

Chapter 4

The Knowledge Base for Ethical Behavior

We here observe that God is the only supreme governor and independent being in whom all fullness and perfection dwell; who is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient; without beginning of days or end of life; and that in him every good gift and every good principle dwell; and that he is the Father of lights; in him the principle of faith dwells independently, and he is the object in whom the faith of all other rational and accountable beings center for life and salvation. (Lecture 2:2)

As we have been indebted to a revelation which God made of himself to his creatures, in the first instance, for the idea of his existence, so in like manner we are indebted to the revelations which he has given to us for a correct understanding of his character, perfections, and attributes; because without the revelations which he has given to us, no man by searching could find out God. (Lecture 3:7)

Jesus in his mortal ministry, being, as Paul said, *the express image of his (Father's) person* (Hebrews 1:3), was a true and complete revelation of the person and nature of God. This he confirmed to Philip when he said, *He that hath seen me hath seen the Father* (John 14:9). Marion G. Romney¹

For faith to be productive and lead us to happiness, it must be based on God who is *the object in whom the faith of all other rational and accountable beings center for life and salvation*. We can learn about God and His nature from three sources—the scriptures or the *revelations*, words of the modern prophets, and personal revelation. We are taught in the *Lectures on Faith* that *we are indebted to the revelations which he has given to us for a correct understanding of his character, perfections, and attributes*. The *revelations* also contain an account of Jesus' *mortal ministry*. From reading and studying about the life of the Savior, we are learning about God, since *Jesus was a true and complete revelation of the person and nature of God*.

From Chapter 1, three things are necessary for us to exercise faith in God unto life and salvation. These are:

First, the idea that he actually exists. Secondly, a *correct* idea of his character, perfections, and attributes. Thirdly, an actual knowledge that the course of life which he is pursuing is according to His will. (Lecture 3:3-5)

Joseph Smith further explained that without a knowledge of these things, our faith would be 'unproductive'. The following examples from the scriptures teach us what happens when people do not have access to the *revelations* or when their knowledge base has become corrupt.

The Mulekites. In Omni in the Book of Mormon, Amaleki wrote about Mosiah leading the Nephites out of the land of Nephi and discovering the land of Zarahemla. There he met a people who were called the people of Zarahemla who were descendants of the Mulekites that had fled from Jerusalem under the direction of Mulek, a son of Zedekiah, king of Judah about 600 B.C. The people of Zarahemla had become quite numerous notwithstanding a history of wars and contentions and a denial of the existence of God. When these people were discovered, Mosiah could not understand them because their language had become corrupted. The words in Omni 1:17-18 provide insight on their condition.

And at the time that Mosiah discovered them, they had become exceedingly numerous. Nevertheless, they had had many wars and serious contentions, and had fallen by the sword from time to time; and their language had become corrupted; and they had brought no records with them; and they denied the being of their Creator; and Mosiah, nor the people of Mosiah, could understand them. But it came to pass that Mosiah caused that they should be taught in his language. And it came to pass that after they were taught in the language of Mosiah, Zarahemla gave a genealogy of his fathers, according to his memory . . . (Omni 1:17-18)

One of the causes of the idolatry and language problems of the people of Zarahemla was due to the fact that their ancestors had not brought records with them when they fled Jerusalem. Since they did not have a written account of a language, they were not able to maintain the integrity of their language and lost the ability to communicate with other people of their same origin. More importantly, because they had no witness of God, i.e., no written record of the prophets to bear testimony of the actual existence of God, they lost their knowledge of God and came to deny *the being of their Creator*.

The Iron Yoke. Nephi wrote a brief account of what would befall not only his descendants in the promised land but also the descendants of those that remained in the old world. This account includes a profound description of what happens to people when their knowledge base becomes corrupted. In Nephi's own words, we read:

And it came to pass that I saw among the nations of the Gentiles the formation of a great church. And the angel said unto me: Behold the formation of a church which is most abominable above all other churches, which slayeth the saints of God, yea, and tortureth them and bindeth them down, and yoketh them with a yoke of iron, and bringeth them down into captivity. And it came to pass that I beheld this great and abominable church; and I saw the devil that he was the founder of it. (1 Nephi 13:4-6)

And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld that they did prosper in the land; and I

beheld a book, and it was carried forth among them. And the angel said unto me . . . The book that thou beholdest is a record of the Jews, which contains the covenants of the Lord, which he hath made unto the house of Israel; and it also containeth many of the prophecies of the holy prophets; and it is a record like unto the engravings which are upon the plates of brass, save there are not so many; nevertheless, they contain the covenants of the Lord, which he hath made unto the house of Israel; wherefore, they are of great worth unto the Gentilesand when it proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew it contained the fulness of the gospel of the LordWherefore, these things go forth from the Jews in purity unto the Gentiles, according to the truth which is in God. And after they go forth by the hand of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, from the Jews unto the Gentiles, thou seest the formation of a great and abominable church, which is most abominable above all other churches; for behold, they have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants of the Lord have they taken away. And all this have they done that they might pervert the right ways of the Lord, that they might blind the eyes and harden the hearts of the children of men. And after these plain and precious things were taken away it goeth forth unto all the nations of the Gentiles; and after it goeth forth unto all the nations of the Gentiles because of these things which are taken away out of the gospel of the Lamb, an exceedingly great many do stumble, yea, insomuch that Satan hath great power over them Neither will the Lord God suffer that the Gentiles shall forever remain in that awful state of blindness, which thou beholdest they are in, because of the plain and most precious parts of the gospel of the Lamb which have been kept back by that abominable church, whose formation thou hast seen. (1 Nephi 13:20-32)

Nephi told us that because these plain and precious truths had been removed, a *great many do stumble* and that they have been yoked by a *yoke of iron* which has led to their *captivity*. The Lord reiterated these words in modern revelation,

It is an imperative duty that we owe to God, to angels, with whom we shall be brought to stand, and also to ourselves, to our wives and children, who have been made to bow down with grief, sorrow, and care, under the most damning hand of murder, tyranny, and oppression, supported and urged on and upheld by the influence of that spirit which hath so strongly riveted the creeds of the fathers, who have inherited lies, upon the hearts of the children, and filled the world with confusion, and has been growing stronger and stronger, and is now the very mainspring of all corruption, and the whole earth groans under the weight of its iniquity. It is an iron yoke, it is a strong band; they are the very handcuffs, and chains, and shackles, and fetters of hell. (Doctrine and Covenants 123:7-8)

The removal of the plain and precious truths from the original record of the Jews has prevented millions of God's children of obtaining a correct knowledge of Him and His plan.

The confusion regarding the knowledge of God was increased by the great apostasy and God's removing the Melchizedek Priesthood from the earth. The Melchizedek Priesthood holds the keys of the knowledge of God (see D&C 84:19). Without the plain and precious truths recorded in the bible and without the Melchizedek Priesthood, the correct knowledge of God was lost for

generations.

The above two examples from the scriptures illustrate what can happen when people have an incorrect knowledge of God and his plan.

God – The Object of Our Faith

Joseph Smith taught that the object of our faith should be God.

We here observe that God is the only supreme governor and independent being in whom all fullness and perfection dwell; who is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient; without beginning of days or end of life; and that in him every good gift and every good principle dwell; and that he is the Father of lights; in him the principle of faith dwells independently, and he is the object in whom the faith of all other rational and accountable beings center for life and salvation. (Lectures on Faith 2:2)

A knowledge of God first came into the world through Adam and Eve. God walked and talked with them in the Garden of Eden. After their fall, this knowledge of God was retained. In Moses we read,

And Adam and Eve, his wife, called upon the name of the Lord, and they heard the voice of the Lord from the way toward the Garden of Eden, speaking unto them, and they saw him not; for they were shut out from his presence. And he gave unto them commandments, that they should worship the Lord their God, and should offer the firstlings of their flocks, for an offering unto the Lord. And Adam was obedient unto the commandments of the Lord. And after many days an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam, saying: Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord? And Adam said unto him: I know not, save the Lord commanded me. And then the angel spake, saying: This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth. Wherefore, thou shalt do all that thou doest in the name of the Son, and thou shalt repent and call upon God in the name of the Son forevermore. And in that day the Holy Ghost fell upon Adam, which beareth record of the Father and the Son, saying: I am the Only Begotten of the Father from the beginning, henceforth and forever, that as thou hast fallen thou mayest be redeemed, and all mankind, even as many as will. (Moses 5:4-9)

It is clear that God continued to communicate with Adam and Eve to give them more knowledge through His voice, angels, and the Holy Ghost. They in turn passed their knowledge on to their posterity by bearing testimony.

At the beginning of each subsequent dispensation, a prophet (Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, or Joseph Smith) was given a direct witness of God the Father. With this first hand knowledge, they could then bear testimony to the people of their respective dispensations of the reality of God. Bruce McConkie wrote of dispensations and the role of these prophets.

I am speaking of those great eras or periods, of those designated portions of the earth's history when the Lord, through one man, gives his word to the whole world and makes all the prophets, and all the seers, and all the administrators, and all the apostles of that period subject to, and exponents of, what came through that individual. . . . Every prophet is a witness of Christ; every dispensation head is a revealer of Christ for his day; and every other prophet or apostle who comes is a reflection and an echo and an exponent of the dispensation head. All such come to echo to the world and to expound and unfold what God has revealed through the man who was appointed for that era to give his eternal word to the world.²

At the beginning of this last dispensation, the young Joseph Smith was visited by God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, as he attempted to follow the admonition of James.

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all [men] liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. (James 1:5)

Joseph learned much about God during that brief visit that was not known by modern Christianity. He frequently bore testimony of his experience and each of the prophets that have followed him have born testimony of his role in reestablishing the knowledge of God.

While it is important that the direct evidence of the knowledge of God be established with a prophet in each dispensation, it is also important for us to realize that our own knowledge of God can come to us in a variety of ways. We have the testimony of Joseph Smith as it is passed on by each generation to all of the people of this dispensation. We also have the scriptures that have been preserved for our day and which contain the recorded testimonies of the prophets. We can also receive knowledge by the Holy Ghost. He is a bearer of truth and will aid us in our quest to learn about God.

There are many evidences that could be offered to demonstrate the power that this knowledge has to motivate people to good actions. One such example is found in the Book of Mormon. The father of the Lamanite king, Lamoni, prayed and committed that he would give away all of his sins to come to know God (see Alma 22).

The knowledge that Joseph Smith received in the sacred grove served as a basis for his faith that was tried repeatedly during the next 24 years of his life. In Joseph's own words:

I have thought since, that I felt much like Paul, when he made his defense before King Agrippa, and related the account of the vision he had when he saw a light, and heard a voice; but still there were but few who believed him; some said he was dishonest, others said he was mad; and he was ridiculed and reviled. But all this did not destroy the reality of his vision. He had seen a vision, he knew he had, and all the persecution under heaven could not make it otherwise; and though they should persecute him unto death, yet he knew, and would know to his latest breath, that he had both seen a light and heard a voice speaking unto him, and all the world could not make him think or believe otherwise. So it was with me. I had actually seen a light, and in the midst of that light I saw two Personages, and they did in reality speak to me; and though I was hated and persecuted for saying that I had seen a vision, yet it

was true; and while they were persecuting me, reviling me, and speaking all manner of evil against me falsely for so saying, I was led to say in my heart: Why persecute me for telling the truth? I have actually seen a vision; and who am I that I can withstand God, or why does the world think to make me deny what I have actually seen? For I had seen a vision; I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it, neither dared I do it; at least I knew that by so doing I would offend God, and come under condemnation. (Joseph Smith History 1:24-25)

As it did for Joseph Smith, a knowledge of the reality of God can sustain us in times of adversity and cause us to have faith which will motivate us to correct actions.

In addition to knowing that God exists, we also need to have a correct understanding of His characteristics and attributes in order for us to have faith in Him and to learn how to act.

Let us here observe, that the real design which the God of heaven had in view in making the human family acquainted with his attributes, was that they, through the ideas of the existence of his attributes, might be enabled to exercise faith in him, and through the exercise of faith in him, might obtain eternal life; for without the idea of the existence of the attributes which belong to God, the minds of men could not have power to exercise faith in him so as to lay hold upon eternal life. The God of heaven, understanding most perfectly the constitution of human nature, and the weakness of men, knew what was necessary to be revealed, and what ideas must be planted in their minds in order that they might be enabled to exercise faith in him unto eternal life. (Lecture 4:2)

When we know of His characteristics, it will be easier to place our faith in Him when we are faced with challenging ethical dilemmas. Jerry Wilson in his book *The Great Plan of Happiness* wrote:

. . . . the knowledge of his existence is only preliminary to our knowing his characteristics and attributes. When the challenges and traumas of life arise—and they are a natural part of this mortal experience—though we know there is a God, the issue will depend more critically on what he is like. The questions in those difficult times will center on whether I can depend on and trust in him implicitly. Does he, for instance, have knowledge and power sufficient to save me? And for that matter, does he have the mercy and desire to do so?³

The *Lectures on Faith* provide valuable information regarding God's character. Lecture 3 defines 6 of God's characteristics:

1. "He was God before the world was created, and the same God that he was after it was created" (Lecture 3:13);
2. "He is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abundant in goodness, and that he was so from everlasting, and will be to everlasting" (Lecture 3:14);
3. "He changes not, neither is there variableness with him; but that he is the same from everlasting to everlasting, being the same yesterday, today, and for ever; and that his course is one eternal round, without variation" (Lecture 3:15);

4. “He is a God of truth and cannot lie” (Lecture 3:16);
5. “He is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that fears God and works righteousness is accepted of him” (Lecture 3:17);
6. “He is love” (Lecture 3:18)

And Lecture 4 defines 6 attributes of God:

1. “Knowledge” (Lecture 4:5);
2. “Faith or power” (Lecture 4:6);
3. “Justice” (Lecture 4:7);
4. “Judgment” (Lecture 4:8);
5. “Mercy” (Lecture 4:9);
6. “Truth” (Lecture 4:10).

For the purpose of our discussion, let us condense these twelve characteristics and attributes to the following list of eight since some of them are repetitious:

1. God is omnipotent
2. God changes not
3. God is omniscient
4. God is truthful and cannot lie
5. God is just
6. God is no respecter of persons
7. God is merciful and gracious
8. God is love

Let us now try to understand more fully their correct meaning. To do this, each of the characteristics will be discussed by presenting: 1) a definition from the *Lectures on Faith*; 2) some commentary from the scriptures; 3) additional quotes from modern prophets; and 4) applications illustrating how each can assist in the solution of life’s challenges. The applications are designed to respond to the following statement: Given God’s characteristic of being _____ (fill in the blank with one of the above 8 characteristics), the example demonstrates how someone behaved ethically, or chose a correct action, by having faith that God possessed the given characteristic.

The scriptures are a great resource to learn about these characteristics. The words of the prophets that are recorded in them contain many references which have been summarized in the Topical Guide found in the 1979 edition of the Standard Works. The prophets also have recorded the life of the Savior, which was, as discussed in the introduction of this chapter, “a true and complete revelation of the person and nature of God”.¹

The *Lectures on Faith* also teach the importance of the scriptures to help us learn about the nature of God.

As we have been indebted to a revelation which God made of himself to his creatures, in the first instance, for the idea of his existence, so in like manner we are indebted to the

revelations which he has given to us for a correct understanding of his character, perfections, and attributes; because without the revelations which he has given to us, no man by searching could find out God. (Lecture 3:7)

God is Omnipotent

Definition. We read the following in the *Lectures on Faith*:

For if he did not, in the first instance, believe him to be God, that is, the Creator, and upholder of all things, he could not center his faith in him for life and salvation, for fear there should be greater than he who would thwart all his plans, and he like the gods of the heathen, would be unable to fulfill his promises; but seeing he is God over all, from everlasting to everlasting, the Creator and upholder of all things, no such fear can exist in the minds of those who put their trust in him, so that in this respect their faith can be without wavering. (Lecture 3:19)

And it is not less necessary that men should have the idea of the existence of the attribute power in the Deity; for unless God had power over all things, and was able by his power to control all things, and thereby deliver his creatures who put their trust in him from the power of all beings that might seek their destruction, whether in heaven, on earth, or in hell, men could not be saved. But with the idea of the existence of this attribute planted in the mind, men feel as though they had nothing to fear who put their trust in God, believing that he has power to save all who come to him to the very uttermost. (Lecture 4:12)

There are two aspects of the definition of omnipotence which are contained in these statements. First, we come to understand that God put in motion this mortal existence, i.e., He is the Creator, and second, He has the power to see it through to its end. Understanding these concepts, we can have implicit faith that no other being can change the purpose of this mortal life or put an end to His plan which includes our ability to choose our own destiny. Certainly, Satan has the power to tempt us, but he can not eliminate our agency and can have no power over us unless we yield to his temptations. The Encyclopedia of Mormonism has the following definition for God's omnipotence:

The Church affirms the biblical view of divine omnipotence (often rendered as "almighty"), that God is supreme, having power over all things. No one or no force or happening can frustrate or prevent him from accomplishing his designs (D&C 3:1-3). His power is sufficient to fulfill all his purposes and promises, including his promise of eternal life for all who obey him. However, the Church does not understand this term in the traditional sense of absoluteness, and, on the authority of modern revelation, rejects the classical doctrine of creation out of nothing. It affirms, rather, that there are actualities that are coeternal with the persons of the Godhead, including elements, intelligence, and law (D&C 93:29, 33, 35: 88:34-40). Omnipotence, therefore, cannot coherently be understood as absolutely unlimited power. That view is internally self-contradictory and, given the fact that evil and suffering are real, not reconcilable with God's omnibenevolence or loving kindness.⁴

Joseph Smith taught that God not only created ‘laws’ that allowed us to progress to become like Him, but that He is also subject to other laws that are ‘self-existent’ with Him. Thus, He is able to deliver us from evil and heal our souls but He will not (some would argue can not) remove evil and suffering from this earth life.

The first principles of man are self-existent with God. God himself, finding he was in the midst of spirits and glory, because he was more intelligent, saw proper to institute laws whereby the rest could have a privilege to advance like himself. The relationship we have with God places us in a situation to advance in knowledge. He has power to institute laws to instruct the weaker intelligences that they may be exalted with himself, so that they might have one glory upon another, and all that knowledge, power, glory and intelligence which is requisite in order to save them in the world of spirits.⁵

Many people question why an omnipotent God would allow the evil and pain that many experience in mortality. But when we come to understand that He too is subject to laws and can not, or will not, remove evil and pain from this earth life, then we can come to peace with the issue. We also need to realize that the role of the Savior was to provide a way for all mankind to be compensated for the inconsistencies of mortality.

‘Omnipotent’ from the scriptures.

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. (Gen. 1:1)

. for [there is] no restraint to the LORD. (1 Sam. 14:6)

Believe in God; believe that he is, and that he created all things, both in heaven and in earth; believe that he has all wisdom, and all power, both in heaven and in earth; believe that man doth not comprehend all the things which the Lord can comprehend. (Mosiah 4:9)

And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes (Mal 3:11)

But Jesus beheld [them], and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible. (Matt 19:26)

But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. (Romans 8:11)

And it came to pass that I spake unto my brethren, saying: Let us go up again unto Jerusalem, and let us be faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord; for behold he is mightier than all the earth, then why not mightier than Laban and his fifty, yea, or even than his tens of thousands? (1 Nephi 4:1)

Behold, and hearken unto the voice of him who has all power, who is from everlasting to everlasting, even Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. (D&C 61:1)

How long can rolling waters remain impure? What power shall stay the heavens? As well might man stretch forth his puny arm to stop the Missouri river in its decreed course, or to turn it up stream, as to hinder the Almighty from pouring down knowledge from heaven upon the heads of the Latter-day Saints. (D&C 121:33)

And worlds without number have I created; and I also created them for mine own purpose; and by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten. (Moses 1:33)

For I am the Lord thy God; I dwell in heaven; the earth is my footstool; I stretch my hand over the sea, and it obeys my voice; I cause the wind and the fire to be my chariot; I say to the mountains—Depart hence—and behold, they are taken away by a whirlwind, in an instant, suddenly. (Abr. 2:7)

‘Omnipotent’ from modern prophets.

It was the faith of our pioneer fathers that prompted them, as they pitched camp to begin a new settlement, to devoutly invoke the blessings of the Almighty God upon their efforts. They prayed for the rains to come, for the fertility of the soil, for protection against destructive forces to the end that their crops would grow and that a harvest would be gathered. When a bounteous harvest came, they thanked God; for the protection of loved ones, they gave recognition to an Omnipotent Power; in death and sorrow, in floods and in storm, they saw the workings of a Divine Will. Out of such faith there was born in them, and can be likewise in you, a conviction that “a man and the Lord are a big majority in any test.” Harold B. Lee⁶

O that men would listen! Why should there be spiritual blindness in the day of brightest scientific and technological vision? Why must men rely on physical fortifications and armaments when the God of heaven yearns to bless them? One stroke of his omnipotent hand could make powerless all nations who oppose, and save a world even when in its death throes. Yet men shun God and put their trust in weapons of war, in the *arm of flesh*. Spencer W. Kimball⁷

In a short period man has so improved his communication techniques as to hear voices around the world. A few years ago, even with earphones, we could decode only part of the static over the newborn radio. Our first television pictures were very local and very amateurish. Today, we see in our homes a fight in Madison Square Garden, a football game in the Cotton Bowl, the Tabernacle Choir in Chicago, an astronaut on his way to the moon. Is it hard to believe that with such accomplishments by puny man Omnipotent God has precision instruments with which to enlarge the knowledge of those who have the skill to use them? Is it difficult to believe that the Urim and Thummim could be such a precision instrument to transmit messages from God to his supreme creation—man? Can God have limitations? Can atmosphere or distance or space hold back his pictures? Would it be so difficult for Moses or Enoch or Abraham or Joseph to see a colorful, accurate, moving picture of all things past and present, and even future? The Creator said to Moses, *look, and I will show thee the workmanship of mine hands; but not all, for my works are*

without end (see Moses 1:4). Spencer W. Kimball⁸

The people assembled in the picturesque place and Elijah addressed them: *How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him, but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered not a word.* It is suggestive. There the people were halting: many of them knew in a way that Israel's God was omnipotent, that He it was who could save them, and yet the other gods offered pleasure, offered indulgence, and the people halted; some trying to serve and yield obedience to both. . . . don't try to mix in trying to serve one today and then falling back in obedience to the teachings of the tomorrow. Well, you know the test that was decided upon: you know the result, and the death that came to the priests of Baal. David O. McKay⁹

We believe it to be self-evident that the greatest truth in all eternity is: That there is a God in heaven who created all things the universe, man, and all forms of life; that there is existence, creation, and being-all controlled and governed by an intelligent Head; that God is, and we are, and all things exist. As to the facts of existence and Creation, such need no proof. As to the wisdom and omnipotence of the Creator, such is shown by the extent, complexity, and organized nature of created things. Bruce R. McConkie¹⁰

God is Omnipotent: He is properly called the Almighty. Man can discern proofs of the Divine omnipotence on every side, in the forces that control the elements of earth, and that guide the orbs of heaven in their prescribed courses; all are working together for the common good. There can be no limits to the powers of God; whatever His wisdom indicates as fit to be done He can and will do. The means through which He operates may not be of infinite capacity in themselves; but they are directed by an infinite power. A rational conception of His omnipotence is power to do all that He may will to do. James E. Talmage¹¹

I am bold to testify that these doctrines are true; that God is all that the revelations say he is; that there is no power, no might, no omnipotence, that excels him; and that if you and I will advance and pursue the course that he has made available for us we can attain that state where we will be from everlasting to everlasting. Then, as these revelations recite, we will know all things and have all power, and we will go on eternally in the same type and kind of existence that he lives. Bruce R. McConkie¹²

Applications of 'omnipotent'.

- In the Pearl of Great Price, Moses recorded a visit from God. He spoke with God *face to face* and, in order for him to survive the experience, the *glory of God was upon Moses* and he was changed (see Moses 1:1). When God left him, he had little strength and fell to the earth. After recuperating for several hours, Moses regained his natural strength and exclaimed, *Now, for this cause I know that man is nothing, which thing I never had supposed* (see Moses 1:10). Moses was left in awe at the power and glory of God. Moses then described a visit from Satan who tempted him by asking him to worship Satan.

And it came to pass that Moses looked upon Satan and said: Who art thou? For

behold, I am a son of God, in the similitude of his Only Begotten; and where is thy glory, that I should worship thee? For behold, I could not look upon God, except his glory should come upon me, and I were transfigured before him. But I can look upon thee in the natural man. Is it not so, surely? Blessed be the name of my God, for his Spirit hath not altogether withdrawn from me, or else where is thy glory, for it is darkness unto me? And I can judge between thee and God; for God said unto me: Worship God, for him only shalt thou serve. Get thee hence, Satan; deceive me not; for God said unto me: Thou art after the similitude of mine Only Begotten. And he also gave me commandments when he called unto me out of the burning bush, saying: Call upon God in the name of mine Only Begotten, and worship me. And again Moses said: I will not cease to call upon God, I have other things to inquire of him: for his glory has been upon me, wherefore I can judge between him and thee. Depart hence, Satan. (Moses 1:13-18)

Satan continued to tempt Moses but again he refused to obey Satan's command. This scene was repeated three times at which point Moses called upon God and in the name of the *Only Begotten* commanded Satan to leave which he did (see Moses 1:21). Few of us will receive visits by God and Satan like Moses did but we all can feel the spirit and power of both. We also have Moses' record to serve as a basis for our faith in the omnipotence of God. We, too, can use our faith in this characteristic of God to choose good over evil for we know that God has the power to combat all of Satan's attempts to destroy the great and eternal plan of happiness that God instituted in the premortal existence.

- A second example from the scriptures that involves someone relying on a knowledge of God's omnipotence to help accomplish a difficult task is found in 1 Nephi 17. Nephi recorded that he was commanded by God to build a ship for his family to use to cross the ocean to the promised land. His brothers called him a fool and told him that he was not capable of building such a ship. Nephi told them to stop murmuring and explained:

And I said unto them: If God had commanded me to do all things I could do them. If he should command me that I should say unto this water, be thou earth, it should be earth; and if I should say it, it would be done. And now, if the Lord has such great power, and has wrought so many miracles among the children of men, how is it that he cannot instruct me, that I should build a ship? (1 Nephi 17:50-51)

- After constructing 8 barges that were to carry his people to a new land, the brother of Jared was concerned about the absence of light inside the barges. He asked the Lord how they would be able to see during the journey. The Lord, respecting his agency and creativity, asked him *What will ye that I should do that ye may have light in your vessels?* (see Ether 2:23) After much thought, the brother of Jared devised a plan that involved asking the Lord to touch 16 stones which he had moltened from a rock.

And I know, O Lord, that thou hast all power, and can do whatsoever thou wilt for the benefit of man; therefore touch these stones, O Lord, with thy finger, and prepare

them that they may shine forth in darkness; and they shall shine forth unto us in the vessels which we have prepared, that we may have light while we shall cross the sea. Behold, O Lord, thou canst do this. We know that thou art able to show forth great power (Ether 3:4-5)

Because of his tremendous faith in the Lord's omnipotence, the brother of Jared was able to solve a problem for his people.

- Faith in God's omnipotence leads people to dedicate their homes and grave sites for their loved ones. It also is the basis for the church leaders to dedicate chapels and temples. The knowledge that God is all powerful gives us assurance that by dedicating these things, He can protect them from all attempts by Satan to harm them.

God Changes Not

Definition. Joseph Smith said the following about this characteristic of God in Lecture 3:

But it is equally as necessary that men should have the idea that he is a God who changes not, in order to have faith in him, as it is to have the idea that he is gracious and long-suffering; for without the idea of unchangeableness in the character of the Deity, doubt would take the place of faith. But with the idea that he changes not, faith lays hold upon the excellencies in his character with unshaken confidence, believing he is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and that his course is one eternal round. (Lecture 3:21)

God's omnipotence allows us to have faith that not only did He put in place the great plan of happiness but that He can cause it to play out for all of His children. The fact that He changes not gives us faith that He will not alter the plan nor change the rules by which it operates. We know His government, the priesthood, will not change. We can have faith that the saving ordinances of the gospel will not change. For example, the ordinance of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins and admission into the kingdom of God is a necessary ordinance for all people and will not vary in time.

Does this mean that policies and programs will not change? No, only that the principles, the fundamentals of the plan, will remain constant. There are many evidences of programs changing. For instance, the method of financing church operations has varied from consecration to tithing several times in history. But the eternal principles, i.e., the law of sacrifice and the responsibility to take care of the poor, have not changed.

Faith in the unchanging nature of God also gives us assurance that His other characteristics of truth, mercy, justice, no respecter of persons, and love will not change. What was important in Noah's time will also be important in our time. This allows us to learn from the scriptures the things that He feels are important and necessary for our growth and development.

Such, then, is the foundation which is laid, through the revelation of the attributes of

God, for the exercise of faith in him for life and salvation; and seeing that these are attributes of the Deity, they are unchangeable—being the same yesterday, today and forever—which gives to the minds of the Latter-day Saints the same power and authority to exercise faith in God which the Former-day Saints had; so that all the saints, in this respect, have been, are, and will be, alike until the end of time; for God never changes, therefore his attributes and character remain forever the same. And as it is through the revelation of these that a foundation is laid for the exercise of faith in God unto life and salvation, the foundation, therefore, for the exercise of faith was, is, and ever will be, the same; so that all men have had, and will have, an equal privilege. (Lecture 4:19)

‘God Changes Not’ from the scriptures.

Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou [art] God. (Psalms 90:2)

But thou [art] the same, and thy years shall have no end. (Psalms 102:27)

For I [am] the LORD, I change not. (Malachi 3:6)

Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever. (Hebrews 13:8)

For he that diligently seeketh shall find; and the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto them, by the power of the Holy Ghost, as well in these times as in times of old, and as well in times of old as in times to come; wherefore, the course of the Lord is one eternal round. (1 Nephi 10:19)

And it may suffice if I only say they are preserved for a wise purpose, which purpose is known unto God; for he doth counsel in wisdom over all his works, and his paths are straight, and his course is one eternal round. (Alma 37:12)

For do we not read that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and in him there is no variableness neither shadow of changing? (Mormon 9:9)

For I know that God is not a partial God, neither a changeable being; but he is unchangeable from all eternity to all eternity. (Moroni 8:18)

For God doth not walk in crooked paths, neither doth he turn to the right hand nor to the left, neither doth he vary from that which he hath said, therefore his paths are straight, and his course is one eternal round. (D&C 3:2)

‘God Changes Not’ from modern prophets.

True worship is always and everlastingly the same. Truth does not vary, and God does not change. We are saved today by obedience to the same eternal laws that have saved men in all ages past and that will save them in all ages future. The Author and Finisher of our faith is the same yesterday, today, and forever. In him there is no variableness, neither

shadow of turning. Salvation always comes by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the everlasting gospel, the gospel that has existed with God from all eternity and that will continue to crown his unchangeable goodness toward his creatures forever. Bruce R. McConkie¹³

There is no room in Christian faith for the heresy that man makes his own god, who changes with the times and with the cultural and intellectual development of the man creating him—this at best is anti-Christ; nor is there space in Christian faith for that other heresy that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and of Moses and of Israel of the time of Moses and later, is not the God of the Christian world, not the God of today. These heresies will condemn all who hold them. The scriptures hold one language, that God the Father and his Only Begotten, Jesus Christ, are the same yesterday, today, and forever, from everlasting to everlasting, unchangeable. J. Reuben Clark¹⁴

It is only natural when the heavens are closed and men are left to grope and find their way without divine aid, that there will be confusion. If the Lord had agreed that every man should work out his salvation in his own appointed way, without respect to the divine commandments, there would be the utmost confusion not only on earth but in heaven. The poet Pope, said, “Order is heaven’s first law.” There must be order in heaven, but that order comes because of obedience to divine law, and God being unchangeable therefore his laws are unchangeable and not subject to the whim or fancy, or interpretation, which man may place upon them. Joseph Fielding Smith¹⁵

Applications of ‘changes not’.

- Nephi and his brethren failed twice as they attempted to get the brass plates from Laban. After the second time, Laman and Lemuel murmured and complained about their task. They physically beat Nephi and Sam and were rebuked by an angel. Following the visit by the angel, they again murmured and asked how it was possible that they could obtain the plates when Laban was such a *mighty man* and could *command fifty* (see 1 Nephi 3). Nephi responded by reminding them of the power of God and how He had helped their forefathers escape from the Egyptians and since God changes not, He could help them obtain the plates.

And it came to pass that I spake unto my brethren, saying: Let us go up again unto Jerusalem, and let us be faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord; for behold he is mightier than all the earth, then why not mightier than Laban and his fifty, yea, or even than his tens of thousands? Therefore let us go up; let us be strong like unto Moses; for he truly spake unto the waters of the Red Sea and they divided hither and thither, and our fathers came through, out of captivity, on dry ground, and the armies of Pharaoh did follow and were drowned in the waters of the Red Sea. Now behold ye know that this is true; and ye also know that an angel hath spoken unto you; wherefore can ye doubt? Let us go up; the Lord is able to deliver us, even as our fathers, and to destroy Laban, even as the Egyptians. (1 Nephi 4:1-3)

Knowing that God does not change, allows us to draw on the experiences of others to bolster our confidence and faith in God as we face similar, challenging situations.

- We are taught in the scriptures that when there is a prophet on the earth, the government of God will be through that chosen prophet (see Amos 3:7). We can have faith that this will always be the case because of the unchanging nature of God. This fact was a significant help to the early saints in this dispensation. They came from a variety of religious backgrounds that frequently led to problems. In one particular case, Hiram Page began professing to receive revelations through a ‘seer’ stone. Several members of the church, including Oliver Cowdery, were deceived by his claims. The Lord reiterated His line of communication through the prophet in Sections 21 and 28 of the Doctrine and Covenants.

Behold, there shall be a record kept among you; and in it thou shalt be called a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of the church through the will of God the Father, and the grace of your Lord Jesus Christ, Being inspired of the Holy Ghost to lay the foundation thereof, and to build it up unto the most holy faith. Which church was organized and established in the year of your Lord eighteen hundred and thirty, in the fourth month, and on the sixth day of the month which is called April. Wherefore, meaning the church, thou shalt give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me; For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith. (D&C 21:1-5)

But, behold, verily, verily, I say unto thee, no one shall be appointed to receive commandments and revelations in this church excepting my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., for he receiveth them even as Moses. . . And thou shalt not command him who is at thy head, and at the head of the church; For I have given him the keys of the mysteries, and the revelations which are sealed, until I shall appoint unto them another in his stead. (D&C 28:2,6-7)

There are people in every age that claim that revelation for the church should come in other ways but, beginning with Adam, prophets have been given that responsibility. We need to look to the prophet and have faith that God will not change the way He communicates to His people.

- Many thousands of people have sought for God’s church based on the belief in the fact that God changes not. As an example,

God is Omniscient

Definition. From the *Lectures on Faith*, we read,

. . . without the knowledge of all things, God would not be able to save any portion of his creatures; for it is by reason of the knowledge which he has of all things, from the

beginning to the end, that enables him to give that understanding to his creatures by which they are made partakers of eternal life; and if it were not for the idea existing in the minds of men that God had all knowledge it would be impossible for them to exercise faith in him. . . For inasmuch as God possesses the attribute knowledge, he can make all things known to his saints necessary for their salvation (Lecture 4:11,17)

It's been said that knowledge is power. In that sense, the words omnipotence and omniscience are similar, for in the fact that God knows all lies the basis for His being all powerful. The Encyclopedia of Mormonism provides the following explanation concerning God's omniscience:

Latter-day Saints differ among themselves in their understanding of the nature of God's knowledge. Some have thought that God increases endlessly in knowledge as well as in glory and dominion. Others hold to the more traditional view that God's knowledge, including the foreknowledge of future free contingencies, is complete. Despite these differing views, there is accord on two fundamental issues: (1) God's foreknowledge does not causally determine human choices, and (2) this knowledge, like God's power, is maximally efficacious. No event occurs that He has not anticipated or has not taken into account in His planning.¹⁶

As the above quote mentions, there is some debate among members of the church as to just what God's omniscience means. Is God still growing in knowledge and wisdom? The answer to this question doesn't appear to be clear either from the scriptures or from the words of the prophets, but a definitive answer really isn't necessary for our salvation. However, what is clear, is that, in order for us to have faith unto salvation in God's omniscient attribute, it is important for us to accept the two fundamental issues discussed in the quote.

Restating the second issue, we need to know that the knowledge that He possesses now and at the time of the creation of the plan of happiness is sufficient for Him to assist us to return to His presence. If God did not have this knowledge, then there might arise some situation or some new fact that He hadn't accounted for and our salvation could be in jeopardy. The scriptures and the *Lectures on Faith* are clear that God does know all things pertaining unto our salvation and we can have faith in His knowledge of these things.

The first issue involves the age old debate of agency versus predestination. We can be assured though, that just because He knows all things, including how we will think and act in every possible situation, He will not interfere with our agency. We can all think of a time in our lives, or in the life of an associate, when we knew, or at least were fairly sure, that a certain consequence would occur as a result of some action. Our knowing the consequence did not affect the actions taken. In those situations, we either knew or were able to make an educated guess. God does not guess. He sees all and comprehends all. He is not limited by the dimension of time as we mortals are. He knows exactly what will happen and when. But having this knowledge does not affect our agency. As we discussed in the section of 'omnipotence', He will not, or can not, interfere with our right to choose for ourselves. A classic example of this is the story of the lost 116 pages of Book of Mormon manuscript in early modern church history. God had provided a way to

compensate for the loss but He still allowed Joseph Smith and Martin Harris to act for themselves.

As we come to understand the omniscience of God, we can have faith that His knowledge and wisdom is sufficient for our salvation. By placing our faith in that fact and using it to help us make choices, we can be assured that our actions will be correct even though our limited understanding and knowledge may suggest an alternate course of actions.

‘Omniscient’ from the scriptures.

And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts (1 Chronicles 28:9)

Great [is] our Lord, and of great power: his understanding [is] infinite. (Psalms 147:5)

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable [are] his judgments, and his ways past finding out! (Romans 11:33)

But the Lord knoweth all things from the beginning; wherefore, he prepareth a way to accomplish all his works among the children of men; for behold, he hath all power unto the fulfilling of all his words. And thus it is. Amen. (1 Nephi 9:6)

But behold, all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things. (2 Nephi 2:24)

O how great the holiness of our God! For he knoweth all things, and there is not anything save he knows it. (2 Nephi 9:20)

And I do this for a wise purpose; for thus it whispereth me, according to the workings of the Spirit of the Lord which is in me. And now, I do not know all things; but the Lord knoweth all things which are to come; wherefore, he worketh in me to do according to his will. (Words of Mormon 1:7)

Believe in God; believe that he is, and that he created all things, both in heaven and in earth; believe that he has all wisdom, and all power, both in heaven and in earth; believe that man doth not comprehend all the things which the Lord can comprehend. (Mosiah 4:9)

Now have we not reason to rejoice? Yea, I say unto you, there never were men that had so great reason to rejoice as we, since the world began; yea, and my joy is carried away, even unto boasting in my God; for he has all power, all wisdom, and all understanding; he comprehendeth all things, and he is a merciful Being, even unto salvation, to those who will repent and believe on his name. (Alma 26:35)

For behold, God knowing all things, being from everlasting to everlasting, behold,

he sent angels to minister unto the children of men, to make manifest concerning the coming of Christ; and in Christ there should come every good thing. (Moroni 7:22)

I will not suffer that they shall destroy my work; yea, I will show unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil. (D&C 10:43)

The same which knoweth all things, for all things are present before mine eyes (D&C 38:2)

He comprehendeth all things, and all things are before him, and all things are round about him; and he is above all things, and in all things, and is through all things, and is round about all things; and all things are by him, and of him, even God, forever and ever. (D&C 88:41)

My name is Jehovah, and I know the end from the beginning; therefore my hand shall be over thee. (Abr 2:8)

‘Omniscient’ from modern prophets.

Few doctrines, save those pertaining to the reality of the existence of God, are more basic than the truth that God is omniscient. *O how great the holiness of our God! For he knoweth all things, and there is not anything save he knows it. (2 Nephi 9:20)* Unfortunately, this truth is sometimes only passively assented to by individuals who avoid exploring it and coming to understand its implications. Later on, such believers sometimes have difficulty with the implications of this core doctrine. . . . The all-loving God who shapes our individual growing and sanctifying experiences—and then sees us through them—could not do so if He were not omniscient. . . Below the scripture that declares that God knows *all things* there is no footnote reading “except that God is a little weak in geophysics!” We do not worship a God who simply forecasts a generally greater frequency of earthquakes in the last days before the second coming of His Son; He knows precisely when and where all these will occur. Neal A. Maxwell¹⁷

Since—unlike for us enclosed by the veil—things are, for God, one “eternal now,” it is to be remembered that for God to foresee is not to cause or even to desire a particular occurrence—but it is to take that occurrence into account beforehand, so that divine reckoning folds it into the unfolding purposes of God. . . . The actual determinations, however, are made by us mortals using our agency as to this or that course of action. For these determinations and decisions we are accountable. . . . Our agency is preserved. . . . by the fact that as we approach a given moment we do not know what our response will be. Meanwhile, God has foreseen what we will do and has taken our decision into account (in composite with all others), so that His purposes are not frustrated. . . . It is unfortunate that our concerns do not center more upon the correctness of what we do in a given moment—and less upon whether or not God’s having foreseen what we would do then somehow compromises our agency. It is equally regrettable that our souls should be troubled at all because we cannot figure out “how” God does it, when it has been made so abundantly clear and on so many occasions that He does do it. In any event, this great reality of omniscience will happily operate even if it is for us an unexplained reality! Neal A. Maxwell¹⁸

There are principles which, if applied and acted upon, are conducive to the social, spiritual, and economic well-being of the nation. They are basic to sound international as well as domestic accord. They came from God himself to Moses, and form the foundation for civilized society. They are embodied in what have been denominated as the Ten Commandments. These were designed by an Omniscient Intelligence to plumb the depths of human motives and urges and to govern the baser parts of man's nature. It is well to be reminded that no nation has ever perished that has kept the commandments of God. Ezra T. Benson¹⁹

As a member of the Godhead, and being one with the Father and the Son, the Holy Ghost is, as are the Father and the Son, omniscient. He comprehends all truth, having a *knowledge of [all] things* (D&C 93:24). Marion G. Romney²⁰

Authority is an eternal principle operative throughout the universe. To the *utmost bounds* of space all things are governed by law emanating from the Lord our God. On Kolob and other giant governing stars and in the tiny electron infinitesimally small, and of which all things are composed, divine authority is manifest in the form of immutable law. All space is filled with matter and that matter is controlled and directed by the all wise and omniscient Creator who *comprehendeth all things, and all things are before him, and all things are round about him; and he is above all things, and in all things, and is through all things, and is round about all things, and all things are by him, and of him, even God, forever and ever. And again, verily I say unto you, he hath given a law unto all things, by which they move in their times and their seasons.* Joseph Fielding Smith²¹

God is Omniscient—By Him matter has been organized and energy directed. He is therefore the Creator of all things that are created; and *Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.* His power and His wisdom are alike incomprehensible to man, for they are infinite. Being Himself eternal and perfect, His knowledge cannot be otherwise than infinite. To comprehend Himself, an infinite Being, He must possess an infinite mind. Through the agency of angels and ministering servants He is in continuous communication with all parts of creation, and may personally visit as He may determine. James E. Talmage²²

The doctrine of God, as taught by Joseph Smith, is the noblest of which the human mind can conceive. No religion ascribes to God more perfect attributes than does that of the Latter-Day Saints. Yet the Church, asserts that God was not always what he is today. Through countless ages he has grown towards greater perfection, and at the present, though in comparison with humankind, he is omniscient and omnipotent, he is still progressing. John A. Widstoe²³

Applications of ‘omniscient’.

- Daniel and three other sons of Judah, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, were told by their captors to eat a certain diet that contained things that they knew they shouldn't eat. Daniel requested that they be allowed to continue eating their own diet because he had faith that God knew what was best for them.

Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants. So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days. And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat. (Daniel 1:12-15)

God's omniscience is far superior to man's knowledge but frequently in our naivete we can not see or understand why. When God gave the Word of Wisdom for His saints in this dispensation in Section 89 of the Doctrine and Covenants, many accepted it on faith in the omniscience of God. Medical science is now proving the wisdom of the counsel given in that revelation.²⁴

- In our professional career or in our church service, we frequently find application of this characteristic of God. We are called to do something for which we do not have the answer. We study the problem out. We call upon all of our past experiences and knowledge but still find that the solution to the problem is alluding us. At this point, we approach God in prayer having faith in His knowledge and that He will assist us with the problem. One of the authors recalls a time when this happened with his employment. He was asked to do something that was beyond his capabilities. After asking God for help, he was led to a solution that involved some mathematics that he did not understand. He and his supervisor decided that they would implement the solution. Testing of the final product confirmed that the solution was correct. God's knowledge is unlimited and He is more than willing to assist us in those areas where our's is lacking if we have the faith necessary in His omniscience and His willingness to convey that knowledge to us.
- There is another class of examples that involve the application of God's omniscience that we frequently encounter. It involves deciding between two or more courses of action. In these situations, we are counseled to study out each option, carefully considering the consequences and then pray for a confirmation of our decision. We sometimes receive an answer that leads us to a different solution than our decision. This may cause a trial of our faith. If we have faith in God's omniscience, then we will realize that God has a superior knowledge concerning the situation than we do. Although we may not understand nor see how His suggested solution is better, we can have faith that it is. Recently, a student told of his attempts in seeking full-time employment after his university studies. He had approached it in a prayerful attitude. He told of several interviews that he had with companies and how he wanted badly to receive an offer from one of them. None of the interviews ended with an offer of employment. He felt frustrated but when he thought on the omniscience of God, realizing that God knew best for him, he was at peace and felt that things would work out.
- Another example of how faith in God's omniscience can help us involves the tribulations

and trials that we face. When Joseph Smith was incarcerated in the Liberty Jail, he asked God how long the Saints were going to have to suffer at the hands of their persecutors. God responded with this:

My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment; And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes. . . . know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good. (D&C 121:7-8, 122:7)

Having faith that God knows that our trials are for our *experience* and will do us *good* will provide strength to make it through those trials.

God is Truthful and Cannot Lie

Definition. Joseph wrote the following about truth in the *Lectures on Faith*:

And again, the idea that he is a God of truth and cannot lie, is equally as necessary to the exercise of faith in him as the idea of his unchangeableness. For without the idea that he was a God of truth and could not lie, the confidence necessary to be placed in his word in order to the exercise of faith in him could not exist. But having the idea that he is not man, that he cannot lie, it gives power to the minds of men to exercise faith in him. (Lecture 3:22)

And lastly, but not less important to the exercise of faith in God, is the idea of the existence of the attribute truth in him; for without the idea of the existence of this attribute the mind of man could have nothing upon which it could rest with certainty—all would be confusion and doubt. But with the idea of the existence of this attribute in the Deity in the mind, all the teachings, instructions, promises, and blessings, become realities, and the mind is enabled to lay hold of them with certainty and confidence, believing that these things, and all that the Lord has said, shall be fulfilled in their time; and that all the cursings, denunciations, and judgments, pronounced upon the heads of the unrighteous, will also be executed in the due time of the Lord: and, by reason of the truth and veracity of him, the mind beholds its deliverance and salvation as being certain. (Lecture 4:16)

From these statements and from the revelations that God gave to Joseph on other occasions, we learn two aspects of truth. The first is the notion that truth is the matching of a thought in the mind with a fact outside the mind. Philosophers have debated over this definition of truth arguing about what constitutes a ‘fact’ and whose ‘mind’, i.e., from whose perspective, is the fact being observed. Because people have different backgrounds and perspectives, they do not always see and understand things in the same manner. This tends to bias all of our observations. But God sees things differently than us as Rodney Turner wrote in the following:

Truth is the sum of reality or, as John Jaques wrote, “the sum of existence” (Hymns #272). God is omniscient in part because He is omnipresent via His Spirit throughout all

reality or existence. He is above, in, through, and round about all things (D&C 88:41)²⁵

For God, everything is a certainty because He has a *knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come* (D&C 93:24).

This leads us to the second aspect of truth. He lives a life of truth. He will not deceive nor does He work in illusions for. . . *the Spirit speaketh the truth and lieth not. Wherefore, it speaketh of things as they really are, and of things as they really will be* (Jacob 4:13). Terry Warner has written:

Though they (Latter-day Saints) do speak of the truth of statements, they most often use the word “truth” to signify an entire way of life—specifically, the way of life exemplified, prescribed, and guided by Jesus Christ. . . Latter-day Saints believe that to walk in truth is to keep one’s commitments to follow Christ’s way uprightly. Because Christ perfectly embodies the virtue of being true and faithful (in His case, to the life His Father required of Him), there is a crucial sense in which He Himself is the truth. *I am the way, He said, the truth, and the life.* (John 14:6)²⁶

Because God is *true and faithful*, when we enter a covenant with Him, we can be assured that He will keep His part of the covenantal relationship. His promises and blessings will come to pass if we remain *true and faithful* to our part of the covenant.

‘Truthful’ from the scriptures.

[He is] the Rock, his work [is] perfect: for all his ways [are] judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right [is] he. (Deut. 32:4)

Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works [are] truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase. (Dan. 4: 37)

For the law was given by Moses, [but] grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. (John 1:17)

But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God. (John 3:21)

Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, [then] are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. (John 8:31-32)

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. (John 14:6)

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, [even] the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me (John 15:26)

Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. (John 17:17)

In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began (Titus 1:2)

This is he that came by water and blood, [even] Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. 1 (John 5:6)

Behold, my brethren, he that prophesieth, let him prophesy to the understanding of men; for the Spirit speaketh the truth and lieth not. Wherefore, it speaketh of things as they really are, and of things as they really will be; wherefore, these things are manifested unto us plainly, for the salvation of our souls. But behold, we are not witnesses alone in these things; for God also spake them unto prophets of old. (Jacob 4:13)

And I, Enos, knew that God could not lie; wherefore, my guilt was swept away. (Enos 1:6)

And the angel said unto me he is a holy man; wherefore I know he is a holy man because it was said by an angel of God. (Alma 10:9)

And the Lord said unto him: Believest thou the words which I shall speak? And he answered: Yea, Lord, I know that thou speakest the truth, for thou art a God of truth, and canst not lie. (Ether 3:11-12)

But he that believeth these things which I have spoken, him will I visit with the manifestations of my Spirit, and he shall know and bear record. For because of my Spirit he shall know that these things are true; for it persuadeth men to do good. And whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do good is of me; for good cometh of none save it be of me. I am the same that leadeth men to all good; he that will not believe my words will not believe me—that I am; and he that will not believe me will not believe the Father who sent me. For behold, I am the Father, I am the light, and the life, and the truth of the world. (Ether 4:11-12)

For behold, and lo, the Lord is God, and the Spirit beareth record, and the record is true, and the truth abideth forever and ever. (D&C 1:39)

For the word of the Lord is truth, and whatsoever is truth is light, and whatsoever is light is Spirit, even the Spirit of Jesus Christ. (D&C 84:45)

Ye were also in the beginning with the Father; that which is Spirit, even the Spirit

of truth; And truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come. . . The Spirit of truth is of God. I am the Spirit of truth, and John bore record of me, saying: He received a fulness of truth, yea, even of all truth. . . He that keepeth his commandments receiveth truth and light, until he is glorified in truth and knoweth all things. Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be. . . The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth. Light and truth forsake that evil one. (D&C 93:23-24, 26, 28-29, 36-37)

And I have a work for thee, Moses, my son; and thou art in the similitude of mine Only Begotten; and mine Only Begotten is and shall be the Savior, for he is full of grace and truth; but there is no God beside me, and all things are present with me, for I know them all. (Moses 1:6)

And thou hast taken Zion to thine own bosom, from all thy creations, from all eternity to all eternity; and naught but peace, justice, and truth is the habitation of thy throne; and mercy shall go before thy face and have no end; how is it thou canst weep? (Moses 7:31)

‘Truthful’ from modern prophets.

All true knowledge is of God. There is but one world; it is a spiritual one encased in the physical, and when the end approaches, it will be found that all the teachings of the secular world which are found to be exact and absolute will fade into the spiritual, for God is not the father of the mind and the body only. Spencer W. Kimball²⁷

We must imitate Christ in our mental growth as we search for truth. Let us never fear truth, but only its misuse. On the contrary, let us love truth above all else, for God Himself is truth. Ezra Taft Benson²⁸

The Lord speaks to us in this question: *Unto what were ye ordained?* (D&C 50:13) He gives us the answer: *To preach my gospel by the Spirit, even the Comforter which was sent forth to teach the truth* (D&C 50:14). In the same manner He points out that if we speak in any other way than by the Spirit of truth, it will not be of God (D&C 50:17-18). Ezra Taft Benson²⁹

His character fits a like pattern. He was the same God before the earth was created that He now is. From everlasting to everlasting, He is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in goodness. With Him there is no variableness; He changes not; neither doth He walk in crooked paths; and His course is one eternal round. He is a God of truth; He cannot lie; His word endureth to all generations. Bruce R. McConkie³⁰

Spiritually enlightened minds always know that the word of the Lord is truth; God did not lie in the past, nor does He now, nor will He do so to all eternity. Thus the true saints say in their hearts: “Speak, Lord. Let thy servants hear and we will believe thy word. If it runs counter to our previous views or to the wisdom of the worldly wise, no matter. Thou knowest all things, and we believe thy word, let it be whatsoever it may be.” Bruce R.

McConkie³¹

To deal carelessly with truth, to deny it when once gained, to defy the laws of truth which are the laws of God must be counted among the greatest sins. John A. Widstoe³²

Joseph Smith, not yet fifteen years of age, in the midst of contending religious opinions, set out to find the truth. To God, the author of truth, he stated his desire and the Father, in His graciousness, in His mercy, gave to the boy that for which he asked. John A. Widstoe³³

Applications of ‘truthful’.

- Shortly after the sons of the Book of Mormon king, Mosiah, repented of their past and turned to the Lord, they expressed a desire to their father to go on a mission to the Lamanites. They wanted to bring the joy and peace that they had obtained through the atonement to their brethren even though the Lamanites were their sworn enemy and would surely seek to take their lives. Mosiah went to God in prayer to ask if he should let his sons go to the Lamanites. God spoke peace to his mind and told him that they would return safe from their mission.

And it came to pass that they did plead with their father many days that they might go up to the land of Nephi. And king Mosiah went and inquired of the Lord if he should let his sons go up among the Lamanites to preach the word. And the Lord said unto Mosiah: Let them go up, for many shall believe on their words, and they shall have eternal life; and I will deliver thy sons out of the hands of the Lamanites. And it came to pass that Mosiah granted that they might go and do according to their request. (Mosiah 28:5-8)

Mosiah granted their request because he had faith that God was truthful and would not lie. Later, one of his sons, Ammon, was attacked and we read the following concerning it:

Now, one of them, whose brother had been slain with the sword of Ammon, being exceedingly angry with Ammon, drew his sword and went forth that he might let it fall upon Ammon, to slay him; and as he lifted the sword to smite him, behold, he fell dead. Now we see that Ammon could not be slain, for the Lord had said unto Mosiah, his father: I will spare him, and it shall be unto him according to thy faith—therefore, Mosiah trusted him unto the Lord. (Alma 19:22-23)

The sons did return safely after serving a marvelous mission that led to many souls being brought to Christ.

- Samuel, a Book of Mormon prophet, lived shortly before the Lord was to be born in mortality. He prophesied to the people that the Lord would be born on a certain date, five years from the time of his prophecy. A small band of Nephite believers had faith in

Samuel's prophecy. They were mocked and ridiculed for believing, but they had faith that God had spoken through His prophet and would not lie. Their persecutors set a date for their death for believing in the prophecy. Their prophet leader, Nephi, went to the Lord in prayer on behalf of his people and was told the following:

Lift up your head and be of good cheer; for behold, the time is at hand, and on this night shall the sign be given, and on the morrow come I into the world, to show unto the world that I will fulfill all that which I have caused to be spoken by the mouth of my holy prophets. Behold, I come unto my own, to fulfill all things which I have made known unto the children of men from the foundation of the world, and to do the will, both of the Father and of the Son—of the Father because of me, and of the Son because of my flesh. And behold, the time is at hand, and this night shall the sign be given. (3 Nephi 1:13-14)

Once again, faith in God's truthfulness was rewarded.

- 1 Kings 17 - woman believed Elijah
- Enos 1:6 - Enos believed God

God is Just

Definition. Concerning the attributes of just and judgment which have been combined for our purposes, we read the following in the *Lectures on Faith*:

It is also necessary, in order to the exercise of faith in God unto life and salvation, that men should have the idea of the existence of the attribute justice in him; for without the idea of the existence of the attribute justice in the Deity, men could not have confidence sufficient to place themselves under his guidance and direction; for they would be filled with fear and doubt lest the judge of all the earth would not do right, and thus fear or doubt, existing in the mind, would preclude the possibility of the exercise of faith in him for life and salvation. But when the idea of the existence of the attribute justice in the Deity is fairly planted in the mind, it leaves no room for doubt to get into the heart, and the mind is enabled to cast itself upon the Almighty without fear and without doubt, and with the most unshaken confidence, believing that the Judge of all the earth will do right. It is also of equal importance that men should have the idea of the existence of the attribute judgment in God, in order that they may exercise faith in him for life and salvation; for without the idea of the existence of this attribute in the Deity, it would be impossible for men to exercise faith in him for life and salvation, seeing that it is through the exercise of this attribute that the faithful in Christ Jesus are delivered out of the hands of those who seek their destruction; for if God were not to come out in swift judgment against the workers of iniquity and the powers of darkness, his saints could not be saved; for it is by judgment that the Lord delivers his saints out of the hands of all their enemies, and those who reject the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. But no sooner is the idea of the existence of this attribute planted in the minds of men, than it gives power to the mind for the exercise of faith and confidence in God, and they are enabled by faith to lay hold on the promises which are set before them, and wade through all the tribulations and afflictions to which they are subjected by reason of the persecution from those who know not God, and obey

not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, believing that in due time the Lord will come out in swift judgment against their enemies, and they shall be cut off from before him, and that in his own due time he will bear them off conquerors, and more than conquerors, in all things. (Lecture 4:13-14)

In an earlier section, we discussed the fact that God instituted laws for the benefit of His children in order to help them progress and become like Him. God is both a law giver and a law abider. Furthermore, He has told us that all blessings come from obedience to law (see D&C 130:20-21) and that we will inherit the glory with which our obedience is commensurate (see D&C 88:21-25). We also know that there are consequences for sin and that we are accountable for our own sins. Knowing that God is just and fair in His judgment, allows us to have faith in Him and put our minds at ease that we alone choose our fate and that He will judge us fairly.

Working hand in hand with the concept of justice is mercy, which we will discuss in detail later. However, it is important to state that mercy, while not robbing justice, will account for sins committed out of ignorance to the law and will make up for any injustices that we experience while in mortality.

‘Just’ from the scriptures.

[He is] the Rock, his work [is] perfect: for all his ways [are] judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right [is] he. (Deut. 32:4)

Justice and judgment [are] the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face. (Psalms 89:14)

I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me. (John 5:30)

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us [our] sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous [are] thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true [are] thy ways, thou King of saints. (Revelations 15:9)

O the greatness and the justice of our God! For he executeth all his words, and they have gone forth out of his mouth, and his law must be fulfilled. (2 Nephi 9:17)

Prepare your souls for that glorious day when justice shall be administered unto the righteous, even the day of judgment, that ye may not shrink with awful fear; that ye may not remember your awful guilt in perfectness, and be constrained to exclaim: Holy, holy are thy judgments, O Lord God Almighty—but I know my guilt; I transgressed thy law, and my transgressions are mine; and the devil hath obtained me,

that I am a prey to his awful misery. (2 Nephi 9:46)

Now it is better that a man should be judged of God than of man, for the judgments of God are always just, but the judgments of man are not always just. (Mosiah 29:12)

Thus, none shall be exempted from the justice and the laws of God, that all things may be done in order and in solemnity before him, according to truth and righteousness. (D&C 107:84)

O Lord God Almighty, hear us in these our petitions, and answer us from heaven, thy holy habitation, where thou sittest enthroned, with glory, honor, power, majesty, might, dominion, truth, justice, judgment, mercy, and an infinity of fulness, from everlasting to everlasting. (D&C 109:77)

Wherefore teach it unto your children, that all men, everywhere, must repent, or they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God, for no unclean thing can dwell there, or dwell in his presence; for, in the language of Adam, Man of Holiness is his name, and the name of his Only Begotten is the Son of Man, even Jesus Christ, a righteous Judge, who shall come in the meridian of time. (Moses 6:57)

And were it possible that man could number the particles of the earth, yea, millions of earths like this, it would not be a beginning to the number of thy creations; and thy curtains are stretched out still; and yet thou art there, and thy bosom is there; and also thou art just; thou art merciful and kind forever; And thou hast taken Zion to thine own bosom, from all thy creations, from all eternity to all eternity; and naught but peace, justice, and truth is the habitation of thy throne; and mercy shall go before thy face and have no end; how is it thou canst weep? (Moses 7:30-31)

‘Just’ from modern prophets.

Persons who are deprived of sight, hearing, or movement, parents who care for a handicapped child, and persons who are compelled to endure conditions of economic hardship, political oppression, or even obnoxious personal associations, can achieve extraordinary spiritual growth through the process of coping with such adversities. God is just. He knows all things, and all things are present before his eyes (see D&C 38:2). When we can see our own condition and behavior as he sees them, we will understand why he told the imprisoned and suffering Prophet Joseph Smith, *all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good* (D&C 122:7). Dallin H. Oaks³⁴

If we have been merciful, kind, sympathetic, filled with charity and love, we will have these repaid to us; but if we have not exercised these heavenly qualities, we may depend upon it, unless we have repented and made atonement, they will be measured to us in the same manner that we have measured them to others. God is just, and He cannot even wink at iniquity, much less countenance it (Jan. 14, 1894, DW 48:350). George Q. Cannon³⁵

A basic principle of Latter-day Saint doctrine is that in order to go forward, we have to know that God is just. Joseph Smith's *Lectures on Faith* give a basic list of attributes God

must have (which we know he does have) in order for us to have faith in him, principles that give us the courage to believe that it will be well with us if we obey his commandments. One of those Godly attributes is justice. We would not have the faith to live righteously or to love better or to repent more readily if we did not think that justice would count for us, if we thought that God would change his mind midstream and tell us there was another set of rules in force. Because we know that God is just and would cease to be God if he were unjust, we have the faith to go forward knowing we will not be the victims of whimsy or caprice or a bad day or a bad joke. Jeffery R. Holland³⁶

Now the phrase "with all his heart" is vital. There can be no reservations. It must be an all-out unconditional surrender. The mere abandonment of the specific sin and even the confession of it are not sufficient to save. The Lord knows, as does the individual, the degree of contrition, and the reward will be according to desserts, for God is just. Feigning repentance or bluffing is futile, for both the transgressor and the Lord can evaluate and recognize insincerity and hypocrisy. One may fool his fellow men sometimes, but himself and his Lord never. Yet the devout, repenting soul has claim upon the mercy of the Lord. Spencer W. Kimball³⁷

"It is also necessary, in order to the exercise of faith in God unto life and salvation, that men should have the idea of the existence of the attribute justice in him." That which is just is right and proper. It is true; it conforms to spiritual law; it is righteous before God. Justice is the administration and the maintenance of that which is just and right. Justice, therefore, deals with the unbending, invariable results that always and ever flow from the same causes. Fairness, impartiality, perfect rectitude, complete integrity, righteousness itself—all of these are inherent in justice. The whole tenor of the scriptures is that God is just and that justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne. Bruce R. McConkie³⁸

He is not a passive God who merely watches lights on a cosmic computer and presses buttons to implement previously laid plans; He is a personal God who is just, merciful, and kind. His great desire is not to count His creations like so many coins, but to bind up the broken hearts of the inhabitants of each world: sanctification, not quantification, is His work. Has Christ not even promised us that, sooner or later, every soul that forsakes sin shall see His face? Further, that He will appear unto His servants? His desire is to reassure us as directly as we are prepared to receive. Though He is just, He is not exclusionary; His invitations to us are far more numerous than the conditions attached thereto. Neal A. Maxwell³⁹

God will make up for the injustices of this world (Hafen, Holland ??)

Applications of 'just'.

- The Book of Mormon prophet, Abinadi, is a good example of one who trusted in the justice of God rather than the justice of man. He was called to preach repentance to King Noah and his people. In doing so, he boldly bore testimony of Christ and the plan of salvation and taught the people that they had gone astray from the Mosaic Law. King Noah's followers brought him before the king to stand trial for insubordination. Abinadi continued his preaching before the king and when the king's men attempted to drag him off to be put to death for treason, Abinadi responded:

Touch me not, for God shall smite you if ye lay your hands upon me, for I have not delivered the message which the Lord sent me to deliver; neither have I told you that which ye requested that I should tell; therefore, God will not suffer that I shall be destroyed at this time. But I must fulfill the commandments wherewith God has commanded me; and because I have told you the truth ye are angry with me. (Mosiah 13:3-4)

Abinadi continued to bear testimony of Christ and to call them to repentance and when he had concluded, the king asked him to recall his words. He replied:

Now Abinadi said unto him: I say unto you, I will not recall the words which I have spoken unto you concerning this people, for they are true; and that ye may know of their surety I have suffered myself that I have fallen into your hands. Yea, and I will suffer even until death, and I will not recall my words, and they shall stand as a testimony against you. And if ye slay me ye will shed innocent blood, and this shall also stand as a testimony against you at the last day. (Mosiah 17:9-10)

Because Abinadi had faith in God's justice, he knew that even if the king killed him, God would make everything right at the judgment day. Knowing that God is just makes up for the injustices that we suffer at the hand of man.

- During the mission of Alma and Amulek to the city of Ammonihah, the more part of the people became angry and sought to destroy them. The people did not like the message of repentance that they preached. The people brought the wives and children of all the believers of Alma and Amulek together and caused them to be cast into a fire along with all their records (holy scriptures). Alma and Amulek were brought to the "place of martyrdom, that they might witness the destruction" (see Alma 14:9). Amulek was pained at what he saw and suggested to Alma that they cause the power of God to be used to save the martyrs. Alma responded:

The Spirit constraineth me that I must not stretch forth mine hand; for behold the Lord receiveth them up unto himself, in glory; and he doth suffer that they may do this thing, or that the people may do this thing unto them, according to the hardness of their hearts, that the judgments which he shall exercise upon them in his wrath may be just; and the blood of the innocent shall stand as a witness against them, yea, and cry mightily against them at the last day. (Alma 14:11)

Alma knew that God was just and that the martyrs, though suffering in this life, would in the next life receive a just reward for their unfair mortal deaths. And he also knew that the justice of God would be exercised against those that caused the martyrdoms. Faith in God's justice eases the pain of not only injustices suffered by ourselves but also by those we love.

- We frequently find injustices in the work place, some of which need to be addressed for

legal purposes but others do not. A story is told of a man who was fired from his job due to his membership in the church. Even though the man had proof of unfairness, he chose not to pursue it because of his belief that God is just. He felt that not only would things work out for him but that he should leave the circumstance in God's hands. While this world's justice may not seem fair at times, we can trust that God's justice in our next existence will be fair and will make up for the injustices of this mortal existence.

- Joseph on his way to Carthage
- Alma 24:16 - anti Nephi-Lehites

God is No Respector of Persons

Definition. This characteristic of God is closely linked with that of God being just. In the *Lectures on Faith*, we read,

He is no respector of persons: but in every nation he that fears God and works righteousness is accepted of him. . . . But it is also necessary that men should have an idea that he is no respector of persons, for with the idea of all the other excellencies in his character, and this one wanting, men could not exercise faith in him; because if he were a respector of persons, they could not tell what their privileges were, nor how far they were authorized to exercise faith in him, or whether they were authorized to do it at all, but all must be confusion; but no sooner are the minds of men made acquainted with the truth on this point, that he is no respector of persons, than they see that they have authority by faith to lay hold on eternal life, the richest boon of heaven, because God is no respector of persons, and that every man in every nation has an equal privilege. (Lecture 3:17, 23)

The fact that God is no respector of persons suggests that all of His children are equally valued in His eyes. There are no favorites. Knowing that allows us to have faith that we all have equal access to eternal life with Him and therefore will be treated fairly.

It is our own choices and actions that cause us to be in or out of favor with Him.

Behold, the Lord esteemeth all flesh in one; he that is righteous is favored of God.
(1 Nephi 17:35)

Nephi was more faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord—therefore he was favored of the Lord. (Mosiah 10:13)

In the church, we speak of a 'chosen' people (see D&C 121:40). However, the choosing is done by us. We become 'chosen' as we do works of righteousness and select a path that will lead us back to God's presence.

'No respector of persons' from the scriptures.

Then Peter opened [his] mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. (Acts 10:34-35)

For there is no respect of persons with God. (Romans 2:11)

For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. (Romans 10:11-13)

Behold, the Lord esteemeth all flesh in one; he that is righteous is favored of God. (1 Nephi 17:35)

. . . all men are privileged the one like unto the other, and none are forbidden. . . and he inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile. (2 Nephi 26:28, 33)

Now my brethren, we see that God is mindful of every people, whatsoever land they may be in; yea, he numbereth his people, and his bowels of mercy are over all the earth. Now this is my joy, and my great thanksgiving; yea, and I will give thanks unto my God forever. Amen. (Alma 26:37)

For behold, the Lord doth grant unto all nations, of their own nation and tongue, to teach his word, yea, in wisdom, all that he seeth fit that they should have; therefore we see that the Lord doth counsel in wisdom, according to that which is just and true. (Alma 29:8)

But little children are alive in Christ, even from the foundation of the world; if not so, God is a partial God, and also a changeable God, and a respecter to persons; for how many little children have died without baptism! (Moroni 8:12)

And again, verily I say unto you, O inhabitants of the earth: I the Lord am willing to make these things known unto all flesh; For I am no respecter of persons, and will that all men shall know that the day speedily cometh. . . (D&C 1:34-35)

And for your salvation I give unto you a commandment, for I have heard your prayers, and the poor have complained before me, and the rich have I made, and all flesh is mine, and I am no respecter of persons. (D&C 38:16)

Whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection. And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come. There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the

foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated— And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated. (D&C 130:18-21)

‘No respecter of persons’ from modern prophets.

We must get away from the idea that any one group of individuals is the favorite of the Lord or that any other group is entitled to his displeasure as a group. He is no respecter of persons. We must remember that as the Apostle Paul said, *God . . . hath made of one blood all nations of men* (Acts 17:26), and we must, in realizing this fact, come to realize that nations are but groups of men who are our brothers; we must realize that sometime, somewhere, we will be charged with the responsibility in some measure of being our brother's keeper. Hugh B. Brown or Jeffrey Holland⁴⁰

When Peter realized the meaning of the vision, his whole Jewish nature was shocked; for to obey was to break the Law of his forefathers by associating with Gentiles. The Jewish Christians who were with Peter from Joppa to Caesarea were *astonished* when they saw *the gift of the Holy Ghost poured out on the unclean* Gentiles. When Peter reached Jerusalem, he was accused of having not only associated but eaten with Gentiles, but Peter had learned by revelation that *what God has made clean* no one should *call common or unclean*, that the Lord is *no respecter of persons*, and that *every nation* that accepts Him, and *feareth Him and worketh righteousness*, may receive His blessings. David O. McKay⁴¹

George Washington Carver was one of the noblest souls that ever came to earth. He held a close kinship with his Heavenly Father and rendered a service to his fellow men such as few have ever excelled. For every righteous endeavor, for every noble impulse, for every good deed performed in his useful life George Washington Carver will be rewarded, and so will every other man, be he red, white, black, or yellow, for God is no respecter of persons. David O. McKay⁴²

It is surely not difficult to discern in the statements of this article the underlying principles set forth in the Christian scriptures that man is his brother's keeper, that God is no respecter of persons (nor occupations), that to do unto others what you would have done to yourself is the basis of ethical standards, that as a man thinketh (and acts) so is he, and that his personal worth is his most potent contribution to community life, and that peace on earth and goodwill to men are the products of universal brotherhood among mankind. Stephen Richards⁴³

Applications of ‘no respecter of persons’.

- Murray High School’s homecoming queen – from Pres. Monson’s Oct 98 Conf talk
- Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King - belief in God being no respecter of persons motivated them in their human rights positions (**can we find some quotes**)
- parable of the Good Samaritan
- prodigal son - God treats all equally no matter when their repentance comes

- Peter taking gospel to Gentiles

God is Merciful and Gracious

Definition. Joseph defines two aspects of mercy in Lecture 3 and 4. The first has to do with the mercy that God exhibits toward us due to the sins that we commit. The second involves the mercy that He extends because of the tribulations and afflictions that people undergo. These aspects are discussed in the following two excerpts from the Lectures.

But secondly; unless he was merciful and gracious, slow to anger, long-suffering and full of goodness, such is the weakness of human nature, and so great the frailties and imperfections of men, that unless they believed that these excellencies existed in the divine character, the faith necessary to salvation could not exist; for doubt would take the place of faith, and those who know their weakness and liability to sin would be in constant doubt of salvation if it were not for the idea which they have of the excellency of the character of God, that he is slow to anger and long-suffering, and of a forgiving disposition, and does forgive iniquity, transgression, and sin. An idea of these facts does away doubt, and makes faith exceedingly strong. (Lecture 3:20)

And again, it is equally important that men should have the idea of the existence of the attribute mercy in the Deity, in order to exercise faith in him for life and salvation; for without the idea of the existence of this attribute in the Deity, the spirits of the saints would faint in the midst of the tribulations, afflictions, and persecutions which they have to endure for righteousness' sake. But when the idea of the existence of this attribute is once established in the mind it gives life and energy to the spirits of the saints, believing that the mercy of God will be poured out upon them in the midst of their afflictions, and that He will be compassionate to them in their sufferings, and that the mercy of God will lay hold of them and secure them in the arms of his love, so that they will receive a full reward for all their sufferings. . . . And as mercy is also an attribute of the Deity, his saints can have confidence that it will be exercised towards them, and through the exercise of that attribute towards them comfort and consolation will be administered unto them abundantly, amid all their afflictions and tribulations. (Lecture 4:15,17)

Although, no real formal distinction will be made between the words *mercy* and *grace* for the purposes of this text, they differ slightly in meaning. Bruce Hafen in his excellent book, *The Broken Heart*, wrote the following:

Mercy is the more general of the two concepts, having broad enough meaning to include *grace* within its scope—which is why either term can be used in some contexts to convey the same meaning. *Mercy* refers both to an attribute of deity and to a universal law that allows a specially qualified third party to pay the penalty of justice on behalf of one who is subject to such a penalty. . . . *mercy* is in some sense the source of all our blessings—even the blessing of the earth's creation and our very presence here. . . . Moreover, that same divine *mercy* gave us the Atonement, without which there could be no salvation or exaltation—neither hope nor meaning—after this life. . . . *Grace*, on the other hand, is the means by which *mercy* enacts many of its miraculous effects, particularly

the blessings of the Atonement.⁴⁴

When we ponder upon our fallen state and our disposition to commit sin and transgression, we can easily get depressed, for we also know, that “no unclean thing can dwell with God” (1 Nephi 10:21). But justice and mercy work hand in hand in the remission of sins. We are told that mercy can not rob justice (see Alma 42:25). The Savior, in a marvelous way, fulfilled the demands of justice by working out the Atonement for us. It is this Atonement and the characteristic of mercy and grace that abides in both God and His Only Begotten that gives us hope and, as the Lectures teach, *does away doubt, and makes faith exceedingly strong.*

But not only does the idea that God is merciful and gracious provide a source of hope from sin and transgression, it also provides *life and energy to the spirits of the saints* as they undergo tribulations and persecutions. Life is not always fair. Because we live in an imperfect world, we are subject to outside influences of which we do not always have control. The effects of the Atonement can ease our pain during these difficult times if we have faith in God’s mercy.

There are many excellent sources that discuss this important characteristic of God in much more detail, such as, *The Broken Heart* by Bruce Hafen, *The Miracle of Forgiveness* by Spencer W. Kimball, and *Believing Christ* by Stephen E. Robinson.

‘Mercy’ from the scriptures.

(For the LORD thy God [is] a merciful God;) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he swore unto them. (Deut. 4:31)

But the mercy of the LORD [is] from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children’s children; (Psalm 103:17)

In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer. (Isaiah 54:8)

Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. (Luke 6:36)

Blessed [be] God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. (2 Cor. 1:3-5)

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) (Eph. 2:4-5)

O then, if I have seen so great things, if the Lord in his condescension unto the children of men hath visited men in so much mercy, why should my heart weep and my soul linger in the valley of sorrow, and my flesh waste away, and my strength slacken, because of mine afflictions? (2 Nephi 4:26)

O the wisdom of God, his mercy and grace! For behold, if the flesh should rise no more our spirits must become subject to that angel who fell from before the presence of the Eternal God, and became the devil, to rise no more. . . And behold how great the covenants of the Lord, and how great his condescensions unto the children of men; and because of his greatness, and his grace and mercy, he has promised unto us that our seed shall not utterly be destroyed, according to the flesh, but that he would preserve them; and in future generations they shall become a righteous branch unto the house of Israel. (2 Nephi 9:8,53)

And thus did the Spirit of the Lord work upon them, for they were the very vilest of sinners. And the Lord saw fit in his infinite mercy to spare them; nevertheless they suffered much anguish of soul because of their iniquities, suffering much and fearing that they should be cast off forever. (Mosiah 28:4)

And not many days hence the Son of God shall come in his glory; and his glory shall be the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace, equity, and truth, full of patience, mercy, and long-suffering, quick to hear the cries of his people and to answer their prayers. (Alma 9:26)

Now have we not reason to rejoice? Yea, I say unto you, there never were men that had so great reason to rejoice as we, since the world began; yea, and my joy is carried away, even unto boasting in my God; for he has all power, all wisdom, and all understanding; he comprehendeth all things, and he is a merciful Being, even unto salvation, to those who will repent and believe on his name. (Alma 26:35)

And now, the plan of mercy could not be brought about except an atonement should be made; therefore God himself atoneth for the sins of the world, to bring about the plan of mercy, to appease the demands of justice, that God might be a perfect, just God, and a merciful God also. (Alma 42:15)

Little children cannot repent; wherefore, it is awful wickedness to deny the pure mercies of God unto them, for they are all alive in him because of his mercy. And he that saith that little children need baptism denieth the mercies of Christ, and setteth at naught the atonement of him and the power of his redemption. (Moroni 8:19-20)

*Glory, and honor, and power, and might,
Be ascribed to our God; for he is full of mercy,
Justice, grace and truth, and peace,
Forever and ever, Amen. (D&C 84:102)*

‘Mercy’ from modern prophets.

God is in form like a man. He is personal. He speaks, and has spoken to man. He is exalted, and by human standards he is all-wise and all-powerful. But he is merciful and kind. He is the father of the spirits of all men, and he has a father's consideration for and interest in his children. His work and his glory lie in their eternal welfare (*What of the Mormons?* pamphlet, 1982, p. 6.). Gordon B. Hinckley⁴⁵

A third thought came to me. How grateful I was that, in addition to being just, God is able to be merciful also. After Alma had established with Corianton that God has to be just, he then stressed that that same God would be merciful as well, and that mercy would claim the *penitent* (See Alma 42). That concept meant a bit more to me because I had just been where they added *i-a-r-y* to that word. Alma gave me encouragement: mercy could claim the penitent. I decided that if those men had to go to the penitentiary to take advantage of the gift of mercy, if somehow by going there they were repenting and finding the gospel of Jesus Christ or the scriptures or the power of the Atonement, then their imprisonment was worth it. We should all go to the penitentiary, or to the bishop, or to the Lord, or to those whom we have offended or to those who have offended us. Our own little penitentiaries are all around us. If acknowledgment of that is what it takes to make us truly penitent, to enable us to lay claim to the gift of mercy, then we must "serve our time." Jeffrey Holland⁴⁶

Justice is served and mercy is extended by the suffering and shed blood of Jesus Christ. In this way *God himself atoneth for the sins of the world, to bring about the plan of mercy, to appease the demands of justice, that God might be a perfect, just God, and a merciful God also* (Alma 42:15). As Elder Boyd K. Packer explains in his illuminating parable *The Mediator*, "Through Him mercy can be fully extended to each of us without offending the eternal law of justice."⁴⁷ Dallin H. Oaks⁴⁸

There is in the Church. . . the power to remit sins, but I do not believe it resides in the bishops. That is a power that must be exercised under the proper authority of the priesthood and by those who hold the keys that pertain to that function. Woo back every sinner. Forgive them personally. The Lord has said that. Do all you can, but short of that formal remission the matter then rests between the transgressor and the Lord, who is merciful, who knows all of the circumstances, who has no disposition but to aid his children, give them comfort, guide them, and help them. But the Lord has said, *I cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance*. So we leave it with him, and our prayers go with the prayers of the transgressor that God will forgive him, but the path of the sinner was never smooth and I believe never will be. We must pay the penalty, but God's mercy tempers his justice. His love is boundless, his desire to see us is infinite. All of us have done something that would be better left undone. All of us need the mercy of God and his love, and we should look at all the others, our brothers and sisters, knowing that we, with them, have something for which to be forgiven, but we must remember we must pay whatever the price be that the Lord exacts. Spencer W. Kimball⁴⁹

Many people have been led to regard this foreknowledge of God as a predestination whereby souls are designated for glory or condemnation even before their birth in the flesh, and irrespective of individual merit or demerit. This heretical doctrine seeks to rob Deity of

mercy, justice, and love; it would make God appear capricious and selfish, directing and creating all things solely for His own glory, caring not for the suffering of His victims. How dreadful, how inconsistent is such an idea of God! James E. Talmage⁵⁰

Nothing shows forth more perfectly the complete justice, equity, and mercy of God's dealings with men than the doctrine of salvation for the dead. Salvation is not limited to those who are born in a favored lineage. It is not reserved for people who chance to live in a day when there are prophets and apostles on earth who have authority from the Almighty to teach the doctrines and perform the ordinances of salvation. It is not for those only who learn of Christ and his laws in this life. It is available for all men, in all ages, and in all places. In the infinite wisdom of Him who knoweth all things and who seeks the salvation of all His children, it was ordained in the councils of eternity, before the foundations of this earth were laid, that every living soul, either in mortality or in the spirit world, would have a fair, a just, and an equitable opportunity to believe and obey those laws which lead to eternal life. The Lord be praised. Bruce R. McConkie⁵¹

Applications of 'merciful and gracious'.

- There is a beautiful example of Joseph Smith acting on faith in God's characteristic of mercy and grace during the difficult 1830s. W.W. Phelps, once a great defender of the Prophet Joseph and the church, became caught up with the spirit of apostasy and was excommunicated from the church on March 10, 1838. He, along with several other apostates, signed an affidavit that led to the arrest of Joseph, Hyrum Smith, Sidney Ridgon, and several others. Joseph was quickly and illegally sentenced to a public death but, due to the efforts of General Alexander Doniphan, he was spared the execution. He and others did spend several months in the Richmond and Liberty Jails during the time the Saints were being run out of Missouri. In June of 1840, W.W. Phelps sent a letter to Joseph seeking forgiveness and reinstatement into the church. In it, he wrote:

Brother Joseph: I am as the prodigal son. . . I have seen the folly of my way, and I tremble at the gulf I have passed. . . I have done wrong and I am sorry. . . I ask forgiveness in the name of Jesus Christ. . . I want your fellowship; if you cannot grant that, grant me your peace and friendship, for we are brethren, and our communion used to be sweet. . .⁵²

Joseph, a month later, wrote the following as a response to his letter:

Dear Brother Phelps: I must say that it is with no ordinary feelings I endeavor to write a few lines to you. . . You may in some measure realize what my feelings as well as Elder Rigdon's and Brother Hyrum's were, when we read your letter—truly our hearts were melted into tenderness and compassion. . . I can assure you I feel a disposition to act on your case in a manner that will meet the approbation of Jehovah. . . I feel disposed to copy the example, cherish the same principles, and by so doing be a savior of my fellow man. . . I shall be happy once again to give you the right hand of fellowship, and rejoice over the returning prodigal. . . "Come on, dear brother, since the war is past, For friends at first,

are friends again at last.”⁵³

Joseph extended mercy and forgiveness to his friend, W.W. Phelps, because of his faith in the Great Exemplar’s mercy and forgiveness.

- Tragedies that befall people in this life lead to the application of this important characteristic of God. How should individuals respond when loved ones are violently hurt or killed? Should they pursue justice? Should they extend mercy to the perpetrators of these violent crimes? Recent events in one of the mission’s in Russia has provided another great example of faith in God’s mercy and grace. A young missionary was attacked and killed by a couple of local residents as he was serving the Lord and the Russian people. The parents of the missionary had a choice. The choice was not between justice and mercy, since justice was really out of their hands. Their choice was how they could react to the individuals who committed the crime. They could exhibit bitterness over their son’s death or they could extend mercy and grace. Because they had faith and a knowledge of God’s mercy, they chose to emulate His example. The following comments attest to their faith:
- Faith in this characteristic of God, also leads us to seek forgiveness for our sins. We know that God is merciful and gracious therefore we are willing to confess our sins and forsake them.
- Les Miserable - Bishop forgives Jean Val because of his faith in Jesus’ mercy
- Paul and Alma (Alma 36:5,18-24)
- woman caught in adultery
- 3 Nephi - My bowels are full of mercy

God is Love

Definition. This characteristic of God encompasses many of the other characteristics that we have previously discussed. The idea of love has been expressed in word, song, various art forms, and a myriad of other means of communication throughout recorded history. To attempt to define it in a few short paragraphs may be presumptuous.

Joseph wrote the following in Lecture 3:

And lastly, but not less important to the exercise of faith in God, is the idea that he is love; for with all the other excellencies in his character, without this one to influence them, they could not have such powerful dominion over the minds of men; but when the idea is planted in the mind that he is love, who cannot see the just ground that men of every nation, kindred, and tongue, have to exercise faith in God so as to obtain eternal life? (Lecture 3:24)

From the Encyclopedia of Mormonism, we read:

Love is manifested in its perfection in God the Eternal Father and His son Jesus Christ. John declared that *God is love* (1 John 4:8). His love has no portions and no bounds; love given to one does not diminish that given to another. The Father desires to share with His children all that He has—all truth, power, and goodness. He is the Father of all human spirits. He placed human beings upon this earth and provided the plan through which His Only Begotten Son makes it possible for individuals to come back into His presence and receive exaltation and eternal life. *For God so loved the world, that He gave His Only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life* (John 3:16). Jesus Christ also loved the Father's children, His brothers and sisters, so much that He freely shed His blood and laid down His life to atone for their sins and bring about a universal resurrection. *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends* (John 15:13).⁵³

Having faith that God possesses the characteristic of love, and realizing that He is our Father, we can know that He wants the very best for each of us. We know that He wants us to be able to live with Him forever. We then can have faith in the eternal plan of happiness and in the fact that we can achieve eternal life. To reach this, we are commanded to love as He loves. Joseph wrote about this to the Quorum of Twelve.

Love is one of the leading characteristics of Deity, and ought to be manifested by those who aspire to be the sons of God. A man filled with the love of God, is not content with blessing his family alone but ranges through the world, anxious to bless the whole of the human family.⁵⁴

'Love' from the scriptures.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son [to be] the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. (1 John 4:7-12)

We love him, because he first loved us. (1 John 4:19)

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? [shall] tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake

we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
(Romans 8:35-39)

And he said unto me: Knowest thou the condescension of God? And I said unto him: I know that he loveth his children; nevertheless, I do not know the meaning of all things. And he said unto me: Behold, the virgin whom thou seest is the mother of the Son of God, after the manner of the flesh. And it came to pass that I beheld that she was carried away in the Spirit; and after she had been carried away in the Spirit for the space of a time the angel spake unto me, saying: Look! And I looked and beheld the virgin again, bearing a child in her arms. And the angel said unto me: Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father! Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw? And I answered him, saying: Yea, it is the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men; wherefore, it is the most desirable above all things. And he spake unto me, saying: Yea, and the most joyous to the soul. (1 Nephi 11:16-23)

But behold, the Lord hath redeemed my soul from hell; I have beheld his glory, and I am encircled about eternally in the arms of his love. (2 Nephi 1:15)

For behold, my beloved brethren, I say unto you that the Lord God worketh not in darkness. He doeth not anything save it be for the benefit of the world; for he loveth the world, even that he layeth down his own life that he may draw all men unto him. Wherefore, he commandeth none that they shall not partake of his salvation. Behold, doth he cry unto any, saying: Depart from me? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; but he saith: Come unto me all ye ends of the earth, buy milk and honey, without money and without price. (2 Nephi 26:23-25)

Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world. And behold, I am the light and the life of the world; and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning. . . Arise and come forth unto me, that ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet, that ye may know that I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world. And it came to pass that the multitude went forth, and thrust their hands into his side, and did feel the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet; and this they did do, going forth one by one until they had all gone forth, and did see with their eyes and did feel with their hands, and did know of a surety and did bear record, that it was he, of whom it was written by the prophets, that should come. (3 Nephi 11:10-15)

And it came to pass that when Jesus had thus spoken, he cast his eyes round about again on the multitude, and beheld they were in tears, and did look steadfastly upon

him as if they would ask him to tarry a little longer with them. And he said unto them: Behold, my bowels are filled with compassion towards you. Have ye any that are sick among you? Bring them hither. Have ye any that are lame, or blind, or halt, or maimed, or leprous, or that are withered, or that are deaf, or that are afflicted in any manner? Bring them hither and I will heal them, for I have compassion upon you; my bowels are filled with mercy. . . And it came to pass that when he had thus spoken, all the multitude, with one accord, did go forth with their sick and their afflicted, and their lame, and with their blind, and with their dumb, and with all them that were afflicted in any manner; and he did heal them every one as they were brought forth unto him. . . And it came to pass that he commanded that their little children should be brought. So they brought their little children and set them down upon the ground round about him, and Jesus stood in the midst; and the multitude gave way till they had all been brought unto him. . . Blessed are ye because of your faith. And now behold, my joy is full. And when he had said these words, he wept, and the multitude bare record of it, and he took their little children, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them. And when he had done this he wept again. . . And the multitude did see and hear and bear record; and they know that their record is true for they all of them did see and hear, every man for himself; and they were in number about two thousand and five hundred souls; and they did consist of men, women, and children. (3 Nephi 17:5-25)

Behold, thou art Oliver, and I have spoken unto thee because of thy desires; therefore treasure up these words in thy heart. Be faithful and diligent in keeping the commandments of God, and I will encircle thee in the arms of my love. Behold, I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God. (D&C 6:20-21)

‘Love’ from modern prophets.

I ask you, what father and mother could stand by and listen to the cry of their children in distress. . . and not render assistance? I have heard of mothers throwing themselves into raging streams when they could not swim a stroke to save their drowning children, [I have heard of fathers] rushing into burning buildings to rescue those whom they loved. We cannot stand by and listen to those cries without its touching our hearts. . . He had the power to save, and He loved His Son, and He could have saved Him. He might have rescued Him for the insult of the crowds. He might have rescued Him when the crown of thorns was placed upon His head. He might have rescued Him when the Son, hanging between two thieves, was mocked with, *Save thyself, and come down from the cross. He saved others; himself he cannot save.* He listened to all this. He saw that Son condemned; He saw Him drag the cross through the streets of Jerusalem and faint under its load. He saw the Son finally upon Calvary; He saw His body stretched out upon the wooden cross; He saw the cruel nails driven through hands and feet, and the blows that broke the skin, tore the flesh, and let out the life’s blood of His [Only Begotten] Son. . . [He] looked on [all that] with great grief and agony over His Beloved [Child], until there seems to have come a moment when even our Saviour cried out in despair: *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me.* In that hour I think I can see our dear Father behind the veil looking upon these dying struggles. . . His great heart almost breaking for the love that He had for His Son. Oh, in that moment when He might have saved His Son, I thank

Him and praise Him that He did not fail us. . . I rejoice that He did not interfere, and that His love for us made it possible for Him to endure to look upon the sufferings of His [Only Begotten] and give Him finally to us, our Saviour and our Redeemer. Melvin J. Ballard⁵⁵

No peace will be lasting unless it is built upon the solid foundation of eternal principles such as love of God, love of neighbor, and love of self. Those who love their neighbors can bring peace and happiness to many. Love can build bridges to understanding and tear down walls of suspicion and hate. Christlike love can bring peace into any neighborhood. With that kind of love each of us can help resolve petty differences, be they in the home or the community. Marvin J. Ashton⁵⁶

He loved everyone because he could see the good within him. He did not look upon sin with the least degree of allowance, but he loved the sinner because he knew that God was love, and that it is God's love that regenerates human souls and may, by that process, transform the sinner into a saint. Matthew Cowley⁵⁷

This remarkable and miraculous process occurs in our own lives as we reach out with love to serve others. Each of us can, with effort, successfully root the principle of love deep in our being so that we may be nourished by its great power all of our lives. For as we tap into the power of love, we will come to understand the great truth written by John: *God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God* (1 John 4:16). Gordon B. Hinckley⁵⁸

To love the Lord is not just counsel; it is not just well-wishing. It is a commandment. It is the first and great commandment incumbent upon each of us because love of God is the root from which spring all other types of love; love of God is the root of all virtue, of all goodness, of all strength of character, of all fidelity to do right. Love the Lord your God, and love His Son, and be ever grateful for their love for us. Whenever other love fades, there will be that shining, transcendent, everlasting love of God for each of us and the love of His Son, who gave His life for us (Ricks College Regional Conference, Rexburg, Idaho, October 29, 1995). Gordon B. Hinckley⁵⁹

We know also that God is perfect in his love for each and all of us as his spirit children. When we know these truths, my sisters and associates in this divine cause, it should help us greatly as we all experience much less than perfect love and perfect justice in the world. If, in the short term, we are sometimes dealt with insensitively and thoughtlessly by others, by imperfect men and women, it may still cause us pain, but such pain and disappointment are not the whole of life. The ways of the world will not prevail, for the ways of God will triumph. Spencer W. Kimball⁶⁰

We had full equality as his spirit children. We have equality as recipients of God's perfected love for each of us. . . Within those great assurances, however, our roles and assignments differ. These are eternal differences—with women being given many tremendous responsibilities of motherhood and sisterhood and men being given the tremendous responsibilities of fatherhood and the priesthood—but the man is not without the woman nor the woman without the man in the Lord (see 1 Cor. 11:11). Both a righteous man and a righteous woman are a blessing to all those their lives touch. Spencer W. Kimball⁶¹

Just as the love of God for us is unconditional, one day ours for Him will be likewise. This is what the first commandment is all about. But even then, the adoration and awe we

have developed for God will take humble and eternal notice of the vital fact stressed by John—that God loved us first (see 1 John 4:19). Indeed, while God’s great plan of redemption was made feasible by His omniscience and His omnipotence, it was made inevitable because of His perfect love for us! Neal A. Maxwell⁶²

Too often we behave as if we were in massive competition with others for God’s love. But we have His love, unconditionally and universally; it is our love of Him that remains to be proven, such as through service to others. Magnanimity, after all, arises from meekness. Neal A. Maxwell⁶³

What we will feel on that occasion will be God’s and Jesus’s perfect love for us—not a scolding sternness but a profound kindness and immense tenderness. As these virtues flow from them toward us, many will feel the scalding shame of not having returned that love. As we feel their perfect love, we will confess that the justice and mercy of God are likewise perfect. Neal A. Maxwell⁶⁴

Applications of ‘love’.

- The sons of Mosiah were “the very vilest of sinners and suffered much anguish of soul because of their iniquities fearing that they should be cast off forever” (see Mosiah 28:4). After suffering the pains of the damned, they desired to serve a mission to their Lamanite brethren in order to prevent them from having to suffer God’s punishment. They knew that God was just and that people who didn’t repent would have to suffer even more than they had suffered. They didn’t want that to happen to anyone. Their knowledge that God was a just God motivated them to do something that was thought to be very dangerous—travel into the lands of the Lamanites who hated Mosiah’s people.

Now they were desirous that salvation should be declared to every creature, for they could not bear that any human soul should perish; yea, even the very thoughts that any soul should endure endless torment did cause them to quake and tremble. (Mosiah 28:3)

They later served a successful mission to the Lamanites and were instruments in God’s hand in bringing many people to Christ.

- missionaries teach non-members in their missions because they know that God loves the people
- we can find a lot of examples of people doing things out of love for others but not so many of people doing things because they know that God loves - is there a difference? - 1 John 4 says that we love because God first loved us

References

1. Romney, M.G., *Look to God and Live*, Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1971, p. 18.
2. McConkie, B.R., "This Generation Shall Have My Word Through You", *Hearken, O Ye People*, Randall Book, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1984, p. 4-5.
3. Wilson, J.A., *The Great Plan of Happiness*, Bookcraft, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1997, p. 27.
4. Encyclopedia of Mormonism, Ludlow, D. editor, MacMillan, New York, New York, p. 1030.
5. Smith, J., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 7 Volumes, edited by B.H. Roberts, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1932-51, Vol. 6, p. 311-12.
6. Lee, H.B., *Stand Ye in Holy Places*, Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1974, p. 337.
7. Kimball, S.K., *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, Bookcraft, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1969, p. 318.
8. Kimball, S.K., *Faith Precedes the Miracle*, Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1972, p. 53.
9. McKay, D.O., Conference Report, October 1913, p.105.
10. McConkie, B.R., *The Promised Messiah*, Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1975, p. 518.
11. Talmage, J.E., *The Articles of Faith*, Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1899, p. 42-3.
12. McConkie, B.R., *Sermons and Writings of Bruce R. McConkie*, edited by M.L. McConkie, Bookcraft, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1989, p.
13. McConkie, B.R., *The Mortal Messiah*, 4 Volumes, Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1979-81, Vol. 1, p. 51.
14. Clark, J.R., *On the Way to Immortality and Eternal Life*, Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1953, p.12.
15. Smith, J.F., *The Restoration of All Things*, p.70.
16. omniscience, Encyclopedia of Mormonism, Ludlow, D. editor, MacMillan, New York, New York, p.
17. Maxwell, N.A., *All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience*, Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1979, p. 6-7.
18. Maxwell, N.A., *All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience*, Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1979, p. 12-13.

19. Benson, E.T., *This Nation Shall Endure*, Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1977, p.62.
20. Maxwell, N.A., *Things as They Really Are*, Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1978, p. 18.
21. Smith, J.F., *Seek Ye Earnestly*, Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1970, p. 33.
22. Talmage, J.E., *The Articles of Faith*, Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1899, p. 39.
23. Widstoe, J.A., *Joseph Smith as Scientist*, p.104-5.
24. reference for scientific evidence against smoking
25. Turner, R., "The Imperative and Unchanging Nature of God," *The Lectures on Faith in Historical Perspective*, Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1990, p. 211.
26. Warner, T.
27. Kimball, S.K., *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, Bookcraft, Salt Lake City, 1982, p.24.
28. Benson, E.T., *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, Bookcraft, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1988, p. 120.
29. Benson, E.T., *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, Bookcraft, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1988, p. 314.
30. McConkie, B.R., *The Promised Messiah*, Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1975, p.197-8.
31. McConkie, B.R., *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1985, p. 481-2.
32. Widstoe, J.A., *Evidences and Reconciliations*, Bookcraft, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1960, p. 214.
33. Widstoe, J.A., Conference Report, October 1926, p. 80.
34. Oaks, D.H., *Pure in Heart*, Bookcraft, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1988, p. 67.
35. Cannon, G.Q., *Gospel Truth*, p. 128.
36. Holland, J.R., *However Long and Hard the Road*, Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1985, p. 55.
37. Kimball, S.K., *Faith Precedes the Miracle*, Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1972, p. 183.
38. McConkie, B.R., *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1985, p. 177.
39. Maxwell, N.A., *Even As I Am*, Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1982, p. 30.

40. Brown, H.B., *Continuing the Quest*, Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1961, p. 412.
41. McKay, D.O., *Ancient Apostles*, Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1964, p. 172-3.
42. McKay, L.R., *Home Memories of President David O. McKay*, Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1956, p. 230-1.
43. Richards, S.L., *Where is Wisdom?*, Utah State Agricultural College, Logan, Utah, 1948, p.22.
44. Hafen, B.C., *The Broken Heart*, Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1989, p. 143.
45. Hinckley, G.B., *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley*, Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1997, p. 236.
46. Holland, J.R., *However Long and Hard the Road*, Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1985, p. 55.
47. Packer, B.K., *The Mediator*, Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1978, p.21.
48. Oaks, D.H., *The Lord's Way*, Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1991, p.218.
49. Kimball, S.K., *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, Bookcraft, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1969, p.333.
50. Talmage, J.E., *Articles of Faith*, Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1899, p. 191-2.
51. McConkie, B.R., *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 Volumes, Bookcraft, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1965-73, Vol.3, p. 316-7.
52. Smith, J., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 7 Volumes, edited by B.H. Roberts, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1932-51, Vol. 4, p. 163-4.
53. Smith, J., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 7 Volumes, edited by B.H. Roberts, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1932-51, Vol. 4, p. 163-4.
54. Encyclopedia of Mormonism, Ludlow, D. editor, MacMillan, New York, New York, p.
55. Smith, J., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 7 Volumes, edited by B.H. Roberts, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1932-51, Vol. 4, p. 227.
56. B, *Melvin J. Ballard, Crusader for Righteousness*, Bookcraft, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1966, p. 136-138.
57. Ashton, M.J., *Be of Good Cheer*, Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1987, p. 90.

58. Cowley, M., *Matthew Cowley Speaks*, p. 207-8.
59. Hinckley, G.B., *Faith, the Essence of True Religion*, Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1989, p. 49.
60. Hinckley, G.B., *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley*, Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1997, p. 319.
61. Kimball, S.K., *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, Bookcraft, Salt Lake City, 1982, p. 244.
62. Kimball, S.K., *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, Bookcraft, Salt Lake City, 1982, p. 315.
63. Maxwell, N.A., *All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience*, Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1979, p. 128.
64. Maxwell, N.A., *Even As I Am*, Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1982, p. 63.
65. Maxwell, N.A., *Not My Will, But Thine*, Bookcraft, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1988, p. 141.