the festival; they might have hoarded their harvest and closed their hearts. Instead, with open and thankful hearts they welcomed their neighbors to their tables of plenty.

This model of fellowship can inspire us today. A truly grateful heart is an abundant heart that breaks down walls of estrangement, builds bridges of understanding, and opens doors of friendship. At times it may seem easier to turn inward, to keep others at a distance, to withhold our time, our means, and our hearts from others. But that can lead to unhappiness, to animosity, to smallness of heart.

When we feel grateful, our hearts overflow with good feelings for others. Rabbi Harold S. Kushner writes of a man whose small plane crash-landed but who was fortunate enough to escape before it burst into flames. A reporter asked him what was going through his mind as the plane neared the ground. His answer revealed the abundance of his heart: "I realized I hadn't thanked enough people in my life."¹

Before another opportunity passes, let's open our hearts to others, count our blessings, and give thanks.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. In *The Lord Is My Shepherd: Healing Wisdom of the Twenty-Third Psalm* (2003), 154–55
Program #4029

This Country Does Not Forget

Notes

Fifty years ago, President John F. Kennedy spoke to members of the First Armored Division in Fort Stewart, Georgia, who had been deployed during the Cuban missile crisis. During his speech, he recited a poem:

“God and the soldier, all men adore
In time of danger and not before
When the danger is passed and all things righted,
God is forgotten and the soldier slighted.”

He continued by saying: “This country does not forget God or the soldier. Upon both we now depend.”¹

There are many ways a country can remember, ways we can show that we will never forget. In the United States, November 11 has been designated as Veterans Day, a day to “solemnly remember the sacrifices of all those who fought so valiantly, on the seas, in the air, and on foreign shores, to preserve our heritage of freedom, and ... reconsecrate ourselves to the task of promoting an enduring peace so that their efforts shall not have been in vain.”²

But remembering does not happen on one day alone. We honor best those who have defended our freedoms abroad by defending each day those same freedoms here at home. We honor those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country by willingly making our own daily sacrifices for the common good. This is how we as a nation show that we will never forget the soldiers or the worthy cause they fought for.

As we consider our soldiers past and present, let us give thanks that they are willing to give their all, even their “last full measure of devotion” in serving this land that we love.³ May we never forget God or the soldier.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. In Suzy Platt, ed., *Respectfully Quoted: A Dictionary of Quotations* (1993), 326.
 2. Dwight D. Eisenhower, in *Federal Register*, Oct. 12, 1952, 6545.
 3. Abraham Lincoln, “Address at Gettysburg,” in Lewis Copeland and others, eds., *The World’s Great Speeches*, 4th ed. (1999), 315.
- Program #4339

Civic and Military Holidays

Veterans Day

Notes

Our Undying Gratitude

In the early morning hours of November 11, 1918, representatives of the Allied nations met in a railroad car near Compiègne, France, to sign an armistice ending what was being called the Great War.

Meanwhile, somewhere in the trenches in France, shellings and bombings were proceeding as they had for the past four years. In fact, as 11 o'clock neared—the appointed time when fighting was to cease—the attacks intensified. As one U.S. soldier put it: “It was not a barrage. It was a deluge.”

But then, suddenly, at the 11th hour of that 11th day of the 11th month, the battlefield went silent. At long last, it was “all quiet on the western front.” “The roar stopped like a motor car hitting a wall,” a soldier recalled. The quiet was uncanny as soldiers on both sides crawled out of their trenches. Some cheered or sang; others stood numb. Germans threw down their weapons. One intrepid American infantryman raced out into no-man’s-land with the stars and stripes on a signal pole and planted it in a shell hole while a bugler played “The Star-Spangled Banner” on a German trumpet.¹

The armistice that we commemorate every November 11 ended World War I, but it did not end war, nor did it end the need to defend the cause of freedom. Veterans Day has therefore become a day to honor veterans of all wars. So today, with brave soldiers again engaged in conflict on foreign soil, may we remember the stirring words of President Harry S Truman: “Our debt to the heroic men and valiant women in the service of our country can never be repaid. They have earned our undying gratitude. America will never forget their sacrifices.”²

Lloyd D. Newell

1. See Daniel J. Sweeney, comp., *History of Buffalo and Erie County, 1914–1919*, 2nd ed. (1920), 317.

2. Address before a joint session of Congress, Apr. 16, 1945, www.trumanlibrary.org/ww2/stofunio.htm
Program #4235

Each Day is A Day to Remember

Notes

Etched on the U.S. Navy Seabee Memorial in Arlington, Virginia, are words that resonate with every member of the military—past and present.

“With willing hearts and skillful hands,
The difficult we do at once;
The impossible takes a bit longer

“With compassion for others
We build—we fight
For peace with freedom”

As a nation, we commemorate a special day of appreciation for veterans, the brave men and women who have willingly dedicated their lives to their country and the freedoms it represents. Over 50 years ago, United States President Dwight D. Eisenhower, himself a veteran of two world wars, issued this proclamation:

“I ... do hereby call upon all of our citizens to observe Thursday, November 11, 1954, as Veterans Day. On that day let us solemnly remember the sacrifices of all those who fought so valiantly, on the seas, in the air, and on foreign shores, to preserve our heritage of freedom, and let us reconsecrate ourselves to the task of promoting an enduring peace so that their efforts shall not have been in vain.”¹

For those who love freedom and country, for those who respect sacrifice and service in behalf of the common good, each day is a day to remember those who have donned the uniform and served their country.

A country is only as strong as the men and women brave enough, selfless enough, and honorable enough to serve their nation. All who have served gave some part of their life, and some made the ultimate sacrifice. Today each one of us is a beneficiary of their service. We remember and honor them, this day and always.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. In “History of Veterans Day,”
Program #4130

Civic and Military Holidays

Veterans Day

Notes

As We Remember

Now, as in times past, turmoil and conflict rage across the earth. We long for peace, for harmony among nations and individuals, for serenity to still the commotion around us. As part of this earnest longing for peace, we pause to give thanks and remember a day that must not be forgotten.

More than 70 years ago the United States Congress passed a bill that each November 11th should be “dedicated to the cause of world peace and . . . celebrated and known as ‘Armistice Day.’” The name was later changed to Veterans Day by an act of Congress to honor the sacrifices of all veterans of America’s wars. President Dwight D. Eisenhower, himself a veteran of two world wars, called on citizens to rededicate themselves on Veterans Day “to the task of promoting an enduring peace.”¹

If turmoil and conflict have any worth, it may be that they can help us value and remember those who have sacrificed for peace. Decades ago, Richard L. Evans, longtime announcer and writer for this broadcast, wrote of peace and the people who protect it:

“Peace is a positive and not merely a passive thing. It is more than the absence of war. It is a way of life, an attitude, and an inner condition. . . . As we remember one Armistice and hope and pray for another, we are thankful for the brave men [and women] who stand ‘between their loved homes and the war’s desolation.’ May those of the past be honored, and those of the present be protected. And may the loved ones of those who have lost their lives have the heaviness of their hearts lifted and have sweet assurance of an eternal renewal of association with those they love.”²

As we approach this day “dedicated to the cause of world peace,” may we also dedicate ourselves to this cause, in memory of those whose dedication has included not only their way of life but even, in some cases, life itself.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. In United States Department of Veterans Affairs, “History of Veterans Day,” <http://www1.va.gov/opa/vetsday/vetdayhistory.asp>.

2. Tonic for Our Times, (1952), 211–12.

Program #4182

A Prayer in Music

Notes

Most of us have attended a funeral, a wreath-laying ceremony, or a graveside service and heard the solemn music of “Taps.” This tune, created on the battlefield of the Civil War, has sounded officially over soldiers’ graves since 1891. When played at dusk, these 24 notes signal “lights out” at the end of day. But when played during daylight, “Taps” carries the sobering message—a soldier has fallen.

Many of us remember the single bugler who paid the nation’s final tribute to President John F. Kennedy at Arlington National Cemetery in 1963. Seldom has the stirring melody had a larger audience than on that day. But that same tune has filled the air for small families clustered on a windy hillside around the grave of a young private and for aging veterans gathered to say good-bye to a wartime buddy. “Taps” is the dignified tribute played for fallen soldiers of every war and every rank, for the famous and the unknown. It humbly reassures the mourning families of these soldiers that the nation mourns with them.

“We cannot listen to Taps without our souls stirring,” Air Force Chaplain Edward Brogan has said. “Its plaintive notes are a prayer in music—of hope, of peace, of grief, of rest.”¹ This simple but noble melody expresses, in a way only music can, these deepest of human emotions as we honor our fallen heroes.

In that same spirit, as we visit the graves of our loved ones, as we remember their lives and contributions, as we hold dear their memories, may our grief be soothed and our hearts filled with that hope, peace, and rest.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. From the invocation given at the opening ceremony of the “Taps” exhibit at Arlington National Cemetery, May 28, 1999. Program #4056

Civic and Military Holidays

Veterans Day

Notes

For Your Tomorrow We Gave Our Today

Across an ocean, there is a cemetery built for Allied soldiers who died in World War II. It includes a memorial with an inscription that captures the sentiment of those who fought: “For your tomorrow we gave our today.”

Similar words adorn a monument at Arlington National Cemetery, where others of our brave soldiers are laid to rest:

Not for fame or reward
Not for place or for rank
Not lured by ambition
Or goaded by necessity
But in simple
Obedience to duty
As they understood it
These men suffered all
Sacrificed all
Dared all—and died

The love of freedom and country inspires men and women to proudly don military uniforms and put their lives on the line. Brave soldiers representing every region, race, and religion of our diverse melting pot willingly sacrifice for their country. They all know the risk, but they do not let their fear overcome their mission. As former Illinois governor Adlai Stevenson once said, “[Those] who have offered their lives for their country know that patriotism is not the fear of something; it is the love of something.”¹

In 1938 the U.S. Congress passed a bill that each November 11 should be “dedicated to the cause of world peace and . . . thereafter celebrated and known as ‘Armistice Day.’” In 1954, when the name was changed to Veterans Day, President Dwight Eisenhower, himself a veteran, called on citizens to observe the day by remembering the sacrifices of all war veterans and to rededicate ourselves as a nation “to the task of promoting an enduring peace.”²

Today we honor such patriots by remembering them and the wars they fought and by cherishing the freedoms they upheld.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. “Adlai Stevenson’s ‘Nature of Patriotism’ Speech, 1952,” http://tucnak.fsv.cuni.cz/~calda/Documents/1950s/Stevenson_52.htm
2. In United States Department of Veterans Affairs, “History of Veterans Day,” <http://www1.va.gov/opa/vetsday/vetdayhistory.asp> Program #4028

A Veteran

Notes

America's war veterans come in a wide variety of sizes, shapes, and ages. Their collective experience spans two world wars and several foreign conflicts. They have followed war mules through the mud of Flanders Field, dropped from landing barges onto the beaches of Normandy, faced the icy cold of Porkchop Hill, and trudged the rice paddies of the Mekong Delta. But, regardless of differences in makeup and experience, all veterans share a common bond—a brotherhood of memory and hard-won wisdom that helps define their character.

A veteran is the first man up as the flag passes by on the Fourth of July and the last man down, for he has been a witness to the blood and tears that make this and all other parades possible. A veteran is a man of peace, soft spoken, slow to anger, quick to realize that those who talk most about the glory of war are those who know least about its horror. He never jokes about war: he's been there, and still sees on memory's vivid screen the wounded and dying, the widows and orphans; he knows first-hand that no war is good and that the only thing worse than war is slavery.

He is friend to all races of man, begrudging none; he carries with him the knowledge that it is not the man who is the enemy but enslavement and false ideologies who are the foes. Those whom he once faced across the hostile battle lines, he now esteems as his brothers. A veteran is at once proud and humble: proud of the fact that in 170 years no foreign enemy has set foot on American soil, and humble in the realization that many of his comrades who helped him make this lofty aim a reality never returned.

More than anything else, a veteran loves freedom. He can spend a whole afternoon doing nothing—just because it suits him and just because he has paid the price to do what he wants with his time. He also takes a personal pride in the freedom of others—in men and women attending the church of their choice, in friends voting how they choose, and in children sleeping quietly, without fear to interrupt their slumber.

A veteran is every man grown up a little taller—a person who understands the awesome price of life's intangibles of freedom, justice, and democracy. His motto is to live and let live. But, if he had to, if he had to choose between servitude and conflict, the veteran would once again answer a call to duty. Because, above all—above all else—a veteran is an American.

J. Spencer Kinard

Civic and Military Holidays

Washington's Birthday

Notes

George and Martha-A Love Story

The love shared between George and Martha Washington continues to inspire one generation after another. George and Martha loved each other not just in times of peace but also through the separation and hardships of war. For 40 years they supported, confided in, and trusted one another. They had each other's best interests at heart. Both were happier and better in each other's company. They simply enjoyed being together. Though challenged during difficult times, they remained devoted and true to each other.

When George Washington took command of the Continental Army in 1775, the American War for Independence kept him away from his beloved home at Mount Vernon for more than six years. Every year, when the cold, miserable winter months temporarily suspended the fighting, General Washington asked his wife to visit him at his winter encampment.

And every year Martha came, wherever his camp happened to be that year—from Cambridge to Morristown to Valley Forge. She could have been enjoying the warm comforts of home, but Mount Vernon was hardly as warm without her husband there. She considered home to be wherever George was, and often stayed with him for several months at a time.

Martha was the general's beloved companion and confidant, but she was there to give more than just companionship. She also organized social activities and cheered up sick and wounded soldiers. A true and valued partner in the cause of freedom, Martha boosted the morale not only of her husband but of the entire camp.¹

Is there something we can learn from the loving marriage of George and Martha Washington—the way they chose to stay together through difficult times, the way they supported, cherished, and remained dedicated to each other, no matter the circumstances? We will face our own challenges and difficulties, but perhaps if we can think about the tender story of a loyal general and his devoted wife, we can remember and be strengthened by the power of love.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. See Rosemarie Zagari, Martha Washington: A Life, <http://www.marthawashington.us/exhibits/show/martha-washington-a-life/the-war-for-independence/front>. Program #4352

Making Courtesy More Common

Notes

Early in his youth, George Washington wrote down a list of what he considered the rules of civility. The first suggested that “every action done in company [of other people] ought to be with some sign of respect to those that are present.”¹ Young George Washington learned the importance of acting with courtesy toward others.

That was more than 200 years ago. Today, common courtesy seems less common, and some people take kindness as a sign of weakness. But the reality has not changed—courtesy is as important as courage. It represents the best part of being human.

Courtesy is kindness come alive. It is shown most often in little things: the driver who slows so that other cars can merge, the person who stands on a crowded bus to give a seat to one who needs it more, the customer who says a sincere “thank you” to a helpful clerk. Through courtesy we give expression to kindness by showing respect, making someone’s life a little easier, or brightening someone’s day. Of a courteous man it was said, “Yesterday was dark and rainy, but [he] passed [by] and the sun shone.”²

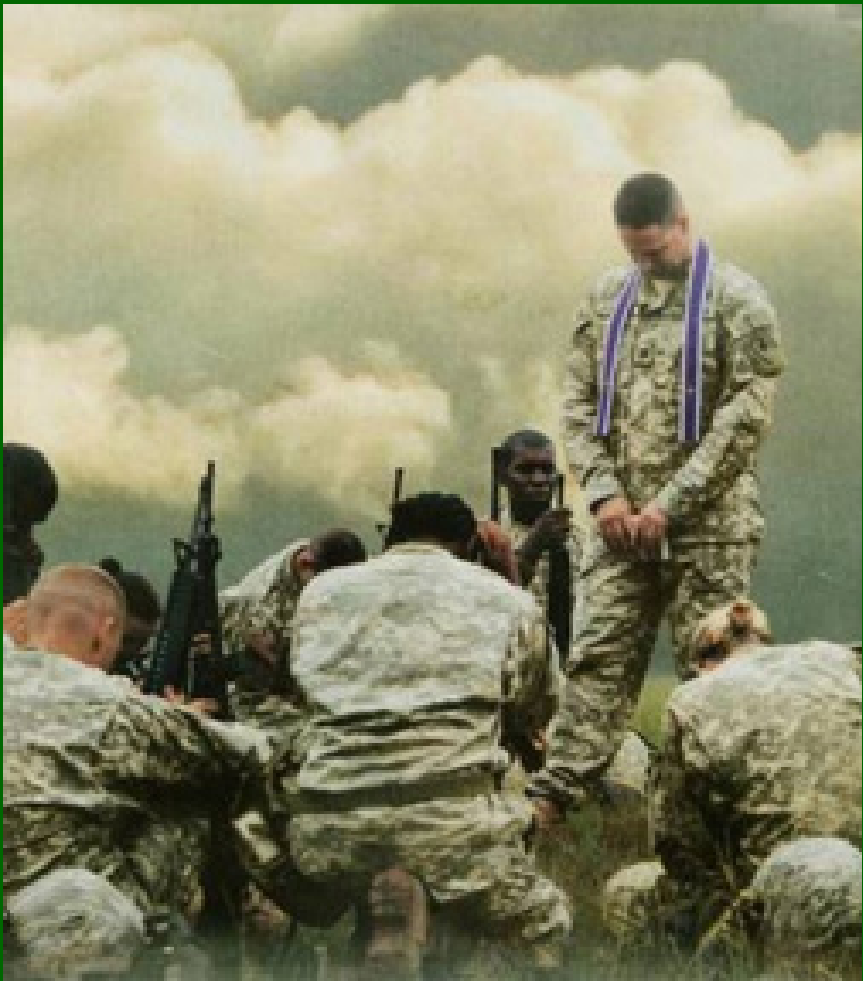
Of all the rules that could be written for civility, perhaps the most enduring is what has been called the “Golden Rule.” Simply stated, this sublime law of relationships suggests that we treat others as we would hope to be treated. When we are courteous, when we act with thoughtful kindness, then those around us are likely to respond in kind. In this way, each of us can do our part to make courtesy a little more common.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. Rules of Civility and Decent Behaviour in Company and Conversation (1988), 9.
2. In Mary Mercedes, A Book of Courtesy: The Art of Living with Yourself and Others (2001), 1. Program #4050

Civic and Military Holidays

This image shows a single page from a notebook or ledger. The page has a light blue background and is framed by a thin red border. At the top center, the word "Notes" is printed in a black serif font. Below the title, there are numerous horizontal grey lines spaced evenly apart, providing space for writing. The corners of the page are rounded.



Protestant/Ecumenical
Observance Days

Protestant/Ecumenical Observance Days

May Fellowship Day

Notes

Touched for Good

At a recent funeral for a woman in her eighties named Elda, the speaker asked all of her relatives to stand. A sprinkling of children and grandchildren rose. Next he asked those who were members of her church to rise. Several dozen more stood.

“How about members of her ladies’ lunch club?” he asked. About 10 more women stood up. “How about those who were in the book club? the sewing club? the homeowners’ welcoming committee? the art class? the garden group? the Tae Bo class?”

On and on he went, listing more than a dozen ways Elda had endeared herself to the community. Hundreds of people were now on their feet, all smiling or chuckling about Elda’s boundless enthusiasm and the many people she had taken time to know and nurture.

One amazing life...countless hearts touched. Here was a woman who made friends with all the neighbors up and down her street, whose happy smile was generously given to all within her circle of influence. From busy young mothers to the lonely and the bedridden, Elda found a way to connect.

When our lives are through and we are called home to our Heavenly Father, how diverse will the congregation be that gathers to bid us goodbye? Will we have reached beyond the familiar to befriend those in need? Will the homeless, the newly married, the elderly, people of various faiths and races remember our friendship to them?

Often we complain that life is too hectic and that we need to cut back and spend more time pursuing leisure activities or doing nothing at all. But could it be that just the opposite is true—that we need to extend ourselves and reach out to others in order to be happy? Holy writ tells us that to live a contented life, we must forget ourselves and fill our days with service and sacrifice for those around us. By reaching out and getting involved in our communities, we can bring strength and hope to the downtrodden, energy to the discouraged and joy to the grieving. Our own lives will be made richer by the variety of friends we learn to love. And when our final chapter is written, it will be lovingly signed by countless friends whose lives were truly touched for good.

Lloyd D. Newell

Program #3853

Volunteers and Helpers

May Fellowship Day

Notes

To those who follow the news of the day, the whole world seems to be in turmoil. Some would say the world has always been in turmoil, and that may be true. But the difference is that today, with immediate and widespread news coverage, the world seems to be much smaller—and getting smaller each day. For that reason, we feel more connected to those on the other side of the world; we seem more part of a global community. In a sense, we’re all neighbors. And what makes this worldwide neighborhood run most effectively are volunteers and helpers.

We recognize and give thanks for those among us who are willing to help others, those who volunteer their time and talents, those who sacrifice in some way for the betterment of the human family.

One insightful observer noted, “In a world continually ripped by massive calamities, we ... need an auxiliary corps of volunteers, ordinary citizens who willingly undergo discomfort and danger to help fellow human beings. Volunteers are special people with a highly developed sense of responsibility. While pessimists and optimists argue whether a glass is half-empty or half-full, the volunteer sees a glass of water and starts looking for someone who might be thirsty.”¹

Each of us can try to do something. We can volunteer our time in our communities, at a school or library, a hospital or care center. In a hundred ways, small and not so small, we can open our hearts to others, down the street or around the world. Volunteering and helping builds love and relationships, renews our faith in the goodness of people, and changes our attitude and sense of well-being.

Indeed, our world depends on volunteers and helpers, co-workers and partners, who offer their hands and hearts in building a better place for all of us.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. Michael Josephson, “Heartwrenching to Heartwarming,” Character Counts, Mar. 11, 2011, charactercounts.org/michael/2011/03/heart-wrenching_to_heart-warmi.html.
Program #4261

Protestant/Ecumenical Observance Days

World Communion Sunday

Notes

From Rivals to Friends

In May 1860, four men were vying to be their party’s nominee for president of the United States at the Republican convention. Delegates were expected to give the nod to well-known and experienced Senator William Henry Seward, with Ohio Governor Salmon P. Chase the next most likely candidate and Judge Edward Bates another viable choice. The long shot was a one-term congressman from Illinois, Abraham Lincoln, whose previous history at the ballot box was stacked with losses. They were all good men, but Lincoln seemed to lag in both respect and recognition among the competitors. As the balloting began, Seward placed first but not decisively, with a surprisingly strong showing by Lincoln. On the second ballot, Lincoln pulled almost even with Seward; and on the third, Lincoln registered a stunning victory. Months later, Abraham Lincoln was elected president of the United States.

While Seward, Chase, and Bates grumbled about the outcome and envied the new president, Lincoln shocked the political community by appointing his three rivals to positions in his cabinet. The editor of the Chicago Tribune asked President Lincoln why he had made the surprising appointments of men who coveted his position and who might overshadow him with their political experience. “We needed the strongest men of the party in the cabinet,” Lincoln replied. “These were the very strongest men. Then I had no right to deprive the country of their services.”¹

What a lesson in wise, big-hearted leadership. Who can tell how history might have been different if Lincoln had not been willing to place the good of his country above his personal pride and ambition?

Our decisions may not determine the destiny of nations, but they can influence, for good or ill, our cherished relationships. How many relationships have been saved when a good soul chooses to be happy—rather than envious—about a neighbor’s success? Interestingly, Lincoln’s surprising cabinet appointments not only blessed the country but also turned political rivalries into warm and respectful friendships.

Like Lincoln, we can stand above the fray and applaud the successes of others; we can see the good they have to offer and embrace their contributions. As we do, we will find ourselves and our relationships stronger as a result.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. James M. McPherson, “‘Team of Rivals’: Friends of Abe,” New York Times, Nov. 6, 2005, www.nytimes.com/2005/11/06/books/review/06mcpherson.html

Protestant/Ecumenical Observance Days

World Communion Sunday

Strength from Our Differences

Notes

Looking at others, we can easily distinguish how each person is unique. Beyond our physical differences, no two members of the human family view the world in exactly the same way. Humanity's colorful spectrum of cultures, skin tones, and philosophies leads us to decide whether our differences will divide us, or whether mankind's miraculous diversity will teach and strengthen us all.

Tragedies such as discrimination, gang violence, school shootings, and genocide stem from roots of prejudice and intolerance. There will always be differences, from which we can form isolating walls or build bridges of understanding.

Facing the most divisive issue ever to confront his country, in 1861 Abraham Lincoln asked Americans to let their actions be guided by "the better angels of [their] nature,"¹ knowing that such angels judge others by their capacity, not by their color; by their actions, not by their ancestry." Lincoln's words of 1865 remain true today: "With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, . . . [we can establish] a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."²

God has created magnificent diversity among His children. When we create unity and strength from our differences instead of malice and fear, we begin to glimpse the grand design of Him who has woven the tapestry of humanity from threads of many lengths and colors.

When we respect our differences, they can make us stronger as families, as communities, and as nations.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. "Lincoln's First Inaugural Address," Abraham Lincoln's Speeches: Complete, ed. J. B. McClure (Chicago: Rhodes and McClure Publishing Co.), 394.
 2. "Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address," Abraham Lincoln's Speeches, 449-50.
- Program #3744

Protestant/Ecumenical Observance Days

World Community Day

Notes

Like a Turtle on a Fence

The late Alex Haley, author of the novel *Roots*, kept on the wall of his office a picture of a turtle sitting on a fence. To him, the image held a powerful lesson. He explained, “If you see a turtle on top of a fence post, you know he had some help.” Haley continued, “Any time I start thinking, ‘Wow, isn’t this marvelous what I’ve done!’ I look at that picture and remember how this turtle—me—got up on that post.”¹

What Haley understood is that no one gets anywhere without a boost—without the help, attention, love, and encouragement of others. In a word, he understood humility, the forgotten virtue of our time.

We live in an increasingly aggressive, self-centered society where so many are rushing to make a statement about their successes, to be noticed and acknowledged as significant and indispensable. Some justify such behavior under the false pretense of healthy self-esteem and high self-confidence. In contrast, humility is cast as weakness.

Meanwhile, truly great men and women all around us quietly demonstrate that quite the opposite is true. They seem to draw strength not from popularity and praise but from humility and service. They allow others to be in the limelight. Their interest in others is sincere. They ask questions and then seriously consider the answers. They share credit for successes, standing with others, not above them. They give willingly, even anonymously. Their humility puts others at ease. Isn’t this the kind of person we seek as a friend—a person with a sense of self but not selfishness?

Imagine a community—or better yet, a world—where selflessness and humility are valued. Humility is strength. It is quiet but not speechless. It is certain but not superior. It respects the dignity, talents, and opinions of others. And it recognizes that, in a sense, we are all turtles sitting on a fence.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. In Stephen R. Covey, *Everyday Greatness* (2006), 162.
Program #4283

Carve Your Name on Hearts

Not long ago, a funeral was held for a man who lived a long and productive life. The flowers and music were beautiful; the remarks about his good life were inspiring. But some who attended were struck by something unusual: there was no mention, either in his obituary or in tributes to his name, about what he did for a living. The eulogies in his honor spoke essentially of two things: his great love for his family and the selfless service he rendered throughout his life.

His life was a testimonial of love and service: more than 65 years ago he served his country overseas defending freedom; he served his beloved wife, children, and many grandchildren with selflessness over many decades; he was a loyal friend; he generously volunteered his time in his community and church.

Yes, he worked hard professionally throughout his life; he had accomplished much in his chosen career. But when his time had come, what his family and friends remembered most about him—what they really cared about—were his love and service. The rest, in a certain sense, is forgotten in the end.

Ultimately, the same is true for all of us. We are most likely to be remembered not for plaques on the wall but for warm memories in the heart. What will be cherished is the difference we’ve made in others’ lives. What will be valued is the love and service we’ve offered. As Charles Spurgeon said: “A good character is the best tombstone. Those who loved you, and were helped by you, will remember you when forget-me-nots are withered. Carve your name on hearts, and not on marble.”¹

Lloyd D. Newell

1. John Ploughman’s Talk, or Plain Advice for Plain People (1896), 214.
Program #4180

World Community Day

Notes

Protestant/Ecumenical Observance Days

World Community Day

Notes

Good News

An evening television news commentator, after delivering story after story of tragic and unhappy events, paused and with a smile on her face and a sound of relief in her voice said, “And now some good news.” She went on to tell of a notable act of service rendered to someone in need.

Of course, those who bring us the news are interested in reporting the truth. And the truth is, there is plenty of good news to report. Examples of hope, courage, commitment, and personal sacrifice are everywhere. They are found in hospital recovery rooms, in schools, in houses of worship, and in loving homes. Good news is made by devoted religious leaders, honest businesspeople, diligent students, and parents who listen to their children. It seems to come most frequently from otherwise ordinary people who respond generously when someone is in need, down the street or around the world. Every day, while our attention may be focused on a world of trouble, all around us is the good news that people care, they are willing to share, and small acts of kindness really do matter.

Sometimes it seems bad news travels faster than good, that there is more of a market for hate than for happiness. Good news may not always sell newspapers or improve broadcast ratings, but it does lift and inspire the human spirit.

We don’t need to wait for a commentator to announce good news. We can find relief from bad news and find great joy by making good news ourselves—in our own community, our own neighborhood, our own family. If we look around, we will see opportunities to bring some good news to the lives of others. In quiet acts of service, by simply doing our duty, by lending a willing hand to those who need a little help, we can be the good news.

Lloyd D. Newell

Program #4195

Guiding Lights

Notes

The Old North Church, an Anglican church where sea captains and merchants loyal to the crown worshipped, is most famous as the place where two lanterns were hung in the tower to warn that British troops were arriving in Boston. Paul Revere, one of the Sons of Liberty, enlisted the help of the church's sexton to hang the signal lanterns. Revere, stationed across the bay, mounted a borrowed horse and went off on his famous ride—immortalized in the poem written 85 years later by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow: "Listen, my children, and you shall hear / Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere."¹ Minutemen were alerted, and the surprised British were defeated in the battle of Lexington. The Old North Church has become a symbol, a place where a warning was posted—two lights set at the highest point in Boston.

Imagine colonial Boston at midnight. Most lanterns had been doused by then. The stars and moon provided dim night lights. Perhaps the steeple of the North Church was visible against the faint sky. It must have been a restless night for many, knowing of an impending attack, and yet not knowing from which direction it would come. Families in two-and three-room homes huddled in the darkness, wondering, waiting. Maybe some could see the lights on the steeple. Others waited for the cry from horsemen like Paul Revere. Hundreds would answer the call and throw themselves into battle and eventual victory.

As we navigate through life, we also depend on certain points of light—beacons that shine through the darkness, steady and never faltering. We look to them for guidance: parents, grandparents, and good friends. Perhaps what made Paul Revere's ride so remarkable was that so many people trusted him. He had been a bell ringer sounding out alarms at the North Church since he was 15. He'd spent much of his life engaged in the welfare of his community. He could be trusted. He was, as the scriptures say, a light upon a hill.² And when his fellowmen needed him most, even at the risk of his own life, he was there.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. "Paul Revere's Ride," *The Complete Poetical Works of Longfellow*, Cambridge Edition (1922), 207.
2. See Matthew 5:14
Program #3885

Protestant/Ecumenical Observance Days

World Day of Prayer

Notes

Amazing Grace

Few things in this world bear the power of a mother’s heartfelt prayer. John Newton’s earliest memories with his devoted but frail mother recall afternoons spent praying and memorizing hymns and Bible passages. His mother died when he was seven years old, but her tearful prayers for him would leave a lifelong impression.

John Newton was on his own at a young age, alternating between boarding school and the grueling work of the high seas. As a teenager he was pressed into service with the British navy and fell into a life of sin. Finding the conditions unbearable, he deserted the navy but was later captured and flogged. A darkness settled over him as he sailed through dangers and adventures unrivaled in fiction. He was exchanged to a slave ship where he worked as a slave trader and was brutally abused by the captain. Eventually he became the captain of his own ship.

One night in the spring of 1748, as John was returning home from Africa, a violent storm arose. Steering the ship in what must have seemed like his last hours alive, perhaps John thought of his mother’s prayers. He later wrote of his experience, “The Lord came from on high and delivered me out of deep waters.”¹

Upon his safe return home, John acknowledged his spiritual roots and committed himself to a life of living and preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. His mother’s prayers had been answered, for her son had been saved by God’s amazing grace. In the words of John Newton’s famous hymn, “Amazing Grace.” “Thru many dangers, toils and snares I have already come; ’Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, And grace will lead me home.”²

Lloyd D. Newell

- 1. In “John Newton, Servant of Slaves, Discovers Amazing Grace!” Christian History Institute. <http://www.gospelcom.net/chi/GLIMPSEF/Glimpses/glimps028.shtml>.
- 2. In Kenneth W. Osbeck, 101 Hymn Stories (1982), 28. Program #3900

Don't Forget to Pray

“Did you think to pray?” This simple question from a 19th-century hymn reminds us to offer thanks and seek divine guidance, comfort, and peace each day. Is there anyone who does not need such divine intervention?

“Oh, how praying rests the weary,” the familiar hymn continues. “Prayer will change the night to day.”¹ These are powerful promises in our challenging world. Each of us faces situations we cannot handle alone, problems we cannot solve alone, weaknesses we cannot overcome alone.

Abraham Lincoln, wearied by the division of our nation at the time of the Civil War, humbly spoke these words: “I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My own wisdom, and that of all around me, seemed insufficient for the day.”²

Prayer can be our lifeline. When tragedy strikes a community, citizens gather in churches, synagogues, mosques, and homes to pray and draw strength from God. Family prayer brings parents and children together. One 15-year-old whose turn it was to say the family prayer paused and looked from one face to another. He then asked quietly, “Does anyone need anything?” What an immeasurable gift we give when we pray in behalf of another.

Humble prayer can prompt in us a desire to be better—to be a little kinder, more generous with others, more patient and forgiving. Whether spoken aloud or carried silently in our souls, each sincere prayer reaches to heaven. It draws down from heaven the strength to press on, the ability to see beyond today, and the willingness to trust God’s answers and His will in our behalf.

“So, when life gets dark and dreary, don’t forget to pray.”³

Lloyd D. Newell

1. Mary A. Pepper Kidder, “Did You Think to Pray?”
2. In *The New Dictionary of Thoughts: A Cyclopedia of Quotations*, comp. Tryon Edwards, rev. ed. (1959), 540.
3. Mary A. Pepper Kidder, “Did You Think to Pray?” Program #3985

Protestant/Ecumenical Observance Days

World Day of Prayer

Notes

The Power of Prayer

“I’ll cast on [God] my ev’ry care and wait for thee, sweet hour of prayer!”¹
We live in a time when drawing upon the powers of heaven through prayer is needed more than ever. So much about our lives can fill our days with worry and keep us awake at night with anxiety: we have health and family challenges, financial and career concerns, disquiet over daily difficulties, and fear over what could happen in the future. No doubt about it, we need heaven’s help.

A wise religious leader has said: “If you need a transfusion of spiritual strength, then just ask for it. We call that prayer. Prayer is powerful spiritual medicine.”²
Prayer can see us through to the other side of sorrow; it can buoy up our spirits when we feel like giving up; it can prompt us with inspiration and guidance about what to do and how to do it. Life is a process of maturation, and one of our most important opportunities is to learn how to pray and how to receive answers to prayers. Some answers come soon, some come later, but they do come to those who sincerely pray. It matters not how simple the words may be. If we come before the Lord with a humble heart, He will draw near unto us.

At any given moment, all around the world, prayers are ascending to heaven. One grandmother never hangs up the phone without telling her grandchildren, “I love you. I’m praying for you.” A farmer, the father of a large family, explained that prayer has always been a part of his daily life. But on occasion he has felt “an overwhelming need to go into the field at night or kneel by the haystack, look up into the heavens, and speak aloud to [his] Father in Heaven.” When he has prayed in this way, with real intent, he has felt the warmth of God’s love and known that his prayer would be answered in wisdom and for his best good.³ A young mother kneels to pray with her son each night, but then sometimes, after he has fallen asleep, she bows her head and prays over this precious child. She prays to be a better mother; she invokes heaven’s blessing upon her son.

Life can change in an instant, but the one constant, the one thing we can always count on is the opportunity to turn to God in prayer—not just in petitions, but in praise and thanks. Two thousand years ago the Apostle Paul spoke of the power of prayer. He urged us to “pray without ceasing” and “by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let [our] requests be made known unto God.”⁴ Since the beginning, people have called upon the name of God for strength in suffering, for wisdom to understand, for peace as we struggle with life’s unanswered questions. This day and always may we “cast on him [our] ev’ry care and wait for [him], sweet hour of prayer!”

Lloyd D. Newell

1. “Sweet Hour of Prayer,” Hymns, no. 142.
2. Boyd K. Packer, in Conference Report, Oct. 1987, 20; or Ensign, Nov. 1987, 18.
3. D. Rex Gerratt, in Conference Report, Apr. 2003, 96; or Ensign, May 2003, 90.
4. 1 Thessalonians 5:17; Philippians 4:6.
Program #3890

Notes

Protestant/Ecumenical Observance Days

[illegible]



Christian Feast Days

Christian Feast Days

Christmas

Notes

Christmas Offerings

During this season we celebrate “peace on earth,” yet some of us find it the most busy and stressful time of the year. We worry about decorations and decking the halls, gifts and gatherings—and the many other things we feel we need to do. And, very often, amid all the hustle and bustle, we have a quiet sense that we want to make our celebrations a little different, a little more meaningful than they have been in the past.

This year, rather than focusing on everything we need to do, let us consider what we can offer. Some offer talents in singing carols or playing musical instruments; others offer time as they visit loved ones and share memories of Christmases past. Some offer resources and labor, doing acts of service to help the less fortunate. No matter what our offerings are, if our intent this season is to make someone’s life happier, Christmas will be for us a time of peace and joy.

Children teach us much about making heartfelt offerings. Not long ago, a little girl stood to tell her class some sad news. Her grandmother passed away, and as she related details, she became overcome with emotion. Not able to say anything more, she walked toward her chair. A little boy got up from his chair and sat down beside her. Filled with compassion and a desire to make her feel better, he gave her the only thing he had: a little toy that he had smuggled into class. He did not pause to wonder whether it was good enough. He simply and selflessly gave from the heart.

Something deep and meaningful happens within us when we make such offerings. We feel connected to those around us. We feel a love that we may not have known we had—the love of that babe in Bethlehem, whose pure offering, given so long ago, still fills the earth with “peace, [and] good will toward men” (Luke 2:14)

Lloyd D. Newell

Program #4239

The First Christmas

Notes

A long time ago and a long way away, the sun settled into a holy night unlike any before or since. Out of darkness came the glorious light of a new star; in the meekness of a manger was born greatness that would change the world; and in the quiet of a shepherd’s field came angelic praises of peace on earth and good will toward men.¹ It was the very first Christmas night.

Today, some two thousand years later, the sublime simplicity of that first Christmas still stirs our hearts. No tinsel or manufactured light could ever outshine that brilliant night sky. No palace or mansion could compare with the majesty of that manger. And state-of-the-art sound systems will never match the heavenly music heard in that shepherd’s field. And yet it’s possible for us to feel today some of what was felt on that holy night.

Because the King of Kings humbly and willingly came into the world, the glory of His birth is still within our reach. We don’t need to travel to the Holy Land to feel the miracle of the first Christmas. We can see it when we look into the eyes of children and find faith born of purity and goodness. We can experience it when we seek more sincerely for the light of kindness and friendship, when we share tidings of peace and good will with those around us, and when we try a bit more earnestly to give gifts of the heart and of time.

In other words, we remember that first Christmas by the love that was born then. Hearts were knit together in sweet expectation. Wise men knelt before a lowly baby. Shepherds were strangers no more. And Mary and Joseph welcomed a newborn King who would teach the world the most transcendent truth of all: love one another.²

Lloyd D. Newell

1. See Luke 2:14.
2. See John 13:34–35.
Program #4345

Christian Feast Days

Christmas

Notes

Perfect Peace

Over 2,000 years ago, shepherds tending their flocks by night heard the herald angels' song of peace on earth and good will toward men.¹ With haste they went to Bethlehem to see Jesus, the Prince of Peace, born in the most humble circumstances. When He grew to manhood, Jesus "went about doing good"² and teaching all who would hear Him of the pathway to peace in this life and to eternal peace in the life to come.

Today, peace seems to be among the most difficult things to achieve. The ideal of "peace on earth" has been an elusive goal, as conflict surrounds us and differences in race and religion too often lead to discord, even violence. National border and property disputes disrupt peace, often forcing innocent victims to flee in search of safety.

And yet, as elusive as world peace may be, sometimes the peace that is most difficult to find is personal peace of mind. The stresses and strains of everyday life can rob us of the tranquility and contentment we yearn for.

Jesus taught that real peace comes through paying less attention to ourselves and our own needs and seeking instead to serve those around us. "Love one another; as I have loved you," He taught.³ Perhaps it is this spirit of giving that makes Christmas such a meaningful time of year. Generosity fills the hearts of so many, and it seems that the more we give, the more we receive—though not so much of material things but of true peace.

This is the peace that those herald angels promised on that first Christmas night—the peace that comes from helping another and bringing happiness into someone's life. This is the peace that Jesus promised when He said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you."⁴ This is the divine gift of Him whose birth so long ago heralded the peace that surpasses all understanding.⁵

Lloyd D. Newell

- 1. See Luke 2:14.
- 2. Acts 10:38.
- 3. John 13:34.
- 4. John 14:27; italics added.
- 5. See Philippians 4:7.

The Way to Bethlehem

Notes

At this time of year, people all over the world turn their thoughts to Bethlehem, as did the shepherds of so long ago when they declared, “Let us now go . . . unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass” (Luke 2:15).

The ancient city of Bethlehem is located along an old caravan route a few miles southwest of Jerusalem. It was known as the City of David because it was there that the prophet Samuel anointed young David to be the king of Israel (see 1 Samuel 16:1–13). Today it is known as the long-foretold birthplace of the King of kings, Jesus Christ. It has been referred to as a “little town,” and indeed it was 2,000 years ago. But from small things very often comes that which is great—“the hinge of history,” one writer observed, “is on the door of a Bethlehem stable.”¹

Traveling to Bethlehem today would be a long and costly journey for most of us. Few are fortunate enough to go there; most of us will never see it in person. Nonetheless, our hearts and our actions can take us to Bethlehem every day. And very often the journey may be as important as the actual destination.

The way to Bethlehem—and to the King who was born there—is marked by good thoughts and good deeds. We go to Bethlehem every time we turn the other cheek and respond with kindness instead of anger; we journey to Bethlehem when we open our hearts to others and let them into our lives—even when it’s inconvenient or difficult; we travel to Bethlehem as we set aside selfish pursuits and focus our thoughts and energies on the things that matter most; and we go to Bethlehem as we hold on to hope in the face of discouragement and tribulation.

The journey to Bethlehem is not just for a day or even a special season of the year. Truly, it is the journey of a lifetime.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. Ralph Sockman, in Spencer W. Kimball, “Why Call Me Lord, Lord, and Do Not the Things Which I Say?” Ensign, May 1975, 4.

Christian Feast Days

Christmas

Notes

Good Tidings of Great Joy

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” (Luke 2:14). Thus sang the herald angels to the humble shepherds in celebration of the birth of the baby Jesus. On that wondrous night in Bethlehem, the shepherds came from their fields to honor the Christ child. Later, they spread the good tidings they had received, making “known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child” (Luke 2:17).

The traditions of Christmas remember that sacred event. Today, Nativity scenes adorn churchyards, families gather from great distances, bells ring, carolers sing, and friends send Christmas cards, all in the spirit of spreading “good tidings of great joy . . . to all people” (Luke 2:10).

The first Christmas card is a good example of this legacy of good will. Commissioned in 1843 by Henry Cole and designed by British artist John Calcott Horsley, the hand-painted cards featured three panels. The center depicted a family gathered around a table at Christmas. Two side panels illustrated good deeds—one showed a woman clothing the naked, the other a man feeding the hungry. The card carried the greeting, “A merry Christmas and a happy New Year to you.”

With his card, Cole not only sent the message to his friends, “You are remembered,” but he also encouraged them to bless the lives of others by following the teachings of the Master whose birth they were celebrating.

At this glorious season, may we share our goodness and our greetings with all. May we be filled with love as was the “heaven-born Prince of Peace,”¹ who came that holy night so long ago.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing,” Hymns, no. 209.
Program #4034

Christmas

Christmas Bells

Notes

This is the season for bells to ring the joyous sounds of Christmas. But bells are more than just a sound of Christmas. We sing about bells and deck our streets and homes with real bells, with pictures and lighted representations of bells. People around the world tell stories of how all the bells on earth rang when the baby Jesus was born. But have you ever stopped to wonder why bells?

Look back to the time when bells were a major part of daily life. Before modern communication, bells were used to signal danger, or herald the time of day. Bells announced important events—births, marriages, or deaths. Today, we still ring bells to gather people to school, to work, to worship.

Bells have been used for decoration and cheer. Small bells tinkled from belts, capes, cloaks, shoes, and jewelry. Horses’ bridles and saddles were decked with bells, as were the carriages that bounced over rutted roads. The clear sounds of the bells brightened people’s lives.

It’s fitting, then, that bells came to be the sound of Christmas. The ringing of Christmas bells announces the most important news ever heralded to man—the glad tidings that Jesus Christ was born into the world. Christmas bells proclaim that because of Him, our lives can have joy. “Be of good cheer,” He said, for “I have overcome the world.”¹ Christmas bells invite us to turn to Him, even the babe born in Bethlehem, on that silent, holy night.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. John 16:33.
Program #3775

Christian Feast Days

Christmas

Notes

The First Noel

Christmas is the most wonderful time of the year. The sights and sounds stir within us a sense of excitement—and of reverence. As we jubilantly sing the songs of the season, we think of all that is good about Christmas: the renewed hope, goodwill, and good cheer that typify this time of the year.

Many of our favorite songs of the season are lively and vigorous, stirring our souls with joyous exultation. Others are more peaceful, evoking the sweet simplicity of the season. Their soft and gentle refrains, almost like lullabies, carry a quiet but penetrating message that resonates deep within us. One of those is the centuries-old familiar carol “The First Noel.”

The song is simple and reverent—much as that birth so sacred of 2,000 years ago must have been. The beloved words and tune transport us to that most special of all nights:

The first Noel the angel did say
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay,
In fields where they lay keeping their sheep
On a cold winter’s night that was so deep.

Noel is originally a French word related to the Latin natalis, which means “birthday.” Today, of course, noel connotes not just any birthday but a birthday that would change the world and everything in it; a birthday that, for much of the world, reset the calendar, marks time, and is celebrated still today.

Over time, the word noel has come to refer both to Christmas and, more specifically, to Christmas music. “The First Noel,” then, is a song about the first Christmas carol—the one sung by a choir of angels to humble shepherds gathered in a lonely field outside of Bethlehem. We can only imagine what their glorious music sounded like, but in a sense, our carols today are each an echo of that first noel. Whether it’s our own rousing declaration of “glory to God in the highest” or a gentle affirmation of peace on earth and “good will toward men,” we humbly join the angels in singing praises to the newborn King.

Lloyd D. Newell

No Ordinary Event

Notes

Sometimes the most extraordinary things happen in the most ordinary places. Two thousand years ago, in a very common setting, a shepherd’s field, angels proclaimed “good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people” (Luke 2:10). That holy message of heavenly hosts was delivered not to the pompous or the powerful but to a group of lowly shepherds watching over their flocks by night. It would lead them not to a majestic hall but rather to a lowly manger. The events of that night, so unlike any night before or since, remind us to look for greatness in the commonplace.

Observe any family or neighborhood, and you will find that the most precious moments usually take place during day-to-day living: a sister helps her younger siblings with homework, a mother tenderly cares for a sick child, a father plays catch with his son, a widow invites friends to her home, a neighbor shovels the snow, a teacher explains a concept at a child’s desk. These events are not to be ignored or diminished just because they seem small or ordinary. They are meaningful in the most profound way, and yet they are cloaked in the commonplace, the everyday.

To see and appreciate these happenings, we need to open our eyes and hearts. We may not hear angels sing or see a new star in the heavens, but we can sense in our souls when something significant is happening. When we do, we will find that these are not ordinary events at all. They are the stuff of which miracles are made; they are heavenly proclamations of hope. We need only remember that a king can be born in a stable, shepherds can receive heavenly messengers, and a bright new star can shine on dark and lonely nights.

Lloyd D. Newell

Program #4290

Christian Feast Days

Christmas

Notes

Hope and Christmas Gatherings

Christmas is a season like none other, and central to its celebrations is gathering. From near and far, down the street and around the world, we gather as family, friends, and neighbors to sing and to make memories, to share love and gifts, to warm ourselves in the sweet glow of the season. It’s as if all the sights and sounds, the wonder and awe, are designed to draw us closer together.

These gatherings are what make Christmas so joyous. But for some, this is a difficult and tender time. Some loved ones are missing from Christmas gatherings for the first time; some are not able to leave their home or travel; others are separated from loved ones by long miles or strained relations, by broken hearts or painful memories. But the promise of Christmas is that sorrow can be turned to joy, and sadness can give way to gladness.

Always there is hope—hope that we will reunite with loved ones, so cherished and missed; hope for an opportunity to start rebuilding a relationship; hope that this Christmas will mark the dawning of new life and new prospects. Two thousand years ago, a new star appeared in the heavens, signaling a glorious birth, a new beginning, a radiant hope. No star ever shone so brightly. No birth ever changed the world so much. No simple gathering of parent and child was ever so glorious, so promising.

This season, may our hearts be open to the possibilities that gathering with loved ones affords. May we be sensitive to the loneliness of others and look for ways to expand our circles. May we feel the joy and hope of Christmas gatherings.

Lloyd D. Newell

Program #4241

With Wondering Awe

Notes

This is a season of wonder and awe. It’s a time when we remember a wonderful and awe-inspiring story of shepherds, Wise Men, and angels; of a little town named Bethlehem and a magnificent shining star; of a crowded inn and a lowly manger in a stable.

Indeed, this is a special time of the year. And, in good measure, what makes it so special is the wonder and awe in our hearts. Awe is profound reverence mingled with respect. Wonder is deep joy mixed with astonishment. “Wondering awe” describes well the feelings we have for Christmas.

But wondering awe is not reserved for the Christmas season alone. We can experience wonder and awe regularly as we observe children laugh and play, as we read and ponder the meaning of scripture, as we glory in the beauty and majesty that surrounds us every day. Wonder and awe are found in every season: winter’s snowy blanket, spring’s rejuvenated splendor, summer’s bold energy, and fall’s brisk air and brilliant colors. And it can be found in every season of life: a baby’s birth, a changed heart, a new start, an empty nest. Wherever we live, whatever our age, we can look for wonder and awe.

And though the world often seems so large, so cold, so enveloped in conflict and unrest, we can join our voices in the angels’ song, look to the heavenly star, pray for peace, and experience wonder and awe.

Well over a hundred years ago, an unknown author wrote of the “wondering awe” shared by the Wise Men and millions of others since:

And still is found, the world around,
The old and hallowed story,
And still is sung in every tongue
The angels’ song of glory. . . .
The heavenly star its rays afar
On every land is throwing,
And shall not cease till holy peace
In all the earth is growing.¹

Lloyd D. Newell

1. “With Wondering Awe,” Hymns, no. 210.
Program #4189

Christian Feast Days

Christmas

Notes

O Holy Night

“O Holy Night” is one of the most beloved Christmas carols of our time. But most people have never heard the curious story of how it came to be.

In 1847 a parish priest of a small French village asked a local amateur poet, Placide Cappeau, to write a poem for Christmas Mass. Cappeau was known more for attending to business than for attending church, but he felt honored by the request and agreed.

Once he was finished, Cappeau felt his poem was more of a song, and so he contacted an accomplished Parisian composer, Adolphe Adam, who agreed to write music for it.

A few years later, in the United States, the carol was discovered by John Dwight, editor of Dwight’s Journal of Music, who translated the lyrics into English.

These three personalities—writer, composer, and translator—make up an interesting trio. The writer, Placide Cappeau, turned out to be more interested in politics than religion. Adolphe Adam, the composer of this classic among Christian carols, was of Jewish ancestry. And John Dwight, the translator, was a Unitarian minister who, seized by panic attacks whenever he spoke in public, had turned to music to express his devotion. Together these three very different people created a masterpiece that has thrilled and inspired millions.

When Placide Cappeau penned the words of his poem, he tried to imagine what it must have been like to be present on that holy night of Jesus’s birth. As he did, the words flowed.¹

As we, in turn, seek to understand the meaning of that sacred night, we discover a love strong enough to melt away differences. We learn that despite our diverse backgrounds and beliefs, we can work together to create something beautiful and lasting, and each time we do, we bring the world closer to a “new and glorious morn.”

Lloyd D. Newell

1. See Ace Collins, *Stories behind the Best-Loved Songs of Christmas* (2001), 132–38.
Program # 4084

Fellow Christmas Passengers

On a cold winter night not long ago, a young family seeking to feel the real joy of the Christmas season volunteered to serve dinner in a homeless shelter. At first, some of the younger children were a bit frightened by the sights, smells, and sounds of the inner-city shelter. They had never been so close to such distress before. But, in time, a little Christmas miracle took place.

As the family served the hot meal, they began to interact with the homeless residents. They exchanged smiles, laughter, and small talk. Then the singing started. No one really remembers who began to sing first—perhaps one of the residents or one of the children—but before long, everyone was singing Christmas carols. The room filled with the sweet spirit of Christmas. It became like a great party, almost a family reunion. They were no longer strangers but brothers and sisters, children of the same God. It was powerful, personal, and poignant—a night never to be forgotten.

In Charles Dickens’s *A Christmas Carol*, Scrooge’s nephew Fred describes Christmas as “a good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time; the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people [around] them as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys.”¹

No heavenly angels sang that night at the shelter—at least, not in the literal sense—but heaven came closer to everyone there. As the evening ended and the family stepped back into the cold night, they each felt the joy and meaning of Christmas more deeply. The stars shone a little brighter, hearts had opened freely, and they all felt a little closer to a few of their fellow passengers on the journey of life.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. (1906), 5–6.
Program #4343

Christian Feast Days

Christmas

Notes

What Matters Most at Christmastime

In 1783, after eight years of war, General George Washington wanted to be home for Christmas. He had been with his small band of soldiers, experiencing the hardships and horrors of the Revolutionary War, since his commission in 1775 as commander in chief. In 1776 he spent Christmas crossing the Delaware amid ice floes and bitter winds. In 1777 he spent Christmas searching surrounding farms and towns for something—anything—to bolster his hungry, freezing, and in many cases shoeless soldiers at Valley Forge. And so it had gone year after year.

With victory secured in 1783, General Washington headed for Mount Vernon, stopping along the way to greet crowds and conduct a few final acts of official business. “Among [these],” he wrote in a letter to a dear friend and fellow soldier, “none afford me more pleasure than to acknowledge the assistance I have received from those worthy men whom I have had the honor to command.”¹ His last stop was in Annapolis, where before Congress he officially resigned his commission.

He then pointed his horse home, across the Potomac, through woods, up hills, and across the fields, orchards, and meadows until he could see in the distance the windows of Mount Vernon, candlelit in welcome. Two terms as the first President of the United States were in his future. But that could wait. Tonight was Christmas Eve, and his family was waiting for him.

Unfortunately, not everyone can be home for Christmas. But even if our loved ones can be with us only in spirit, Christmas is a time to cherish the warmth and affection of family and friends. It’s a time to share with those we love our most precious gift—our time. Whether it’s the joyful laugh of a favorite uncle, the contented smiles of grandparents, the excitement of children, the embrace of one who is home at last, or the traditional reading of the story of the babe in the manger, Christmas is best celebrated with people we love.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. In Stanley Weintraub, General Washington’s Christmas Farewell: A Mount Vernon Homecoming, 1783 (2004), 129. Program #4342

The Easter Story Continues

Notes

It was an early spring morning. Grieving women made their way to a garden sepulcher. They had prepared spices and ointments to anoint the lifeless body of their Master. But arriving at an empty tomb, they heard angels proclaiming: “Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen.”¹

They remembered Jesus had said, “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.”² Now they knew it was true, and the women proclaimed the glorious news: Christ had risen. There was, as He had promised, life after death.

But the Easter story is not complete with an empty tomb and a vision of what lies after death. In Jesus we can find a new life now, a new life before the grave. For Christ said, “He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.”³ The Easter story continues so long as men and women find a new life by losing their lives in service to the Master.

So the Easter story continues when we break our bread and share it with those who hunger. It continues when we spend time with someone lonely or ill, or when we are generous with our praise and encouragement. The Easter story continues when we take the first step to end a quarrel or find it in our hearts to forgive.

In fact, Easter will continue so long as people realize that in giving life away they will find it.

Lloyd D. Newell

- 1. Luke 24:5-6.
 - 2. John 11:25.
 - 3. Matthew 10:39
- Program #3789

Christian Feast Days

Easter

Notes

We Look to a New Day

To those who mourn, to those whose hearts are weighed down there is peace—there is hope in the renewal of the season. There is joy in the sowing of new seeds. The Creator of the earth assembled the seasons as a reminder of the seasons in our lives, of the renewal He grants us if we will only believe in Him. It is no coincidence that nearly every culture and religion celebrates new life this time of year. The Jews observe Passover, a remembrance of God’s deliverance of the Israelites. Muslims give to the poor as a reminder of the sacrifice of Abraham. For Christians there is Good Friday, a sober reminder of Christ’s crucifixion three days before the Resurrection celebrated on Easter morning. Easter is an observance that begins with a sunrise, a new day. The symbols of that awakening include the first blossoms of spring, the lily, reminding us to renew our faith; the Easter basket, representing the first crops and seedlings that were brought to the temple to be blessed; and the egg, a symbol of new life.

And so we are renewed with the season. We seek peace after a turbulent winter. We lay the first days of our new life on the steps of the temple with a promise to serve all men, to sacrifice for the good of all, and to live our lives as symbols of hope for those around us.

As each culture and people pauses to renew, let us observe that we are all sharing the season’s emotions together, that each of us is somberly reminded of those who have left us and that we can all feel the joy of being delivered from the bondage of sorrow and separation with our eventual reunion and experience that deepest joy that comes from forgiveness and the opportunity to start over. God is the Creator of us all. He grants us the greatest expression of love possible—life itself. This year let us revere and celebrate it. Let us not be troubled by the world or afraid of the future. Let us bond with our neighbors and ring out our joy the way bells have sounded for centuries on Easter morning, ringing across the countryside the harmony of spring and of our faith in the Resurrection. Until that day, let us remember those comforting words of Jesus: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.”¹

Lloyd D. Newell

1. John 14:27.
Program # 3844

Singing Praises to God

Notes

In Matthew we read that “where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”¹ In 1739 in London, England, one such small gathering occurred. Charles Wesley met with his fledgling flock in an old, deserted iron foundry to preach and sing praises to God. This first Wesleyan chapel became known as the Foundry Meeting House.² It was run down, damp, and drafty, but those who gathered there felt the nearness of their Lord as they raised their voices to Him in song.

From those years at the old foundry, a book of hymns was published that captured the exuberance of Wesley’s faithful followers. One of the most joyful hymns included in the Foundry’s Collection was an Easter hymn Wesley wrote for his first service. We still sing it with great passion: “Christ the Lord is ris’n today, Alleluia!”³

Alleluia is a Hebrew expression of praise that was present in the early Christian church. In fact, St. Jerome, who translated the Bible into Latin in the late fourth century, said that in his day believers would gather in houses of worship to sing praises to God, causing the very ceilings to shake with their resonate hallelujahs.⁴

“Raise your joys and triumphs high . . . ! Sing, ye heav’ns, and earth reply.”⁵ Like the Christians of long ago, we should let our voices shake the rafters and our prayers of gratitude reach the heavens this Easter season, giving thanks for our Father in Heaven’s plan and praise to our resurrected Savior, for “Christ the Lord is ris’n today”!

Lloyd D. Newell

1. Matthew 18:20.
2. See Kenneth W. Osbeck, 101 Hymn Stories (1982), 48.
3. “Christ the Lord Is Risen Today,” Hymns, no. 200.
4. See 101 Hymn Stories, 48.
5. Hymns, no. 200.
Program #3895

Christian Feast Days

Easter

Notes

The Promise of New Life

The promise of new life, even everlasting life, is everywhere at springtime. A once-bare tree dons a new coat of pink blossoms. A red-breasted robin searches the dry grass for just the right twig for her nest. A baby lamb makes a test run of his little legs. A mother holds her baby for the first time and forgets the long winter of waiting. New life is so much more than just another beginning. In the weary eyes of any who have endured long winters, it is hope and continuity, meaning and purpose. New life is the color in a gray and darkening world.

Several years ago, on Easter weekend, a young girl came to auction her lamb at the county fair. Her parents were not there. The girl stood alone with her little lamb while the auctioneer called out a small sum. Everyone whispered when someone bid unusually high. And then everyone became quiet when the bidder gave the lamb back to the little girl, along with the money. The auctioneer explained. Her daddy was in the hospital dying of cancer. Her mommy was there with him. Nothing more was said. One hand after another was raised. The lamb was sold again—and then again and again and again. With each offering came a ray of hope, not so much for the money earned but for the promise of living in a world where strangers treat each other like good neighbors.¹

Every unselfish act breathes life into another's existence. Just as each splash of spring color reminds us of the ultimate victory of life over death, so do acts of goodwill revive feelings of faith, hope, and charity. Such acts are merely a reflection of that divine light within us, that spark of goodness that lights our way and leads us back to the God who gave us life. He sent His Son, the Lamb of God, that we might have new life and have it more abundantly²—in every season of every year.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. See "The Day the Lamb Was Sold," Ensign, March 2005, 8–9.
2. See John 10:10.
Program #3944

Light of Life

Notes

Something within us loves light. We need light for life. Both physically and spiritually, we thrive when we see and feel the light. Who doesn't feel drawn to a window, not just for the view it affords, but especially for the light it invites?

The natural world shows how essential light is to life. Delicate flowers push their way through the darkness of the cold, hard soil just to drink from the sun's warm light. Spring's bold display of blossoms is a direct response to longer days of more direct light.

In ancient times, people were more dependent on natural light than we are today. And when the sun went down, they could not simply flip a switch or press a button to illuminate their dwellings.

Long ago, early on that first Easter morning, "it was yet dark" when Mary went to the garden tomb (see John 20:1). The darkness in the world around her was likely easier to bear than the darkness and emptiness she felt in her heart. Soon the sun would rise, however, and soon the Light of Life would illuminate her soul.

In a sense, each of us walks a part of life's journey in the dark. But each step of faith leads to more light, more reason to believe, greater cause to hope, until we finally find the Light of Life. As the Psalmist said, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119:105).

The more we yearn for the Light of Life, the more our spirits, like the flowers of spring, blossom with the fruits of faith: peace, joy, love, and hope. Without the light that shines in darkness, we could not gather "fruit unto life eternal" (John 4:36). We could not feel the light of everlasting life.

Lloyd D. Newell

Program #4203

Christian Feast Days

Easter

Notes

A Promise of New Hope and Everlasting Life

One cold day, toward the end of a long, snowy winter, a family noticed serious damage to the beautiful ivy that grew on the outside of their home. It seemed that hungry deer had been feeding on it throughout the winter, until nothing but a tangle of brown sticks remained. The tender plants appeared damaged beyond repair. Disappointed, the family determined they would need to pull the ivy out, replant, and start over. For the time being, they tried to forget about the assault to their ivy and saved the somber task for warmer weather.

When spring finally arrived, the family was shocked by what they saw: the broken vines had somehow mended, and tiny buds had appeared. In time, those little buds flourished into beautiful, green leaves. Today, several springs later, the ivy is robust and continues to spread its leafy sprouts around the home.

Though it seemed miraculous, the rebirth of the ivy was actually not that unusual. Similar miracles happen every year as spring follows winter in an unceasing and marvelous cycle of rejuvenation. It's an eternal truth reflected in nature—an annual reminder that death is not permanent. Grass that looks dead, brown, and beaten somehow thrives again. Bulbs buried in the dark soil send their shoots toward the light, and flowers triumph afresh. Hope is always part of the landscape.

Beloved religious leader Gordon B. Hinckley said: “There is nothing more universal than death, and nothing brighter with hope and faith than the assurance of immortality. . . . What meaning would life have without the reality of immortality?”¹

When we feel discouraged, when life seems bleak and gloomy, we can remember the One who declared, “I am the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25). On that first Easter morning long ago, the promise of new hope and everlasting life filled an empty tomb: “He is not here: for he is risen, as he said” (Matthew 28:6).

Lloyd D. Newell

1. “This Glorious Easter Morn,” Ensign, May 1996, 67.
Program #4359

Sacred Gifts of Sacrifice

When we hear the word sacrifice, we usually think of a person giving up something of great value. Perhaps we picture an elderly man giving up his personal activities to care for his wife in her final years or a mother waking up in the middle of the night, sacrificing her well-deserved rest to comfort a crying child. It could even be a co-worker sacrificing a lunch hour to volunteer in the community.

But if our definition of sacrifice focuses mainly on what we give up, then we’re missing the essence of sacrifice. The complete definition is to forfeit one thing for something of greater value. And it’s the “greater value” part that we often forget. The man who cares for his ailing wife may have less time for golf or television, but he is growing more deeply in love, earning his wife’s eternal gratitude, and enlarging his own soul. The gifts he receives far outweigh what he gives up.

The mother who soothes her crying child may be missing some sleep, but she is carving a legacy of devotion and forging a bond with her child that she will cherish for years to come. Her choice yields a gain, not a loss—for who can put a price on the successful upbringing of one’s children?

Whenever we assist others or donate our time to a worthy cause, we know we are investing our time to make the world better. When we devote our time to higher purposes, we always come out ahead. It’s often a matter of understanding what truly matters. Giving up a recreational pursuit to spend time with our children, taking time to listen to a heartbroken neighbor—such sacrifice is always a bargain. It turns selfishness inside out and brings immeasurable joy.

The word sacrifice comes from Latin roots that mean “to make holy or sacred.”¹ Thus, when we devote our time and energy to greater causes and higher purposes, our efforts truly become sacred gifts.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. See Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed. [2003], “sacrifice.”
Program #4333

Lent

Notes

Christian Feast Days

Lent

Notes

A Work in Progress

A masterpiece is a work that demonstrates extraordinary talent, artistic skill, or workmanship—a supreme intellectual or artistic achievement. Historically, a masterpiece represented an artist’s finest piece of work, evidence that he or she, after years of perfecting a craft, had achieved the rank of master. Yet when we see or read or listen to a masterpiece, we rarely think of the time, the effort—even the mistakes—that accompanied its creation.

It has been said that each of us is a masterpiece in progress. That may seem trite or clichéd, but it’s a reassuring thought during those disheartening times when we feel like anything but a masterpiece.

Everyone goes through those times, including people who seem perfect—which, of course, no one is. We all have strengths and weaknesses, positive and not-so-positive traits and habits. We all have occasions when we are and are not at our best. Even though our past may be marred by mistakes and disappointments, our future holds the promise of growth and improvement. Consider this wise counsel: “God wants to help us to eventually turn all of our weaknesses into strengths, but He knows that this is a long-term goal. . . . Many of you are endlessly compassionate and patient with the weaknesses of others. Please remember also to be compassionate and patient with yourself.”¹

No masterpiece is ever created all at once. So be thankful for the small successes, the simple joys, the good times, and even the hard times. Each one is another brushstroke, another stanza, another note toward the finished product. Each one gives us experience, teaches us, and strengthens us for what lies ahead. Life is a process of change and improvement: becoming a little kinder, a little stronger, a little better. So be patient with the process, and remember that each of us is a work in progress—a masterpiece in the making.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Forget Me Not,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 120.
Program #4383

Tenacity

A few years ago, a psychology professor at the University of Pennsylvania studied the lives of National Spelling Bee finalists. She wanted to find out how they reached this significant accomplishment. Many people assume that they are just smarter than their peers. But the researcher found in these young people a trait more important than intelligence: she found tenacity. She writes: “The finalists are willing to forgo the immediate gratification of watching TV or texting friends so they can spend hours and do the tedious and merciless ... work. They write out thousands of flashcards with words and definitions and memorize them.”¹ These teens succeed because they are willing to resist the tugs and pulls of idleness and ease. With the encouragement of supportive parents, they just work harder and never give up.

In the process, they likely discover an important truth: the thrill of victory comes not necessarily from winning, but from doing our best, giving our all, and enduring to the end. On the other hand, the agony of defeat comes not so much from losing, but from quitting.

The same applies to any worthwhile goal—whether it’s completing a 5K run, graduating from college or vocational school, writing a book, composing a song, or raising a strong family—all these take tenacity, the willpower to see it through to the end. That “end” may be different from what we envisioned, and it may change over time, but the only way to get there is with tenacity.

The root of the word tenacity is a Latin word that means “to hold fast.”² And sometimes, holding fast to our goals and dreams may mean letting go of less important pursuits. But it does not feel like a sacrifice, because even if we never win a spelling bee, we can experience the thrill of victory if we have the tenacity to never give up.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. Warren Kozak, “Call Them Tiger Students. And Get to Work,” Wall Street Journal, Apr. 5, 2013, A13.
2. See Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed. [2003], “tenacious.”
Program #4369

Christian Feast Days

Palm Sunday

Notes

True Loyalty

At the beginning of the last week of His life, the Lord entered into Jerusalem amid waving palm branches and shouts of adulation. He made His triumphant entrance riding upon a colt over the carefully placed clothing of believers.¹ In His honor the great multitude cried, “Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.”² With celebrating crowds and pleas for deliverance, the Lord was surrounded by devoted followers who looked to Him for rescue and salvation. But He was the only one who knew of the loneliness ahead; He alone understood that some of those who stood with Him one day could reject Him the next. Just days later, His mortal life would end on the solitary, cruel cross of Calvary.

Sometimes, when all is well and friends abound, the tide can turn, people change, and, it seems, in an instant we’re alone. Once we reveled in the support of friends; now we feel abandoned. We look around for those who will stay with us through thick and thin. Many among us have felt the shallowness of the crowd, the fickleness of fans. The athlete who is cheered on one play, is booed the next; the actor who wins the critics’ acclaim for one role is vilified for the next. At times it may seem that no one can be counted on for long.

Fortunately, most of us know true loyalty because we’ve experienced it. If not, we can sow seeds of loyalty. We can be more trustworthy and reliable, welcoming these virtues into our lives. Loyalty and all its associated qualities are to be cherished and nurtured: We can be faithful to family, friends, and others in good and not-so-good times. We can be steadfast in our devotion to truth. We can be fair and treat people mercifully. In word and deed, we can be loyal not only to those who are present but also to those who are absent.

Far from the pulsating, fickle crowd is One who slumbers not nor sleeps as He watches over us.³ His love is perfect, His fidelity unsurpassed. Quietly, and with unwavering loyalty, we can let Him in.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. See Matthew 21:8, John 12:12-19.
2. 2 John 12:13.
3. See Psalm 121:4.
Program #3843

Triumphal Entry

Notes

Jerusalem stirred with passion that Sunday before the Passover. Travelers had clustered there, bringing sacrificial lambs. Coins clattered in coffers where pigeons were sold, and in the temple yard, merchants were busy earning silver from the celebration. But above the hubbub hung a question, Would the prophet from Galilee come? “What think ye, that he will not come to the feast?” they asked one another. (John 11:56.)

Even as he wondered, Jesus Christ’s apostles had fetched him a young donkey for his entry into the city. It was to be his last, and so he paused for a moment at the Mount of Olives, looking across at the golden city, and he wept, not for himself, though he knew his death was imminent, but for Jerusalem, a city whose walls and children would be ground into the earth. The he proceeded.

Word spread that he was coming, and as he rode toward the city, the babble of voices united into an uproar of adulation. “Hosanna to the Son of David,” they cried. “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” (Matthew 21:9.) Even before he reached the gates of the city, crowds were thronging the way, waving palm fronds and myrtle, spreading their garments in his path. They were giving him a messianic welcome. For this moment, at least, they were his people and he was their king. He came not with armies but riding a gentle animal, and they believed they adored him.

Where was this crowd just five days later when Jesus hobbled to Golgotha, bent under a cross? History does not tell us. Their shouts had been carried away on the wind, their palm fronds withered, and Christ went alone to be crucified.

As we contemplate a lonely Savior on a hillside cross, we may feel critical of this crowd whose love was so brief, but it should teach us something deeper. It is a human tendency for even the most righteous enthusiasm to wane. We are inspired, see with clarity, and then the fog rushes in. We seek to proclaim our love of the Lord, and then circumstances teach us forgetfulness. We shout for the Lord one day and turn our backs the next. When we hope that we would have rushed out to carry his cross, we need to examine whether even now our shouts swell and ebb on a fickle wind.

J. Spencer Kinard

Christian Feast Days

Notes



Jewish Holy Days

Jewish Holy Days

Hanukkah

Notes

The Promise of Hope

The beginning of a new year is a good time to remember that most darkness is temporary. No matter how bleak or dark things may seem at times, the long nights of winter gradually grow shorter, a new day eventually dawns, and with it comes a new beginning and new confidence. Hope is the flame that brightens the darkest nights.

During the dark days of World War II, a Jewish inmate in a Nazi concentration camp found a way to rekindle hope. It was the first night of Hanukkah (which, in most parts of the world, falls at the darkest time of the year). On this night, Jews traditionally light the first candle in their Menorah. Not having any provisions for such a celebration, the prisoner saved a scrap of bread from his meager meal and dipped it in grease from his dinner dish. After saying the appropriate prayer, he lit his makeshift candle.

His son said to him, “Father, that was food you burned. We have so little of it. Wouldn’t we have been better off eating it?” The father replied, “My son, people can live for a week without food, but they cannot live for one day without hope.”¹

Hope is so much more than positive thinking. It’s deeper than smiley faces and lofty words, although a sincere smile or an expression of faith can be a good start. But true hope is found deep in the hearts of those who love. It is expressed through meaningful work and worthwhile activity. It is manifested in service, sacrifice, and selflessness. It leads us to see ourselves—and others—as children of a loving Heavenly Father who, as the Psalmist said, can be to us a light that casts away fear.²

Each new year, and each new day, can be filled with hope and possibility. When the night seems particularly dark, let us light a candle, even if only in our hearts, to the promise of hope.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. See Harold Kushner, *Conquering Fear: Living Boldly in an Uncertain World* (2009), 93-944
2. See Psalm 27:1
Program #4294

Beauty for Ashes

Great beauty is often forged in the crucible of affliction. If we look ahead with the eye of faith and never lose hope, we can emerge triumphant over even the most difficult trials.

Examples of this abound in the inspiring African American spiritual. Sung by slaves, spirituals provided hope and eased the weariness and burden of daily tasks. Above all, they were an expression of spiritual devotion and a heartfelt yearning for freedom from bondage.

The biblical themes of the spiritual often carried a hidden message of hope and trust in God. Lyrics about the Exodus, for example, were a metaphor for eventual victory over oppression. The promised land or home represented freedom from slavery; the River Jordan was a code name for the Ohio River, which stood between the slaves and free country to the north; and swing low, sweet chariot referred to the Underground Railroad. Tales of God's deliverance in Old Testament times gave the slaves hope that He would deliver them too.

The authors of early spirituals are unknown. Their songs were spontaneous and unwritten, flowing from heavy but hopeful hearts. After the Civil War, African American musicians began to compose arrangements of these songs, and today they are a beloved part of the world's musical repertoire. The legacy of the African American spiritual is more than musical; it is one of hope and promise.

Thousands of years ago, the prophet Isaiah spoke of all who endure hardship and promised that the Lord would give them "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."¹ These spirituals speak to all who mourn, all who are burdened, and encourage us to seek beauty and hope in our time of affliction.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. Isaiah 61:3
Program #4026

Passover

Notes

Hither by Thy Help I’m Come

Some 3,000 years ago, Samuel the prophet led ancient Israel to victory over a powerful enemy. Samuel placed a large stone at the place of their deliverance and dedicated it as a monument to God’s assistance. He called the stone “Eben-ezer,” which meant “stone of help.” The stone became a symbol of the Lord’s goodness and strength.¹

This practice of raising memorials to divine help has deep roots in ancient Israel. Generations earlier, after the Israelites crossed the mighty Jordan River on dry ground and entered the promised land, their leader, Joshua, commanded the people to gather 12 stones from the river and build a monument. He explained that the purpose of the monument was to build faith in future generations, that “when [their] children ask . . . in time to come, saying, What mean ye by these stones?” they could tell their children how the Lord helped them in their hour of need.²

The beloved hymn “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing” alludes to this biblical practice with these words:

Here I raise my Ebenezer;
Hither by Thy help I’m come;
And I hope, by Thy good pleasure,
Safely to arrive at home.

Life is full of rivers to cross, full of challenges to overcome. However, those who see with an eye of faith understand that they did not cross their rivers alone. In a way, each of us could raise an Ebenezer, a memorial of the divine assistance, heavenly favor, and forgiveness extended to us. It may not be a monument of stone—indeed, hearts filled with humility and gratitude are the most meaningful memorials. Whatever form our memorial takes, acknowledging the help we’ve received renews our hope that by His good pleasure and in His due time, we will safely arrive at home.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. See 1 Samuel 7:7–12.
2. See Joshua 4:1–7.
Program #4177

Our Search for Meaning

In 1941, Viktor Frankl was a prominent Jewish psychiatrist and neurologist in Vienna, Austria. The threat of Nazi concentration camps was increasing, but Viktor had found a way out: a visa that would allow him to take his new wife and his promising career to America—and to safety.

But Viktor knew that when the Nazis came, they would take the elderly first—including, likely, his aging parents. They would need his care and support. Anguished, he searched his soul and sought heavenly guidance about what to do.

Then, one day, he came home to find a piece of marble on the table. His father explained that he had retrieved it from the rubble of a nearby synagogue that the Nazis had destroyed. Coincidentally, it was a fragment from an engraving of one of the Ten Commandments: “Honour thy father and thy mother.”¹

Viktor had his answer. He stayed with his parents in Austria, and within a few months, Viktor, his wife, and his parents were arrested and taken to a concentration camp.²

Over the next three years, Viktor discovered an important difference between those who survived the camps and those who did not: a sense of meaning. The ability to find meaning even in horrific circumstances, he observed, gave prisoners resilience in the face of suffering.

After the war was over, Viktor wrote a book, *Man’s Search for Meaning*, describing what he learned. It took him nine days to write and eventually sold millions of copies. The Library of Congress has listed it as one of the 10 most influential books in the United States.

In one way or another, we are all involved in our own search for meaning. Our ability to find it depends a lot on where we’re looking. We’re likely to discover, as Viktor Frankl did, that life’s true meaning does not come from pursuing our own happiness but from sacrificing for something bigger. Whatever that something is—family and friends, faith and community, volunteering and serving others—it can give our lives more purpose than we could ever find in just ourselves.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. Exodus 20:12.

2. See Anna S. Redsand, *Viktor Frankl: A Life Worth Living* (2006), 5–6.

Notes

Second Chances

Among life’s greatest blessings is the opportunity for second chances. A disobedient child says to his mother, “I promise I’ll do better next time” and “Can I try again?” We’ve probably all felt that way from time to time—we fall short, and we long for another chance, a fresh start, a new beginning. And while justice and fairness always have their claim, mercy and second chances also have their place.

The theme of second chances is as old as time and abundant in literature and history. We’re familiar with the story of the prodigal son who came home again; or the reluctant prophet Jonah, who got a second chance to overcome his fears. And we all have personal and family stories of making mistakes but then trying anew.

Another story of second chances is the novel *Silas Marner*, by George Eliot. Because of a false accusation and a friend’s betrayal, Silas becomes a recluse and miser, his heart “a locked casket,”¹ whose only concern is his work and his hoard of money. When his precious gold is stolen, the loss drives Silas into a deeper gloom.

Then along comes a little girl, an orphan he names Eppie, who presents Silas with a chance at redemption, another life, a new hope for happiness. When Silas’s thoughts turn to little Eppie’s care and keeping, when his heart opens to her, he finds love and release from his bitterness and depression. Silas may have lost his gold, but he finds true joy in a golden-haired girl who gives him a reason for living, a second chance at life.

Believing and hoping for life’s second chances gives us the confidence to live a life that, while not flawless, is determined; not perfect, but progressing.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. (1922), 90.
Program #4139

Notes

[illegible]



Additional Important Dates

Additional Important Dates

Armed Forces Day

Notes

God Be With You

A young soldier, with tears in his eyes, hugs his wife and child and boards a transport plane, bound for foreign conflict. It is a scene we have witnessed many times through the years, as men and women of the military leave loved ones behind and bravely go to play their part in the fight for freedom. For all who make this sacrifice, it seems the hardest part of all is saying good-bye.

Whether for only a few hours or much longer, we must, on occasion, say farewell and place our lives and the lives of those we love in the hands of divine providence. Mothers know the feelings of joy mixed with worry as they send their little ones off to the first day of school. Children grow up and leave home, friends move away, jobs end, family members pass on, and each time we have to say good-bye.

And yet there is something particularly poignant about bidding farewell to a soldier—to a man or woman who, though reluctant to leave behind loved ones, is nevertheless emboldened by a sense of sacred duty to the cause of freedom and country. And while we may not be able to fully appreciate the sacrifice made by the families of these heroes, we all share a measure of pride in their service and prayers for their safe return.

Just as touching—and often just as tearful—as the soldier’s departure is the joy of his return and the rush to meet his embrace and welcome him home. Even if the reunion is postponed longer than we wish, we never need to let go of the assurance that someday it will come.

Life demands that all of us endure separation, but the pain of this separation can be greatly softened when, with trust in heaven’s help, we include with our good-bye the hopeful plea “God be with you till we meet again.”¹

Lloyd D. Newell

1. “God Be with You Till We Meet Again,” Hymns, no. 152.
Program #4286

Duty, Honor, Country

Notes

Inscribed on the coat of arms of the United States Military Academy at West Point is the motto “Duty, Honor, Country.” These three words burn in the heart of every dedicated member of the armed forces—and of those at home who support them.

Duty is the effort required of every man or woman who desires to live under the banner of a nation or in the embrace of a community. According to General Robert E. Lee, “duty is the sublimest word in our language.” “Do your duty in all things,” said General Lee. “You cannot do more. You should never wish to do less.”¹

Honor is the virtue that causes men and women to live up to their duty. It produces the strength to carry on, even when the demands of duty are hard to bear. Honor is the cornerstone of courage, the foundation of discipline, and the wellspring of commitment.

Country is a word that reaches deeply into our hearts. Country is home and family. Country is dreams and opportunities. Country is hope and peace and security, a source of pride and patriotism, and a tear in the eye at the sight of a waving flag.

There are few causes worthy of the sacrifice of peace, few issues that can justify a man fighting his fellowman. But history teaches that when such causes arise, great is the obligation to rely on the sacred notions of duty, honor, and country. We join in a chorus of thanks for those who have sacrificed for their country in times of need—and for those who stand ready to do so today.

“Duty, Honor, Country.” When these are neglected, nations fall from stature and the people suffer. When they are treasured in the hearts and minds of brave men and women, they give enduring strength.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. In John Bartlett, comp., *Familiar Quotations*, 14th ed. (1968), 620.
Program #4079

Additional Important Dates

Boy Scout Sunday

Notes

Lives Touching Ours for Good

We have nothing to give that we didn't first receive from someone else. If we were to rummage down into ourselves like we were searching through an old chest, we would find—people, so many people who have helped make us who we are: mother, father, sisters, brothers, friends. God has made us who we are through others.

No blessing's trail can be traced very far back without running into someone's gift to us. There's the parent who lavished love and tenderness, the teacher who lifted and inspired us, the friend who changed discouragement into hope. They're the ones who go about the doing of earthly things in a heavenly manner.

Small acts of kindness freely given can transform lives far from the giver. One cold day at the turn of the century in London, an American visitor lost his way in a dense fog. Frustrated, he stopped under a street lamp to figure out where he was and how he could get to his appointment on time. A boy approached him, and asked if he could be of some help. When he found out the man needed to find a certain address in the city, the boy offered to take him there. The offer was gratefully accepted. When they got to the destination, the visitor reached into his pocket for a tip, but the boy stopped him. "No, thank you, sir. I am a Scout. I won't take anything for helping you." So impressed was the man by this act of service, that upon his return to the United States, he got together with some of his business associates, and they formed a scouting program that was later to involve countless boys.¹ That good turn by a young English lad still blesses a host of others.

The blessings that come to us from those we know, and those we don't, live on and bring God closer.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. See William D. Murray, *The History of the Boy Scouts of America* (New York: Boy Scouts of America, 1937), 25. Program #3724

The Bond of Brotherhood

Notes

Not long ago a group of American college students arrived in an eastern European city somewhat apprehensive. The country was not known for its political friendliness to the United States, and in addition, there were representatives there from several other countries, some of which also were not particularly friendly to the United States. But the apprehension soon faded. The tentative smiles on the faces of the young Americas were matched by the smiles of the multinational crowd about them. It was an international folk dance festival, and soon the music was playing and the students were dancing.

Though there was no common spoken language, the young dancers from all over the world were soon so intermixed that it was nearly impossible to tell who was from where. Nor did it matter. They were enjoying their common bond and the association as members of the same human family.

They had learned a truth that all of us would do well to keep in mind. Beneath the screaming headlines, the political propaganda, most people are pretty much the same. They help their neighbors, love their children, want to be appreciated, and would like to make the world a little better than they found it.

Today it is important to emphasize our human similarities, because we are rapidly being pulled into what some social scientists call a "global village." Jets move people from one culture to another in a matter of hours. Orbiting satellites send words or pictures to virtually any corner of the earth instantaneously. The barriers of time and space are coming down. Our separate roads are converging, and we must learn to live together on our shrinking planet.

"There is a destiny which makes us brothers," wrote Edwin Markham. "None goes his way alone." We, like the young dancers, need to enjoy each other's company, bury our hatreds, forget our prejudices. Our eternal destiny is to be one in the human family.

Let us work to catch that vision of oneness, to build the brotherhood of man, to build a bond of brotherhood that will bring us together as children of an eternal Father in heaven.

J. Spencer Kinard

Additional Important Dates

Christian Unity Week

Notes

E Pluribus Unum

On the great seal of the United States and on our coins is our national slogan: “E Pluribus Unum,” which, translated, means “from many, one.” Our various histories, heritages, cultural and ethnic diversities intertwine in this land to create the unique character that is an American. How does this happen? How do so many background blend into so strong a national union?

Some have suggested that the attraction of America is strictly economic. The poor and outcast flee to these shores only for material gain and America’s riches. But if wealth were the only magnet, then greed for goods of this world would immediately divide Americans into thousands of factions as they hungrily and selfishly gather the gold they came for.

Others suggest that America’s free business and political climate attracts foreigners. Surely, the blessed freedom of America’s Constitution is a treasure beyond price to all who are privileged to live under it. But political and economic freedom alone would also divide Americans, not bind them together. Many from foreign shores have forsaken their own advantage and position to contribute to the common good of America. What, then, is the power that pulls us together?

Sydney Harris suggested that America is not so much a nation as it is an idea. The idea is that “the people are in charge of their rulers and not the other way around.”¹ These rights of free agency are God-given to every people, for, as Thomas Jefferson wrote in the Declaration of Independence, “All men are created equal.” This belief in equality has stimulated a unifying spirit in America that goes beyond and below our differences of nationality, wealth, creed or color. Although we have not yet totally achieved the ideal of equality for all people, it has ever been before us as a beacon, reminding us that we are all brothers and sisters in the family of God.

This enlightened view of responsibility for each other and equality before God is the secret of America’s greatness. In the earliest years of our republic, French philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville observed that goodness was the glue holding this diverse nation together. He wrote, “America is great because she is good. And if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great.”²

Then, as now, of course, Americans were not perfect. There were those, and are those, who would take unfair advantage of this spirit of brotherhood to advance their own selfish interests. But in the main our national treasure of good will to all people, of individual human rights, has been sustained and replenished in war, in peace, in prosperity, and in depression, through hard times and good times. And so long as we feel love and concern for each other and a reverence for the God and Father of us all, this great nation shall stand strong, and we will continue to be so many voices who sing America’s song.

J. Spencer Kinard

1. “What’s Happened to Americanism?” Deseret News, 3 July 1985, p. 14A.
2. La Democratie en Amerique, 1835.

A Ballad of Brotherhood

Notes

One of the most persistent poetic themes is the brotherhood of man, the responsibility we have to love one another. The result of that love is beautifully expressed by the English Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley: love results in affection that endures, affection that lives after us in the objects of our love.

Indeed, the result of brotherhood and sisterhood is neither temporal nor temporary; it is eternal in both its joy and its power. Nor is such love merely a poetic convention; it is a scriptural truth. The Savior taught us to “love one another,” even as he loves us. He called this a “new commandment,” not because love is new, but because Christian love is all encompassing. (John 13:34.) No longer can we love them that love us and hate them that hate us. As Christians, the responsibility of our faith is to recognize the common ancestry of all mankind, the brotherhood that binds us all.

True, we come from separate cultures. We have unique customs and traditions. The shape of our eyes may vary, and the color of our skins. But beneath these variations beats a common soul, a bonding more significant and eternal than any apparent separation. We are, in fact, brothers and sisters, and it is our responsibility to love one another.

The Savior made no exception to this exhortation. As God made us all, he made us all to be his children. And we cannot be his children without accepting those brothers and sisters whom he gave us to love. This is the brotherhood of man, and it is through this bonding love that we discover the fatherhood of God and his love for us all.

Roses die, but their fragrance endures. Voices fade, but music continues. And each of us one day shall return to him who gave us life, as surely as the family of which our love is a part shall live forever.

J. Spencer Kinard

Additional Important Dates

Father's Day

Notes

Renaissance Men

From time to time we hear great artists or athletes described as “Renaissance men.” Society marvels at the variety of their accomplishments—a football player who also excels as a musician or a writer who can also paint.

We admire people who can switch hats and shine in more than one arena. But in our quest to find the next celebrity multitasker, we often overlook countless Renaissance men who are closer to home.

The real treasures of our society are the dads who wear multiple hats every day of their lives, even when they’re tired after a long day at work. Our world is made better by these kinds of men—men who can work a jackhammer one minute and caress a baby the next. Men who can split a log yet mend a heart. Men who can be tenacious at the office in the morning, yet be found teetering on a tiny chair and sipping from a tiny cup at their young daughter’s teddy bear tea party that evening.

Great fathers listen, guide, love, and laugh, forging a sacred bond with their children that will last for generations. Such men put family first and understand that their role extends far beyond providing. In the process, they show their families what it means to be a real man. No one can fill this heroic role quite like a loving father.

If you ask them how they do it, they’ll simply say they’re average guys with average lives. But in the eyes of their children, they are heroes, men who can stand as strong as mighty oaks yet share a gentle breeze and the squeeze of a little hand. These are the real Renaissance men, and they are all around us: fathers whose children matter most of all.

Lloyd D. Newell

Program #4214

Where Father Lives

Father's Day

Notes

A father died and left a grieving child. "Where is my father now?" she asked, then paused. Scanning a family portrait, she saw his mark on every child, gene deep. One with father's dark eyes, another with his height, large hands on still another to cup with comfort a slumping shoulder. "That's where my father lives," she said . Then on into the day she went, and the clouds grew thick around her and the light fled until she knew fear. "The world is not a safe place," she said . "Where is my father now ?" When others trembled and fell back, she kept walking, one footstep at a time, finding the only safety in her soul. "That's where my father lives," she said. She came upon an ailing friend along the road whom others hurried by . "When someone needs help is when they need it-not some other time," she had heard her father say. She had no time, but still she stopped. "That's where my father lives."

Every father leaves his mark upon his child more indelibly than in any other place. He may run a corporation, carve monuments to his greatness, create legislation in his name, but it is his child who will show the sure impression of what he was. "I want to be like my dad," writes the primary schooler, describing his ambitions-and he will be, too, socially handicapped or armed for triumph by the man who reared him. Consider the lessons of fathers.

A child's first sense of security may be because the father who knows the contradictions and injustices of the world protects him like the aspen does the seedling pine. The pine will know the weather soon enough. For now, it needs to establish solid roots. A child's sense of right may come because a father has uncompromising integrity. His actions are not based upon expediency, but values. Cheat a business colleague, go for greed, lie just this once when it's convenient? Never. A child's sense of compassion may grow because his father showed him that kindness is not weak. Stop for the stricken motorist, build another's confidence, help with the dishes? Of course . Jesus Christ told us that if we knew him, we would know the Father. We too are our father's child, and even when he's gone, some gesture, some holding on when it seems impossible, some rise of courage when all else fails us can let us know-that's where our father lives.

Additional Important Dates

Father's Day

Notes

The Work of Fathers

Of what work may a man be most proud? Should he be proud to be a patriot? Should he be proud to preside over a great business corporation, command vast armies, occupy a seat of power in government, receive the cheers of thousands, be the subject of biographies? Such works should make a man feel proud indeed of his accomplishments.

But listen to the words of one man who lived just such a life and then looked back. "By profession," he wrote, "I am a soldier and take pride in that fact. But I am prouder—infinately prouder—to be a father. . . . It is my hope that my son, when I am gone, will remember me not from the battle but in the home, repeating with him our simple daily prayer, 'Our Father Who Art in Heaven.'" General Douglas MacArthur wrote those words, and he was right. Our world needs good men for many things, but for nothing so much as to be righteous fathers. No number of brilliant statesmen, subtle philosophers, resourceful businessmen, or scientific geniuses can save us from chaos if we break the thread that binds our generation to the next.

We speak of the father of our country, or the father of modern science, or the father of endless other endeavors. But these are merely metaphors, shadows of the singular title a man assumes when he shares in the sacred act of creating another human being. Fatherhood is a responsibility that cannot be delegated or ignored. Every father will influence his child for good or bad. Traits of his mind and body will be part of the baby even before it is born. Virtually everything the father does will affect his child. No man can run so far or hide so well that his absence or presence, his indifference or concern, his cruelty or his kindness will not affect his child for good or ill. What a sobering responsibility and what an inspiring opportunity it is to be a father.

God bless the righteous fathers of this world. Men will do great works here on this earth for which they will be duly honored and duly proud, but they will do no greater work than bringing forth and "training up" another generation. (See Prov. 22:6.) It is significant that God, who could have chosen any awe-inspiring title in the universe, has asked that we call him Father.

What Do We Ask of a Father?

Notes

Fathers. Just what do we ask of a father?

He's the one who has to be versatile enough to plow a field, build a house, or lead a corporation; change a diaper, soothe a hurt, or throw a ball. He's asked to be strong enough to protect a family and gentle enough to cry on.

We ask him to love us when we don't deserve it and forgive us when we don't love in return. We need him to watch only us, to see something special that others overlook, even when we're not the star of the team or the lead in the play.

We ask our fathers to provide us a feeling of safety and security in a world they know has none. We ask them to turn a positive face toward us, despite problems of their own, so that we may grow up with confidence.

We expect fathers to teach us about the consequences of our actions, to be firm enough that we believe them and not so strong that we rebel. Fathers have to watch, unflinching, while we suffer the results of our own actions and not rescue us so soon that we do not learn the hard, important lessons.

We hope Dad will inspire us to live beyond our short-term needs, that he'll help us achieve what we really need and want and not just what we want right now.

We want our fathers to live these things, not just talk about them. One woman, in speaking of her father, said, "I don't remember that he preached order, but many mornings I saw him at his desk, poring over the family budgets so we could live within it. He didn't moralize about how we should treat others: I just watched him lift everyone who came into his presence. He didn't command us to be honest, but I knew I could trust his word. He did say, 'When people need help is when they need it, not some other time,' and he lived that way. I know, because I always needed him, and he was always there."

And so are our expectations of fathers. Do we ask too much? Perhaps – just as we ask too much of mothers. Yet, it is the Lord's great wisdom that in this creation we come to earth so vulnerable, so open, so innocent, that we must depend on someone who has journeyed here a few years longer and, in turn, that when we are grown, we have to stretch ourselves to hold another's hand along the way. We are bound to each other in ways we could never be were we not, at one time in our lives, so dependent and, in a later time, so responsible to those who depend on us.

J. Spencer Kinard

Additional Important Dates

Father's Day

Notes

Memories of Father

Popular culture and media sometimes portray fathers as either unnecessary or incompetent, and yes, there are bad fathers who are unworthy of the name. But let's not forget, most fathers give their all for their families. Most do their best to be there for their kids, to set good examples and show their children how to be responsible adults. Most fathers try to teach their children goodness and truth. They provide for, protect, and love their families—and then love them some more.

Just as no child is perfect, no father is perfect. We all hope to be remembered more for our strengths than our shortcomings. As days become years and fathers grow older, we might consider showing more compassion, forgiveness, and appreciation. Choose to remember the good moments, the happy times. Hold on to the memories that can sustain us in loss or heartache and can give us hope as we struggle to leave our own legacy of love.

A middle-aged woman recently experienced the loss of her father. In most ways, he was a very ordinary man. His professional pursuits were varied and not necessarily noteworthy. He lived a simple life, but he provided for his family and stayed true to his wife and children until the end. Upon his passing, his daughter reflected on his life and realized that his greatest gift to her was a feeling of pure love, and she was only now beginning to understand what a precious gift that was. When she was a girl, he sang her to sleep. When she was a teenager, he told her she was beautiful, and she believed him. As a grown woman, she still wanted to please him, and whenever he smiled at her, she couldn't help but smile back. She knew that he loved her, and quite frankly, she did not need to know much else.

Each dad is unique; each has his own way of expressing love. But love is what all good fathers—all true fathers—have in common, and love is what will live on in the hearts of their children forever.

Lloyd D. Newell

Program #4370

Symbols of Freedom

Flag Day

Notes

The symbols of our freedom—the flags, statues, uniforms, anthems, and other emblems of our inspiring history—are not just relics of ancient heroism. They continue to inspire us today, keeping the promise of freedom alive for present and future generations.

Nearly 200 years ago Francis Scott Key wrote words that became America’s national anthem. All through the night, enemy war ships bombarded Baltimore’s Fort McHenry. But by “dawn’s early light,”¹ Francis Scott Key saw his country’s flag still flying proudly. We feel that same pride when this anthem brings stadiums full of people to their feet in grateful remembrance of their liberty.

Our souls are likewise stirred when we see symbols like the Liberty Bell. Thousands wait in line, day after day, to view the now-silent bell near Independence Hall in Philadelphia. Its inscription still resounds in our hearts: “Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof.”²

The Statue of Liberty is another symbol that rallies our resolve for freedom. Its torch kindles hope in people from all nations who are welcomed by the words engraved in its pedestal:

“Give me your tired, your poor,

Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.”³

Symbols such as these are so much more than cloth or metal. They remind us of the ideals for which so many have united and worked and sacrificed. They fill us with thanksgiving for the land we love. These symbols remind us to protect and promote freedom—for a land that was free and brave in the past is only as strong as the free and the brave who call it home today.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. “The Star-Spangled Banner,” Hymns, no. 340.

2. Leviticus 25:10.

3. Emma Lazarus, “The New Colossus.”

Additional Important Dates

Mother's Day

Notes

Mother's Love

There are mothers all over the world. No matter the language, culture or continent, what a difference a mother makes. She is the purveyor of love and tenderness, which prompts nation after nation from America to Ethiopia, Thailand to my homeland of Wales to honor mothers with a day of tribute once a year.

The Welsh word for mother or mum is mam. Think about it; she is the one person who loves us unconditionally, who cares for us without limits, who never tires of us and makes us smile time and time again.

Each one of us holds in our hearts special memories of our mothers and of those who have also stood at our sides—grandmothers, aunts, sisters, neighbors, even teachers. These women have held us accountable, taught us the basic strengths of society like truth, honor, mercy, goodness and loyalty. I think of my own grandmother, mum and aunties attending my many singing performances beginning at the age 4. They have been cheering me on ever since.

Wales has a precious tradition of showing love—the giving of love spoons. It began in the sixteenth century when young men would fashion a carved wooden spoon as a declaration of love and commitment to a young woman. But as the years have passed, this common kitchen utensil turned work of art has become an expression of love. Many a Welsh mother's home displays love spoons from those she counts dear. My mum included. Carved from one piece of wood, be it sycamore, oak, boxwood, yew, or even fruit tree, the love spoon is decorated with designs of flowers representing affection, diamonds for good fortune, a wheel showing support, a lock for security, and a dragon for protection and a heart – of course – for love.

So it is with us. Carved in each of our hearts is a mother's love.

Lloyd D. Newell

Program #4365

Thoughts for Mothers

Notes

At the end of a long day, a busy mother sat down for what seemed like the first time since she got out of bed that morning. She was so exhausted she wanted to cry, but she didn't even have the energy for that. She looked around the room and saw a day's worth of clutter and too many chores half-done or not even started. "I can't keep up," she thought to herself. "There is no end to it, and I'm a failure at all of this." She felt worn out, used up, and quite unappreciated.

Then her eyes caught hold of a work of crayon art stuck by a magnet to the refrigerator. At the bottom of the drawing was written in a child's hand, "I love you, Mom." She saw little handprints on the patio door and realized that someday soon those would disappear and the sweet child who left them would be grown and gone. She felt the lingering warmth of the goodnight hug she received as the last child went off to bed. As tears filled her eyes, the sight of the clutter dimmed, and she saw two things clearly: it was worth it, and she was good enough.

What mother hasn't felt just as tired and hopeless as this one did? But when we see beyond the demands of daily living, keep a long-range view of things, and recognize the things that matter most, there can come into our hearts the assurance that our efforts are truly worth it, that they are making a difference. What we are doing, though probably not perfect, is surely good enough.

Dear mothers, close your eyes to the clutter, forget for a moment the things you haven't been able to do, and know that you are loved, that your sacrifice is of great worth, and that you are more than good enough. God bless mothers everywhere.

Lloyd D. Newell

Program #4313

Additional Important Dates

Mother's Day

Notes

A Mother's Love

"No one should ever underestimate the profound power of a mother's love. Not ever." These are the words of Steve Mikita, who was born with a muscle disease that has confined him to a wheelchair for more than five decades.

His earliest memory is not about being frustrated that he could not stand, walk, ride a bicycle, or kneel to pray. His earliest memory, he writes, is "of being kissed—a lot—by my mother. . . . In her arms, I experienced the priceless gift of a mother's love."

Every day until Steve was 18 and left for college, his mother was the first to greet him in the morning and the last to say goodnight, and she arose three or four times each night to turn him from one side to another. "She did it all, and without a single complaint," he remembers. "She did it gladly and cheerfully. I was never made to feel that I was a burden. Rather, I was her son, and she viewed the service she gave to me as a gift and a privilege."

His mother, and countless others, give all they have to their children. In ways large and small, day after day, they sacrifice and serve; they demonstrate courage, confidence, and faith. They willingly walk into the valley of the shadow of death to give birth and then continue to give life and love all their days. No mother is perfect, but most do their best to nurture, teach, and love.

Steve Mikita says of his mother, who passed away decades ago: "Without her love, I would never have come to know [God's] love. Without her at my side during trial after trial, I would not have approached my life with a muscle disease with as much optimism, resolve, and resilience as I have. . . . It was she who taught me to believe there is purpose in trials. . . . Her love filled the gaps. Her love was my strength."¹

May the Lord bless and keep such mothers.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. I Sit All Amazed: The Extraordinary Power of a Mother's Love (2011), 32–34.
Program #4260

Priceless to her Children

Notes

Whenever a camera scans a cheering crowd at a ballgame, very often an excited fan will wave and shout, “Hi, Mom!” When a young man holds open a door for an elderly couple, he is likely to be told that his mother obviously raised him well. And countless individuals daily catch themselves repeating Mother’s words: “Better safe than sorry.” “Waste not, want not.” “Money doesn’t grow on trees,” and so on.

Mothers have such tremendous influence in our lives that it’s no wonder we frequently hear stories, poems, and songs idealizing motherhood. Some mothers may feel that they don’t measure up to that high standard, but if only they could see themselves the way their children see them, they might realize how valiant they truly are, despite their imperfections. Mothers have accepted the most important job on earth: to train and nurture precious children. Surely our Maker sees their efforts, hears their prayers, and counts their tears.

A young mother expressed her worries about her two little boys to an older woman whose children were grown. The experienced mother smiled and shared this wisdom: “When children know they are loved, it covers a host of parenting mistakes.” Twenty-five years later, the once-insecure mother has seen that this is absolutely true. Her now-grown children, happy and secure in their mother’s love, overlook her shortcomings. She is their mother, she loved them, she tried to do her best, and in the end that’s all that really mattered.

Every mother needs to hear that every once in a while—especially from her children. Perhaps today we can take a moment to mother our mothers a bit and assure them that they’re wonderful—just as they have told us so many times in our moments of self-doubt. Not just today, but every day, they need to know that a mother is a precious jewel, each one different, but each one priceless to her children.

Lloyd D. Newell

Program #4208

Additional Important Dates

Mother's Day

Notes

The Title of Mother

Mother Teresa, known the world over for her great compassion, was once asked what she considered the most significant honor she had ever received. There were many to choose from, including the Nobel Peace Prize. But she surprised her questioner when she replied, "The title of Mother."¹

No two mothers are alike, but they share common purpose, whether they are mothering their own or stepping in, like Mother Teresa, with just the right touch or tutoring for someone they love. Mothers aren't perfect; indeed, they readily admit they are learning on the job—one that calls for wisdom, sacrifice, patience, love, and the willingness to lift others' burdens as well as their own.

Jane James was a mother who in 1856 journeyed with her family in a handcart company across a vast wilderness. Early blizzards created desperate conditions, but Jane did not let her family become desperate.

One bitter morning, Jane's husband succumbed to the cold and exhaustion, leaving Jane to care for the children alone. "I can see my mother's face," her daughter Sarah wrote years later. "Her eyes looked so dead that I was afraid. She didn't sit long, however, for my mother was never one to cry. When it was time to move out, mother had her family ready to go. She put her invalid son in the cart with her baby, and we joined the train. Our mother was a strong woman, and she would see us through anything."² Nourished by their mother's courage, the young family found the faith to carry on until the end of their journey.

Mothers are like that. They see us through the dark days—and the bright ones as well. Mother Teresa devoted herself to the poorest of the poor; Sarah's mother mustered the strength to lead her family on. May we, as did these two, honor the title of mother.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. See "Mother Teresa—Greatest of All Mothers," <http://www.themothersday.org.uk/mother-teresa.html>.

2. In Carol Cornwall Madsen, *Journey to Zion: Voices from the Mormon Trail* (1997), 630.
Program #4156

The Queen Mum

Notes

No matter where life takes us, a mother's love and guidance can help us become secure, compassionate, and contributing individuals. Few if any mothers feel they measure up to that accolade. Yet their love and influence are undeniable. And that's why we honor them. A mother's love can be so powerful that it can influence a child, a family, a community, and even a nation.

Elizabeth Angela Marguerite Bowes-Lyon is a good example. By title, she was the Queen Consort, wife of King George VI and mother of today's Queen Elizabeth. Her royal position could have made her aloof and out-of-touch with the people. But history says otherwise. For good reason, the Brits endearingly called her the Queen Mum.

During the Second World War, England faced relentless aerial bombing; even Buckingham Palace was hit in the raids. Officials urged the queen to flee to Canada, but she refused to leave the land and people she loved. She became the symbol of the British fighting spirit, inspiring her subjects to courage and optimism.

The queen willingly sacrificed along with her people. She participated in food rationing, used space heaters to conserve fuel, and allowed only one bare bulb to light each room at Windsor Castle. She frequently visited bombed-out areas, offering hope to those whose lives were buried in rubble.

Sounds like a mother, doesn't it? On the front lines and battlefields of life, they can rally the best in us. They build with courage, sacrifice, dedication, determination, and service—and above all, love. May we each so live that our lives reflect the powerful influence of our mothers' love.

Lloyd D. Newell

Program #4105

Additional Important Dates

Valentine's Day

Notes

On True Love

One of the problems with verbal language is its inability to adequately express abstract thoughts or feelings. Take, for instance, the oft-spoken phrase, "I love you." Three syllables, three short sounds, uttered daily wherever English is spoken; and yet this simple phrase can represent a wide variety of feelings or thoughts. When whispered between the young couple, across a candle-lit table or under a full moon, "I love you" suggests romance, desire, or idolization. But when exchanged between those who have weathered long seasons of marriage together—periods of financial distress, the responsibilities of parenthood, sickness, and even tragedy—the words "I love you" may have quite a different meaning.

It is to this notion of mature love, which many times begins as infatuation, that we turn our thought today. The enduring nature of true love sets it apart from its fleeting counterfeit. That is not properly called love which dissolves when confronted by adversity or change. Indeed, genuine affection cannot be altered by the transitory factors of circumstance because it has nothing to do with extrinsic things. It is, rather, an attachment to the intrinsic qualities of character, qualities that do not alter with changes in appearance or possessions.

Love is not love that wavers with the turns of fashion; nor does it falter with time's theft of youthful looks; nor will it disappear with the failure of health or prosperity. It is as Shakespeare wrote: "An ever fixed mark that looks on tempests, and is never shaken." No, true love is not a weed that sprouts overnight, spontaneously along the roadside, without forethought or care. Authentic love is a more exotic plant. It is a hybrid flower that must be nurtured and developed through the entire season of marriage; a flower that blossoms only in a climate of patience, consistency, and continuous kindness. As the Scottish poet Robert Burns observed about true love, "My Luve's like a red, red rose. . . and I will luv thee still . . . till a' the seas gang dry, . . . and the rocks melt wi' the sun."

J. Spencer Kinard

How Do I Love Thee

Notes

“How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.” So begins the tender expression of poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning. She then describes the depth of her devotion: “I love thee to the level of everyday’s most quiet need.”¹

Such love is not expressed only in a nice card or a special gift. The greatest love poems are written in the book of daily, selfless sacrifice with the pen of thoughtfulness and the ink of kindness. How loving are those who give of their time and forget personal comfort in order to care for another.

Love usually isn’t mysterious—it always deepens as we open our hearts to another, as we are thoughtful and considerate. Many couples, newly married, wonder how their young love could ever become any stronger. They soon learn that the more they serve one another, the more they give of themselves, the greater grows their love. The seeds of true love, planted in romance, grow and blossom as we serve each other. This kind of love then bears the fruit of pure and wholesome joy, and our love yields a bountiful increase.

Those we love cannot question our devotion when they receive our loving service. A man who had a hard time telling his wife he loved her demonstrated that love as he cared for her through several years of illness. When he finally spoke of his love, she responded, “I know you love me. You have taken such good care of me.”

Real love is more than just a feeling, no matter how intense it may be. True love is shown in thoughtful acts of caring and kind attention to another’s “quiet need.”

Lloyd D. Newell

1. “Sonnets from the Portuguese,” no. 43, *The Complete Poetical Works of Mrs. Browning*, ed. Harriet Waters Preston (1900), 223. Program #4041

Additional Important Dates

Valentine's Day

Notes

Real Love

Ever ask a married couple, how they keep love alive in their marriage? Well, they'll probably tell you that the honeymoon always ends. Daily life together, with its stresses and problems, tends to crowd out the bloom of romance in even the best of relationships. But we all know that love, real love, never dies.

Noted psychiatrist and writer M. Scott Peck has said that, "Of all the misconceptions about love the most powerful and pervasive is the belief that 'falling in love' is love."¹ Actually, falling in love requires minimal effort and very little willpower, whereas being in love involves much work and a steadfast commitment to the comfort and well-being of one's companion. He also says that "love is an act of will—namely, both an intention and an action. Will also implies choice. We do not have to love. We choose to love."²

Real love enlarges the soul. It helps us to bite our tongue when it would be easy to say something hurtful. It gives us an understanding heart that is filled with compassion for another. It enables us to be more patient with others' imperfections and recognize our own. And it means that we stay loyal and true when it would be easy or enticing to find someone else to love. The miracle of real love is that those who choose to love blossom under the sunshine of trust and appreciation and they even become more lovable.

Whenever we make a choice for lasting love, we grow. Our hearts, they expand in kindness; our minds are more open to another's point of view. Our vision of the future is hopeful and we continue to nurture our relationship over the long haul, through the ups and downs of life.

Yes, honeymoons come to an end, but the life and the love of a relationship can continue to grow—even flourish—"like a red, red rose that's newly sprung in June"³ when we love and choose to stay in love.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. *The Road Less Traveled: A New Psychology of Love, Traditional Values and Spiritual Growth* (1978), 84.

2. *The Road Less Traveled*, 83.

3. Robert Burns, "A Red, Red Rose" (1794).

Program #3938

Notes

Additional Important Dates

Notes



Other

Facing Problems

Every year in much of the northern hemisphere we enter the long, gray season when life seems a little harder for want of sunshine. We battle flu bugs and stalled cars, try to buoy sagging spirits against long, cold nights, and through it all wonder why life has to have so many frustrations. We think that tomorrow or next month or even next year will bring us ease. Surely at some point the obstacles will fall, the little problems that bite at us like a swarm of angry insects will subside. That is the time for which we yearn.

In Reality, though, those who are the sturdiest and happiest among us have learned a secret about problems—a secret, perhaps, that is the source of the happiness that lights their way. It is this—that there is no tomorrow or next month or next year when life is suddenly easy. Ease was not promised us as one of the conditions of mortality. If we are happy, it must be despite the fact that life presents challenges—not by fooling ourselves that someday they will go away.

The happy among us know that life is essentially a problem-solving experience. They expect that life will hold its anxieties and are not baffled when it does. The issue is not whether we will have problems, but how we solve them or react to them. Many are angry when a problem arises, consider it a great injustice, a wart upon the face of experience. We sometimes ignore our problems hoping they will go away. We pelt at them with our fists in rage, or we devise wonderful escapes. But these devices eventually fail.

If we would be happy, then we must finally admit that life will present us problems in one form or another nearly every day. Once we admit that, we are made free of that sense of injustice that usually accompanies a problem. We won't continue to ask, "Why me? Why today?" We'll take problems as a condition of life and gear ourselves to face them and fight them. Wrote one poet, "Let nothing ever grieve thee, distressed by life's problems." Said a successful businessman who conquered obstacles along the way: "If there is a problem, there is a way to solve that problem." When we admit problems are part of the fabric of experience, we can face them; and when we face them, we can find power to solve them.

Never Give Up

Several years ago a young athlete crouched poised in the starting blocks at the beginning of the high hurdles competition. Behind him was a good part of his lifetime spent in dreaming, training, working, planning and building for this moment. Ahead of him was a chance for the highest of all trophies, an Olympic gold medal. At the gun he shot out of the blocks and streaked down the track. But he misjudged a hurdle, fell, and in a fraction of a second the dream of a lifetime slipped out of his grasp.

He was asked many times the obvious question, "Was it worth it?" Always his answer was the same, "Yes. It isn't how many times you fall in this life that counts, it's how many times you get up." Thus it is with each of us. None of us is so talented and skilled that we will accomplish all our dreams without skinned knees, bumped noses, or occasionally falling flat on our faces. If we go through this life with no failures, it will mean simply that we set our goals too low.

One of history's great examples of tenacity and perseverance is Winston Churchill. When England was on her knees, and most of the free world was reeling from the blows of the Nazi war machine, Churchill hurled his famous challenge to Hitler. Tough as an old English bulldog, he stood before the House of Commons and thundered, "We shall never surrender." And they never did.

The same principle holds true whether we are defending a nation or building a life. It is the making, not the having, it is the trip and not the destination; it is the next pinnacle beyond the one on which we stand that gives life its zest and gives promise to tomorrow. And the greatest of all the gifts of God to us is the promise that those tomorrows can go on forever; that growth and continual climbing can be ours, and with them the ever-enlarging vistas and the joy that comes with accomplishment. So when life is difficult and dreams are far distant, be assured that if they are good and worthy, they will come to pass even if it takes some portion of eternity.

J. Spencer Kinard

Overcoming Problems

A problem, like a child's exercise in mathematics, seems something to be solved according to an easy formula, set aside, and then forgotten. Certainly that's what we hope for in life. Sometimes under our breath, we pray, "Let it not be too hard today." We look forward to a time when the difficulties will level off. We think that after a challenge has passed, after a sickness is spent, or after the closets are organized, then will come a time of peace. Not so.

Problems are a condition of personal mortality, the ebb and sometimes inconvenient flow of a world where we are only visiting. There is no security from them. Helen Keller, who ought to know, is quoted as saying this about security: "It is mostly a superstition. Security does not exist in nature, nor do the children of men as a whole experience it. Avoiding danger is no safer in the long run than outright exposure. Life is either a daring adventure or nothing."

But sometimes the danger of living can almost overwhelm us. We wonder if we can manage our problems or if they will manage us. We could handle them if they would come one at a time with sufficient breaks, but too often they flood us. We frantically search our resources and seem to come up empty.

That is when we need to remember the great message of the gospel. To God nothing is impossible and we are not alone. We were not born to fail. He who has known us longer than we can remember can give us back to ourselves. However much evidence we may muster to the contrary, he knows that we have the power within us to meet any problem with his help. Eleanor Roosevelt reportedly used to carry the following prayer in her purse: "Our Father, who has set restlessness in our hearts and made us all seekers after that which we can never fully find, keep us at tasks too hard for us, that we may be driven to Thee for strength." We must never doubt that he can deliver.

J. Spencer Kinard

“You’ll Never Walk Alone”

If we could have our way, we would book ourselves a safe passage through this life. What day, after all, would we ever choose to face terminal illness, the loss of our dearest love, the winds of adversity or failure? When would we say, “This day I choose pain. Today I choose disappointment”? No day. Yet, the solemn reality is that life will bring us experiences we would never choose, and we are left with that awesome encounter—the revealing of our own character.

Spencer W. Kimball said, “Now, we find many people critical when a righteous person is killed, a young father or mothers is taken from a family, or when violent deaths occur. Some become bitter when oft-repeated prayers seem unanswered. . . . But if all the sick were healed, if all the righteous were protected and the wicked destroyed, the whole program of the Father would be annulled and the basic principle of the Gospel, free agency, would be ended.”¹

Pain and sorrow do not immediately follow sin, nor does reward come instantly upon the heels of righteousness. If it did, no one would ever be good simply to be good.

Life will always have sharp edges. The ground will not be soft when we fall on it; viruses will not lose their potency when they near us. So, what are we to make of it all? How are we to wend our way happily in a world so potentially dangerous? Be assured that we can do the things we must. The great message of the gospel is that we don’t need to do them alone. We are in the Lord’s hands, and what better place to be than in those hands pierced with nails? Who can hold us more gently against the storm?

The happy ones of this earth are not those free of trial. Hardship is blind, and comes to all. The happy ones are those who know where to seek comfort when the rain falls.

Thomas Carlyle said, “For man’s well-being, Faith is properly the one thing needful; how, with it, Martyrs, otherwise weak, can cheerfully endure the shame and the cross; and without it, Worldlings puke-up their existence, by suicide, in the minds of luxury.”² Misery need not make us miserable. The sharpest pain can be blunted and turned to peace. When you choose to put your hand in the Lord’s, though the storm blows, you’ll never walk alone.

J. Spencer Kinard

1. Tragedy or Destiny, BYU Speeches of the Year (Provo, 6 Dec. 1955), pp. 4-5.

2. In Evans, Richard Evans’ Quote Book, p. 130.

The Strength from Adversity

Life is so basically good, and we so expect it to be good that occasionally we become frustrated and confused by the adversities that may appear to stand in the way of happiness. There may even be those who ask, "If God loves us, why does he not protect us? Why does he not keep trouble from afflicting us?"

The most immediate answer to that question is that he does. He does love us, and frequently he answers our prayers with deliverance. Are not the scriptures filled with songs of gratitude such as the one found in Psalm 30:1-2: "I will extol thee, O Lord; for thou has lifted me up. . . O Lord my God, I cried unto thee, and thou has healed me."

But sometimes, too, God may appear not to intercede. Sometimes we are blessed not with miraculous deliverance, but with the lesson of adversity. The eighteenth-century British statesman and orator Edmund Burke taught that "adversity is a severe instructor, set over us by one who knows us better than we do ourselves, as he loves us better too." Indeed, from adversity, from challenge, from difficult moments and potentially defeating circumstances have come some of mankind's noblest moments.

Seventeen years ago the American educator and concert pianist Leon Fleischer was stricken with an undiagnosed case of carpal tunnel syndrome. The result was that he lost control of the fingers of his right hand. He could no longer play the piano—a potentially devastating tragedy for a man who had been a child prodigy, who had dedicated much of his life to performing on the concert stage. But the artist devoted himself to his teaching; he began conducting; he did not utterly despair. In 1981 an operation restored the use of his right hand. Subsequently, he returned to the concert stage. But of those intervening years when his dreams seemed ruined, he says, "There is no doubt that what seemed like the end of the world to me in my little life turned into an opportunity for growth, for expansion and a widening of horizons."

So it often is with adversity. We must pray for God's help on our lives; and he will help us. Sometimes the adversity that is best put aside will be put aside. And for that adversity that does not leave, he will make us strong enough to bear, and the stronger for having borne.

J. Spencer Kinard

Misery Is Optional

It has been said that while pain and heartache are inevitable, misery is optional. In other words, even amid the difficulties and adversities of life, we can choose happiness and reject misery. Misery so often leads to a sense of defeat and despair, the feeling that life is either so painful or so hard that it's not worth trying. Although it's not easy at times, we have the power to choose.

Meg is a woman in her 70s who, like all of us, has known adversity. Her painful bursitis has kept her from moving as quickly as she once did. Eventually her medical problems left her home-bound, but she chose not to be defined by her limitations. As she pondered what she could do, Meg got the idea to send cards to people. She quickly discovered that people love receiving cards. Hers are all homemade: she decorates them with beautiful photos and artwork; she tenderly writes personalized notes of encouragement and love. It's more than a hobby; it's her passion. She says that she just feels better when she thinks of others and sends them a card.

Her husband helps by buying stamps, and he buys a lot of them! Most days she sends out three or four cards, sometimes as many as seven or eight. That adds up to more than a hundred cards every month. She says, "I can't do much, but I can send cards." The grateful recipients know that Meg cares about them enough to take the time to send her love and encouragement.

This is how Meg chooses happiness. You may choose it in a different way. What matters is deciding not to dwell on the aches and pains, the struggles and strains of life. Instead, try to think of the beauty in the world, the good things that surround you, the people who could use a little care and encouragement and love. You'll find that happiness is not bound by our circumstances—rather, it is activated by our choices.

Lloyd D. Newell

Program #4382

The Person and the Moment

From time to time, moments arise in our lives that require us to stretch farther than we ever have before, to rise to the greatness that we didn't know we had within us.

For one young couple, it happened when their twin girls were born. All of the anticipation and expectation of the long-awaited day became real as the new parents brought their babies home to a once quiet and calm apartment. How could they ever adequately prepare for such a moment? Their whole world changed as the size of their small family suddenly doubled. And yet, upon reflection, they realized that various experiences and events over the course of their lives really had helped them prepare to be the parents of these two adorable babies.

When people and moments meet, great potential that has been lying unnoticed inside us is revealed. Those moments, large and small, happen to all of us—in every season of life. A phone call or a blood test or an accident can immediately change everything. Some moments we anticipate, and we have time to prepare ourselves. But often they happen unexpectedly, without warning, in ways we couldn't have imagined. Either way, in time and with perspective, we begin to see how our past experiences have helped prepare us to rise to the occasion and do things we may have never thought we could. Though these moments can be trying, without them we would never know just how much we can achieve.

Remember the lyrics from the Broadway musical of decades ago:

Should you draw back the curtain,
This I am certain:
You'll be impressed with you.
On a clear day
Rise and look around you
And you'll see who you are.¹

When you meet your moment, face it with confidence. You'll find that you can rise to challenges, draw strength from the lessons of the past, and go forward into the future with courage and hope.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. Alan Jay Lerner, *On a Clear Day You Can See Forever* (1965).
Program #4376

Change and Permanence

Life is a rhythm of change and permanence. Change, because we measure everything in mortal minutes, and time is constantly changing. So much about us seems to be in a state of fluctuation. And then permanence. While much is always changing, we value that which doesn't. Constancy gives us security. We look for it in relationships, in philosophies, in the traditions that bind the past to the future.

Change and permanence. We are made to need and appreciate both, and the earth reflects our need: the waves, changing and unchanging; the seasons, earth yielding to cold and then to warm; change within a constant cycle, a refreshment to our souls.

But too much can be harmful. To exaggerate the pleasures either of change or of permanence in our lives can do us harm. Too much change gives us an appetite for novelty, a need for something in our lives that is never fully satisfied. The very nature of the pursuit guarantees diminishing returns and can bring such tragedies as infidelity in marriage, inconstancy in friendship, or ineffectiveness in completing daily responsibilities.

Those who become addicted to the novelty of change become slaves to the whims of the world. C.S. Lewis said that the Lord wants men to ask very simple questions: Is it righteous? Is it prudent? Is it possible? But if men ask, Is it in accordance with the general movement of our time, or is this the way that history is going? Then they will neglect the relevant questions.¹

On the other hand, those who become too attached to permanence can stagnate, dig deep grooves for themselves beyond which they cannot see. Individually, these are they who take a rigid position and cannot move from it, who are afraid to try new things, who cannot nor dare not risk or try. These are they who considered their progression sufficient years ago and have remained petrified in place ever since. Organizations that dwell on permanence are those that say, "This is the way we've always done it" or "if it isn't broken, don't fix it," not realizing the thing that broke was their ability to change. They fear innovation, quash new ideas, penalize risk takers. Such intransigence, either in companies or individual lives, results in regression, not progression.

Change and permanence. They are two of life's great pleasures and opportunities, but we must always strive to keep them in proper balance.

J. Spencer Kinard

1. See *The Screwtape Letters*, (Lord and King Associates), p. 42.

Adapting

On the world's highest mountains there is a point beyond which no tree can grow. The air is too cool and the growing season too short to sustain a mighty tree. But there is some plant life in the alpine meadows above the tree line: wildflowers especially adapted for the harsh conditions. Instead of being long-stemmed and large like the flowers lower on the mountain, they are tiny and hug the ground for warmth. Their growing season is short, and, perhaps most interesting, some of the flowers face the rising sun in the morning and turn to follow its light all day, until when the sun sets, the flower faces west—a marvelous adaptation to a fierce environment. No longer-stemmed, large flower from the lower reaches could survive above the tree line.

Adaptation seems to be one of nature's great laws, and it ought to be one of ours, too. For while there is the great constant in our lives of eternal laws that must be obeyed, much else about us seems to change. At one time of life we are the child to our parents; at another we are the parent to a child. Our life may bring us days of companionship and love; it may bring us days of loneliness. A sunny day is not a constant, for there is no growth without the rain. Yes, all about us and within us, there is always change.

As an unknown writer suggested, "There is no point at which, having arrived, we can remain."¹ Life is like a river. At no point can we step into it and call it fixed, even if we would like to. A moment may be so precious we would like to clutch it to us and hold it there, but it always passes on.

What are we to do, then, we mortals for whom the landscape so often changes? Like the alpine flowers above the tree line, we must adapt to survive.

Life may not meet our best expectations; our rigid schedules may have to be redone; our tastes based on the quirks of our own personality may have to be widened. Whatever circumstance life may thrust upon us, we must be ready to learn from it and live with it. We cannot call back the past. We cannot lament forever the circumstances that wouldn't conform to our will. When life doesn't meet our brightest hopes, we must simply press forward with courage, willing to give, unwilling ever to give in, always aware that life changes.

J. Spencer Kinard

1. In Evans, Richard Evan's Quote Book, p. 61.

People Change Everyday

Have you ever bumped into someone you knew years ago, surprised to find how much he or she had changed for the better? Life is full of little miracles, but this is perhaps the greatest miracle of all—to see people change, grow, and improve, day by day and little by little.

Imagine how different life would be if we saw people not for who they are right now, but for who they could become. Think of how we might respond differently to a child if we looked past his failed and messy attempts to make something and into his productive, positive future. Consider the boss, spouse, teenager, or neighbor whose occasional annoying behaviors sometimes put us at odds. What if we could see them as the better person they might become? This may be the most important way we can change—in our ability to believe in and nurture change in others.

Clinton Duffy was a prison warden in the United States during the 1940s and 50s. He was well known for his efforts to rehabilitate the men in his prison. One critic who was skeptical of these efforts said to the warden, “You should know that leopards don’t change their spots!” But Duffy replied, with the wisdom and perspective that comes of experience: “You should know I don’t work with leopards. I work with men, and men change every day.”¹

It’s not always easy to see others as they can become, and it very often takes patience and faith. Too often we give ourselves and others a reputation, a perception, that makes change difficult. But people can surprise us, even inspire us, with how they can and often will change for the better.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. In Thomas S. Monson, “See Others as They May Become,” Ensign or Liahona, Nov. 2012, 69.
Program #4354

The Need for Education

Once again, in most communities in this country, the learning process is underway in the schools—from kindergarten through college and on into adult education—providing a life-giving source of enrichment, not only in professional preparation, but in the overall enjoyment of life here upon the earth. We are told that “the glory of God is intelligence” (D&C 93:36), that “a wise man will hear, and will increase learning” (Prov. 1:5). This admonition applies to both the temporal and spiritual spheres. True education is the paramount purpose of a free people. It helps us develop fundamental operating principles in our lives that can guide and influence us for good. It helps make living happier by contributing to the prosperity, peace, and security of our country. So, as a free people, we must always strive for the highest and best in education.

As individuals, learning should be a lifelong endeavor. . . a continuing exercise in thinking, preparing, and living. The very process of learning helps us develop and preserve such valuable habits of the mind as curiosity, objectivity, open-mindedness, respect for evidence, and the capacity to think critically. It awakens and encourages a love of truth and contributes to our individual well-being as long as life endures. Learning need not always be a formal exercise that takes place in the classroom or in a library. Sometimes, we become educated when we least expect it. We learn through our day-to-day accomplishments, and we learn about ourselves through living. That, too, is an important part of education—learning what is inside us, finding the spark of truth that God has put into every heart, acquiring the inner knowledge of what is right and wrong for each one of us.

Some of our most vital learning takes place as we study the scriptures. We learn not only the truths of this earth, but the truth of the Creator. We learn to know him, to have confidence in him, to have faith in his laws. We learn to love him and to serve him, not because we fear him but because we have knowledge of his purpose. For most of us, the beginning of a school year is a reminder of our life-long education process, a process that includes the growth of spiritual knowledge as well as temporal learning.

J. Spencer Kinard

Lifelong Learning

Every year at the beginning of summer, the nation witnesses the annual pageantry of graduation ceremonies—a time signifying the end of formal education. But the young graduates—and some are not so young—soon realize that they are, in a sense, freshmen again—that the good life is a series of learning experiences. As these newly trained people enter the professional world, they would do well to build careers on a solid foundation of steady learning and steadily developing talent. There are immense satisfactions for the individual whose job is under control. There is only anxiety for the person whose job is not.

If the school and other social institutions have done their work well, graduates will have developed habits of the mind that will be useful in new situations throughout their lives—curiosity, open-mindedness, objectivity, respect for evidence, and the capacity to think critically. If society has created an atmosphere that encourages effort, striving, and vigorous performance, the chances are that our young people will expect much of themselves.

Part of that expectation will be to continue learning. Learning must be a lifelong occupation so that there will be continual self-renewal. At the same time, there must be educational concern for the eternal man. As Spencer W. Kimball told a college faculty, “When there is an inner emptiness in the life of a man, his surroundings, however affluent, cannot compensate.” When there is a crisis of purpose, nothing will really seem worthwhile or meaningful. When man’s relationship with God has been breached, we will be, as Isaiah said, “Like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest!” (Isa. 57:20)

The truly educated person knows that happiness does not come from self-gratification, ease, comfort, diversion, or a stat of having achieved all one’s goals. Happiness involves the pursuit of meaningful goals—goals that relate the individual to a larger context of purposes, goals that call forth the full use of one’s powers and talents. Graduation is, indeed, a commencement. It is a beginning toward the best that life has to offer, the foundation of which is learning, and summit of which is true knowledge.

J. Spencer Kinard

To Be Truly Educated

Today we reflect on the meaning of a couplet from the English poet Alexander Pope. The short rhyme talks about the necessity for a complete education and reads like this: “A little learning is a dangerous thing; / Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring.”¹

Pope refers here to the mythological fountain of knowledge and wisdom. He suggests that a small drink of learning is not only insufficient but also dangerous, that a little education is worse than none at all. He also advises us to “drink deep” from the well of knowledge, to become more than superficially educated, to become truly educated.

What is that? The truly educated man or woman is one who has schooled the whole person, not only the mind but the heart and the hand as well.

First the mind. Knowledge is mind, and mind is knowledge – and the great mind seeks knowledge in all directions. To truly educate the mind is to expand it widely along as much of the spectrum of knowledge as possible, to make it well-proportioned and balanced. The mathematician, though he or she may be a genius at numbers, is not well schooled without a corresponding foundation in the humanities. And the poet may be gifted in rhyme and meter but cannot be well-versed without an understanding of the physical world of physics, chemistry and natural science.

And the heart? To train the whole person is to discipline the heart as well as the mind, for feelings guide the mind. Napoleon was an intellectual without a heart. He was a giant of strategy and logic but a pygmy of affection and human kindness. To discipline the heart is to develop patience, temperance, charity, and to live the Golden Rule.

And then the hand. To be truly educated, one must also train the hand, for wisdom includes the proper and efficient application of knowledge. To think and to feel are authentic earmarks of education, but to do is the sign of true culture. The man or woman who both possesses and applies knowledge – who knows how to lay concrete, to play a violin concerto, to bake an award-winning cherry pie – is genuinely educated.

So, Alexander Pope was right. A little learning is a dangerous thing, but true education, which includes educating the mind, the heart, and the hand, is a blessed thing when we drink deep from life’s Pierian spring.

J. Spencer Kinard

1. An Essay on Criticism, lines 215-16.

A Lifetime of Learning

An elderly man sat in his easy chair carefully cradling a book. Magazines and newspapers lay on the table in front of him. "My books are like friends to me," he said. "I share so many memories with the old ones, and I enjoy learning from the new ones. And there is always so much to learn!" This from a man for whom learning had been a constant practice for the better part of a century.

Some feel they have outgrown their chance to learn. "You can't teach an old dog new tricks," goes the saying, but that seems not to be true. Many older people are still reaping a rich harvest of knowledge. Lifelong learning is no longer a luxury for just a few of us but something that all can pursue.

To consume a good book, to digest a report of current events, to savor the words of great thinkers past and present is to feed the soul and nourish the heart. We are never too old for such a feast.

And learning is found not just in books. People and places are great sources of new information and experience. We can ask questions and enjoy discussions with friends and family members, learning from their points of view. We can visit a local museum to hear the story of a historic landmark or inquire at a public library about any topic we choose. Or we can visit the Internet, where a world of information is right at our fingertips.

Formal education may be designed for the young, but the young at heart can enjoy a lifetime of learning. And when we leave this life, though our earthly goods will be left behind, the knowledge we have gained will be ours forever.

Lloyd D. Newell

Program #4101

Live to Learn

Life is filled with opportunities for learning. Education neither begins nor ends in the classroom. Even if our formal schooling is a thing of the past, we're never too old and it's never too late to learn. Throughout life we can study, read, observe, inquire—learn—so that life in all its wonder and possibility opens to us. A columnist observed: "We live and learn. Indeed, the happiest people live to learn. They live for the delightful astonishments that never stop coming to those who never stop learning."¹

One of the pathways to happiness is to continue learning throughout life. Examples abound: A 78-year-old grandmother, despite apprehensions, learns to use the computer so she can e-mail her grandchildren. A new world opens to her. A middle-aged father hesitates to attempt a home repair, but after asking a lot of questions and taking a few more trips to the hardware store, he figures it out. His sense of accomplishment makes the effort worthwhile. A college student enrolls in a demanding class that she is not required to take. Instead of becoming discouraged by the heavy load, she feels challenged and exhilarated by the questions she can't yet answer. All of these examples confirm that lifelong learning is good—it stretches us, expands our horizons, and enlarges our understanding.

Each of us could testify that most of our learning takes place outside of a classroom, in the school of life. The world God has given us is a library full of books waiting to be read. It's a classroom without walls that cries out to the curious, "What, why, how, when, and where?" Our lives are like study halls that forever present opportunities to learn. The activities, hobbies, and talents we can pursue are limitless. Only time is limited. Begin today. Learning is so rich in astonishments, so loaded with opportunity. Waste not a moment. Live to learn.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. George F. Will, "Keep Learning throughout Life," *Deseret News*, June 10, 1999, p. A25.
Program #3916

By Faith All Things Are Possible

Faith is the key that unlocks the door of success for every human being. We all exercise faith at various times in our lives. It comes in all degrees and in all quantities. The scriptures tell us, “Whatsoever thing ye shall ask in faith, believing that ye shall receive in the name of Christ, ye shall receive it.” (Enos 1:15.) Faith can heal the sick, bring comfort to those who mourn, strengthen our resolve against temptation, help us overcome harmful habits, and give us the strength to change our lives. Faith is the source of New Year’s resolutions. . . and the power that makes them work.

It takes faith to develop a strong personal value system, to stand up for what we believe, to lead a disciplined life, to control our appetites and our yearning for material things. It takes faith to make the Sabbath more than just another day of the week. It takes faith to make prayer a daily habit. It takes faith to keep God’s commandments. If we had greater faith in ourselves and the truth of God’s help—which he freely offers each of us—we could accomplish many things. It is a power by which all things are possible. . . a power we all have but only the wisest among us use consciously.

Of course, there must be a beginning point—a place to start building faith. We are told in Romans 10:17 that faith comes by hearing the word of God. Throughout biblical history we read of those who developed strong faith. It was by faith that Moses led Israel through the Red Sea, that Daniel stopped the mouths of lions, that Peter and Paul raised the dead. By faith Noah prepared an ark for his family. It was faith that sustained Abraham when asked to place his son, Isaac, upon the sacrificial altar. (See Heb. 11.)

J. Spencer Kinard

Faith Makes a Difference

The Savior said: “Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. 19:14.) Many scholars believe this statement refers to the faith of children, who truly believe in “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” (Heb. 11:1.)

We begin life with an unquestioning faith. As we grow older, that faith is tested by the experiences and events of life. Often, our faith line hits bottom during the years of early adulthood. At that time we make one of life’s most important decisions: will we allow our faith to continue its decline, or will we take steps to begin rebuilding faith?

Usually, the decline of faith is gradual. It is influenced by the weight of responsibilities that bear on us as we approach adulthood, as we come face to face with the demands of life. We become aware of the weaknesses and strengths of those around us. We have experiences which challenge our faith. But if we are fortunate and wise, we learn that faith does make a difference in life. We learn that faith in a Supreme Being is the single most powerful force we can use to overcome our problems, to understand our situation, and to make life meaningful. Faith is most important where knowledge is imperfect.

We cannot have perfect knowledge about the many demands of living. We can believe that God exists, and that the life he created has purpose beyond our understanding. That kind of faith gives us reason for living. It grounds our existence. It gives solidity to our lives. It helps us venture boldly into the unknown. But as the decline of faith was gradual, so too must the rebuilding of faith be a gradual process; and, most of all, with commitment—commitment expressed in the love of God and the understanding of his divine purpose.

Each of us can remember the unquestioning faith we had as little children. Our goal as adults is to re-create and re-direct that faith, for as the Savior said: “Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little Child, he shall not enter therein.” (Mark 10:15.)

J. Spencer Kinard

Faith in God

The Lord encourages us to have faith: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; . . . and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matt. 11:28-30.) Faith in a supreme being is the single most powerful force we can use to overcome our problems. It helps us endure extraordinary hardships without losing our perspective. With faith we are never alone.

As we begin to understand the process of faith, we realize that we can change our circumstances by changing our attitude and exercising faith. It is true: we are literally what we think; our character is the complete sum of our thoughts. God will always base our individual trials of faith on our particular temperaments and dispositions. The thing that will test one person’s faith will not necessarily test another’s. But when we humble ourselves, fully realizing that we cannot succeed without the Lord’s help, he will extend himself to us.

The Lord wants us to have faith in him. And if faith is difficult, he suggests that we experiment and exercise a particle of faith. If that is still difficult, he tells us to simply have a desire to believe, and he will enlarge our souls and enlighten our understanding (See Alma 32:27-28.) In the words of the hymn by Franz Schubert, “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. . . . He leadeth me beside the still waters. . . . He giveth peace unto my soul.”

J. Spencer Kinard

Faith, Memory, and Patience

Life can be much sweeter if we fully understand the attributes of God. He is love itself, plenteous in mercy, unceasing in his care for us. The mountains rise and fall, but he does not change. Not a hair on our heads is unnoticed by him. "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. . ." he said.

"But I say unto you that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. "Wherefore if God so clothe the grass of the field. . ., how much more will he not provide for you, if ye are not of little faith?" (JST Matthew 6:28-30.)

Provide for us if we have faith. How comforting that sounds in a world that so often pummels us. In a world of light and shadow, the Lord is the one consistency. In that, we can place our faith.

But if our faith sometimes wavers, it may be because two other attributes in us are weak – patience and memory. Faith will falter until it is shored up by these.

Why memory? Because we mortals can be foolish creatures. It is easy for the present to seem eternally upon us. When we are joyous, we can hardly remember trial. The mother, having forgotten labor, gladly goes to childbirth again. And the converse is also true. When we writhe in pain, we think it eternal. We forget that it will pass. We forget that mortal life is like a tide with ebbs and flows, sometimes in the water gasping for air, sometimes on the beach in the sunshine.

Faith remembers. Faith is the bird that senses the light and sings while the dawn is still dark. True faith has a cumulative effect. When the children of Israel stood at the Red Sea and the armies of Egypt came pounding behind them, they could not remember their other miracles in the desert and cried that they had been forgotten.

Faith knows that since God loved and blessed me yesterday, even if I don't feel him today, he still loves and blesses me.

With our remembrance, faith also demands patience, because we see so little here. We are like actors on a dark stage, standing in a spotlight. We cannot see before us. We cannot see what stands in the wings on either side. We stand in our little circle of light and wonder. And, knowing so little, we want things now. We want them on our time schedule. We are restive against God's steady hand and timelessness. But faith accepts God's time frame and comforts us about the future.

With memory and patience, faith can be made whole. No matter what life brings us, we can take advantage of that promise so often repeated in scripture: Ask and ye shall receive. (See Matthew 7:7.)

J. Spencer Kinard

Faith

We often discuss the role of faith in the affairs of men and women. “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” (Heb. 11:1.) It necessarily permeates every aspect of our lives. For instance, the state of world affairs—with wars and rumors of war—can be disheartening. But we overcome our despair by having faith in our country, faith in its leaders, faith that the nations can resolve their differences and move in the direction of peace. And we learn from experience that whenever illness or adversity strikes, the best prescription is faith.

When businessmen share their formulas for success, they call it positive thinking, but it is really nothing more than faith and the will to succeed. Faith often marks the line between success and failure—a line so thin we scarcely know when we pass it. All of us have had the experience of giving up too soon, of throwing up our hands at a time when a little more effort, a little more patience, and a little more faith would have achieved success.

A great deal of the unhappiness and vice in the world is the result of weakness and indecision—products of failing faith and collapsing courage. Those who are undisciplined, who have no faith or inner strength, are severely buffeted by every temptation that comes along. For these individuals, life is often difficult and unhappy.

But of all the creatures on earth, man alone can change his thought patterns and become the architect of his destiny. If we understand the process of faith, we can change our circumstances by changing our attitudes and exercising that faith. Those who think about faith as a principle of power realize that there is virtually no limit to what they can accomplish. Faith—or lack of it—can determine how we feel, thin, and act. It can determine our values, what is important in our lives, and how we cope with problems. It can give direction, purpose, and meaning to daily living.

Faith takes many forms—from belief in our friends, to belief in a better tomorrow, to belief in God. Of all the expressions of faith, that which should have the highest priority is religious faith—faith in the Savior, faith in his teachings and commandments, faith in his prescription for living a rich, full, and rewarding life. This need for religious faith and the peace it brings is well expressed in the lyrics of the hymn, “Jesus my Savior true. . . Teach me a better life. . . Be thou my beacon light; Guide me to thee.”

J. Spencer Kinard

Just Begin!

For many years, a husband and wife had been gathering branches that fell from the trees on their heavily wooded lot. One by one they stacked the branches in a pile next to the creek in their backyard. As time went on, the mound grew into a mountain of wood, and they finally determined they had better move it to the street where it could be picked up and disposed of properly.

They soon found that this task would be more difficult than they thought. First they tried to push and pull the pile toward the curb. Then they tried wrapping it in chains and dragging it. They tried to put a plank underneath it and slide it, but the huge pile would not budge. At last, a simple but profound idea struck them: they would need to carry the pile one branch, one limb, one piece of wood at a time. Over the course of several days, they moved the pile.

We've all had similar experiences when a problem, a project, or a challenge felt almost impossible, too large and difficult for our limited time, resources, and capacity. We may have felt frozen by fear, paralyzed by indecision—by not knowing where or how to proceed. And then we discovered the only way to proceed was simply to begin. Just begin! It has been said that the deed is half done once we have made a beginning. So we do what we can, no matter how small it seems.

It certainly requires faith, but that's the way challenges that seem insurmountable have always been overcome. Remember the children of Israel: after 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, they faced one final obstacle before entering the promised land—the River Jordan, overflowing its banks. The Lord parted the river, allowing the Israelites to cross on dry ground, but only after they showed enough faith to step into the water.¹

When we feel overwhelmed, when the task ahead seems too great, we may just need to start by getting our feet wet! Step by step, little by little, great things will begin to happen. The Lord will bless our efforts and magnify our abilities, but we must first begin!

Lloyd D. Newell

1. See Joshua 3:14–17.
Program #4360

One Simple Gesture

For years a certain family was plagued by resentment. Various members refused to speak to each other, weddings went unattended, and children were growing up without knowing their cousins. The years had given family members plenty of time to justify their behavior and blame the others for their injuries.

And then, in a sudden impulse of generosity, a young aunt sent a package of school supplies to her brother's children. It wasn't expensive; it wasn't grandiose. It was just one simple gesture.

But like a drop of rain on parched, cracked soil, it caught the attention of a family thirsty for kindness. A thank-you note was written. A phone call was made. A caring comment was spoken. Feelings began to soften. And now a holiday feast is being planned. The prospects for healing and forgiveness are bright. And it all began with a small investment in just a few notebooks and markers.

Of course, reaching out with compassion across a bitter chasm is not easy. It may even seem impossible, and it always requires patience and persistence. But often just one simple gesture of kindness is enough to set in motion a series of actions that convey love and goodwill, balms that can soothe any wound.

We see the powerful impact of small gestures every day. The people who thank returning soldiers at an airport, a group of teens who visit patients in a hospital, even a young girl picking up the keys dropped by an elderly woman. These simple gestures seem small, but they stay forever in the hearts of the people they bless.

Like sunlight shining through a small crack in a dungeon wall, one small gesture can bring warmth to cold hearts. By responding to even the smallest of generous impulses, we just may witness a miracle that not only softens the hearts of others but also brings unexpected joy into our own.

Lloyd D. Newell

Program #4341

By the Side of the Road

Life is more satisfying and enjoyable when we chose to see the good in others. While we all have our share of shortcomings, there is in each of us an abundance of goodness to celebrate. Wise people choose to focus on others' strengths rather than dwell on their weaknesses.

Years ago, Sam Walter Foss wrote a poem that captures this sentiment well:

Let me live in a house by the side of the road,
Where the race of men go by—
The men who are good and the men who are bad,
As good and as bad as I.
I would not sit in the scorner's seat,
Or hurl the cynic's ban;—
Let me live in a house by the side of the road
And be a friend to man.¹

When we choose an attitude of friendship rather than faultfinding, we surround ourselves with colleagues rather than competitors. It's easy to cast stones, hold grudges and deride others; it takes more effort to forgive, to commend, and to love. But the dividends are well worth the investment. Think what would happen if we lived in a world of fewer critics and more friends, where people gave each other the benefit of the doubt.

Gordon B. Hinckley, a beloved religious leader who lived well into his 90s, explained that somehow this gets easier over time. He said: "Age does something to a man. It seems to make him more aware of the need for kindness and goodness and forbearance. He wishes and prays that men might live together in peace without war and contention, argument and conflict."²

Life is hard and mean enough. Each of us has a place "by the side of the road," where we can choose today to "be a friend" and look for the good in others, and thereby replace the scorn and cynicism of the day with encouragement and hope.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. In *Respectfully Quoted: A Dictionary of Quotations*, ed. Suzy Platt (1993), 136.

2. "Forgiveness," *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 81.
Program #4335

The Path of Forgiveness and Healing

It's easy to talk about forgiveness: about wanting to forgive, hoping to forgive, even knowing that someday we will need to forgive. It's much more difficult to choose to forgive. But those who do find that this critical choice marks an important first step on the path to true healing.

Such was the case with Chris Williams, who had every reason not to forgive. A few years ago, a 17-year-old drunk driver hit the car he was driving, killing his expectant wife and two of their four children. Severely injured, Chris lay trapped in the car, feeling the most intense pain he had ever experienced. He later recounted that in the midst of all the chaos, his thoughts went quiet, and he felt peace enough to hear a voice inside his mind—a voice that was “straightforward and filled with power.” It simply said, “Let it go!”¹ And so, in that very moment, Chris decided that, no matter what the future held, he would forgive. He would set his feet on the path of forgiveness and, in effect, save his own life.

As the next weeks turned into years, Chris repeatedly acted upon his choice to forgive. In the hospital emergency room, he asked a friend to pray for the teenage driver. To the press, he issued a statement asking for stories of forgiveness that he could share with his surviving sons. As Chris began to heal, he reached out to the driver. He prayed for the young man; he encouraged him to go forward and make something of his life.

Choosing to forgive did not make everything easy for Chris ever after. He still experienced intense periods of grief and loneliness, heartache and anguish. But he sought heaven's help and strength. He remembered the peace he had felt and the decision he had made. And, without fail, every time he chose to “let it go,” his burden was lifted and he took one more step on the path of forgiveness and healing.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. Chris Williams, *Let It Go: A True Story of Tragedy and Forgiveness* (2012), 28.

The Gift of Forgiveness

Life is a study in forgiveness. No one gets through life without needing to forgive. And no one escapes the need to be forgiven. Perhaps the central test of character, forgiveness brings out the best in us. It leads us beyond our own pain and suffering and helps us feel God's love. Ironically, we help ourselves in the most profound way when we give the gift of forgiveness to others.

Charlotte Brontë's literary classic *Jane Eyre* addresses the theme of forgiveness so well. Young Jane, orphaned and sent to live with a spiteful aunt, endures years of neglect and cruelty as a child. When Jane is old enough, her aunt sends her away to a substandard boarding school, where she is again mistreated. But Jane learns a vital lesson from Helen, a dear friend there. Helen explains to Jane one of life's great secrets: "Life appears to me too short to be spent in nursing animosity, or registering wrongs."¹ Helen teaches Jane to forgive: to forget wrongs, to love enemies, to "bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you . . . [and] despitefully use you."²

Jane's life is different ever after. It doesn't necessarily become easier—Jane still has to endure injustices, hardships, and betrayals—but she is better prepared for all these things because she has learned not to hold on to grudges and ill feelings. She frees her soul from anger, bitterness, and revenge. In fact, Jane even returns to her malicious aunt and attends to her during her dying days. Ultimately, Jane finds true joy—and even true love—because she learned to forgive.

And so can we. It may be the hardest work we ever do, but it is also the most rewarding. Resolve now to let an old grudge go. Decide in advance to forgive any future offense that may come. Determine never to let a mistake get in the way of a meaningful relationship. As the 18th-century British poet Alexander Pope wrote, "To err is human, to forgive, divine."³

Lloyd D. Newell

1. Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (2006), 60.

2. Matthew 5:44.

3. *Essay on Criticism* (1711), line 525.

Program #4281

A Forgiving Heart

There's something so forgiving about freshly fallen snow. No longer visible are the unraked leaves, brown patches of lawn, and roofs in need of repair. In one merciful swipe of winter's wand, the snow falls and all is white and wonderful.

A blanket of freshly fallen snow has long been a symbol of forgiveness. The prophet Isaiah taught, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow."¹ Because, ultimately, forgiveness is a gift from God that descends upon all who are truly repentant, whatever forgiveness we extend to others is a reflection of the forgiveness God so generously showers upon us.

The biblical account of Jacob and Esau contains a poignant example of forgiveness. When Esau first discovers that Jacob took his birthright blessing, Esau is enraged and even thinks of killing his brother. Fearing for his life, Jacob flees to another town.² Over the next several years, they both do a lot of growing up. Esau marries and fathers children, and so does Jacob.

After many years, Jacob prays for reconciliation with his brother and decides to initiate a reunion.³ Jacob sends messengers to present Esau with generous gifts and to invite Esau to meet him.⁴ Esau accepts the invitation, and they come together. Upon seeing Jacob bow down before him, Esau "[runs] to meet him, and [embraces] him, and [falls] on his neck, and [kisses] him: and they [weep]."⁵

A full and lasting forgiveness takes place. In fact, it appears to have taken place well before they reunite. Each seems to have cleansed his heart of animosity and done the real soul-work of forgiveness. Independent of the other's attitude or response, they welcomed the peace of God into their lives.

So often we halt the process of forgiveness because we think it depends on the other party's apology or sincerity or demonstration of loyalty. But as this sweet reunion between estranged brothers demonstrates, forgiveness is not dependent upon another person's repentance. God will bless us to be able to forgive. Just as we welcome the peaceful beauty God bestows every time it snows, so the peace of a forgiving heart descends upon all who sincerely seek it.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. Isaiah 1:18.

2. See Genesis 27:41-43, 28:5.

3. See Genesis 32:3-11.

4. See Genesis 32:13-16.

5. Genesis 33:4.

Program #3841

The Hidden Power of Gratitude

The autumn season with its brilliant colors and bountiful harvests could be also thought of as the season of gratitude. It is a time when our feelings seem to run a little deeper, when our emotions are more vibrant, when the earth gives something back. It is a time to notice the bounties of life, and it intensifies as we approach our most American holiday – Thanksgiving.

Gratitude is a good feeling with a strange kind of healing power. But it slips away, if we don't look deep into ourselves and admit how much we need the power it releases – not just during a day, a month, or a season, but throughout the year.

Gratitude releases a psychodynamic energy. It makes us focus on good and draws us away from evil. This process generates optimism and self-confidence. It also draws our attention toward others and away from destructive self-centeredness. We feel impelled to repay kindness with kindness, favor with favor, trust with trust. Barriers are broken, and horizons pushed back.

Gratitude is a principle that should be pointed out to so-called unhappy people. The best way to counter anger and frustration when things go wrong is to remember all the times when things went right. That is the hidden power, the healing power we sense during the Thanksgiving season. Our challenge is to prolong it.

Perhaps this season of the year, in its own modest way, tries to remind us how much we owe to forces outside ourselves and how much all of us, regardless of status, are in the hands of the Almighty. It is a time to examine our attitudes, to make an effort to refrain from taking everything for granted. It's a good time to look at our own lives. Why were we born at this particular time in the history of the world, surrounded with physical and material blessings?

Many comprehend so dimly the truth of our relationship with God. Many do not know him as the Giver. Many do not understand his gifts, the depth of his love, the wisdom with which he deals with us individually. And so the challenge of the season is to put our feelings of gratitude in perspective. The basis of our thanksgiving should be the knowledge that God has given us all that we have and more than we realize. Throughout the year, we can show gratitude to God not only with prayers of thanks but also by living as closely as we can to the way he would have us live.

J. Spencer Kinard

Giving Gratitude to God

On one occasion during his ministry, Jesus met ten men afflicted with the dread scourge of leprosy. They approached him, beseeching mercy. Jesus healed them, and they went their way, rejoicing; but one among them stopped, returned to the Master, and gave thanks to him. Jesus responded gently, "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?" (Luke 17:17.)

We cannot know the thoughts behind the Savior's words; but given his emotional and spiritual maturity, it is safe to assume that he was not asking for gratitude to boost his own sense of importance or to make others feel indebted to him. Such motives were beneath the stature of the Son of God. Rather, he knew that gratitude is good for those who experience and express it. He had perhaps hooped not only to heal the afflicted lepers' bodies but also to help heal their souls with the balm of gratitude.

Sincere gratitude is perhaps the purest of virtues. Almsgiving can be tinged with self-importance. Being busy, even in good works, can sometimes cause us to be "troubled about many things" (Luke 10:41), as Jesus cautioned his friend Martha. On the other hand, meditations and private devotionals carried to extremes can turn us excessively inward.

But unadulterated gratitude is a pure and virtuous essence. A consciousness bathed in the light of gratitude and thanksgiving sees itself and the rest of the world in authentic terms. In the light of gratitude, there can be no egotistical self-sufficiency. Gratitude gives us a sense of how indebted we are to others. Our entire life is a litany of those who have lifted us, lent us strength, and guided us along our path. From parents and friends to fellow workers and people we do not even know – the list of those to whom we owe gratitude is far too long to compile.

And if we are indebted to our fellow human beings, how much more indebted are we to him who created us? We can never repay our debt to God. But even if we could, he suggests that gratitude is more than just saying thanks. It is best manifest in what we do for others: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren," he said, "ye have done it unto me." (Matthew 25:40.) Might we, at this holiday season, give of ourselves in the service of others. And, by so doing, we will show the sincerest form of gratitude and thanksgiving to God.

J. Spencer Kinard

The Power of Gratitude

The story is told of a person who noticed that his friend was always happy. If there were gray skies, he celebrated the shapes of the clouds; if it stormed, he went out on the front porch to watch and wonder. At each day, he awakened not with anxiety or depression but with rejoicing. Finally, the one friend asked the other, "What is the secret of your happiness? You are not a wealthy man. You are not exempt from the heaviness and pain of this world, yet you are happier than most."

And the happy man answered in one word: "Gratitude."

And so, a lesson for us all: to be grateful for what we have in life. Yet, there are those who will say, "I have nothing for which to be grateful. I am sore and tired. My best dreams have turned to ashes. The world is dark and getting darker."

Maybe. But the very essence of gratitude is learning to love what is instead of endlessly wishing for something different. Gratitude touches the cold stones of reality with light. Are there problems in life? Yes, but we have power to do something about them. That's a reason to be grateful. Is the world sometimes hard and cruel? Of course. But it is also beautiful. Do we cry because life is short? Its brevity adds poignancy to every experience, and we love what we love all the more.

When we are endlessly pining for a different situation, perhaps we should stop and ask ourselves, "Have I seen the gifts I already have? Have I opened my eyes to the heavenly reflections that are already around me?"

God asked us to give thanks, even when there seems to be little for which to be grateful. The reason, perhaps, as in all the Lord gives and asks of us, is for our own happiness. An ancient proverb says, "A gift unacknowledged is a gift un-received." It is undoubtedly for this reason that the Lord has asked that gratitude be a part of our prayers.

The Savior cleansed ten lepers one day, and all rushed away save one, who came back, fell at the feet of Christ, and gave thanks. "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?" asked the Savior. (Luke 17:17.) Why did Jesus respond that way? Why did it matter to him? Surely their gratitude could not add anything to Christ's stature. It is because the Lord requests of us only things that add to our happiness.

Gratitude helps give us the proper perspective to be happy. Truly, a thankful heart is a rejoicing one.

J. Spencer Kinard

Happiness Is Expressing Gratitude

A common characteristic of happy people is that they feel grateful; even happier, however, are those who express their gratitude. It's one thing to take stock of blessings silently, to be thankful in your heart; it's quite another to give voice to those feelings. Recently, social scientists confirmed this observation—they noted a slight increase in the happiness of people who wrote down their feelings of gratitude and a much more significant increase in those who verbally expressed their thanks. Their moods lifted and their overall contentment with life improved.

Imagine how much happier we might feel if we simply made more of an effort to thank people—out loud? To tell them how they have influenced us for good? To share our gratitude more freely and readily—with loved ones or even strangers?

Recently, a woman made great efforts to track down her kindergarten teacher of nearly 50 years ago. Back then, Thelma was a shy girl who spoke little English, but Mrs. Silverman believed in her. Little Thelma went on to earn a PhD and make great contributions as an educator herself. But she never forgot her kindergarten teacher. After years of searching, Thelma was reunited with Mrs. Silverman (now 83 years old) and could finally tell her—in person—how she felt. They talked for three hours, and Thelma expressed profound appreciation for the kindergarten teacher who shaped her life. Mrs. Silverman was overwhelmed. “[It] didn’t just make my year,” she said. “It made my lifetime.”

That’s the power of expressed thanks.

Finally and perhaps most importantly, what about the Giver of all good gifts? What if we made more of an effort to thank God for His goodness—to pray and express our feelings of gratitude out loud? Perhaps that’s why the Psalmist penned this everlasting truth: “It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto [His] name.”³

Lloyd D. Newell

1. See Abby Stevens, “Key to Happiness: Simple Act Makes You Happier Than 2,000 Bars of Chocolate Can,” *Deseret News*, Sept. 30, 2013, www.deseretnews.com/article/865587370/Key-to-happiness-simple-act-makes-you-happier-than-2000-bars-of-chocolate-can.html?pg=all.
2. In Greg Hardesty, “Santa Ana Unified Leader Thanks Her Teacher,” *Orange County Register*, Feb. 8, 2012, www.ocregister.com/articles/silverman-339439-mel233ndez-mrs.html.
3. Psalm 92:1.

Tethered to the Lord

The scriptures tell us that because the Lord suffered, He's able to comfort us when we are suffering.¹ He knows our pain and sorrow because He experienced and overcame pain and sorrow Himself. He loves us, and He can soothe our suffering.²

In the Old Testament one of the words translated as hope literally means "a cord" or a rope or tether.³ When we tether ourselves to someone or something, we expect the same destiny as the person or thing we are tied to. When we tether ourselves to God through faith, we can trust Him to sustain us in our times of trial.

A young mother, who had recently been widowed, felt totally overwhelmed. Financial problems multiplied. Working and caring for two young children by herself seemed impossible. Decisions needed to be made that would have lasting effects, and yet she couldn't decide what to do. In the depths of despair, she drove to the mountains and began to hike, hoping to find comfort in nature. But comfort wouldn't come. Finally, eyes too full of tears to walk on, she found a shady spot and rested in the midst of God's creations. Suddenly within herself she felt an affirming truth: "God created me too. And therefore, He will help me." Her tether to the Lord gave her the strength to endure, and to eventually find happiness again.

In times of trial we can be comforted by remembering that we are tethered to a loving Heavenly Father. He created us. He loves us. He will comfort and sustain us. That is our promise from Him.⁴

Lloyd D. Newell

1. See 2 Corinthians 1:3–4; Alma 7:12.

2. See Psalm 147:3; John 3:16.

3. See James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1894), "hope" 491; "tiqzâh [8615]," 126.

4. See John 14:18.

Program #3780

A Healing Place Called Grieving

Grieving is an essential part of living. It helps us move forward with our lives after we experience deep loss. Grieving means we feel sorrow, and because we do, we are able to free ourselves from bad feelings, like anger and regret. When a loved one dies, when a child wanders, when poor health debilitates, or when a dream dissolves before our eyes, we are faced with a choice. We can deny the loss and get stuck in a state of non-feeling, protecting ourselves from pain. Or we can grieve. We can feel the loss and open our souls to new vistas of hope and possibility.

Grieving helps us to redefine our outlook, to pick up the pieces, so to speak, after heartache and start living again. If we don't confront our losses or if we hold on to them for too long, we suffer; we deny the power of God to heal our broken hearts and give us new life.

In the Bible we read about Lot's wife, who, in a sense, refused to grieve. She was warned to leave Sodom and Gomorrah but stopped to look back because she could not accept the losses she faced. The reality of leaving family members, friends, and possessions behind overwhelmed her. She tried to stop the pain instead of passing through it. Not trusting that God would lead her through the valley of sorrow, she gave in to her fears and perished.¹

A physician who has counseled chronically and terminally ill patients and their families compares the fate of Lot's wife with the failure to grieve. She believes that grieving is essential to joyful living. "Grieving is not about forgetting," she writes. "Grieving allows us to heal, to remember with love rather than pain. It is a sorting process. One by one you let go of the things that are gone and you mourn for them. One by one you take hold of the things that have become a part of who you are and build again."²

Remembering with love rather than pain lifts the burden of loss and helps us to feel joy again. Somewhere between shutting out memories and desperately holding on to them is a healing place called grieving. There we find the untapped strength we need to go on living—not just existing, but really living. The Lord, in His loving mercy, makes it all possible. He promises: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."³

Lloyd D. Newell

1. See Genesis 19:12–26.

2. Rachel Naomi Remen, *My Grandfather's Blessings: Stories of Strength, Refuge, and Belonging* (2000), 38.

3. John 10:10.

After the Death of a Loved One

It seems incomprehensible to those who mourn the death of a loved one that the world keeps turning, that shops are open for business as usual, that newspapers and bills are still delivered, that neighbors and friends continue on their casual way. This is especially true for those who lose a partner in marriage, a companion through long decades of growing and changing. When death takes a spouse, much of our own life also dies, leaving us withered and unwilling to continue. Even with the healing hands of time, some are never able to fully overcome the traumatic and awesome effect of their spouse's passing. Theirs, unfortunately, is a world of pulled window shades and mementos from the past, a world where the present and the future are nonexistent.

But there are others who with time rise from the ashes of this human tragedy to become even better and stronger, not in forgetfulness of the past, but in appreciation for the future, in gratitude for each new day of life that provides another opportunity to experience, to enjoy, to serve.

These are some examples: One widow from a small Western town began sharing her gift for candy making with friends and relatives. Now whenever the need for encouragement or cheer arises, her delicate candies, symbols of her own kind nature and disposition, are sure to appear. A retired math teacher who lost his wife some time ago now spends much of his time as a volunteer in an alternative high school. It is a rough neighborhood; the students in the program are outcasts and dropouts. But where others have failed, he is succeeding. And in so doing he is enriching the lives of the students as well as his own. And finally a widow of only short duration now enters the doors of a local hospital almost daily to assist wherever help is needed, with paperwork, with the small chores of medical care, or with a more important task for which she is eminently qualified: to sit, quietly, lovingly, with those who wait as she once waited.

The list is endless; countless men and women have risen from despair and bewilderment to bless the lives of others. Theirs is the knowledge that human life consists of human service, and that a meaningful life and service to others are one and the same.

The Usefulness of Sadness

Sadness and melancholy are feelings we would generally avoid if we could, but of course we cannot. Joy and sorrow are mixed and stirred together to make up the substance of our lives. The Roman poet Ovid knew that the fact when he wrote, “No pleasure is unalloyed: some trouble ever intrudes upon our happiness.” And modern psychology seems to confirm this viewpoint. And modern psychology seems to confirm this viewpoint. Dr. Norman Bradburn wrote, “Happiness is resultant of the relative strengths of positive and negative feelings rather than an absolute amount of one or the other.”

Happiness seems universally accepted as a desirable state in our lives, but what is the purpose of sadness? The somewhat pessimistic preacher of Ecclesiastes had high praise for sorrow when he wrote, “Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better.” (Eccl. 7:3) It could be debated whether sorrow is better than laughter, but most certainly it has an oft times unappreciated value in our lives. We can learn lessons in moments of melancholy that would escape us if all our days were filled with sun and smiles—lessons of patience, endurance, long-suffering, and courage in the face of adversity. And these lessons we might well ponder in our pleasure-seeking world.

We are daily indoctrinated to believe that sadness is unnatural, that life should be one steady stream of joy and laughter, and that if we are not happy there is something wrong with us. This shallow view of life can lead us to unfortunate conclusions. Young married people may seek divorce at the first signs of difficulties, not knowing that every marriage has its problems. Others of us may go deep into debt to try to buy our way out of depression.

As a people we have grown so intent on living lives free from all sorrow that we now seek stimulants and tranquilizers, drugs and panaceas at the slightest sign of sadness. While sometimes medication may be necessary to get us through a crisis, we should not let it rob us of the healing and the strength that we can gain in facing our afflictions and working out our problems. A bit of melancholy contemplation can be for the injured heart and mind what rest and recuperation are to the body, a chance to let life’s inner powers work and mend and heal the injury, the trauma to the soul that brought about the sorrow. Yes, sadness is a part of life, and while we do not seek for sorrow, neither do we fearfully flee from it. Oftentimes the shadows gathering about us allow us to more clearly discern the light of the Lord’s Spirit as he sends it forth to lift us and guide us on our way.

J. Spencer Kinard

The Role of Suffering

Of all man's questions regarding human existence, the problem of suffering seems to be one of the most perplexing. For some individuals, pain and suffering appear to be punishment from God for sins committed or laws broken. Others see it as an indication that there is no God: for surely, reason these people, an omnipotent God could have organized a universe without the presence of pain and sorrow. And for others, the question remains an unanswered riddle.

No single conclusion completely answers this question concerning the role of suffering. In one sense, it is punishment brought on by our own doing, for much pain and suffering is the consequence of man's own actions. Unwise decisions, greed, envy, and other forms of ignorance have their own natural results. And just as the child is burned from touching the hot stove, so, too, unhappiness is the predictable outcome of breaking the eternal laws of heaven. These consequences, however, are not arbitrary punishments from a spiteful God, but natural results of disobedience to just laws.

But not all suffering is punishment. Indeed, it seems at times that the pure and innocent suffer the most in this existence. The newborn infant may be stricken with defects at birth; untimely death though accident or disease sometimes overtakes the loveliest and best of our friends; and Jesus himself, the most innocent of all, suffered in agony upon the cross at Calvary.

These facts, however, are not evidence that God is nonexistent or that he is not powerful. Rather, they are evidence that he has used his wisdom for the benefit and education of mankind. "Sorrow is knowledge," observed Byron. And to this Henry Giles added, "The capacity of sorrow belongs to our grandeur; and the loftiest of our race are those who have had the profoundest griefs because they have had the profoundest sympathies."

Thus, the divine qualities of patience, charity, and empathy for the pains of others are many times born and nurtured through suffering. For God to withhold a knowledge of the world's pains and wrongs from his children would be to deprive us of our humanity, leaving us ignorant of the lessons of heaven. Even with this, our understanding of suffering is not complete. Faith is still required: faith that God is, faith that his divine administration extends to the human situation, and faith that his love is that of a kind and eternal parent.

J. Spencer Kinard

Consolation

Notes

No matter who we are or where we live, we all experience hardship. But some tragedies are so horrific or inexplicable that they break the hearts of concerned observers across the country—even around the world. At such moments, complete strangers come together to offer sympathy, comfort, and help. The human family unites in a demonstration of compassion and goodness. We want those who suffer to know that even though they don't know us, we care about them. We want to somehow ease their suffering.

In his many decades as a rabbi, Harold Kushner, author of *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, has met with countless grieving families. When he asks how they are able to cope, they answer almost unanimously, “Community, people suddenly emerging, neighbors, members of their church, total strangers coming up to them to hug them and offer a word of consolation.” This response reminds him that even when a hardship seems inexplicably unfair, “people ... need consolation more than they need explanation. Feeling so singled out by fate, they need the reassurance that they are in fact good people and do not deserve what has happened to them.”

“The God I believe in,” Rabbi Kushner continues, “does not send us the problem; He gives us the strength to cope with the problem.”¹ And most often, He sends that strength in the form of a caring, compassionate person—someone who can help us rise beyond “Why did this happen?” and instead seek answers to “What do I do now to keep my faith and hope strong?”

Opposition and heartache are a part of life. Good people suffer. But no one should suffer alone. We can be there to offer consolation in the spirit of these comforting words of the Psalm: “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber.”

Lloyd D. Newell

1. (2001), xii, 171. 2. Psalm 121:1–3.
Program #4347

Joy for Life’s Journey

Despite its tasks and trials, each day of life offers us opportunities to find joy in our daily activities. In a world filled with cares and sorrow, our Heavenly Father’s love is constantly displayed in the joy He provides along life’s journey.

While joy is part of God’s plan for His children, we all experience seasons of suffering, loss, and pain. Trying to live a joyful life “does not mean we won’t have afflictions, but they will be put in a perspective that permits us to deal with them.”¹

Such joyful moments provide relief from despair, new strength when we’re weary, and respite in tedious times. After dark nights of discouragement, sorrow, or grief, we’ll find that God’s promise is sure: “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.”²

Even during our most severe suffering, God will send moments of joy and relief; however, we must attune our attitudes to perceive them. Confined in a World War II prison camp after she was caught hiding Dutch Jews from the Nazis, Corrie ten Boom records the delight she found in the ants who burrowed into her solitary confinement cell, and her gratitude for the biting fleas because they kept the guards from finding her hidden copy of the Bible.³

Joy cannot be purchased with money or assured by position. Instead, joy flows freely into grateful hearts that rejoice in God’s goodness. When we truly see and feel and listen, we find sources of joy all around us: a family member’s love, a sunset’s beauty, a friend’s loyalty, a child’s laughter. Joy comes to us from many sources, yet each, ultimately, is a blessing from God. Life’s journey has been compared to traveling by steam train. There’ll always be stops and starts, jolts and jarring, smoke and ashes from the locomotive, but in spite of them, there’ll also be occasions of thrilling speed and moments when incredible vistas spread themselves before our view. The secret of having joy is recognizing that joyful living is a style of travel, not only a destination.

In guiding us home, God offers us joy for the journey, and the promise that we’ll rejoice with Him forevermore at the journey’s end.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. The Neal A. Maxwell Quote Book, ed. Cory H. Maxwell (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1997), 184.
2. Psalms 30:5.
3. Corrie ten Boom, The Hiding Place (Grand Rapids: Chosen Book, 1999), 141,190. Program #3683

Sharing Our Joy

Deep within the human heart lies the unquenchable desire to share joy. When we experience joy, it's incomplete until we've rejoiced with another. A toddler runs to show a parent his newfound finger-painting skills. A teenager dashes home with a good test score. We phone loved ones to report a promotion, an engagement, a new baby, or perhaps just the first tulips of spring.

Happiness is multiplied when shared with someone else. But what if we're alone? In our complex world today, circumstances of travel, work, relocation, health, or the loss of loved ones may result in our being alone for a week, a month, perhaps longer. Must we lose that increase of joy because there's no one around to share it with?

When we find ourselves alone, we can reach out, sharing life's delights in community. By reaching out to others, we can do more than share joy; we can create it. We create joy by singing at a sing-along in the park, cheering in the bleachers at a Little League game, participating in a patriotic celebration, or volunteering service to those less fortunate.

Reaching out to community, we not only share our joy; we increase it, and even create it for others. Then our joy is complete.

Lloyd D. Newell

Program #3792

A Meaningful, Lasting Legacy

Has anyone ever given you a gift and said, “This reminded me of you”? Did it make you stop and wonder what traits or qualities stand out to others when they think about you? Consciously or not, we spend a lifetime crafting our reputation. Of course, we can’t really control what people think of us, and it’s neither useful nor healthy to worry too much about our reputation. But it’s also true that a life well lived can have a powerful influence for good on those around us. We’ve all been uplifted and inspired by the loving sacrifices, anonymous deeds, and generous gestures of people who have touched our lives. Are we having a similar influence in the lives we touch?

Hearing a heartfelt eulogy at a funeral can inspire us with the desire to leave a meaningful, lasting legacy for our loved ones. But when the funeral is over, we return to the daily routine, and that routine has a way of distracting our attention from the things that really matter. Priorities sometimes get muddled, and we find ourselves putting self-interest ahead of family or career goals ahead of helping someone in need. Yet none of us wants it said at our funeral that we sure knew how to strike a hard bargain or climb the ladder of success—or even keep the kitchen windows clean. Somehow those things pale in comparison with acts of kindness, the nurturing of a soul, the outstretched hand to the less fortunate.

What do you want to be known for? Love? Hard work? Patriotism? Faith? It’s never too late to start developing such traits. It’s simply a matter of the small choices we make every day. Each choice demonstrates to others—and, more importantly, to ourselves—what we consider important. Then, perhaps one day, your loved ones will give a gift that reminds them of you—the gift of a meaningful, lasting legacy that they pass down to the generations that follow.

Lloyd D. Newell

Program #4379

Smile

Most of us would agree with the lyrics of the well-known song, “When you’re smiling, the whole world smiles with you.”¹ But did you know that smiling may also be good for your health? Researchers are finding that smiling slows down the heart rate, reduces stress, and can make you feel happier. In fact, some research suggests that the smile doesn’t even have to be genuine—even a forced smile can have a positive effect on your well-being.² When you smile, you just feel better.

Of course, on long, hard days it can be difficult to summon a smile or muster a grin. But that may be when a smile is needed the most.

One dark, snowy winter day, a young man was walking across a deserted university campus on his way to an early-morning class. It was hard to find anything to smile about that cold and windy morning. And then he heard someone singing—loudly! As he got a little closer, he recognized his roommate walking toward him, singing at the top of his lungs, “Oh, what a beautiful morning! Oh, what a beautiful day!”³ It’s practically impossible to sing those words without a smile. It can’t be done.

Now, some may say that this young man was silly or deluded, but those who knew him well understood who he really was—optimistic, upbeat, always on the lookout for the positive.⁴

You can’t always do much to change your circumstances, but you can always smile. Smiling is an outward expression of a full and abundant heart.

So smile. Smile because you are alive. Smile because you live in a glorious world. Smile because there are good people around you who could use a smile. Smile because there’s always the promise and hope that life will get better. Having the courage and disposition to greet others and yourself with a smile may be just enough to turn the day around.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. Larry Shay, Mark Fisher, and Joe Goodwin, “When You’re Smiling” (1929).
2. See Sumathi Reddy, “Stress-Busting Smiles,” Wall Street Journal, Feb. 25, 2013, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887323699704578326363601444362.html>.
3. Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II, “Oh, What a Beautiful Morning” (1943).
4. See Bruce D. Porter, “Beautiful Mornings,” Apr. 2013 general conference, <http://www.lds.org/general-conference/2013/04/beautiful-mornings>. Program #4373

Things to be Desired

Max Ehrmann loved to write. And so, after practicing law for a few years and bouncing between the meatpacking and manufacturing industries, he set it all aside, picked up a pen, and turned to writing full-time. Throughout his life he published books and essays and poems that reflected his wisdom, his passion for the written word, and his hopeful view of life.

His most acclaimed work, *Desiderata*, was published in 1927 but didn't become popular until well after his death in 1945. *Desiderata*, which in Latin means "things to be desired," contains this insightful advice for all of us in our hectic, hurry-up world:

Go placidly amid the noise and the haste, and remember what peace there may be in silence.

As far as possible, without surrender, be on good terms with all persons. Speak your truth quietly and clearly; and listen to others, even to the dull and the ignorant; they too have their story. ...

If you compare yourself with others, you may become vain or bitter, for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself. ...

Be gentle with yourself. ...

Whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should.

And whatever your labors and aspirations, in the noisy confusion of life, keep peace in your soul.

With all its sham, drudgery, and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world. Be cheerful.

Strive to be happy.

These wise words echo the peaceful whisperings of truth. They strike the same note as the ancient words of the Psalmist: "Do good; seek peace, and pursue it" (Psalm 34:14).

As "noisy and hasty" as life may have been in 1927, the need to "go placidly" seems even greater today. How might the world be different if shrill, hateful voices were met with truth spoken "quietly and clearly"? We may not be able to change the world in all the ways we would like to, but if we truly do "keep peace in [the] soul," we will see, as Max Ehrmann did, that "it is still a beautiful world."

Lloyd D. Newell

Program #4364

Happiness

The Gallup organization recently released a poll whose purpose was to measure positive emotions worldwide. A thousand people in more than a hundred countries were contacted and asked about their previous day. How often had they smiled or laughed? Did they feel respected? Did they learn or accomplish something interesting? According to the survey, the happiest people on earth live in Panama and Paraguay, which happen to rank 90th and 101st in the world in terms of wealth. In fact, none of the top 10 happiest countries would be considered wealthy by most measures.¹

Admittedly, no survey can accurately measure true happiness, but these results ring true. While wealth, ease, and other external circumstances may influence our happiness, they do not control it. Happiness, it seems, comes from something deep inside us that we choose to nurture. We determine our happiness. Otherwise, how do we explain why one person “can smile or find balance and perspective amid tragedy and despair, [while] someone else can be surrounded by all the good things of the world and yet wallow in gloom”?²

A young man who recently returned from foreign service in a poor country noted that although the people he met there had very little, they were remarkably happy. And he found that he was happy too while purposefully engaged in helping them. We’ve all had enough similar experiences to know that selflessly serving others deepens our love and increases our sense of fulfillment, that treating others with kindness and enjoying life’s simplicities make us happy. Then why do we waste energy seeking happiness in places we know it isn’t found? We know where to find it.

That’s a comforting thought. It means we can choose to be quite happy even if our circumstances are not ideal. It means that true happiness is within reach for all of us.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. John Clifton, “Latin Americans Most Positive in the World,” Gallup World, Dec. 19, 2012, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/159254/latin-americans-positive-world.aspx>.

2. Jay Evensen, “Measuring Happiness Is a Futile Exercise,” Deseret News, Jan. 27, 2013, <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/765620929/Measuring-happiness-is-a-futile-exercise.html>.

Program #4355

“What Think Ye of Christ?”

As another year begins, we experience the annual ritual of examining our priorities and objectives. We often feel the need for more meaning and direction in our lives. There's a desire to increase our spirituality and religious commitment, to bring Christ more into the center of our lives.

Our conscience reminds us of the Savior's powerful teachings – of his admonition to love and serve our fellowmen, not as others do but with a love that far transcends conventional love. If we love only those who love us, he said, what do we do more than others do? He said we must love even those who don't love us and go far beyond. In fact, he told us to acquire the kind of love that he had. That, he emphasized, is the distinguishing Christian personality: “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” (John 13:35.)

He constantly urged people to believe in him, to trust in God. He also emphasized over and over again that great things can be accomplished with faith. In Matthew 9:29 we read, “According to your faith be it unto you.” In Mark 11:24 we're told that faith can move mountains: “Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.” The Lord also made it clear to us that “all things are possible to him that believeth.” (Mark 9:23.)

As another new year unfolds, let us practice the principles of love and faith and obedience that the Master taught. Let us ponder his life and respond to his call for action. Let us realize that it's impossible to be indifferent to him, or even neutral. Let us realize that as we lose our lives for his sake, we will find our own true life. We'll discover new depths of happiness and fulfillment that we never knew existed. We'll be forced to admit that he came into the world that we might have life more abundantly.

Ultimately, the choice is ours of whether or not to make Christ a part of our lives. “What think ye of Christ?” was the question put to a group of Pharisees nearly two thousand years ago. (Matthew 22:42.) It was the most vital, the most far-reaching query in an unsettled and distracted world. It is equally important today.

The Light of Christ

There is in each of us a desire to do good – to be good. We love and are loved; we hope for the future; we learn from the past. In every thoughtful, charitable act we perform, in every pleasure we receive from doing good, there is evidence of the goodness in us.

And there is also an evidence of our purpose in the world. Consistent with our natures, we are born into the world to do good, to be good, to make the world a better place, and, in the process, to refine ourselves.

The impulse toward good springs not only from our own eternal natures but also from the Light of Christ, a light that permeates the world, touching and influencing all things, a light that calls all of us to return to a loving Father in heaven who gave us life.

But though the Light of Christ is in each of us and shines through us to the world, there are many in whom this goodness is dimmed – clouded by what they do and by what they fail to do. The agency we have to choose means we are free to choose – free to choose even against ourselves; free to choose against the truth that is in us. And when we choose to do evil, to look away from goodness, a mist settles between us and the light. Just as we are not infallible, neither is the goodness in us infallible – it must be protected to stay bright.

The good work of God is a sweet work. It is the work for which we were born. It is a work designed to help us be better than the world, a work that makes the world better because of us and the good we do. We know this; in the marrow of our bones, we feel this; and we are drawn to it by all that we love and by all of those who love us. We are drawn to it by the Light of Christ that is in us to inspire us, to direct us, to bind us one to another in love, and, ultimately, to call us home.

J. Spencer Kinard

Jesus Wept

Among the most poignant scriptures to be found in the sacred writings of Christianity is that which is recorded in the gospel of John. A short verse there describes Christ's response to the death of one of his friends. Recorded are these two words: "Jesus wept." (John 11:35.) On that occasion, Jesus shed tears for a single contemporary whom he loved. The event openly displays Christ's capacity to love and feel sorrow for the misfortunes of those around him.

It was not long after this tragedy that Christ faced his own imminent death. Shortly before the crucifixion he went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane. There in a prophetic agony he witnessed the passing of all peoples, of all nations, of us. He discerned that his commandment that we love one another even as he loved us would be largely rejected by mankind. Once, twice, and for a third time he returned to his friends to share the awesome burden; each time he found them asleep. Alone, he took upon himself the sins of the world, suffering for all generations of humanity. And in the depths of that divine despair, he wept.

He wept for the countless unknown soldiers of nameless battles and forgotten wars and for their orphaned children, their widowed wives, their grieving mothers. He wept for the maimed in body and soul who haunt the boweries of large cities, for the aged who wait in nursing homes for visitors who never come, and for the meek and believing who are taken advantage of by the crafty and unscrupulous. He wept because of the ignorance that has made much of mankind live out its life in political and intellectual slavery, and because of superstition that still keeps men in spiritual bondage.

For all of this, and more, the Creator of heaven and earth suffered an exquisite agony. Across the centuries, the lone figure of noble manhood, weeping among the shadows of Gethsemane, looms above humanity. And thus, while his disciples slept, Jesus wept and perhaps still weeps, while mankind sleeps.

J. Spencer Kinard

Do We Despise Him?

Almost two thousand years following the mortal ministry of Jesus Christ, it may be difficult for us to imagine him rejected, to imagine him persecuted and scorned. We revere and worship him and he is worshipped by Christians worldwide for the divinity of his birth, the perfect purity of his life, the remarkable sacrifice of his death, and the hope we have in his resurrection. And yet his coming was prophesied not only as hopeful, but troubled. Seven hundred years before his birth the prophet Isaiah wrote: “He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.” (Isa. 53:3.)

Surely, we do not despise him. Surely, we have not turned our faces from him. Yet, in his atoning sacrifice, each of our sins has a part. Jesus Christ did not die because of the jealous whim of an apostate clergy, or because an ancient government would not stand against the injustice of his crucifixion. Jesus went to the cross to atone for the sins that separate us from him; to save us, in spite of the ways in which our lives have despised him. Jesus went to the cross for us, even though we may have turned our faces away from him.

Therefore, we must not look to others for examples of betrayal. Surely, we may find the Pilate or the chief priest, the proud and open disdainer of Christ. But it was Christ’s chief disciple, Peter, who denied the Savior at the time of his humiliation before the Romans. Just so, there is in each of us who are his modern disciples the moment of failure, the moment of sin and doubt. Christ anticipated these moments when our faces would turn from him, when we would despise him with our lives. He anticipated them; and he died for them.

The prophet Isaiah continues: “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.” (Isa. 53:5.) The resurrection of Jesus Christ is our guarantee. We are healed, if only we will not turn from him, if only we will not despise him with our lives; if only we will love him and live our lives in harmony with the simple grace and love he brought to the world two thousand years ago.

J. Spencer Kinard

His Yoke Is Easy

To enjoy the gift of freedom, the gift of free agency God has given us, we must learn to understand this simple gift of life.

Much has been said and done in this world regarding man's philosophies and theories about our politics and religions; but, after twenty centuries of trial and error, of war and contention, we return again to the wisest, most practical, and simplest system of all. We turn to the gospel of Jesus Christ – to the simplicity of the Sermon on the Mount, to the beauty of the Beatitudes, to the freedom of righteousness. In a very simple way, without money or worldly power, he showed us the path to happiness and eternal life. In his few words and in the sublime gentleness of his life, he offered us a better, clearer, and more intelligent system for individual happiness and social prosperity. While others talked of governments and laws, of money and influence, Jesus spoke the simple language of the heart. He spoke of loving one's neighbor, of taking care of widows and orphans, of visiting the sick, the elderly, and the imprisoned. He said it is hate that makes life difficult and greed that makes the day hard; he taught of the need to be beautiful within – to have a loving heart, to forgive those who have wronged us, to practice virtue and patience.

To this divine philosophy of life, he added this brief post-script: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me. . . . For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."(Matthew 11:29-30.)

And so it is. Accepting and living the gospel of Jesus Christ is easy – easy if we are Christians in the sense that he wanted us to be; easy if we seek internal refinement over external fashion and wealth; easy if worthiness is more important to us than fame; and easy if we love without condition or reward.

Taking upon ourselves his yoke, or accepting his gospel, may not change the whole world, but it will change our hearts: not that there be no suffering but that suffering might be endured; not that there be no tears but that our tears be mixed with the tears of those who share our hurt or joy; not that there be no mortal death but that the promise of eternal life might live within us.

And thus we take upon us his name and live a life of gentle meekness and charity. It is then we learn of the gift to be simple, the gift to be free. It is then we learn to our joy that his promise is true and his yoke is easy.

J. Spencer Kinard

Listen

Ours is an age of communication. Telephone wires hum with millions of voices. Satellites soar through the sky, reflecting words and pictures to the waiting radio speakers and television screens. Mailbags bulge with correspondence, and ceaseless drone of human voices fills the air over every city

The effective persuader is a powerful person in today's society, and communication is preached as a panacea for many of our problems. So, we are encouraged to improve our abilities to get our point across and to effectively state and support our position.

It is good to be able to articulate our views, but there is another communication skill that is equally valuable and vital to the world's well-being, one that may be lost in the babble of voices begging to be heard. That is the quiet and priceless art of listening. The listening we are accustomed to today is often a faint shadow of the real thing. Bombarded as we are each day with hundreds of messages, we have learned to turn a semi-deaf ear to much of what we hear.

Effective listening, of course, is more than just being quiet. Done well it is an active and demanding mental and spiritual labor. To listen well demands our full attention not only to the words but to the inflections, expressions, body movements, the things left unsaid, and any other signals the person may be sending out. Effective listening requires empathy, the ability to put ourselves in the position of those who are speaking to us, to feel as they feel. Good listening demands understanding of others, their desires, their hopes, fears, and problems. We are always so quick to judge and slow to understand.

Real listening would work miracles in this troubled world. If parents listened more to children and children, to parents; if the troubled and forlorn among us could find a sympathetic ear; if nations would stop hollering and threatening and listen to the heartfelt yearnings of each other's people – how different this world might be.

Perhaps in nothing do we need to learn to listen more than in our prayers. We can cry unto the Lord, and then we cut off the communication, assuming that the prayer is over. But it may only have just begun. The ancient king of Israel, David, sang out such a prayer. He piled praise on praise and sang unto the Lord until a voice came to his heart and said, "Be still, and know that I am God." (Psalm 46:10.) That is good counsel yet. Those who listen well will hear this comforting assurance and know that He is always there and always watching over us.

The Lord Also Listens

Listening has always been one of the most important aspects of mankind’s communication. Even the Savior made reference to it. “He that hath ears to hear, let him listen.” (Matthew 11:15.) And the apostle James counseled us to be “swift to hear, slow to speak.” (James 1:19.)

But too often in conversation we find ourselves not really listening, merely waiting for another opportunity to speak. Someone said, “We have one mouth and two ears, use them accordingly.”

How often do we say to others, Did I understand you correctly? Is this how you are feeling? Are these the reasons you believe as you do? Such questions asked in a sincere spirit of trying to understand can build trust, and appreciation between people. And the same principles applied on an international scale can go a long way toward smoothing the friction between nations.

Effective listening involves more than the ears. William Butler Yeats wrote, “I hear it in the deep heart’s core.”¹ We need to develop that kind of empathy for each other – consideration and compassion that will allow each of us to share our inner feelings and thereby help us lift each other’s burdens.

How fortunate we are when we have a friend to whom we can confide our thoughts. And what a great service we perform for others when we really listen with understanding and love. Unfortunately, such listeners are rare in today’s busy world. Because of that, many of us go along day after day feeling misunderstood, unappreciated, and unheard.

But we need not feel alone and isolated, for each of us is free at any time to speak our innermost thoughts and desires in prayer to the one perfect being who can hear and understand our needs. We need not wait for some great crisis to cry unto the Lord. Our everyday affairs are worthy of his consideration. We may not find our prayers answered in the way we expect or according to our timetable, but we are assured unequivocally that no humble prayer will be put on hold. Prayers are heard.

And so, we are counseled to listen – listen to others, listen to the Lord – for we are comforted in knowing that he also listens to us.

J. Spencer Kinard

1. The Lake Isle of Innisfree.

Listening

Notes

Hearing Him

In war as well as in peace we often hear about the suffering Christian as if the object of religion were merely to learn to endure well. Being cast into the fire refines the character, we are told. Pain inclines us to God. These ideas are true as far as they go, but to dwell too long on them misses the point. Many of us on this mortal journey suffer far more than we need. We are choked with fear; we imagine negative events that will never happen; we tremble with occasional feelings of worthlessness, though many of these burdens could be carried away if we would just listen to the Lord.

His voice speaks peace even amidst the jumble of daily events. He calms the troubled waters. He would have us taste and then drink deep from a well of joy. Our Father, who knows us intimately, hears the silent yearnings of our souls and, because he knows the beginning from the end, does not let a single detail escape his notice. If not even a sparrow can fall without his regard, do you think your heart can break without his noticing?

He does not choose for us to suffer. In fact, the very object of suffering is to teach us to end all suffering, move far beyond it in our inclinations and our actions, until it is only a memory. The Lord would have us drink nectar, not vinegar; teach us in sunshine, not in rain. But we prolong our suffering by closing our ears and hearts against his assurances and his direction. And, what's worse, we may even embrace suffering, justifying it as good medicine for the soul.

When our souls are clamoring for relief, sometimes all we need do is go and listen. But listening is not always easy or obvious. When the Lord spoke to Elijah, "a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces. . .; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was no in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice." (1 Kings 19:11-12.) and the Lord spoke in a quiet "still small voice."

Once, when He visited another people, His voice was heard again. "They heard a voice as if it came out of heaven; and they cast their eyes round about, for they understood not the voice which they heard; and it was not a harsh voice, neither was it a loud voice; nevertheless, and notwithstanding it being a small voice it did pierce them that did hear to the center." (3 Nephi 11:3.)

Pierced to the center with sweetness and calm – that is what we can be, if we will stop amid the clamor and hear the Lord, if we will just listen to the still, small voice.

J. Spencer Kinard

Listen to the Coach

One distinguishing feature of our way of life is the increasing number of people who are involved in sports or athletic competition. Most young people now participate in some form of organized sports program. And, of course, spectator sports have become a major focus for the use of leisure time in many of our lives.

There are many positive results that can come from athletic competition. The rewards of disciplined practice, the thrill of pursuing an objective as a team, and the wisdom gained from the inevitable wins and losses are among those benefits.

There is another important lesson that successful athletes must learn. Regardless of athletic prowess or native ability, every individual who has aspirations to succeed in the world of competitive sports must first learn to listen to the coach – to listen to the person who has been there before, to the person whose judgment is born of long seasons of preparation and experience. It is the coach's advice and counsel that must be placed before the noisy urgings of the crowd or even before one's own instincts.

Life, too, demands of us this same lesson. We who participate in this most important contest of living must also learn to heed the voice of the coach: our success and our happiness depend upon it.

And so we turn to the Mentor of life for counsel concerning the rules and strategies for success in this existence. Those who knew Jesus best referred to him as the Good Shepherd. This title was used because of the Savior's wise advice and admonitions. Just as the shepherd would lead his flock to green pastures and sufficient water, so, too, will heeding the words of the Master Teacher lead us to an abundant life.

And yet, many times instead of receiving counsel from the Author of life, we accept advice from those who may know little or nothing about the ways to happiness and eternal life. For in the place of the wise guidelines for successful living that Jesus left us, we many times substitute the unwise persuasions of friends, the urgings of fad or fashion, or the tenuous logic of our own reasoning. And in so doing, we run the risk of losing the rewards of obedience to true principles.

And so, just as the best athletes listen to the coach, may we seek to know and then follow the Shepherd of mankind.

J. Spencer Kinard

Are You Listening?

We live in a world that seems to have stopped listening. Sound bites have replaced conversation; texting has displaced telephone calls; rhetoric has supplanted dialogue; and multitasking has divided our attention. So often, listening isn't on the list of things to do and so it gets overlooked.

Famed solo percussionist and composer Dame Evelyn Glennie, who performed with the Tabernacle Choir during the 2002 Winter Olympics, began losing her hearing at age 8, and by 12 she was deaf. But though she could no longer hear, she found that she could still listen. "Listening to music," she contends, "involves much more than simply letting sound waves hit your eardrums." She describes listening in her legs and feet, her face, her neck and chest. She performs around the world and, in one sense, never actually hears either her music or the applause it inspires. But she feels it and sees it and understands it deeply. Her goal, she says, "is to teach the world to listen"¹ the way she does.

Evelyn Glennie's insights apply not just when listening to music but also when listening to people. So many cry out, "Listen to me," but only those who truly know how to listen can even hear them. Listening is much more than hearing with our ears. It requires shifting the focus from ourselves to someone else. It takes time and often is not convenient. With our ears, but also with our eyes, our minds, our hearts, and our actions, we say, "I'm listening. I'm hearing and thinking about what you are saying. You matter to me."

In this loud and noisy world, think how much it means to someone when you really listen, when you take time to understand their woes and challenges, their joys and excitement, their dreams and aspirations. Consider the gift of love you give when you show that you care by truly listening.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. "Evelyn Glennie: How to Truly Listen," http://www.ted.com/talks/evelyn_glennie_shows_how_to_listen.html
Program #4358

The Choices We Make

Not long ago, a family decided to spend a hot summer afternoon floating down a river on inner tubes. A river guide gave them clear instructions to make their trip enjoyable and safe. In particular, he warned them about a stretch of river where a bridge produced a strong undercurrent. He instructed them to get out of the river at that point and carry their tubes to the next launching area.

All went well, until one adult family member decided to ignore the river guide's warning. The detour seemed like an unnecessary limitation. Besides, he had floated the river before, and he knew what he was doing.

It was a mistake. The violent undercurrent flipped his tube over and plunged him into the water. Luckily, his life jacket kept him afloat, and all he lost were some of his belongings. It could have been much more tragic. He quickly realized how much better off he would have been to avoid the danger zone all together.

Life, like an unpredictable river, is fraught with danger zones—some of them obvious, but many of them unseen. Are we sometimes content to follow the current of popular culture or popular opinion, wherever it might take us? Often the best course is to heed the advice of those who have foreseen the dangers, those who are wiser and better informed, even when it is inconvenient or unpopular.

The counsel to avoid these dangers may at first seem like an unnecessary and unwanted restriction. Sooner or later, however, we realize that such counsel does not restrict our freedom; it protects it. Although we can choose to rationalize, reject, or ignore good counsel and divine commandment, the choices we make—though they may seem small and unimportant at the time—have lasting consequences.

To make it safely home, it is not enough to simply “go with the flow.” The safe course is rarely the path of least resistance; rather, it requires deliberate choices, willingness to learn, and humble recognition that we don't know everything. Truly, these choices determine our safety, our happiness, and our destiny.

Lloyd D. Newell

Consider the Lilies

In this remarkable age, everything seems to be moving faster and faster. The Internet provides almost instantaneous information; communication crosses oceans and continents in a flash. Nearly all of us live fast-paced, hectic lifestyles. Like the view of the countryside from a speeding car, life sometimes seems to go by in a blur.

The speed of life can be exhilarating but also exhausting. Fulfillment is usually found not in something up ahead that we're pursuing but in the good things around us that we rush past in our haste. From the sacred suggestion to "consider the lilies"¹ to the modern admonition to "stop and smell the roses," we have all been invited to slow down, even for a few moments, and enjoy the beauty of the earth.

When we dash past a flower, we have missed an opportunity to consider one of nature's most beautiful creations. Sunsets happen every day, but how often do we stop to let those moments of serenity and beauty lift our spirits and increased our peace? A short pause to feel the breeze on our face, to appreciate a towering tree, or to listen to the song of a bird can clear our minds and refresh our perspective, giving us renewed energy and motivation.

A kindly grandfather sat with his young granddaughter on a park bench. "Listen," he said to her, "to the sound of the wind in the trees. The trees are speaking to you." With innocent awe, the child asked, "What are the trees saying, Grandpa?" "Whatever you need to hear," he replied, "Whatever you need to hear."

Perhaps God has a message for each of us in His glorious creations—if we will only take a moment to stop, observe, and listen. As a wise man once said, "Where there are eyes to see, there will be visions to inspire."²

Lloyd D. Newell

1. Matthew 6:28.
 2. Spencer W. Kimball, personal notes.
- Program #4362

Giving Comfort

The classic western film *Shane* depicts a tragic conflict between ranchers and farmers. In one scene, the distressed wife of a farmer, feeling a need for comfort in the troubled situation, runs to her husband's arms and says, "Hold me. Don't say anything. Just hold me—tight." She didn't need advice or even kind words, just the comfort and reassurance of her husband's embrace.

Have you ever wanted to comfort a loved one, but you didn't know how? Maybe you were afraid of overstepping your bounds or saying the wrong thing. Sometimes we don't need to say anything at all. We simply need to be available. One person who recently lost her father observed, "My friends were there for me. It was great, because they just acted normal. I wasn't ready to talk about my dad's death, but I knew when I was ready they would be there to listen."

Often the best way to give comfort is by offering a listening ear. More than anything, our friends who are suffering simply need to know that someone cares to listen—without judging or advising unless we're asked to. They need a chance to sort out and make sense of their feelings by expressing them to a sympathetic listener.

Then, when we see that something we can do would be comforting, it's often best just to do it. Many people who need help hesitate to ask for it. Knowing a young mother was ill, a neighbor brought over a casserole for the family's dinner—without waiting to be asked. One good man shoveled snow from his neighbor's driveway, knowing the older man would have difficulty doing it himself. Great comfort comes in knowing that someone is aware of us, loves us, and is willing to lend a hand.

We may think we don't know how to appropriately comfort others in times of need. But we do know how to love and care. It requires no eloquence, no special skills or training to show love. When our friends in need sense our love, then they will say with the Psalmist, "This is my comfort in my affliction."¹

Lloyd D. Newell

1. Psalm 119:50.
Program #4356

All Loves Excelling

“Sing praise to him, . . . the fount of love”¹ for blessings large and small. Love pours down from heaven in the beauties around us. It is the salve that ancients called “the balm of Gilead.” But what of the love we express in our own lives?

A couple walking hand in hand speaks of the romance we call love. That picture is even more endearing when the couple is older and their walk slower than in earlier years. But love is more than just romance. Love is shown through serving one another. It manifests itself in little things that cascade through an otherwise difficult day.

Our founts of love are made up of a drop of this and a drop of that. Think how a hug from a grandchild, a simple phone call from a friend who just wants to say hello, or a mother’s comforting words fill the soul and then some. Singing a beloved song to a child, reading a story together from a tattered book, finding Dad’s favorite slippers, or sharing a box of chocolates make up what we call love. Home is the headquarters of our founts of love, the source of care and concern we pour out on others—for a lifetime.

Love is measured one drop at a time. A friend’s applause or honest critique of our performance says, “I love you; you matter to me.” Spilling out of our founts of love can be forgiveness, sincerity, long-suffering, generosity, and warmth for someone we may never meet again. Picture the outpouring when a recent natural disaster washed across a cluster of nations. Images of devastation and death continue to fill our television screens; urgency to help fills our hearts. Nations step up with their many resources; strangers pool together funds and offer prayers.

The fount of love is life at its best—life in its goodness, purity, and simplicity. We love because we have been loved.² May we praise Him who “so loved the world”³ with that “love divine, all loves excelling.”⁴

Lloyd D. Newell

1. “Sing Praise to Him,” Hymns, no. 70.

2. See 1 John 4:19.

3. John 3:16.

4. Charles Wesley, “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling,” (1747).
Program #3935

The Sustaining Power of God's Love

In trying times there's no more reassuring feeling than to know that God is in control and that His love for us is real. God's love can provide the hope and encouragement we need to face our challenges and move forward with our lives.

God's love for us is not diminished by the evil actions of others, nor is it frightened away by times of fear and uncertainty. He knows that our saddest or most challenging days are when we most feel the need for divine help. And often such personal struggles enable us to better comprehend the depth of God's love, and to recognize how completely we depend on Him.

Accepting the Lord as our guide does not guarantee that all of life's paths will be easy or smooth; however, He'll walk with us every step of the journey, offering us the solace and the strength we need to endure. We're promised that our loving Heavenly Father will continue to give good gifts to His children, if we follow Him.¹

The Apostle Paul said "neither death, nor life . . . nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any . . . creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God."²

Knowing that God's love for us is real and unchanging can calm the storms of life and bring meaning amid uncertainty. God will not forget us or forsake us. In this we have peace—a peace that comes from knowing that the world and its affairs remain in the loving and all-powerful hands of Him who created it in the beginning.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. See Luke 11:11-13.

2. Romans 8:38,39.

Program #3771

Love One Another

The most basic commandment in Christianity is that we love one another. Jesus said on this and on our love for God hang all the law and the prophets. But if love is such a desired virtue, why is it so difficult to attain? Part of the difficulty may lie in our definition of love.

No word in our language has been so misused and abused. It is used in the most exalted forms of adoration, awe, and respect to describe the love of God. But then we speak of love in rather everyday experiences such as loving ice cream or chocolate cake. The word love is even twisted and deformed to describe the most sordid kinds of lustful desires. Surely these experiences and others we categorize under love are not the same emotion.

What then is love? No definition can be all inclusive, but a closer analysis might clarify what we mean. The ancient Greek philosophers described three kinds of love. They spoke of eros, which they defined as romantic love. Romantic love at its best is a beautiful thing, but the Greeks recognized that this was not the only kind of love in the world.

They spoke also of philios, or brotherly love. This is the love that inspires fraternities, social gatherings, ethnic and national pride. Brotherly love does much good in the world. It can warm our hearts and make us feel secure among our friends. But this form of love likewise has limitations. It is usually restricted to those who are similar to us, and excludes those who are different. They are out of the brotherhood.

There is a love that transcends these limitations. The Greeks named it agape. Agape asks nothing in return for the love it gives. It does not require that the recipient of love be beautiful, desirable, or even friendly. Agape is for enemies as well as friends. This kind of love does not come easily. It may take a lifetime to achieve. It is the most unselfish of virtues. And though not easy, it is possible, and the rewards that come from practicing this principle are worth any effort to attain it.

As with other forms of love, the definition is in the doing. The Savior knew this, and so he made his life an example that we might follow. He loved his enemies, did good to those who hated him, and prayed for those who persecuted him. And he left us the commandment, "Love one another; as I have loved you." (John 13:34.) Agape—an unselfish Christlike care, concern, and love for each other is the only way we will ever find peace: peace in our own hearts, peace among neighbors, and peace for this war-weary world.

J. Spencer Kinard

When Love Transforms Duty

We do many things in life out of duty. We pay our taxes, follow speed limits when we're late, come back to work after lunch—all in the line of duty. And many of us classify obeying God as a similar action. It is duty. We worry that he is peeking around some corner waiting to pounce on us if we disobey. So with faces tight as army sheets, we grimly do what we think is right, reading the scriptures when we ache to read the paper, gritting our teeth and paying donations, checking off our list of Christian attributes with fixed determination.

Now, duty has its place, of course. We admire it for what it is. It is a marvelous schoolmaster, a bell that stirs us from our slumber, a stick that reminds us that life is larger than our own small passions. Like children who would rather play in the sunshine than learn arithmetic, we sometimes, perhaps often, need duty to motivate us into higher action.

But let us never be blinded into thinking that duty alone is enough to transform our hearts and take us back to God. It is far too weak a current. At some mysterious point, love must transform duty as the morning light transforms a pool of ice. We must obey the lord not because we fear him, not even because it seems the right and proper thing to do. We must obey him finally because we love him. We ache to serve. We yearn to be like him who is the center of our highest ideals and our fondest affection.

It is no accident that the Lord said, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness." (Matt. 5:6) Hunger and thirst are words we understand. They tell us something powerful about our human needs. As Kakuzo Okakura said, "Nothing is real to us but hunger." Love is another word with that kind of passion that cracks through barriers of the heart and moves us when nothing else can.

Yes, the Lord will take our actions born of duty and even bless us for them, but let us understand that there is more. It is love that writes a symphony, a fine novel. It is love that leads a parent to a child's bedside. And finally, it is love, and only love, that can lead us back to the Lord.

J. Spencer Kinard

The Lifting Power of Love

One of the greatest messages the Savior taught and exemplified was love. Not only did he love us enough to die for us, but he taught that we should love one another. What power there is in that admonishment.

What power there is in love. Love poured out upon a wasted wilted life can make it bloom as beautifully as water does the thirsty flowers of the desert. People privileged to develop in a climate of love become securely rooted in a sense of their own worth and abilities. Love begets in us an honest acceptance of ourselves and our fellow human beings. We begin to see beyond our faults and frailties to the potential perfection that is in each of us. Carl Sandbur wrote:

I love you for what you are, but I love you yet more for what you are going to be.

I love you not so much for your realities as for your ideals. . . . Not always shall you be what you are now. You are going Forward toward something great. I am on the way with you and therefore I love you.

We are all going forward toward something great. We need not fear the forces that would try to hold us back, whether they be forces from without or from within our own timid souls. "There is no fear in love," said the apostle John, "but perfect love casteth out fear." (1 Jn. 4:18.) We need to trust the gentle pulling power of love that draws us upward toward the Lord. And we need to show our gratitude to him by stretching out our hands in love to lift the lives of others. We need to love our neighbor and ourselves and God. . . . For only as we love all three can we become what we can be.

J. Spencer Kinard

Marriage – an Important Decision

When individuals choose a companion for life, when lives and love are committed and vows are given, there is no longer a question of compatibility. It becomes a matter of adaptability and quiet inner assurance that future problems can be worked through and solved. There's no need to look back. In fact, it's a good idea not to look sideways, either, wondering if the marriage should have been to someone else, wondering if it could have been better. Usually, change brings only a different set of challenges.

Recall the Lord's counsel to husbands on marriage and intimacy. He commanded, "Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else." (D&C 42:22.) In this brief verse, the Lord commands husbands – and, we add, wives – to do four things.

First, we are commanded to love our spouse, not just to like, not merely to befriend, but to love our spouse in the same spirit and with the same willingness we love our God. Second, we are commanded to love our partner with all our heart – not 80 percent or even 90 percent but 100 percent. That means to love unconditionally all the time. Third, we are commanded to cleave unto our spouse, to adhere closely to that person in good times and bad. Fourth, adding much to the other three, the Lord commands us to cleave to none else – not to mother, or father, or friends, but only to our spouse.¹

When there are problems, challenges, or great experiences to share, who should husband and wife turn to for help, for wisdom, for sharing? To each other, because that is how love grows, strengthens, and reinforces itself.

Good marriages are those where the partners like being together, where they enjoy each other's company, where there is a union of minds as well as of hearts, and where virtue is the strong glue that bonds husband and wife together.

Of course, communication is one of the cornerstones of a solid marriage. Couples should not let things build up inside, should not end the day without having prayed together. It's difficult to pray together if problems have not been discussed and differences resolved.

Marriage may be the most vital of all the decisions we make in life. It may have the most far-reaching effects. That is as it should be, because, as we are told in the scriptures, marriage is ordained of God.

J. Spencer Kinard

1. Christopher M. Wallace, "Intimacy," in *Counseling: A Guide to Helping others*, ed. R. Lanier Britsch and Terrance D. Olson (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1985), 2:138.

Successful Marriage

Notes

Despite rumors to the contrary, there has been an upsurge in recent years. More and more couples—both young and old—are entering matrimony. And an increasing number of these weddings are being performed by the clergy. These are good signs of a healthy society; they are encouraging, hopeful signs in the face of many signals that would have us think marriage is becoming unpopular. Hopefully it never will.

Marriage is perhaps the most vital of all decisions we make in life. It has the most far-reaching impact. And happiness and success in marriage is not just something that happens. A good marriage must be created. It requires constant, continuous nurturing. The little things are the big things—caring, courting, giving, and forgiving. Each partner must be as interested in the other as in himself or herself. That is the only basis on which love and marriage can be successful.

All too often marriages fail because partners focus on what's wrong with their lives rather than what's right with them. Couples must build upon the positives. If the talk is negative and full of problems, it creates a negative outlook. Conversely, when a couple constantly exchanges words of love and support, it creates an atmosphere that in itself will help to sustain and build their happiness. Couples should safeguard each other's self-esteem, developing a mind-set where each is tuned in to the other's positive qualities. In a growing relationship there is no room for constant criticism, sarcasm, nagging, and fault-finding.

A successful marriage brings many benefits. Couples are physically and emotionally healthier. And stability at home overcomes many of the uncertainties in life. In a twenty-four-year study recently completed, satisfied couples identified companionship as their greatest satisfaction. The signs are encouraging, and our continuing interest in marriage is easy to explain. Marriage is the cornerstone of a strong family, and the family is the foundation of society. Wherever the family flourishes in a state of vigor and unity, there will also be found a strong and sound society.

J. Spencer Kinard

A False Escape

Marriage is perhaps the most vital of all the decisions we make in life. It is a union of minds as well as hearts, with far-reaching impact. Yet for many, happiness in marriage is fragile and fleeting. Divorce provides a quick and slick escape route and for many has become a way of life. It seems no one is immune. And what is worse, it seems divorce is contagious.

A good marriage is built upon a foundation of compatibility, but the building material is adaptability. The causes of unhappy marriage and divorce often can be boiled down to one word—selfishness. If each partner is in marriage only for his or her own benefit, it is bound to fail. If both are concerned about the happiness of the other, it is bound to succeed. But it does take a commitment from both.

Divorce is usually a cop-out, a false escape. It begs the question of personal responsibility. It encourages the individuals to take the same problems to a new setting. Two law partners, with thirty years of combined experience specializing in marital problems and divorce, are convinced that, on the whole, divorce is a mistake—that divorce is wrong in ninety percent of the cases they've seen. The exceptions—the ten percent—involved cases of extreme cruelty, alcoholism, and perverse behavior. But they are a tiny minority.

Determination, loyalty, and commitment are the “glue” that holds couples together when they've lost their direction. With that “glue” and the Lord's help, marriages do succeed. “Thou shalt love thy wife with all they heart,” commanded the Lord, “and shalt cleave unto her and none else.” (D&C 42:22.) The apostle Paul said, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.” (Eph. 5:25.) “And unto the married I command, . . . Let not the wife depart from her husband: . . . and let not the husband put away his wife.” (1 Cor. 7:10-11.)

Marriage is a series of compromises. We have to give and take, refrain and restrain, endure and be patient. We must focus on what's right with our lives, not what's wrong. We must build on the positive, not the negative. And marriage can be continually strengthened with words of love and support. Marriage is the most vital of all decisions we make in life. That is as it should be, because it is ordained of God.

J. Spencer Kinard

A Happy and Good Marriage

Marriages would be more successful if each would try to make his partner happy rather than good. Making our spouses good, though, is a great temptation. We don't live with anyone very long before we see their faults. We trip over their inefficiencies and sloppiness, suffer for their moments of selfishness. We're stung by outbursts of anger and by things they've left undone. It doesn't take a genius to see how they could improve our lives—if they would only change. So, we make our lists, create improvement programs, and remind our partners frequently of their faults. Others may nag, but we gently suggest, and see ourselves as virtuous all the while. After all, our efforts are only for their good.

Well, there is nothing that does less good in marriage than vowing to change the other. Marriage ought to be a sanctuary from a painful world, a place to soothe our feelings and gain the strength to run another day. But it can't be if one partner is trying to remake the other. Then, instead, there is a discomfort, a feeling that home is a briar patch full of thorns where one does not quite measure up. Worse, the improvement programs we design for someone else rarely work. Growth is self-initiated. It is an inner striving to be more. We can't make someone kind or thoughtful. Fat people don't lose weight because someone else tells them to. We can no more mold someone than tell a flower when to bloom.

We ought to give up the futile idea of making our partners good and concentrate on making them happy. That starts by accepting our helpmate, faults and all, with unconditional love. It means noticing the thousand good things our loved one does every day and offering praise for them. No one lives with a perfect person. So let us not be surprised that we don't. For every change we'd make in our partners, they could list a change they'd make in us. So when we feel the urge to make somebody good, we can start with ourselves. When we want to make somebody happy, we can look to our partners. Ironically, if we make them happy, we'll go a long way toward making them good.

J. Spencer Kinard

The Warm Embers of Love

Most marriages start out like a glowing fire, full of warmth and light. But anyone who has been married for very long knows that keeping a marriage burning strong and healthy takes effort and commitment. Like a fire, love needs constant attention and nurturing through words and acts of affection and selflessness.

There are as many ways to strengthen a marriage as there are married couples—the key is to find what works for you. One couple found that a daily walk gave them opportunity to talk, share feelings, and stay close. Another couple leaves little notes for each other every day. Usually it's just a line or two, but it helps them remember why and how they love each other. Another couple hangs play tickets or other reminders of their upcoming dates where they both can see them. All week long, they look forward to the time they will share together, just the two of them.

You're never done strengthening your marriage. A lifetime of daily choices, large and small, are needed to fuel the embers of loyalty and love. "Support your [spouse's] values, goals and dreams, and greet his or her good news with interest and delight," says one expert. She suggests that even a fire that seems to have gone out can be rekindled with intentional caring, compassion, and companionship. "A marriage that has been marred by negative, angry or hurtful remarks can often be rescued by filling the home with words and actions that elicit positive emotions."¹

It need not be any more complicated than asking ourselves each day, "What can I do for a few minutes today to make my sweetheart's life better?" Simple actions, like sincerely listening, helping out, sharing an amusing event, smiling, or being good-humored, can rekindle the embers of love. In this way we live by the homespun wisdom of the familiar counsel "Choose your love; love your choice."

Lloyd D. Newell

1. Jane E. Brody, "That Loving Feeling Takes a Lot of Work," New York Times, Jan. 14, 2013, <http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/01/14/that-loving-feeling-takes-a-lot-of-work>.
Program 4366

It Was the Little Things

Notes

Every love story is different. Whether it's fictional or real, from our family history or our own lives, each story includes its share of heartaches and joys. Many are characterized by moving, poetic declarations of love and devotion. But the stories that stand the test of time are those that chronicle love in action: lived affection and demonstrated caring.

Russ and Valerie's love story is just that kind of story. Throughout their many years together, Russ was always generous with compliments. He often told his sweetheart what he loved about her appearance, her cooking, her efforts, and her hard work. Russ found ways to make Valerie's life easier. When he retired two years before she did, he prepared dinner every night so it was ready when she walked through the door. And although Russ was in intense pain during the last years of his life, he continued to find ways to show love. On holidays, anniversaries, birthdays, and just whenever he felt like it, he would give Valerie flowers, a little gift, or a handwritten note of love and appreciation. He was always thinking of her.

After nearly five decades of marriage, Russ passed away and left his sweetheart to reminisce on all of the laughter, love, and devotion they shared. Valerie said it this way: "Do I feel cherished? Oh, make no mistake—it was the little things, the thoughtful, sweet things that Russ did every day that showed me how blessed I am."

The words of the Apostle Paul provide a time-honored description of authentic love, which Paul referred to as charity. "Charity," he said, "suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not . . . , is not puffed up, . . . is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; . . . beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth."¹

All of these things are manifest in actions, not just in declarations. In the end, love is not something you say, it's something you do—little by little, every day, year after year. This is the kind of love that never fails.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. 1 Corinthians 13:4–8

Building Strong Families

The holiday season is an excellent time to enjoy our families. Those who nurture strong family roots watch their efforts bear fruit year-round. But the harvest is at its peak during the season beginning with Thanksgiving and extending through Christmas and New Year’s Day. That is a time when families gather.

As we observe around us the many families gathering, some seem to be closer, more cooperative, and happier than others. They seem to be doing something right—and they are. Researchers have identified five common characteristics of strong families: First, family members express appreciation for one another and make each other feel good about themselves.

Second, families with strong roots spend time together. They structure their lives so they can enjoy each other at meals, in recreation, and at work.

Third, strong families spend time communicating with one another. They share their feelings openly, but they also listen well when others in the family are talking.

Fourth, family members are deeply committed to promoting one another’s happiness and welfare. When life gets too busy or too hectic, they stop to reorder their priorities, making sure the family is at the top of the list.

Fifth, religion continues to be related to marital happiness and successful family relationships. And it’s more than simply attending church together: strong families share a spiritual lifestyle. An awareness of a higher power helps them be more patient, more forgiving, quicker to get over anger.

The strength and character of the family has been a recurrent theme throughout history. Strong families have provided the foundation for every strong society. But the formation of strong families is not automatic. It requires the efforts of every family member. And families will only be as strong and as important as we make them.

The holiday season is a time to renew our commitments to building a strong family. It’s a time to visit relatives and reinforce family ties. It’s time to make family life a top priority—not only for this season, but for the coming years as well.

J. Spencer Kinard

Families Need Priority

Notes

Personal worth can be measured by the happiness one generates in the live of other; and the lives over which we have the most influence are those of our own family members. No joy can equal the joy that comes from being part of a successful family, from building strong relationships, and from developing a feeling of togetherness, a feeling that family members belong to each other.

No family is perfect, but some parents and children seem closer, more cooperative, and happier than others. When the family has high priority, there seems to be a deeper sense of warmth and good feeling among family members, a harmony and oneness of purpose. There is a firm assurance that what individual members do and who they are really matter.

One of the common complaints in busy families when parents must juggle busy schedules is that there just isn't enough time. The characteristics of these overcommitted families include a continual sense of urgency and haste, a constant feeling of frustration about not getting things done, and gnawing desire to find a simpler life. Many families experience these feelings at one time or another, but a relentless hectic pace means it's time for a reevaluation of priorities. Such a pace signals a need to seek more satisfaction from within the family rather than from outside activities.

In order for the family to remain strong, parents must realize that a family must be created, that family units must be built, that a good marriage and responsible parenthood must be worked at. Families require time and attention. Some individuals put personal gratification above the human and spiritual needs of their families, but the happiness these people thought would come to them through worldly ambitions always seems to elude them.

The great need today is for a strong sense of family, the need to slow down and enjoy one another, the need for love at home—love between husband and wife and between parents and children. A breakdown of love at home will bring a collapse of the family itself; and when the family goes, so does the nation. When we generate happiness in our homes, we increase not only the strength of the nation but our own sense of personal worth.

J. Spencer Kinard

The American Family—An Endangered Species

During recent decades, our society has become increasingly sensitive to the various forms of life with whom we share the earth. Laws have been enacted to protect the habitats of numerous types of animal life. Endangered species lists have been established. On them are recorded the names of those animals that face certain extinction unless they are afforded protection and special consideration.

Well, there is another name that should be added to the endangered species list. It is a species whose survival at this time is in serious doubt. A species whose extinction would be tragic and irreplaceable. However, this species is not biological but sociological in nature. This endangered species is the American family.

The existence of the family as a close-knit group of individuals consisting of two parents and their children, working together toward common objectives, is threatened. The following statistics are evidence that the American family is in trouble: The divorce rate in America has reached the fifty percent mark—one of every two marriages now ends in divorce. The number of one-parent families has increased more rapidly in recent years than the number of two-parent families. There is an increasing number of children being born without the advantages of married parents. In 1940, one child in thirty was born out of wedlock; now the figure is one in eight. The average American father spends seven minutes a day with his children. American husbands and wives spend an average of twenty-eight minutes a week talking to each other.

This is only a partial list of indications that the basic unit of society is in danger. Conceivably, it is already too late to save this most valuable of all sociological species. Perhaps the family will succumb to the mounting pressures that threaten its survival and become only a chapter in future history books.

Hopefully not. We like to think it won't happen, and hopefully we'll be proven right. For the strength of the family is the strength of society. The survival of the family is linked directly to the survival of the community and nation. For our own sake, and for that of our children, may we protect, maintain, and restore this endangered species—the American family.

J. Spencer Kinard

A Sacred Trust

Notes

One of the most valued and sacred trusts the Lord has given us is to be guardians of our children. That trust includes the implicit charge of creating a home and family environment that will nurture our children and provide a safe refuge during their formative years.

Today, the home is more important than ever as the place to teach and love our children. And we must do more than just tell our children how to live: we must show them.

If we want our children to live lives of virtue, of self-control, of good report, then we must set the example. If we want to teach faith in God, we must have faith in him. The only way to teach the principle of daily prayer is to pray – together. If we want our children temperate, then we must refrain from intemperance. Indeed, if we want our children to embrace truth and understand it, to be obedient, to love others, then we must cherish those values and act accordingly.

Love is critical to that process. Children need the love of their parents, and they need to love their parents. Love is part of the sacred trust, part of the sacred trust, part of the example, part of the two-way communication. We can show and share our love in many ways. It consists of doing things for and with one another, and it requires the giving of ourselves.

Contrary to those who generate myths about the decline of the American family, a recent national poll – substantiated by family therapists – shows the family unit is not only alive and well but getting stronger. Most parents surveyed said they spend more time with their families than their parents did when they themselves were children. Seven out of ten said their children have more influence on day-to-day decision making than in previous generations. Counselors reaffirm that the family unit is the backbone of an effective society.

Religious orientation is also important in strengthening the family structure. Research over the past forty years shows that religion is related to happiness in marriage and to successful family relationships. And it's more than merely worshiping together. It's also sharing a family life-style, sharing an awareness of a higher power, sharing common faith and expectation. Parenthood and the development of strong and cohesive families are sacred obligations. God's love and concern for children, for the sanctity of marriage, and for the importance of the family unit is found throughout the scriptures. If a satisfying, meaningful life is what we want, we would do well to follow the Lord's counsel regarding family responsibilities.

J. Spencer Kinard

Love, Loyalty, and Belonging

Every parent knows that being a good mom or dad is the most difficult job in the world. No challenge is greater than giving your all to raise a child to become a responsible and honorable adult. And while it can seem exhausting and never-ending at times, the day soon comes when that son or daughter leaves home. It can be as challenging to see your children go as it was to raise them. In some ways, perhaps it's even more difficult.

But giving them wings to fly and find their independence is the task of parenthood. And that's the great irony of parenting—if we do it well, our children grow to need us less and less. As we truly, without guilt or overprotectiveness, “set [them] free to find [their] calling” in life,¹ they leave with a sense of confidence and an assurance that, whatever happens, they are loved. And then, in moments and decisions large and small, thoughts and hearts return to the home that's filled with goodness and love.

Of course, no home, no parent, no son or daughter is perfect or without some problems. But that's the process of life. We give our hearts, we do our best, we learn and grow, and we become better and wiser. Life changes, children grow up and leave, and it seems that things will be forever different. And yet, though circumstances change, in a way they remain the same: We may not live together anymore, but we will always love each other. We may not see each other every day, but we are loyal and true to the timeless values taught and happy memories experienced in the home. We may move far away for a season, but always we are linked together—we forever belong to one another.

That sense of love and loyalty and belonging between parents and children can remain with us always. No matter where we travel, in our hearts we can ever be homeward bound.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. Marta Keen, “Homeward Bound.”

The Patience of Prayer

We live in an impatient world, a world in which the speed of our arrival seems to be valued even more highly than the importance of our destination. Fiber optics, bubble memory, communication satellites—even our communion with one another insist on speed. We telephone across the ocean nearly as easily as across town; we retrieve in milliseconds seemingly limitless information from our computers.

And yet, there are communications that defy our need for speed, messages that cannot be instantly commanded: the love that a parent gives a child, which takes years to develop and a lifetime to prove; the gestures of friendship that cannot be spoken in a moment, cannot be communicated in a word.

And prayer: In Jeremiah 29:12-13 the Lord says: “Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.” We cannot express our “hearts” in a moment, nor quickly make them prayerful. Like the other communications of love and need, prayer requires persistence and consistence, a constant, willing turning of our souls to God.

Not that God needs to be reminded by our repetitions, but we do. We need quite literally to insist on his love—like the importunate widow of Christ’s parable, who won her case before even an unworthy judge. We need to insist the merciful caring of the great judge of all. Because only if we insist, to ourselves as much as to him, only if we persist, will we develop that relationship of love upon which the communication of prayer depends.

God will respond, but his response depends upon our ability to receive. For that reason, the impatience that a busy, hurried world inspires works against the inspirations of prayer. If we are to seek God, and find him, we must find time for prayer, and the patience for our prayers to be answered.

J. Spencer Kinard

Our First Need

We do need the Lord every hour, but one of our challenges is to know in what way. One of the basic principles of economics is that needs and wants are unlimited, but resources to supply those needs are not. So goods and services must be shared and apportioned out in one way or another. The system of the Lord, however, works on different principles. The resources of heaven are beyond the measure of man, and the Lord is a generous provider. He is ever solicitous of our welfare, anxious to help us. He stands at the door and waits for our knock. He promised “[I will]. . . open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.” (Mal. 3:10.)

Why then, with such a vast celestial storehouse to draw from, do so many of us go without the things we need? There are no doubt a number of reasons, but one of the problems lies in not knowing what to ask for. There is a grain of truth in the wit of Oscar Wilde. He said, “When the Gods wish to punish us they answer our prayers.” Many of the things we pray for would be a curse instead of a blessing if the Lord gave us our way, sometimes even when we ask with the best intentions.

Some years ago a forest ranger was stranded in a blizzard with his team and wagon. Back at his cabin his wife and children prayed fervently for the freezing temperatures to rise so their father could make it home, but the thermometer plummeted even lower. They had almost given up hope when they heard outside the bells of the horses and saw their husband and father approaching. The bitter cold had frozen the snow so solidly that he was able to drive home on the crust of it. If the Lord had answered this woman’s prayers and warmed the weather, her husband would have bogged down in the snowdrifts and died from exposure.

How many of our needs are like that? We may think we need more money, but what we really need is the self-discipline that can come with more modest means. We may feel we need more attention and concern from others when what we really need is the chance to serve and take our minds off ourselves. There are times when we think we need rest and relaxation, but in reality we would feel better by increasing our effort. We may think we need power and prestige when we really need humility. On the other hand, the humble young man Saul had to be dragged from hiding at his own coronation. He needed to become a king. Our first need then is to know what our needs really are; and how shall we know except we prayerfully consider, weigh the alternatives, establish our goals, and look to where we would like to be. Then humbly let us ask the Lord for confirmation that these truly are our needs. We may be confident that, as we make ourselves ready, our needs will be met in the Lord’s time and in the Lord’s way.

J. Spencer Kinard

Prayer Power

During a winter month in one of this country's northern states, an eleven-year old boy was playing with his friends when a wall of wet snow collapsed on him and buried him alive. Helplessly pinned with his arms behind him, he felt the snow stiffen and freeze, entombing him and paralyzing his body. Soon he would die of suffocation. Meanwhile rescuers frantically dug through the snow slide as rapidly as they dared and pushed long poles into the snow to find him. Nothing worked until one of the rescuers turned to a powerful force. Moments later the young man was found, and his life was saved. The power that saved him was prayer. The rescuer who found him offered a prayer for guidance, and it was answered.

Yes, the power of prayer can literally guide us and save us, and it can bring us other benefits as well. As Fyodor Dostoyevski wrote in *The Brothers Karamazov*, "Every time you pray, if your prayer is sincere, there will be new feeling and new meaning in it, which will give you fresh courage, and you will understand that prayer is an education." Guidance, courage, comfort, education—these and other blessings come from prayer. It's unfortunate that we don't draw on this power more effectively to bless our own lives and the lives of those about us.

Perhaps we feel that prayer is mysterious, beyond our comprehension. And yet we casually put a plug into a wall and immediately tap power that may have been generated hundreds of miles from our home—power that was stored in coal or oil or gas, the power of a billion raindrops falling on a distant mountain, coursing in a river, and being captured by a hydroelectric generator. We may even be drawing power from the submicroscopic world of the atoms as they whirl and smash in their unseen orbits. Mysterious? Incomprehensible? For most of us, yes. But how dark, cold, and inconvenient our world would be if we refused to use electricity because we did not understand everything about it.

And thus it is with prayer. We may not know quite how it works, but we don't need to. The Lord has not burdened us with complicated formulas. He has made the process of prayer so simple that a humble child on his knees can make it work. The only requirements are that our desires be righteous and our supplication be sincere. The Lord stands ever anxious to assist us. "Ask, and it shall be given you," he said. (Matt. 7:7.) Many marvelous things are done every day in our world of wonders, but it may be that when the histories of mankind are compiled, we will find that the world was persevered not so much by the works we did each day, as by the prayers we offered each night.

J. Spencer Kinard

Turn to Heaven

If you've ever tried to help a toddler eat, you know how important independence is to human nature. The older a child gets, the more she insists on feeding herself—no matter how messy it gets. To the child (and, to a lesser degree, to her parents) the increased independence is well worth getting some food on her face, on her clothes, and even on Mom and Dad.

As we mature, we continue to value independence. We respect those who stand on their own two feet. We may even come to believe that asking for help is a sign of weakness, that to be strong means not to need anyone.

But soon our challenges become more complicated than handling a spoon properly, with consequences more serious than a stained shirt. Commentators Richard and Linda Eyre put it this way: "We realize how little we know, how little we can control, and how dependent we are on things beyond ourselves. Those humble thoughts lead us to prayer and cause us to appeal to a higher, brighter, more knowing power. Particularly in times of crisis, in times of loss or of danger, we come face to face with our own frailty, and it seems both natural and necessary to turn to prayer."¹

When problems seem unsolvable and too complex to handle, we can go to the higher source of wisdom, light, and love. Perhaps we can relate in some way to Abraham Lincoln when he said, "Sometimes I am driven to my knees by the simple conviction that there is nowhere else to go!"²

Prayer is not weakness; it is our access to true strength. Prayer can fortify us for the battles ahead even while it humbles and softens us in times of trial. Ironically, it actually increases our independence, while at the same time opening our hearts to heavenly help. Instead of "When all else fails, turn to heaven," perhaps a better motto is "Turn to heaven at all times and places."

Lloyd D. Newell

1. "The Unique Power of a Parent's Prayer," Deseret News, Apr. 15, 2012, <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/865554030/Eyres-The-unique-power-of-a-parents-prayer.html>.
2. In "The Unique Power of a Parent's Prayer."

Family Prayer

There's an old saying that, families who pray together, stay together. This simple wisdom of inviting God into our family life can make a big difference in our hearts and homes. When we pray as a family, we verbalize our love. We communicate our values, our concerns, our aspirations. A sacred bond forms between husband and wife, parents and children, and even extended family members as we consistently call upon the powers of heaven in each other's behalf. Without doubt, hearts are knit together in a special way when, day after day, families kneel together in prayer.

Think of the soldier who, far away from home, can picture his family around the kitchen table, praying for his safety and comfort. Think of the student who leaves for school with a mother's prayer in her ears or the father who goes to work with the warm glow of a child's prayer in his heart. Consider the grandmother who doesn't feel so alone when her grown children tell her, "We pray for you every day."

Family prayers not only link the generations they also help to bridge gaps in communication. The parents of a four-year-old girl discovered why their daughter was not very excited about the upcoming birth of their baby only after she prayed, "Please bless that the old baby can stay when the new baby comes." Somehow she thought the new baby would replace her two-year-old baby brother, but she had never expressed this concern before. Only in the safety of family prayer, with eyes closed and hands held, could she reveal her deepest fear.

In a world beset by uncertainty and fear, family prayer can be a constant source of strength and unity. In those quiet moments, away from the commotion of the world's fast-spinning wheels, families stop and remember who they are. They pray over their concerns, their worries and their fears. They thank God for the security of each other's embrace, the blessing and promise of each new day, and the assurance that heaven is only a prayer away.

Lloyd D. Newell

Program #3848

The Lesson of the Magnets

Of all the difficult things we do in life, one of the very hardest is to truly forgive someone who has mistreated us. Even when we know forgiving would make us happier, many of us cling to old hurts, unable to let go.

Perhaps we close our hearts in this way because we think we can protect ourselves from ever being hurt again. But really, there's no way to control the actions of others, and wrongs can and will come our way; it's part of life. So keeping injuries alive, waiting for apologies, and increasing our resentment does nothing to prevent hurt. All it does is keep those past offenses in the present, a growing collection of open wounds. What we think will save us destroys us.

There may be a lesson for us in the way magnets interact with each other. Many of us played with magnets as children, and we can remember the invisible repelling power we felt when we tried to hold two like poles together. It took great effort to fight that force, but many of us were determined to make those magnets bend to our will.

So we are sometimes in our relationships—we know grudges give us nothing but grief, yet we seem determined to hold on to them and refuse to back down. And, like magnets, we feel the urge to distance ourselves from others if they don't see things our way.

But if we can find a way to let go, the magnets will very often swing around and right themselves. In letting go, we free ourselves from contention and conflict, begin to see common ground, and find it in our hearts to forgive. As we do, we discover that forgiveness is a gift we give ourselves, a gift that replaces friction with harmony and bitterness with a lasting peace.

Lloyd D. Newell

Program #4325

Our Greatest Treasures

Notes

In 1955 Richard L. Evans, the announcer and writer of the Spoken Word for more than four decades, dedicated a book of his messages with these words: “To Alice and our four sons, who have helped to make life sweetly cherished, always—and forever.”¹ Richard L. Evans was known throughout the world not only as a broadcaster and writer but also as a church leader and president of the exceptional community-service organization Rotary International. He truly spent his life going about doing good.

Through it all, he always remembered something that too many people never come to realize—that his most valued contribution, his most important commitment, was to his family. Over 50 years ago on this broadcast, he said:

“Much of life is made up of things we think we will one day do: of things we postpone, of things we set aside, of things we leave too late. And one of the things we could best determine to do this day, would be for fathers and sons (and daughters) to draw a little nearer, to come a little closer—to take a little more time for a closer kind of companionship with those who mean the most.

“Too many of us wait too long for the cherished times together, for the intimate outings, for the quiet hours of an evening, for the fuller talking out of personal problems with the close confidence of an understanding heart. It is not so much the sending; it is not so much the preaching of the precepts; it is not altogether, even, the providing—but the going with, the doing with, the being with that brings a closer kind of kinship.”²

Time marches on for each of us—especially, it seems, for parents. The children whom we love with all our hearts are too soon grown and gone. But it’s not too late. We can begin today to build a closer relationship with those who are our greatest treasures.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. From the Crossroads (1955), 5.
2. From the Crossroads, 121. ©1955. Used by permission of the Richard L. Evans family.
Program #4059

Assume the Best

Things are not always as they appear. It's easy to make assumptions, only to find out that our quick judgment is not at all accurate.

A grandmother experienced this recently when she took her two teenage granddaughters to a choir concert. She wanted so much for her granddaughters to feel the peace and joy of this kind of inspiring music and had planned well for this special event.

As they sat listening to the choir voices fill the magnificent hall, the grandmother was moved to tears. When she looked at her granddaughters to see if they were having a similarly moving experience, she was disappointed to find them writing notes. How could they not be touched by this glorious music? Why would they be writing notes to each other instead of reveling in the beauty of this sublime performance?

After the concert, to her surprise, she discovered that her granddaughters had been writing a letter to their brother back home, telling him of the amazing experience they were having at that very moment. They were enjoying the concert so much, they could not wait to express their feelings in writing. They were wishing their brother could have been there to feel what they were feeling.

How many times have we harshly judged someone's actions without knowing the whole story? Since we can never know all the facts, we might as well assume the best. If we resist the tendency to make quick judgments and instead cut a little slack for all who may be behaving in ways we do not approve of or understand, then our lives and the lives of those around us can be more peaceful and our relationships more rewarding.

Assuming the best is an act of kindness we can all give to one another. As Rabbi Harold Kushner reminds us, "When you are kind to others, it not only changes you—it changes the world."¹

Lloyd D. Newell

1. Forward to Practice Random Acts of Kindness: Bring More Peace, Love, and Compassion into the World (2007), xvi.
Program #4284

Flexible and Firm

“Make firm plans and be flexible.” This good advice from a father to his children may, at first, seem contradictory. Everybody needs goals, purpose, and direction—and the more specific the better. But because life is continually changing and few things go exactly as planned, we have to be flexible and make adjustments along the way.

We can’t travel very far on life’s highways without encountering detours. In fact, we should expect them. We will enjoy the journey of life so much more when we are willing to change.

Being stubborn and inflexible can damage relationships, limit our prospects, and stifle growth and development. Of course, some things are nonnegotiable. In matters of character, integrity, kindness, and compassion, we should be fixed and steadfast. But in the details of our goals, ambitions, and plans, we must be flexible.

A well-meaning family held a firm grip on some of their holiday traditions. They always did certain things in just a certain way, and they enjoyed the continuity and security of those traditions for many years. But as their family grew, as children married, and as grandchildren entered the family circle, the same traditions that once blessed the family now seemed burdensome. They met to discuss which parts of their traditions should remain the same and how they could adapt them to the needs of their growing family. They were firm in their resolve to maintain loving ties, but because they were flexible in the execution of their resolve, they were able to save and even strengthen precious relationships.

This family had learned that a good pattern of life is to be fixed and firm in our ethics and moral principles, yet flexible and adaptable in our approach—remembering that people always matter, that good human relations are paramount, and that because life changes so much, we must be open to change. We must know when to be flexible and when to be firm.

Lloyd D. Newell

Program #4282

Are You Paying too Much for Your Whistle?

When Benjamin Franklin was a boy, he traded all his money for a friend's whistle. And he enjoyed the whistle until he learned it was worth only a fraction of what he'd paid for it. Immediately the whistle lost all its charm, and Ben was greatly annoyed at having made such a foolish mistake. But he learned an important lesson that day: not to invest more than something is worth.

Years later, when he saw a man neglecting his family for political popularity, or a miser sacrificing friendship for wealth, he would see what the man was missing to pursue the wrong ideals and say, "He pays too much for his whistle."

In Benjamin Franklin's time, just as now, many people were proud of their appearance, their lavish lifestyle, and fancy homes. He would watch them go into debt to maintain the image of wealth and would once again decide they were paying far too much for their whistle.¹

Today we might see people working overtime to buy all the latest toys and electronic gadgets. Long hours away from home could mean that their families have every enticement, but a better gift might simply be to spend time with them.

The most valuable treasures and the greatest satisfaction can usually be found close to home, in the people and loved ones around us. If we've been chasing fame and acclaim instead of building lasting relationships, we can stop in our tracks and make a course correction. What guides our daily actions? Are the things we seek really worth the sacrifices we're making?

Thoughtfully consider your course and your priorities, and then resolve to invest time in what matters most. Then our actions will align with our values and we can rest assured we won't be paying too much for our whistle.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. See Benjamin Franklin, "The Whistle," in Brander Matthews, comp., *The Oxford Book of American Essays* (1914), 4–6.

Time for Our Children

When we hear the word investment, most of us think of investing our money in hopes that it will grow and yield a large return. Some of us feel lucky to have enough money to meet our daily basic needs, let alone to invest any. But in one way, we are all equally rich: We all wake up with 24 hours in each new day. How will we spend those hours? How can we get the largest return on our investment?

The story is told of a boy whose father once gave him a box with a note inside promising the boy one hour of time every day, right after dinner. And it was good for a whole year. For 365 hours, the boy could spend time with his father playing, talking together, whatever the boy chose. And every year, the father renewed that promise. Now a successful attorney, the son looks back on that as the greatest gift he has ever been given—the gift of time from his father.

The wealthiest people in the world cannot buy a gift as valuable as that. But everyone, no matter how wealthy, can make such a wise investment of time. When a parent spends time with a child, together they forge a bond of love that transcends anything that could be purchased. The toys and other things parents buy for their children eventually break down, wear out, and are forgotten. But those precious moments spent together will live forever.

When we invest time in our relationships, we are building a legacy beyond description, a treasure that will outlast all material gifts. Time is truly the best investment—in our children and in everyone we love. Nothing else even comes close.

Lloyd D. Newell

Program #4266

Acceptance and Appreciation

Sometimes relationships flounder because we don't convey enough genuine love—or perhaps we don't convey it in quite the right ways. In our zeal to help loved ones improve, maybe we focus too much on how we think they should change instead of communicating sincere acceptance and appreciation for who they are. Just as plants thrive in a warm and nurturing environment, people thrive when they feel accepted and appreciated. And very often they need that more than they need advice.

One son felt that whatever he did, it was never enough to please his father. When he moved away from home and took a job in another town, he finally explained to his dad, "Our relationship isn't about productivity. You're my dad. Sometimes I need praise more than a push, and approval more than advice. Constantly trying to make me better just makes me feel worse. It's not enough that you love me. I need you to appreciate me."¹

His dad meant well; he wanted his son to reach his full potential, to be the best he could possibly be, with minimal risk of failure. But our loved ones are so much more than productivity projects. They don't need better efficiency models—they need our love and care, our acceptance and appreciation, our best efforts to cherish their unique individuality.

Sometimes it's not easy, but it becomes easier as we truly open our hearts. As we do, we open doors to more trusting relationships. People will often stop resisting change and improvement when they feel valued, when the relationship is built on acceptance and appreciation. For example, a patient, accepting grandma often gets further with a struggling child than a frustrated parent who condemns and finds fault. She's not blind to the child's problems, but her wise counsel and occasional correction are more likely to be accepted because the child knows he is accepted.

Warmth and nurturing kindness will bring out the best not only in ourselves but also in those we love.²

Lloyd D. Newell

1. In Michael Josephson, "Needing Approval More Than Advice," What Will Matter, Oct. 31, 2011, <http://whatwillmatter.com/2011/10/needing-approval-more-than-advice>.
Program #4374

A World of Real People

One of the remarkable things about humans is that we care about others—those we know personally and even those we don't. With a few rare exceptions, most of us genuinely care about the well-being of others, and we do our best to help and not harm. And yet in our technology-filled world, we sometimes don't even notice others or their needs, and so our good intentions go unfulfilled.

Cell phones, computers, and other high-tech tools enrich our lives in countless and amazing ways, but they can also distract and even endanger us. Ironically, they can make us aware of current events a world away but oblivious to what is happening around us. In a sense, life may pass us by because our heads are down, our ears are plugged, and our thoughts are elsewhere. Just a few weeks ago, a woman stood for quite some time in a grocery line next to her neighbor, but both were so focused on their smartphones that they did not even notice or speak to each other.

As one writer observed: "Our use of technology has fundamentally changed not just our awareness in public spaces but our sense of duty to others. Engaged with the glowing screens in front of us rather than with the people around us, we often honestly don't notice what is going on."¹

Some have found it helpful from time to time to unplug certain devices and just listen and look—truly take in the array of sights and sounds, truly look at the glorious world and the people in it. One man found that turning off the world's noise during his drive home from work helped him relax and arrive home refreshed. A family with grown children decided to be more intentional about making time for face-to-face conversations, not just screen-to-screen interactions.

There's no doubt we live in a wired world, but we also live in a world of real people. We can choose to turn our thoughts to them and tune our hearts to their needs.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. Christine Rosen, "Are Smartphones Turning Us into Bad Samaritans?" Wall Street Journal, Oct. 26–27, 2013, C3.

True Success

The definition of the word success varies from individual to individual, from culture to culture. For some people, it has to do with the acquisition of wealth. For others, success involves professional titles or social status. And still others define success in terms of the amount of time available for recreation or leisure. However, an entry from the diary of one American writer, M. L. Robinson, suggests that true success has more to do with the inner successes of the soul than with external prosperity: “I have never made more than enough money to buy the necessities of life; my works are largely unknown; except for the love of my family and a few good friends, I have earned no prestigious titles. But, I have lived simply, laughed frequently, and loved deeply—I am a success.”

These words are food for thought: To live simply is to bring life into focus; it is to set priorities in life, rejecting the extravagant and the unnecessary while making room for the truly important. To live simply is to succeed at the organization of things for the sake of the soul. Laughter, another indication of true success according to Mr. Robinson, is an assurance of inner peace, a sign that all is well behind the portioned walls of self. With laughter, even the poorest individual is a success; without it, the richest is a failure. Perhaps the greatest evidence of inner success is a sincere and profound affection for someone other than ourselves. Loving deeply implies a denial of our own wants in favor of the needs of others. Whether it is extended to wife, or to husband, or to children or grandparents, or to God, love is one of the soul’s greatest accomplishments.

Jesus was the one who distinguished between the true success of the soul and the false achievements of fame and fortune: “For what shall it profit a man,” he queried, “if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Mark 8:36.) Indeed, of what value are the extrinsic possessions of wealth and notoriety without the internal prosperity that results from the personal achievements of the soul? With all of our successes, let us also achieve true success—the kind that comes from living simply, laughing frequently, and loving deeply.

J. Spencer Kinard

A Success Secret

There's an old Babylonian proverb that says, "If a man be lucky, . . . [you can] pitch him into the Euphrates and like as not he will swim out with a pearl in his hand." Some modern writers have also suggested that there are those who continually stumble into prosperity, in spite of themselves. And so it seems that some people have all the luck. Success follows them as surely as noon follows morning. They are the ones who rise through the ranks of any group to emerge as the leader, who have full checking accounts, whose dreams don't turn to dust in their hands. Or so it seems.

Too often our attempt to be like one of them, to move into a more satisfying life, is actually no attempt at all. We wait, thinking some lucky break will come our way and change our life. We think something will arrive in the mail or someone will notice our hidden talent, and then we'll move ahead. Or we wait for tomorrow, believing it will feel different than today—and when it comes and it doesn't, we wait another day.

But the truly successful have a different approach—quite the opposite from waiting. It is action. When an opportunity comes their way, they grasp it. If they have a good idea, they believe in it and won't shake loose. An eminent medical pioneer is said to have a sign on his desk that reads, "I've been lucky. The harder I work, the luckier I get."

In sum, what the truly successful seem to do is to crush the spirit of procrastination that haunts them as it does every human being. They have discovered that the security that comes from never risking failure is no security at all. Earth, after all, is not a safe place to be, and the safety-seeker who procrastinates his best intentions and his best dreams for fear of failure must soon realize that he is no safe anyway. Life is a daring adventure or it is nothing.

We must trample the voice that suggests to us that tomorrow would really be a better day to try. We must crush the whispers that say, "You can't," and ignore those who say, "You're not capable." Those who seem lucky are really those who put aside their fears and doubts and, with the secret knowledge of their own inadequacies, gather together the determination to start today to be what they really want to be.

J. Spencer Kinard

Defeating Discouragement

A characteristic aspect of people who succeed is an unwillingness to admit defeat. Many a cause has been won long after the cause seemed hopeless simply because there was a soul who refused to be discouraged, who saw beyond the specter of defeat the bright hope of success and believed in it.

Of course, failure and defeat are part of life. The only persons who have never failed are those who have never tired; the only ones who have not tasted the bitter legacy of failure are the ones who have not risked devotion to a cause. They who would succeed must understand defeat and not be defeated by it. And it is possible to know defeat and not be defeated. Because in the words of the hymn, "There Is a Balm in Gilead," there is a moment of succeeding and hope beyond all our momentary failures and despair.

Too often we are impressed by the limitations of our lives; too often we focus on failed dreams and unfulfilled expectations; too often we see not the seacoast—the vast and hopeful bounty of the sea—but sand that winnows through our fingers and cannot be held. Certainly, there are those who have talents and abilities greater than our own; there are those who perhaps have suffered less, who have gained more. But God does not measure us one against another; he does not value our lives in the context of others' living. As the hymn promises and persuades us:

If you cannot sing like angels,
If you cannot preach like Paul
You can tell the love of Jesus
And say "He died for All."

God did not make us to be defeated. Indeed, he sent his Son as a sacrifice so that ultimately we might succeed. That ultimate success does not mean there will not be moments of failing. But we are inspired by the Light of Christ to take hope in our succeeding, to not be too quick to have failure define our experience, and to realize that failure does not in itself predicate defeat. We are defeated only if we are stopped, only if we linger in failure and do not see beyond it to the hope of other opportunities. We are defeated only if we fail to see a brighter, more significant eternal success that ultimately will diminish every failure and save every soul who finds it out.

J. Spencer Kinard

A Simpler Life

While serving in the president's cabinet as United States Secretary of Labor, Robert Reich kept a hectic and pressure-filled schedule at the heart of the nation's decision-making process. So busy were his days that he rarely had contact with old friends and saw little of his wife and two sons. One evening he called home and, for the sixth night in a row, told his young son he would miss seeing him before bedtime. His son responded with a request: "Would you wake me, Dad, when you do get home?"

Reich was hesitant: "It will be really late."

But his son insisted. "I just want to know you are there," he said.

It was a wake-up call for Reich. He needed to simplify his life. He started by making a career change.¹

What would a simpler life look like for you? Can you picture it? Where would you start? You might begin by taking an inventory of what you do and why you do it. Too often, we pay little attention to what we really value and allow the less important aspects of our lives to consume us. A little introspection often reveals that in the grand scheme, positions and possessions are not as important as we sometimes treat them.

Simplifying our lives may not require dramatic changes like quitting a job or moving across the country. More often it means increasing the time we spend with our family, close friends, and the people who really matter. It means cutting back on clutter—around the house and in our head, limiting what we worry about so that we have more time and energy for the important things that are within our control. Often it means saying no to requests that merely take time and have little lasting value. And it means finding renewal in relaxation, quiet moments, and the beauty of nature—ideally in the company of someone we love.

Whatever simplifying means to you, don't wait until your loved ones start to wonder if you are there. Decide what you can do to begin living a simpler life today.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. See Stephen R. Covey, *Everyday Greatness* (2006), 386.

Inertia and Momentum

Isaac Newton’s first law of motion states that an object in motion tends to stay in motion; and likewise, an object at rest tends to stay at rest. Unless something acts upon the object, it will remain in its current state of motion or rest.

This law from classical physics has been used to explain the movement of everything from the smallest particles to the largest planets and stars. In some ways, it can even find application in our own lives. Perhaps you’ve noticed how momentum helps carry you once you’ve begun moving your life in a positive direction. On the other hand, you may also have noticed how that same momentum can make it difficult to break a bad habit or change directions and start working on a more worthy goal.

But there is one important way in which Newton’s law does not apply to us: we are not objects. We need not wait for an outside force to act upon us. The power is within us to create our own momentum. If we sense the need to improve, we can make a plan of action. Even if it’s only a few minutes a day set apart to focus on specific goals and clarify our principles, it will help us keep moving forward.

When an important task is started, we can keep it going and see it through to the end. When a relationship needs attention and special care, we can focus on strengthening it. When a challenge or disappointment threatens to slow us down, our positive momentum and determination can keep us going.

Of course, there may be times when it’s best to stop, reevaluate, correct our course, and then restart. While this can be difficult, how grateful we should be that we are not prisoners of the choices in our past!

What will make the difference in our lives is not the speed or the swiftness with which we move but the steady, deliberate progress we make. You can access the power within yourself to direct your own life. Learn from past experience, stay on a path of improvement, and just keep moving forward.

Lloyd D. Newell

Program #4380

Purpose

A wise man who has experienced much in life recalled how, as a boy, he and his friends used to carve toy boats out of wood and race them down the river. They quickly realized that their boats were completely at the mercy of the current; if it led a boat into a whirlpool or a patch of reeds, that's where the boat stayed. "Toy boats," he observed, "[have] no keel for stability, no rudder to provide direction, and no source of power. Inevitably, their destination [is] downstream—the path of least resistance."¹

Are we sometimes like toy boats? Do we passively let life take its course, allowing one day to flow into the next, without a sense of purpose? Dr. Patricia A. Boyle and her colleagues recently conducted a study indicating that having a mission in life can "help stave off cognitive decline and promote a broadly healthier, longer life."² When you set and pursue meaningful goals, you help your brain, your body—your life.

There are so many ways to add purpose to life. And it doesn't need to be anything grandiose. "The first step," Dr. Boyle explains, "is to think about what is important to you, what energizes and motivates you, what gives you the sense that life is meaningful."³

Some volunteer to help those in need. Some become mentors, sharing their wisdom and experience. Others focus on self-improvement, learning a new language or a new skill. One young man spends months training guide dogs for the visually impaired. A busy young mother finds a few minutes each morning to think of ways she can influence her children for good. A grandma who can no longer write calls her friends and extended family members on special occasions. Each, in his or her own way, finds purpose. And although life can be demanding and tedious at times, when we decide to live with purpose, the quality of our life improves. We don't just float; we sail purposefully to our destination.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. Thomas S. Monson, "The Race of Life," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2012, 92.

2. Diane Cole, "Why You Need to Find a Mission," *Wall Street Journal*, Jan. 11, 2013, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887323316804578163501792318298.html>.

3. In Cole, "Why You Need to Find a Mission."

Resilience

You don't have to travel far down the path of life to realize that it's full of stumbling blocks. Avoiding them is an important skill, but perhaps even more important is the ability to pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and keep going after we've stumbled—and we all do from time to time. In the words of Confucius, "Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall."¹

He was describing resilience, the ability to rebound from disappointment, to work through adversity with courage and patience, refusing to give up or give in. It's easy to keep moving forward along the path's smooth patches, but if the whole path were that way, how would we ever learn to be resilient? How would we discover how much inner strength we have if we never had to bounce back after a difficulty, move forward through times of heartache and pressure, or stay strong in moments of gloom and discouragement? Resilience reveals something about our character—and it can empower us to become even better, wiser, and stronger.

There are examples everywhere, large and small, of people who keep going despite setbacks: the athlete who keeps competing despite a less-than-stellar season, the job seeker who keeps his head up in the face of rejection, the student who keeps studying hard even after receiving a bad grade, the soloist who struggles in a recital but keeps practicing and shows up at the next one, the couple who remain committed to strengthening their marriage notwithstanding the ups and downs of life. They all bounce back, keep going, and keep trying even when, at times, they think they can't.

Perhaps the words of Christopher Robin to Winnie the Pooh are words we each need to hear from time to time: "Promise me you'll always remember: You're braver than you believe, and stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think."² So no matter the setback, keep going. It may surprise you to discover how brave, strong, and smart you really are.

Lloyd D. Newell

1. In Tryon Edwards, comp., *A Dictionary of Thoughts* (1891), 149.
2. Carter Crocker and Karl Geurs, *Pooh's Grand Adventure: The Search for Christopher Robin* (1997).
Program #4350

Notes

Compilation of Sermonettes

Sermons Compiled From
<http://fans.musicandthespo-kenword.org/>

A Door of Opportunity
A Forgiving Heart
*A Healing Place Called Griev-
ing*
A Lifetime of Learning
A Meaningful, Lasting Legacy
A Mother's Love
A Prayer in Music
*A Promise of New Hope and
Everlasting Life*
A Simpler Life
A World of Real People
A Work in Progress
Abundant Hearts
Acceptance and Appreciation
All Loves Excelling
Amazing Grace
Are You Listening?
*Are You Paying too Much for
Your Whistle?*
As We Remember
Assume the Best
Beauty for Ashes
By the Side of the Road
Carve Your Name on Hearts
Christmas Bells
Christmas Offerings
Conquer with Kindness
Consider the Lillies
Consolation
Curiosity
*Daily Gratitude and Thanks-
giving*
Don't Forget to Pray
Duty, Honor, Country
Each Day is A Day to Remember
Faith Points to the Future
Family Prayer
Fellow Christmas Passengers

Flexible and Firm
*For Your Tomorrow We Gave
Our Today*
From Rivals to Friends
*George and Martha-A Love
Story*
Giving Comfort
God Be With You
Good News
Good Tidings of Great Joy
Guiding Lights
Happiness
*Happiness Is Expressing Grat-
itude*
Hither by Thy Help I'm Come
Hope and Christmas Gatherings
How Do I love Thee
I Have a Dream
Inertia and Momentum
It Was the Little Things
Joy for Life's Journey
Joy in Our Labors
Just Begin!
Let Freedom Ring
Let Us Remember
*Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of
Happiness*
Like a Turtle on a Fence
Live in Thanksgiving Daily
Live to Learn
Lives Touching Ours for Good
Love, Loyalty, and Belonging
Making Courtesy More Common
Memories of Father
Misery Is Optional
Mother's Love
No Ordinary Event
No Toil nor Labor Fear
O Holy Night
One Simple Gesture
Our Greatest Treasures
Our Search for Meaning
Our Undying Gratitude

<i>Patriotism that Stands for Love of People</i>	<i>Love</i>
<i>Pause and Remember</i>	<i>The Title of Mother</i>
<i>People Change Everyday</i>	<i>The Warm Embers of Love</i>
<i>Perfect Peace</i>	<i>The Way to Bethlehem</i>
<i>Perseverance and Spirit</i>	<i>Things to be Desired</i>
<i>Priceless to her Children</i>	<i>This Country Does Not Forget</i>
<i>Purpose</i>	<i>Thoughts for Mothers</i>
<i>Real Love</i>	<i>Time for Our Children</i>
<i>Remember the Gettysburg Address</i>	<i>To Fallen Soldiers Let Us Sing</i>
<i>Renaissance Men</i>	<i>Touched for Good</i>
<i>Resilience</i>	<i>True Loyalty</i>
<i>Sacred Gifts of Sacrifice</i>	<i>Turn to Heaven</i>
<i>Second Chances</i>	<i>Unity</i>
<i>Sharing Our Joy</i>	<i>Volunteers and Helpers</i>
<i>Singing Praises to God</i>	<i>We Look to a New Day</i>
<i>Smile</i>	<i>What Matters Most at Christmastime</i>
<i>Something to Live For</i>	<i>With Wondering Awe</i>
<i>Standing for Freedom</i>	<i>World War II Memorial</i>
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<i>The Easter Story Continues</i>	<i>Adapting</i>
<i>The First Noel</i>	<i>Change and Permanence</i>
<i>The Gift of Forgiveness</i>	<i>E Pluribus Unum</i>
<i>The Invisible Hand of God</i>	<i>Faith, Memory, and Patience</i>
<i>The Lesson of the Magnets</i>	<i>Giving Gratitude to God</i>
<i>The Light of Home, The Smile of Friends</i>	<i>Hearing Him</i>
<i>The Path of Forgiveness and Healing</i>	<i>His Yoke Is Easy</i>
<i>The Person and the Moment</i>	<i>Listen</i>
<i>The Power of Prayer</i>	<i>Listen to the Coach</i>
<i>The Promise of Hope</i>	<i>Marriage – an Important Decision</i>
<i>The Promise of New Life</i>	<i>Opportunities for a New Year</i>
<i>The Queen Mum</i>	<i>Resolutions</i>
<i>The Sustaining Power of God's</i>	

Compilation of Sermonettes

The Bond of Brotherhood
The Hidden Power of Gratitude
The Light of Christ
The Lord Also Listens
The Power of Gratitude
The Principle of Progress
The Value of Change
To Be Truly Educated
Triumphal Entry
What Do We Ask of a Father?
Who is My Brother?

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*A Responsibility to Our Fore-
fathers*
A Success Secret
A Veteran
After the Death of a Loved One
Being a Patriot
Building Strong Families
By Faith All Things Are Possible
Defeating Discouragement
Do We Despise Him?
Facing Problems
Faith
Faith in God
Faith Makes a Difference
Families Need Priority
Jesus Wept
Land of the Free
Lifelong Learning
Love One Another
Never Give Up
On True Love
Our First Need
Overcoming Problems

Prayer Power
Successful Marriage
*The American Family—An
Endangered Species*
The Blessing of Freedom
The Lifting Power of Love
The Need for Education
The Patience of Prayer
The Role of Suffering
The Strength from Adversity
The Usefulness of Sadness
The Work of Fathers
True Success
When Love Transforms Duty
Where Father Lives



