

March 2019

# Church of Jesus Christ

*Mount Ayr Restoration Branch*

# NEWSLETTER

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[www.gospelrestored.org](http://www.gospelrestored.org)



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*And whoso shall  
receive one such  
little child...  
receiveth Me.*



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## News & Notes

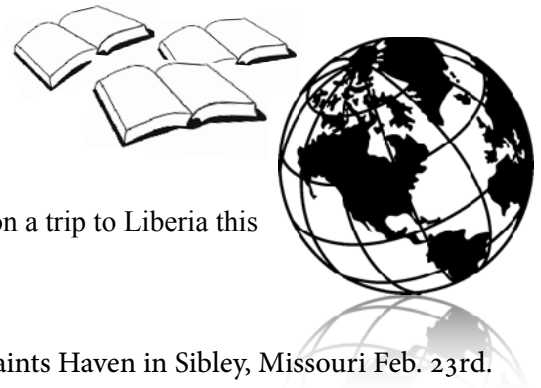
**On February 3rd, Brooklyn Bell, daughter of Brandon and Maggie Bell was blessed by Sherman Phipps and Gordon Winkler, while big brother Lucas and proud grandparents looked on.**

**MARB will be hosting a congregational retreat the weekend of March 22-24 at Camp Wesley Woods, Indianola, IA. Classes will be taught by Ron Smith: Habitations of the Home, Cheryl Phipps: The Slight Edge and Gordon & Linda Winkler:**

**The Miracle Morning.** For those interested in attending, a freewill offering will be taken up if you need assistance.

**NOTE: THERE WILL BE NO SUNDAY SERVICES IN MT. AYR , MARCH 24th.**

The MARB newsletter has been a great outreach tool for many who are not able to attend regular services. If our readers wish to see things included in the newsletter please drop us a line and let us know what we can do to make it better for you.



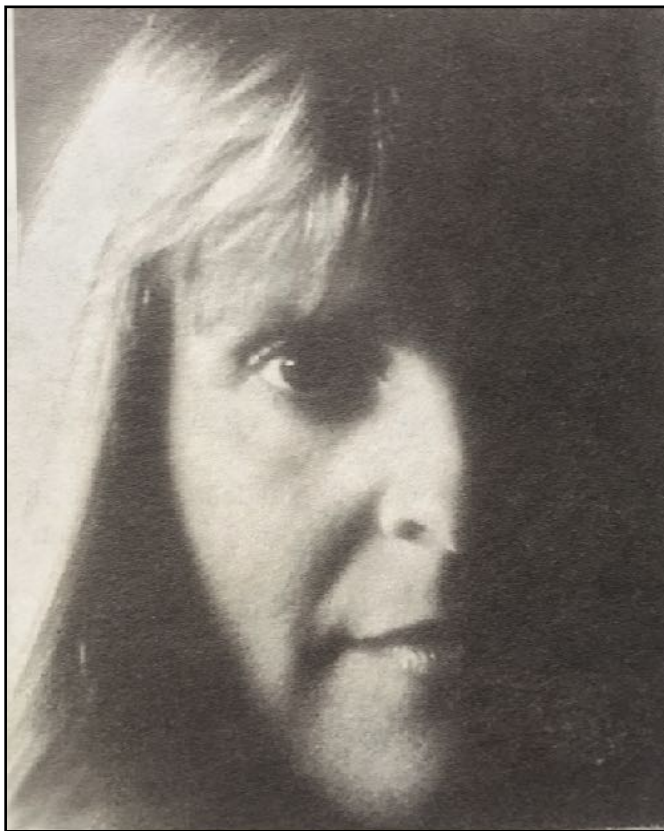
# SAINTS MINISTERING ELSEWHERE

Brother Ron Smith joined with Seventy Jim McKay and Apostle Gary Whiting on a trip to Liberia this month. (See page 18)

Sherman Phipps preached in Keosauqua, Iowa February 17th.

Ron Smith taught classes and preached both morning and evening services at Saints Haven in Sibley, Missouri Feb. 23rd.

Michael Jordison will be preaching at Osceola Branch March 3rd.



## SISTER ELAINA SMITH

***JULY 19, 1954 - DECEMBER 24, 2018***

Elaina Marie Johnsen Smith of Lamoni, IA, was born July 19, 1954 in Brewster, WA, and died on Christmas Eve December 24, 2018 at Southern Hills Rehabilitation Center in Osceola, IA.

Elaina was the daughter of Louis Dale and Ethel Lenore (Loop) Johnsen. She grew up in the state of Washington. She was baptized member of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints at the age of eight years old. She graduated from high school in Omak, WA.

She married Michael Grady Morris in Seattle, WA, and they had a son, Tyler. She worked in the banking industry in Washington, where she was a bank president of a branch of Washington Mutual Bank.

She and her son, Tyler, later moved to the Midwest and she was married to Steven Lynn Smith on March 31, 1980, in Lamoni, IA.

She was devoted to her husband and son. She was a meticulous housekeeper and enjoyed action and courtroom drama television shows.

She faithfully attended the Church of Jesus Christ, Mount Ayr Restoration Branch.

After suffering from frontotemporal dementia for a number of years, in October 2018 she became a resident of Southern Hills Rehabilitation Center.

Survivors include her parents, Dale and Ethel Johnsen, of Blue Springs, MO; her husband, Steven Lynn Smith of Lamoni; children Tyler Dale Morris of Lamoni, Thiera and (Angus) Fung of Chicago, IL, Keston and (Simone) Smith of New York City, NY, and Thoric and (Sarah) Smith of Independence, MO; and grandchildren Carson Dale Morris of Lamoni (who was born the same night that Elaina passed), Landon James Mac Smith of New York City, NY, and Owen and Aiden Smith of Independence, MO.

Preceding her in death were her brother, Greg Johnsen; and her son, Anan James Smith.

A memorial service was held Saturday, Dec. 30, at the Church of Jesus Christ, Mount Ayr Restoration Branch, in Mount Ayr, IA.

A memorial fund has been established for the Church of Jesus Christ, Mount Ayr Restoration Branch.



## THE LOVE OF GOD

**Priest Tyler Ramirez**

***Independence, Missouri***

**January 27, 2019**

It's a joy to be here this morning, and I see some familiar faces. It's always good to be here in a smaller branch. I grew up in San Diego in a very, very small branch. There are more people here than there was back home. Going to a branch in Independence is kind of overwhelming but it's a joyful thing because I get to see more Saints and be around them but it's always good to be in a close, close congregation where it really feels like a church family. I'm really excited to be here and to share with you guys. I haven't preached in a long time so I may be a little rusty but I'm looking forward to the Spirit leading me and leading you as well.

I'd like to give a little background about me. I grew up in the Restored Gospel Movement, the Restoration. Like I just said I came from a really small branch so I didn't have very many friends that were in the church other than the friends that I knew that were here in Missouri or Iowa. I didn't really have anyone to kind of relate to. I had a younger brother and younger siblings

and then there was another family that had younger kids in their family 10 and under so I didn't have anyone really to relate to in my Christian walk. I kind of turned to my friends at school that claimed they were Christians and that believed in God and Christ and went along with what they did. I tried to walk the way that I kind of knew but I really didn't know what I believed. Growing up I thought it was a standard thing that every church had three books so in any religious conversation I would interject my miniscule opinion or thoughts or even just facts that I knew about the gospel. I was brought up in the church but I didn't have a lot of knowledge about it. It wasn't until I was 18 when I graduated high school and moved to Independence, MO that the Lord gave me this really awesome experience.

The camp that I attended that summer was a bit different than all the other camps that I had gone to. It was the same camp that I had gone to all throughout high school but yet it was different than all the other camps that I had been to previously because at this camp my mentality was totally different. I was 18 years old. I thought I was so invincible. I was a cool kid from San Diego so my mentality was that I didn't really care about the spiritual aspect of the camp. I was coming to see my friends in Missouri and have some fun going horseback riding, tubing. Things that I didn't get to do back home in the city.

I was driving with my friend to camp and we were having a conversation in the car. I was just bragging on the things that I had done since the last time I had seen him. I was puffed up and thought I was something and really cool and everything and his response was, 'Oh, man that's pretty cool.' I didn't really know what to think about how he thought about me or anything but he had mentioned that he had changed his life for the Lord.

Throughout that week I just kind of went through the motions and didn't really take any notes in any classes. It wasn't until the middle of the week where we had a campfire that night. The staff would circle up around and pray for you or you could go to one of the staff members personally. During that time something kind of hit me. I don't know if it was my thoughts or it was the Spirit at that point but I went over to my friend and said, 'Hey, can you pray for me?' He was like, 'What do you want to be prayed for?' I said, 'I don't know. Just pray for me.' He prayed for me and I sat back down and was looking up at the sky. At this point I just had a clear mind while I was looking at the stars. Within like two minutes the Spirit just came right over me. It was a different feeling than I had ever had from my



previous experiences. Each camp my sophomore and junior years I had had these great mountain top experiences where I would want to go home and change the world for Jesus but it wasn't something that stuck with me. It would just last for a week or two, a very short period of time. I was kind of hesitant about what I was feeling in the beginning at this camp because I knew, 'All right I've done all these things. I've had all these chances and now the Lord wants to give me this that I'm feeling?' The Spirit came over me and said, 'Tyler, you're forgiven of all your sins.' That actually resonated with me more than the experiences that I had had previously. In spite of all the things that I had thought about, all the things that I was doing and did before I got to camp and even the mentality that I was in just probably two hours before that, the Lord chose me to have that experience. He gave me that experience. He also told me: to gather into the Center Place.

When the Lord told me that I was forgiven, that is what changed me. I went back home for a month and then decided to gather in to Independence. Going back home was different this time. Whenever I would go home previously my friends would say, 'Tyler, we're going to break you and you're going to give in.' It was totally different this time. It was still summertime and all of my friends were still partying and living life before college started. It was really hard to not join them but the feeling that I had had that night at camp was a feeling that gave me a passion and a dedication and a determination that I was going to change. I was going to be a different person than I was before. After a week or two my friends just kind of stopped trying to get me to give in to temptation. I think they actually started to see the change that was taking place in my life. The way I spoke, the way I carried myself, the way I thought and all my desires were different. So since 2012 the Lord has kept me on the path even though sometimes I have sat down on that path or taken a detour but we all do that. That's what I want to talk about this morning.

The last three to four months I have been on that detour. There were a lot of things in my life that caused me to get very down and depressed and kind of frustrated with church and the politics in church and just the United States as a whole. The whole country right now is in a great uproar with different things going on and I allowed all those things to get to me. Then some people in my life who were very close to me decided to do things to me that really brought me down. A lot of you may be able to relate to some of these things in your life that you are going through right now. Throughout

this time I have felt the Lord pulling on me a lot and tugging on me. For a month I wasn't even going to church. It was hard for me to pray. It was hard for me to fast and study. I'd start a fast in the morning and then I'd give in to breaking that fast. It was just so hard to pick up where I started. I kept thinking to myself that I knew the things that I needed to do like fasting, praying and studying to get back to the point where I was with God on a spiritual high because the Lord had previously used me in so many ways and my desires were solely for Him. I think about two days out of the week I had nothing to do that wasn't church related. I had a priesthood visit, prayer service, youth group; something that I was in charge of or doing for the Saints. It was crazy that after a while I just fell off.

This morning if you get anything out of what I'm saying or my rambling or whatever, the Lord loves every one of you. It wasn't until I was driving here that I actually grasped that in my mind and my heart. He actually loves me! As far as I had detoured and strayed away in a pouty baby whiny mood, He sat there with His hand over me the whole time and loved me.

I don't know how to describe that love. That love is unconditional. You don't have to run a 4 second 40 to be loved by Him. You don't have to know all the history of the church to be loved by Him. You don't have to travel all the way to Africa to be loved by Him. You don't have to do any of those things. He just loves you. That's the nature of God. That He loves you no matter what. My wife thought she was a really bad person because when some person was being slow on the road, she got irritated. Sometimes I think with all I have done that I must be terrible and if she thinks she's a horrible person for thinking that someone is being slow on the road, I must be much worse.

That is the special thing about God. He loves you so much and the love that I felt just lifts you back up. It brings you back up so that no matter what happens in your life you have to look for that love. You have to hold on to that love. These scriptures here, the word of God is not just for us to read and to memorize but it's the life that God has given us to fill us with joy and that love that's unconditional.

The scripture that I read earlier, Romans 14:17 talks about the kingdom of God and Matthew 6:21 says, *For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.* If your treasure is in the Lord then your treasure is in His people and His kingdom. There are so many times that we look at each other and people in the grocery stores or



at the mall or our family members, friends and even our enemies and try to figure out how to love them. How to be able to have our hearts and our minds open up to compassion and understanding and patience and temperance and all those things that draw us to actually love someone like God does unconditionally. But to put the spin on it we actually have to start with loving God first because I think if we desire the Lord then we desire what the Lord desires. If He desires to have His kingdom here on earth and He desires all people to be in that kingdom, then we should love them. If I looked at Michael and I said, 'I love you, Michael' and I looked at Josh and Elyse and Sam and Isabel and said, 'I really don't like you. You are not cool. You're no fun. I don't really like you.' If I said that but then I said, 'But I really love Michael. I love him.' Do I actually love Michael? These children are his flesh and blood. Everything about them says Michael. Maybe not everything but they are his blood and flesh, the creation of God. Everything that is created is created of God and everything that is God's we should love.

There's a problem with our hearts. That's what I want to talk about this morning. This kingdom of God is the goal. A lot of times people are like let's build the kingdom. We've got to build the kingdom but Jesus told the Pharisees that the kingdom is already come unto you. You can't say it's here or there. The kingdom of God has already come unto you so there's really nothing that we are building other than ourselves. We have to allow the Lord to build us to be able to be a part of that kingdom.

Over the last three or four months I have kind of been back and forth with the Lord and in my ministry. Let's pretend this vase here is your life, your heart. (He puts ping pong balls in the vase.) All these balls represent the things in your life: your pride, your lust, your greed, everything, all the things that make us sensual, carnal and devilish people. Sometimes there are other good things in here but we're going to pretend that all these things are the sins in our lives, the iniquities.

I remember toward the end of 2016 there were so many things that happened to my wife and me. It was our first year of marriage. Four of our grandparents passed away. Our dog died. I was in a car accident. I had back problems and a concussion. All these bad things started to happen to us. Actually we went through the refiner's fire. At the end of all those trials and tribulations we came out a lot stronger than we had been. I was on a spiritual high. I was doing priesthood

visits, home visits almost every night of the week, scripture studies, youth groups, preaching. I was just so passionate. I was so excited about the gospel. Excited about seeing all of these people which is exactly what



happens to us.

This jug of water here is going to represent the Holy Spirit. The Lord fills us up kind of like He filled me up. We allow Him to pour His Spirit into our lives. We allow Him to use the Spirit in our lives to move on our relationships, our friendships, in our work places, at church. Wherever we are He pours His Spirit into us. We feel like, 'Hey we've got this good thing going right now.' I'm reading my scriptures. I'm praying but if I asked Tony back there, are you able to see the water more or are you able to see the balls more? You are able to see the balls more so from the outside looking in all of our brothers and sisters, these people in the mall or the grocery store or wherever you may be, can still see all these things in our lives. We think we've got a good thing going because we're half-way filled up with the Spirit but we still have all these sins in our lives that have not as yet been removed. Why is that?

Last Tuesday we were at a scripture study and we were talking about the idea of why we have strayed away from God. Why is it that we just kind of give up on our relationships with the Lord and with everyone



around us? Why? I said that I thought it was because we didn't really evaluate ourselves the right way. We're not really 100 % with ourselves. We are comfortable being like we are because we do have this good thing going. So it kind of masks all the other things in our mind. When we are truly seeking the Lord we are those judges that we have to be to judge ourselves, to think about are we the best that we can be? Are we the best that the Lord has created us to be?

When I played football there were always countless things that I had to get better at. There was always something that I could do better or a different play or something else that I needed to watch again on film and to realize in a different aspect or whatever. I wasn't the best out there on the field that I thought I should have been but I had to judge myself hard realizing that the Lord is still the one that is pouring the Spirit into us. That He still has us. That there is still a safety net below and if we are real with ourselves we are able to think, 'Man I am kind of prideful. I am pretty lustful. I am greedy.'

**W**hat do you have in your life that needs to be gone? Looking back throughout the last year and a half or so, when I found myself on a spiritual high I kind of stopped relying on the Lord. I stopped relying on Him and relied on my own knowledge of the scriptures. I relied on my own testimony that I had previously had. I relied on the things like church. I relied on the things like youth groups and I stopped allowing and relying on the Lord to continue to pour His Spirit into my life because I thought that I could get the Spirit out of going to church. I thought that if I was involved in the JCRB or the CRE or whatever that this would give me the Spirit.

Sometimes we go through those things and we don't even realize that we're doing that but that's why this morning, brothers and sisters, the Lord is calling us to stop and think about what we do in our lives that stops Him from continuing to pour His Spirit into our lives. Hopefully, this morning we can allow the Lord to pour more and more of His Spirit into our lives so that we can get rid of all of those sins and be filled up. No longer will we have these in our lives or in our hearts because once we're filled up we can't get these sins back in.

So this morning, brothers and sisters, allow yourselves to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Allow the Lord to continue to pour His Spirit into your hearts, into your lives so that every aspect of your life, your work,

your family, your friends, wherever you are people are able to see the Spirit instead of seeing the things on the outside or the inside. Because of the way we talk and the way we react to certain things, people are able to understand that we have a problem, we have anger issues. We are arrogant but we have to allow the Lord to continue to pour His Spirit into us because if we don't and we try to fan the fire then we'll probably sit back with those balls still at the top and the vase halfway filled up. Then we realize that there are more things getting poured on (those ping pong balls) instead of getting removed.

We should fast. We should pray. We should study instead of playing on our phones or watching the news or being on Facebook. We should be doing those things that will promote being spiritually fit. I am not saying don't go to church but allow yourselves to go for the right reasons not just to go through the motions or to be there and think that you are going to get something out of it.

So this morning I hope that we can put our first foot forward and allow the Lord to pour into our lives because truly He's the only one that can give us life, the water that never stops flowing. You have probably heard a lot of these sermons. I know I have but what is going to be the deciding factor? What is going to make us change? What is going to get us up from our beds tomorrow morning or after you leave this place, what is going to get us to move? There are so many people out there that don't know the gospel. There are so many people out there that have ideas and judge what a Christian is and how he or she should react. Right now a lot of people think Christians are judgmental, very exclusive people. There are some churches out there that are pushing the standard down but unconditional love is the number one thing. Today, let's be the change that the Lord wants us to be that the people in this world need, that we need.

When I went to church last Sunday Richard Neill was preaching and he was talking about how the end times are near. We've been hearing that during most of our lifetime but I'm not going to be one of those who say it's getting a lot worse right now even though maybe it is. I didn't really understand the urgency when I was out of the presence of God. I started to really feel the urgency when I was in the presence of the Holy Spirit. When I am out of the presence it's just like I'm here on the earth with all these other people and we are just going through life. My goals are to get a good job, have



a big house, have kids, etc. but when I am in the presence of the Lord my desires and goals are much different because my desires and goals are for my brothers and sisters. It's for the kingdom. Today let's be the kingdom because we are. We are citizens of that kingdom so let's start living like it instead of living like outlaws to that kingdom. Thank you.



# CHOOSE YE THIS DAY TO SERVE THE LORD

**Priest Joe Mickelson**  
*Lamoni, Iowa*  
**February 3, 2019**

*Verily I say unto you that mine eyes are upon you. I am in your midst, and ye cannot see me; but the day soon cometh that ye shall see me and know that I am;*

*for the veil of darkness shall soon be rent, and he that is not purified shall not abide the day; wherefore, gird up your loins and be prepared. Behold, the kingdom is yours, and the enemy shall not overcome... Therefore, be ye strong from henceforth... And I will give (the land of promise) unto you for the land of your inheritance if you seek it with all your hearts... Let every man esteem his brother as himself and practice virtue and holiness before me. I give unto you a commandment, that every man... go to with his might, with the labor of his hands, to prepare and accomplish the things which I have commanded... And go ye out from among the wicked. Save yourselves. Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord. Even so. Amen. (D&C Section 38)*

I would like for us to take a moment to consider the gravity of what is transpiring here this morning. We proclaim, for everyone who travels across Highway 2 to plainly see, that we are the Church of Jesus Christ. There are a million different places that each one of us could be this Sunday morning. There are a hundred different Christian congregations that we could be joining with in worship within just a few miles of our homes. You could've walked in to any one of them at random this morning and you probably would have been able to hear a good message about the Lord Jesus. You could've found fellowship and support. You probably would have been able to leave the service feeling uplifted or encouraged in some way. But, as the prophet Isaiah has written: *Forasmuch as this people draw near unto me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their hearts far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precepts of men. (Isaiah 29:26)*

Don't misunderstand me. I am not here to condemn or speak ill of anybody or any other denomination. I'm not trying to diminish the works of other churches, because there are a lot of them out there that are doing fantastic things. But, when I hear many of the teachings of modern Christian churches, I can't help but be reminded of the verses from the book of Matthew in which we are told that there will be those who are knocking on the doors of Heaven, seeking entry. Saying, "Lord, open up! Have we not prophesied in thy name? Have we not, in thy name, done many mighty miracles?" But yet, those doors remain shut as the voice of the Lord comes from the other side. "You can't come in. You never knew me."

My purpose, again, is not to judge or condemn. I have absolutely no room to do so. All I'm doing is asking you to take a moment to deeply consider what we



are doing here – in this place, at this time. In order for us to live up to the name on that sign outside, we have to be a people who are not content to just go to church and learn a little from the scriptures, spend time with loved ones, eat good food, and go away feeling better about ourselves. That is not nearly enough. We must seek to know Jesus with everything we have. *O ye that embark in the service of God, see that ye serve him with all your heart, might, mind, and strength, that ye may stand blameless before God at the last day.* (D&C Sec. 4:1b)

To be Christ's church, our Sunday mornings must be an unending pursuit of Christ Himself. We must pour out every ounce of our collective being as we seek to draw closer to Him. These aren't games that we're playing here. Partaking of the bread and wine is not just a mindless physical act. Laying hands upon our children is not just a nice sentiment showing our support of the child and family. We aren't here to merely go through the motions and follow in the traditions set forth by our brethren who've gone before us.

We partake of communion not because it's what we were taught to do from our church history books, but because Christ has told us that, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." We offer blessings upon our children because Christ commanded it to be done. *I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth.* (D&C Sec. 90:6d)

Today, we have the opportunity to be a part of two of the ordinances that the Lord has gifted us. The ordinances that we have been blessed with in this church are more than a mere formality. They're more than an outward gesture of inward conviction. They are an opportunity for us to be physically connected with heaven itself. The scriptures tell us that God has raised us up and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. The ordinances are our highway – or our bridge – that allow the literal fulfillment of that scripture here on Earth.

When we partake of the bread and the wine – when we bring forth our children to be blessed by the laying on of hands – we are not the only ones who are bearing record of those events. These ordinances, through the power and authority that God, through His grace and love for mankind, are recorded in the heavens witnessed by God the Father and His son, Jesus Christ. They are witnessed, too, by the General Assembly of the Church of the Firstborn. And if we could just set our hearts and minds steadfastly to do the will of God in our lives, I believe that our eyes would be opened that we might see

for ourselves that these things are true.

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... and he spake unto the multitude, and saith unto them, Behold your little ones. And as they looked to behold, they cast their eyes towards heaven, and they saw the heavens open, and they saw angels descending out of heaven as it were, in the midst of fire; and they came down and encircled those little ones about; And they were encircled about with fire; and the angels did minister unto them, and the multitude did see and hear, and bear record... for they all of them did see and hear, every man for himself.* (3 Nephi 8:23-26) And immediately following these events, just a few verses down on the page, what did Christ instruct? *And it came to pass that Jesus commanded his disciples that they should bring forth some bread and wine unto them.* (3 Nephi 8:28)

Our multitude today is smaller in number than that of the Nephites who were witnesses to the events in that time. But in no way does that hinder us from having the same experiences, if we properly prepare ourselves, and if we are not of little faith. Section 36 of the Doctrine & Covenants tells us that the day will come when our brother Enoch and his city will descend once more upon the Earth to meet us, once the day of righteousness has come. And that they will fall upon our necks and we will fall upon theirs and we will be received in to their bosom.

I believe Enoch and his city are anxious for that moment, even more anxious than we claim to be. In the meantime, the heavenly host of saints that have gone before us rejoice when they are given the opportunity to fellowship with us on days like today. Just as the heavens opened to the Nephites as their children were blessed and they partook of the bread and the wine, so too are the doors of heaven open for us as we perform the ordinances of God.

**O**ur Father and our Savior are witnessing what is transpiring here today. They are in our midst, as are our brethren who've gone before us. Not just Enoch and his city, but also Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Peter, James, and John, John the Baptist, the prophets of old, Nephi, Alma, Mormon, and Moroni, Sisters Lynda Rolfe and Elaina Smith and Brothers George Knotts and Brad Carr. They are in our midst on days like today, witnessing and recording these things – anxiously waiting to reveal themselves that we might become one with them.

So, again, I ask that you take a moment to consider the gravity of the events unfolding here in these





moments. They are not to be taken lightly. It is an unfortunate fact that many Christians today, especially American Christians, do take lightly those things which are of the spirit. For many, religion and faith are not what dictate lifestyle – but rather, they are an appendage of lifestyle. Too many Christians today profess to believe in Christ, but are unwilling to make even the slightest sacrifice on His behalf. I know, because not only have I been around these types of Christians, but, all too often, I am one of them.

Last week, Brother Tyler Ramirez shared with us how he has felt like he's been detoured from the straight and narrow path of late. His message really hit home with me, because I, too, have been on quite the detour lately. I don't even really know when it started, most likely much earlier than I realize. What I do know is that it wasn't intentional, and it wasn't sudden. It occurred gradually, and started small. *Yea, and (the devil) leadeth them by the neck with a flaxen cord until he bindeth them with his strong cords forever.* (2 Nephi 11:94)

I've talked before about sin being a snowball rolling down a hill. It starts small, and seems harmless at first. But sin breeds more sin. Every time. And eventually, that small snowball at the top of the hill begins to grow in size, strength, and speed. Until all of a sudden you can't stop its momentum. The only way I've found to stop the momentum of sin building up in my life is through complete and total submission and consecration to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Along my detour, I eventually found myself becoming like the characterization I depicted earlier of those who profess Christ, but who are only willing to sacrifice the bare minimum for Him. Those who only allow Christ to occupy a small portion of their heart – who only allow their relationship with Christ to dictate a portion of their lives, rather than the entirety of it. Let me tell you what I've learned: that does not work. It never will. If we only allow Jesus to occupy a portion of our heart, then eventually we will push Him out altogether. I've come to the conclusion that there is no middle ground when it comes to Christ. You are either all in, or you are all out. Love the Lord thy God with ALL thy heart, ALL thy might, ALL thy mind, and ALL thy strength. Give EVERYTHING to Him. That is the only way. Because if you leave any room at all for the adversary to work his way in there, he will find that opening, he will occupy it, and he will do everything he can to expand his domain. *If thine eye be single to the glory of God, thy whole body shall be full of light.... But no man can serve two masters; for either he hate the one*

*and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.* (Matthew 6:22,24)

We all make mistakes. We all sin. We all will likely sin again eventually. At times, we are likely to go on more detours off the straight and narrow path. I'm not saying that the only way to truly be a disciple is to live flawlessly, because that's not going to happen for any of us. That's where God's grace kicks in. Nevertheless, we must always strive to be perfect, just as our Father in heaven is perfect.

Our faith and our relationship with God is not something to be taken lightly. Our pursuit of perfection in Christ is not to be taken lightly. It is not something that we can afford to set aside or drop down on the priority list. It's not something we can only give half of our hearts to. It must always be our first priority – whether we are living righteously at the moment or whether we are on a detour. It should be our first priority every morning when we rise, every afternoon at work or in our homes, every evening before we lie down. It is our first priority, and we must be willing to make any sacrifice that the Lord instructs us to make. *A certain ruler asked him (Jesus), saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? Jesus said unto him... Thou knowest the commandments; Do not commit adultery. Do not kill. Do not steal. Do not bear false witness. Honor thy father and mother. And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up.*

*Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet thou lackest one thing. Sell all that thou hast and distribute unto the poor; and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.* (Luke 18:18-22)

Are we letting it all go for the Lord, or only letting a few things go? Are we sacrificing everything, or just those things that are convenient to sacrifice? Are we striving to keep all the commandments, or just the ones that are easiest to adhere to? *Let us here observe, that a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things, never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation; for from the first existence of man, the faith necessary unto the enjoyment of life and salvation never could be obtained without the sacrifice of all earthly things; it was through this sacrifice, and this only, that God has ordained that men should enjoy eternal life; and it is through the medium of the sacrifice of all earthly things, that men do actually know that they are doing the things that are well pleasing in the sight of God.* (Lectures on Faith: Lecture



6:7a-d)

You've heard me say it before and it remains true today: Most of my adult life has been lived in sin. This world glorifies sin in ways that make it seem like it can bring freedom, joy, and fulfillment to our lives. In the moment, sin often seems like it is, indeed, offering us those things. But as sin permeates within our souls, it begins to transform from something that seems joyful to something that seems harmless, then to something that seems excusable. Then it morphs from something that is excusable to something that is weighing us down, keeping us from a greater promise. If sin is allowed to permeate enough, it transitions all the way in to those strong cords which utterly bind us.

We can find ways to excuse our sin. We can tell ourselves that what we're doing isn't really that bad. We can look around at all the people in our world who are doing far worse things than we are. We can lean on that small part of us that we have allowed the Lord to occupy, and tell ourselves that it's enough to cover our transgressions. There are a lot of different ways that we can justify our behavior. None of them will bring us peace. *There shall be many which shall say, Eat, drink, and be merry; nevertheless fear God; he will justify in committing a little sin; yea, lie a little, take the advantage of one because of his words; dig a pit for thy neighbor; there is no harm in this. And do all these things, for tomorrow we die; and if it so be that we are guilty, God will beat us with a few stripes, and at last we shall be saved in the kingdom of God. Yea, and there shall be many which shall teach after this manner – false, and vain, and foolish doctrines.* (2 Nephi 12:10-12)

That prophecy from 2<sup>nd</sup> Nephi has been fulfilled – both in the congregations of Christians across our country, as well as in our own individual hearts. We seek in vain to find peace by telling ourselves that God will justify the sin in our lives that we've yet to abandon for His sake. I don't know about you, but I've never been able to obtain peace and freedom in that fashion.

The only true peace that I've ever found in my life is when my mind and my heart are single to the glory of God. It comes only after I finally submit to His will in full, allowing the Lord to occupy not just a portion of my heart, but the entirety of it. The only way I've been able to attain the peace that passes all understanding is by throwing everything I have upon the shoulders of Christ. Much of the world sees the teachings of Christianity and thinks that we are telling people they have to quit doing the things that they love to do. That

they have to live a life that consists of always longing to indulge in the behaviors that the rest of the world indulges in, but we begrudgingly abstain because our scriptures direct us to abstain. That is a lie. The power of the gospel of Jesus Christ is such that, if we allow it, it transforms our minds and hearts so that we no longer desire the things that we once desired. Instead, we desire only Jesus Christ. The old man must be put to death so that Christ can lift up the new man within us.

*The freest man on the face of the Earth is the one who makes himself a slave to a perfect master.* Paul Washer

*There is a bondage which is utter freedom, and that is the bondage of love. When you are wholly determined by the good that is for others. When you and I, knowing what we have received from the Almighty hold it in trust for other people, and when we have achieved the state where everything we do is under the divine impulse – every thought and every motive beneath His control. And in the love of Him, we would do nothing that would displease Him - we are in bondage to Him. And such bondage is perfect freedom. You want to be free? Jesus was free. He was the freest man who ever lived.* Arthur Oakman

Freedom is not being able to do whatever you want to do with no consequences. Freedom is submission to righteousness. Freedom is knowing that you are living a life in alignment with the will of God – blocking the adversary from obtaining any hold or power over our hearts and minds. Freedom is consecration to that which is just, that which is true, that which is good and pure and holy. Never have I felt more freedom than when I am able to set down my own will and allow God to take control of my life. *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let it be afraid.* (John 14:27)

The world tries to define peace and freedom for us. The world tells us that peace and freedom come from riches, notoriety, social standing, vices, lusts, and the list goes on and on. Those things don't bring peace and freedom. They only cast upon our shoulders more burdens, more cares, and more bondage. Peace and freedom can only be attained by complete consecration of our lives to the living God.

Hitherto, I have not taken my discipleship nearly as seriously as I need to. This has prevented me from partaking of blessings that God is anxiously waiting to pour upon me. I am determined that that will end here and now. When I eat of the bread and drink of the wine



here this morning, I will do so with true intent of taking upon myself the name of Jesus Christ. That cannot be done lightly. In order for it to mean something – in order for that connection with the heavens to truly take place – it must be done with the intent to lay everything else in my life aside, to allow Christ to have complete and total control from here on out. Every word, every thought, and every action from this moment on belongs to Christ. He in me, and me in Him – we become one.

I mentioned at the outset that, according to the sign out front here, we have proclaimed to be a portion of Christ's church. If that is so, then we, as a church, must also resolve to lay everything else aside for His sake. Our collective eye must be single to His glory. Every decision we make, every prayer we offer, every sermon we give, every dollar we spend, every outreach effort we undertake must be done in unison with the will of God. If we do not take that title and that charge as seriously as we should, then blessings are withheld from us.

The angels in heaven and the saints who await their return to this earth are yearning to physically and visibly be a part of our worship. They yearn to partake of the communion with us. They yearn to join us, hand in hand, as we bring our children forward for a blessing. They wait for us to take our charge seriously, to consecrate ourselves, individually and collectively. *Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ, As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance; But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation, Because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy.* (1 Peter 1:13-16)

I believe the Lord has blessings in store for the Mt. Ayr Restoration Branch that we cannot yet comprehend or imagine. And I'm not talking about the shallow, temporal blessings that a lot of modern evangelists promise to their flock. I'm talking about blessings of peace, joy, and love in our hearts, blessings of visions, dreams, and angelic visitation and blessings of the spirit.

The world around us is rapidly becoming more corrupted. The day of the Lord draws nigh at hand. In the meantime, we are called to higher ground than we have hitherto stood. We are called to greater levels of devotion, submission, consecration, and humility than we have hitherto obtained. If we fulfill our end of the covenant, He is sure to fulfill His end. His promises are true, and He is anxious to show us all what He has in store for us. Let us no longer in vain attempt to serve

two masters, but let us choose this day to serve the Lord our God with all of our heart, might, mind and strength. Let our resolve and determination be renewed as we partake of the sacraments. Let our hope and love grow and expand as we witness the blessing of Brooklyn. Let the light of Jesus Christ within us be rekindled and refueled to shine more brightly than ever before.

*And again I would exhort you, that ye would come unto Christ, and lay hold upon every good gift and touch not the evil gift, nor the unclean thing. And awake, and arise from the dust, O Jerusalem; yea, and put on thy beautiful garments, O daughter of Zion, and strengthen thy stakes, and enlarge thy borders for ever; that thou mayest no more be confounded, that the covenants of the eternal Father which he hath made unto thee, O house of Israel, may be fulfilled. Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind, and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ.... Then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is the covenant of the Father, unto the remission of your sins, that ye may be holy without spot. Amen.* (Moroni 10:27-30)



## BEING BOLD WITH CHRIST

**Priest Josh Pedersen**

*Independence, Missouri*

**October 21, 2018**

Brother Tony Crandell read Psalms 95:1-7 as a Call to Worship. *Oh come, let us sing unto the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In his hand are the deep*



*places of the earth; the strength of the hills is his also. The sea is his, and he made it; and his hand formed the dry land. Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our maker. For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. Today if ye will hear his voice.*



**Good morning.** For anyone who doesn't know me my name is Josh Pedersen. If you know Kent Pedersen I am his youngest son. I married into the Galusha family through Jazmyn.

It's been a while since we've been here and I was thinking about my first time coming here. It was the weekend that Jazmyn had brought me up to meet her family. I don't think George was as enthused as Yvonne was. When we came to church Yvonne made it a point to tell everyone that we talked to, 'This is Josh. He speaks Spanish.' There wasn't really much else to go with that other than they didn't know who I was or where I was from or why I was here. Not even that I was Jazmyn's boyfriend just that I spoke Spanish. That stuck with me for quite a while. I thought that was pretty interesting.

Today I think the Lord really wanted me to get out

of His way. I have three scriptures that we will be talking about and I'm not sure what else will be said. I only had two scriptures than Michael brought something up when the priesthood were in the back before the service. I thought he was going to use it and I thought how fitting it was with the things that I have been thinking about. It comes from the book of Mosiah 1:120. *But if he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man, and becometh a saint, through the atonement of Christ, the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father.*

Jazmyn and I recently, within the last month, have acquired a puppy and a kitten. Most of my analogies lately have been drawn off the training process and parallels between that and I imagine that to a certain extent it's pretty similar to parenthood. However, we are not parents and will not be for some time so the kitten and puppy are all our knowledge comes from. I was thinking about how our puppy acts. No matter what we do, nor no matter what we say even if it is stern and harsh, even if I am across the room chucking a slipper at her, she always comes back excited and she's always happy to see us when we come home. She's always full of love and wants to be around us even when I am doing things that she really doesn't like to have happen. There's times she has to wait for her food and she hates that but she sits there and bounces between each paw excitedly waiting for her to get the OK to finally eat or she does random things when she is so excited and full of life. No matter what happens she lets us know she loves us.

I think about that with our relationship with the Father. The scripture says that we're supposed to become like little children. Think about the similarities between a puppy, kitten and a human baby. Really there is not a ton even though there are a lot of differences in the species. The similarity that they all share is innocence. Innocence and love and they don't know any difference because they haven't been taught.

I've never liked cats mostly because I am horribly allergic to them so naturally having one in the house hasn't been the easiest transition but I am also allergic to dogs and I wanted one of those so I couldn't really stand on that point too hard. I have had allergies and asthma since I was about six years old. My asthma's been really acting up the last few days. This morning I woke up very short of breath. It always makes you feel weird but



it feels like you just ran a mile only you just woke up. I was sitting there and having trouble breathing and was thinking, 'I'm long winded in general and the Lord is either trying to get me to be quiet today or He wants me to rely on Him.' So I said a prayer and I'm a little short of breath right now but my lungs are pretty clear. I would like to praise the Lord for that and apologize because I think I have ended up talking longer than I thought.

The more I see the innocence, trust and love in these little animals, the more I think about our relationship. In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians we're told that charity does a lot of different things but one of the points that has been hit on very hard for me lately is that charity believeth all things. Innocent things always trust you. They always believe that you are going to do the best thing for them. That's why children who are abused don't know it until they are older. They don't know it until they've experienced something that wasn't abusive and heard that abuse wasn't normal. My childhood was really great but I didn't know that that wasn't the case for everybody else until I got older. You are a product of your environment. Innocence believes and trusts and loves everything. We are called to have that same charity as adults which is hard because we become jaded through our experiences and we tend to get a little hardened.

When I was just out of high school I had a very strong conversion testimony to the Lord. I was just on fire so every chance I got to provide any sort of ministry I was there. That included picking up randomly inebriated guys on the Independence Square and driving them around. It got a little risky and dangerous a few times. I remember my dad yelling at me because my friend and I got home one time about 1:00 AM because this guy that we had picked up had been getting us to drive him to random places for two hours. It started to get a little dicey at the end. I remember we were almost out of gas in the middle of Kansas City just before 1:00 AM. It just started to get a little eerie so we left the guy at a gas station. We had to kind of duck and run because we were out of our element.

We got home and my dad had done the classic parent thing where he is sitting on the chair and flips on the lamp when you walk in. He wanted to know where we had been and we told him our story. He said, 'Although I'm proud of you for helping someone out, don't do that again.' After a few experiences like that I started to become a little more jaded to the point where I don't think I've picked somebody up in the last two years. That was a very big thing that no matter what I

was doing I would either stop on the side of the road and help people or pick someone up but I stopped. I've been thinking about that lately and I'm not quite sure why I did that except that it's inconvenient and I'm busy now so I'm jaded and I don't care to do the things that I know I should.

How often do we do that in everything else in life? We've become so busy in the world that we've forgotten to be busy doing the things that we're supposed to be doing. With charity that believes all things it's hard but you are going to be taken advantage of. In a similar deal this one person told me they needed \$45 for an umbrella. I didn't really believe them but I gave them the \$45 any way. I think what happened is they probably got some food and potentially a few things they shouldn't have gotten with that money but I was trying to really exercise that verse that says we're supposed to be a joyful giver and to believe all things. I think thousands of dollars later I started to kind of calm down a little bit. The thing is when I was doing that it had an impact on those people.

I have also been really working on the believing all things. I look back on some of the things that would happen and I remember thinking that did feel a little manipulative but if I was taking them at their word it was a very genuine and a beautiful moment. The first time I gave this homeless couple some money I remember that the wife cried for a while. Now she cried every time I gave her money and potentially that could have been a little suspicious but if she was being genuine it meant something to her. For a while they would come to church because they knew if they came to church I would be more likely to give them money on the ride home but they came to church. They would hear the good things of the gospel.

I really don't think I have a definitive conclusion on that other than we need to be thinking about how we're going to be believing all things, how we're going to be like children. When I was a kid I definitely believed all things. There's a video of me going to hug my cousin who is a year younger than me but she had me by about 20 pounds at the time. I would come to give her a hug and then she would body slam me but I would get back up and try to give her another hug and she would just body slam me every time I came up. Eventually I gave up and started crying and ran away. That's kind of been my natural predisposition. It wasn't until the last few years that I started to change a little bit. They made us take these personality tests at work. I have to display the results in sticker form on my nametag on my desk. It's



kind of a neat idea actually but any time anyone walks by they can glance at my stickers and say, 'OK that's how this guy communicates so I am going to communicate to him the way he needs to be talked to.' It's a pretty neat system but what I found out was that I had two equal strengths, I was overly positive and overly trusting but that's how it's always been throughout my life. I've been in a lot of situations where people weren't too kind but I do feel like a puppy a lot of the times where I just keep coming back.

I really love people and I think that's something where we tend to get jaded and forget about. In the book of Moroni we're told that charity is the pure love of Christ. Every Tuesday Jazmyn allows a bunch of people to invade our home. This last Tuesday we had about 20 or so younger people in the house. We usually have a scripture study but since we've started meeting again after not meeting in the summer, in August we decided to have more discussion. Partly because we were running out of content but also because I don't think people like to sit for one hour a week outside of their normal times and have someone just talk to them. So we've been discussing a lot of things and through the course of our discussion we got to the point of confrontation and how you handle it. For me with the personality traits I have I tend to avoid it at all costs until I am absolutely backed into a corner and then I have to. However, there were people in the room who their initial reaction is I'm going to confront it and I'm going to help those people learn a lesson. For me it's more I will silently bare it until thirty years from now they'll look back and realize that they should have done that better. They learned a lesson but there's strength and differences in everything.

When we're talking about the pure love of Christ one of the examples that was brought up was Jesus in the temple. I don't think in a million years I would ever react in a way that was that forceful. Mostly because I don't think I should but that's what Jesus in His pure love needed to do. He needed to shake things up. He called them vipers. I'm not going to go into detail but He did a lot of things that I don't think I would ever be confident and bold enough to do in a roomful of people, probably because I don't have the Spirit the way I need to but people would look at that and say, 'Christ got pretty mad.' I remember growing up I always thought that anger was something to not allow. I think that's because I wasn't and I'm still not able to do it in a way that is cohesive with the gospel. I do believe that there is an element to righteous anger. Jesus wasn't just mad at

them to be mad at them, He was mad at them for defiling the temple. They needed to be shown a lesson similar to when as a kid I would get a swat. I needed to learn in a way that was not fun for either one of us so I wouldn't do it next time.

At conference this last time Dad was preaching. I have a lot of time at work to listen to things so I've been listening to a lot of the sermons. You know growing up my Dad never cried but any more he cries all the time. He's a very emotional guy now. When he was up front he was crying and it is still a weird thing to see your Dad cry. He was talking about the first time he gave a pretty rough swat to my oldest brother. He didn't go into detail but he said, 'He did something that I wanted to make sure he was never going to do again.' So he gave him a really good one. Dad I think was taking notes during the height of Barry Bonds career post steroids. He was pretty good at it. But he really got Christopher and Christopher was crying very profusely. That was when my Dad started crying retelling the story of just how horrible he felt seeing his oldest son, his only son at the time, his one child at the time just bawling because of something Dad had done to him. One thing that Dad always did that is different and I don't think necessarily effective for discipline but he would take us and set us down after he would swat us and he would hug us, tell us he loved us and explain why he spanked us. He was drawing a correlation because sometimes God has to do that to us. Sometimes we have to go through something that we really don't want to go through because we are not doing what we're supposed to be doing.

In my own life the Lord does that pretty frequently and in ways that are never fun. In high school I really needed to learn to go slower. I wound up getting four speeding tickets that were very high dollar before I got to the point that I learned to drive slower. In fact, we even saw a police officer pull out on the road behind us last night and I wasn't worried because I knew that I was going at an acceptable speed which is a pretty good improvement from the times before.

I still didn't learn a good lesson because before long I started getting into car wrecks. Those were a lot more expensive than the tickets. I was having issues where things would just go wrong but it was always right about the time where I would feel like the Lord was saying, 'I need you to listen to me.' I think it says something about who I am as a person. I am a bit stubborn and so the Lord needs to do some pretty rough things to catch my attention every once in a while. It is usually things that



are really important like I needed to be driving slower and I needed to be paying attention on the road.

Almost a year ago I was in a really rough wreck. By all accounts I should have died several different times. I wasn't wearing my seatbelt. My car got put on an incline that had I adjusted the wheel to get back on the road I should have flipped. I hit a telephone pole going about 40 miles an hour and my body shifted the steering column several inches to the right. When I got out I just felt broken. I remember it took everything that I had to just get out of the car and then I just slumped up against the side. I was mad because I had spent the last six months doing a lot of work on the car and I had finally gotten all the rusted parts off and replaced with good parts. It was finally my car and then I totaled it. I hadn't set down to think about how my body was feeling. Everything in my center felt really wrong, felt achy and messed up.

The tow truck driver was very outgoing and he made sure to tell Jazmyn that if I didn't go to the hospital I'd die. Then when he dropped the car off at Mom and Dad's he made sure to tell them the same thing so everyone was really worried. However, we didn't have health insurance and so I wasn't going to go to the hospital. I did what I should have been doing all along, call for the elders. I was sitting in the chair and couldn't move and was just sitting there very rigid and having trouble with everything. The elders came and laid their hands on my head. I had a friend go through a similar situation where he was rear ended and was going to need back surgery. He reached a point where the pain was so high that he called for the elders and they came and he didn't need back surgery after that. He was healed completely.

So I was sitting there thinking about that because one of the guys doing the administration was one of the people who had administered to my friend. I was sitting there thinking, 'Lord, I know you can do this. You've done it before and I'm looking forward to a blessing.' Gary Metzger and my Uncle Dan Sherer finished the administration and Gary said, 'Oh wait, one more thing. Lord, heal Josh.' They hadn't prayed for a firm healing. They had just been praying in general to help me feel better and let the Lord's will be done and then Gary said, 'You know what. You healed Tyler's back. Heal him.' I stood up and was healed. The Lord left a couple of kinks to remind me that there was still a lesson but He wanted me to live so two chiropractor visits later I was completely one hundred percent.

God needed me to slow down and trust Him. Lately

what's been happening is as we've gotten more comfortable with our income and more comfortable with our lives and more comfortable with our schedules, my faith has grown more complacent because I'm comfortable. I don't need to trust in God the way I did when I was paying my tithing but praying that I could make my rent and school payment or pay for gas. He had blessed me with a job that those things weren't a necessity. We're still tithing and I'm still praying over the things that I was doing but my prayers weren't fervent.

There was a time when I was in college and paying my way through community college. I put 50 cents of gas in my gas tank and prayed that God would just get me to work. I learned that God, similar to my own Dad, likes to do things that are funny to me sometimes. I was really fiercely praying this whole ten minute ride to work because the low fuel light had been on for two days. I was sitting there driving and saying to God, 'Get me there. Get me there.' I pulled in and I might be making it up in my head but I feel like I was just past the threshold in between the two doors of the building and the car stopped. I was in front of the building but it just felt like the moment I passed the middle of the building my engine cut off. I was a waiter at the time and customers had to come out and help me push my car to the back. Of course, they were my table which was awfully embarrassing. I had to trust in the Lord because I didn't know what was going to happen otherwise.

I would take time off work for missionary trips and I would say if I had a job when I got back great but if not I have to go anyway. Now those were things that I knew God had told me to do. Any more I don't feel that same urgency and I wonder if it's because I have become complacent and jaded and not believing all things. I'm not trusting all things. I'm not fulfilling my end of the bargain.

The scripture out of Deuteronomy says that if we will keep His commandments, it's similar to a lot of the other things from Kings or anywhere else really that if you keep my commandments something good is going to happen. There was a billboard coming into downtown Kansas City for a while that said, 'If my people who are called after my name will repent and will call on me I will heal the land.' That's a little paraphrasing but why won't we.

We were talking on the way up here about a statistic that they wouldn't stop talking about on the radio that came out in the last couple of weeks that Kansas City was number 5 in the nation of murders per capita, per



one hundred thousand people. That is kind of a staggering statistic because in my mind I am thinking that New York City, LA, Chicago, Detroit were a lot worse. Detroit was the only one that was actually worse than us. I can't believe that because I don't know anyone who's been murdered in Kansas City but I also don't make it a point to be in those areas where those murders occur either.

The people that I am friends with and speak with, even those not in our church, ask me why we don't have any branches in Kansas City. We don't have one in the proper city limits of Kansas City. We have branches in probably every suburb around but for some reason we are not having a lot of success in the inner city or in the populations that have more poverty than our average Saint. It begs the question why because I imagine if we kept the commandments and carried His Spirit and did what we were supposed to be doing that would be a different story.

In June I was able to go to San Diego as part of a missionary endeavor. We spent the week with a friend of mine's cousin. At the time he was a self-proclaimed atheist and he had died a year before. The restoration elders in the area weren't able to come so they called for a Mormon elder and he came. My friend's cousin was brought back from being flat lined five times by prayer. The elder put his hands on his head and brought him back to life. So this man knew that he had a purpose. He was a machine gunner in the Marines and had lived a very difficult life before that and was dealing with a lot of issues from that time. He said, 'There is no way that I can believe there is a God after the things that I have seen.' So we went and stayed with him a week.

When missionaries had come in the past he had actually laughed in their face and told them to leave. This is kind of harsh but his explanation was they are too white that they could not possibly understand who he was. As you can see I am fairly white myself and so when we went I was a bit nervous about how it was going to go. My friend said go pretend to be a salesman and knock on his door and start asking him if he wanted to learn about this product that had revolutionized his life. He didn't tell me how intimidating his cousin was. He's about six six, six seven and a lean 300 pounds and kind of has a bit of a stern countenance. I wasn't able to keep the farce up very long because I shrank into my boots a little bit and my friend had to come over and say, 'No, no, no Bryce it's OK. He's with me.'

We lived with him for a week. Two days in

whenever he would go to school his family would come and talk to us. His two young sons and his wife, he also has a young daughter but she was 2 and wasn't all that interested in conversation, would come and say, 'Tell me about God. Why do you like Him? What's He got to offer me? How do I pray? What's this? What's that? We started having conversations with his family. Then we did a lot of home visits in the area also while we were there because we're both priests and that's our job so anytime we go anywhere that's usually our primary focus, getting into the Saints' homes. So we were doing our home visits but we would come back to our base camp to this home that was not a believing home but we did what Paul said and we lived like them. When we were in Rome we were Romans and when we were in El Cajon at Bryce's house we were in El Cajon with Bryce so we did whatever he wanted. We let him steer the conversation until one day he said, 'Ok, guys, let's hear it. Give me your spiel?' And so we laid it out and gave him the gospel. We had a class and invited some people and he asked questions and seems generally interested. He's a very analytical guy. He's very logic-based so we knew we weren't going to be able to say the kind of the normal things that work, like just trust and just step out in faith and you will find that you won't fall. Those kinds of things didn't work for him because he said, 'No, I want to know why.' So we had a series of classes. We both felt very inadequate and were really worried that we weren't going to be able to convince him. We knew we couldn't if it was up to us but we presented the gospel as we knew it and we kept living with him.

The last night before we left we talked with him for three hours, between 11 and 2 AM and we talked about the gospel. The next morning when we woke up, there was a dusted off three-in-one on the table that he had gone up and gotten after we went to bed. And he started his morning off with study and reading the scriptures. The day that we left he said, 'You know, guys, I was really worried that you were going to come and Bible bash me to death when you got here. But you did exactly what needed to be done for me to support the gospel.'

I wonder how much as Saints we tend to do that. There's a time to be meek and there's a time to be bold. The problem is that we each have our own gifts but have we ever tried to step out and exercise our gifts in the way that makes us uncomfortable. For me you're almost never going to catch me going to somebody, poking them in the chest and saying, 'You need God.' I'm very uncomfortable with that but I need to be doing, maybe not in that exact way but I need to be bold.





If you've ever met Dad, every once in a while he needs to kind of take a step back too. He needs to try the more meek approach. Actually I guess in Dad's defense he used to do that a lot before he got older. He would do sneak attacks at work. He would just sit there and be quiet and just live his life as a good person. If they brought up God in a conversation he would talk with them so usually after about two or three months, his co-workers would say, 'OK Kent's obviously a good Christian guy.' Then when they'd ask him where he went to church. He would say well I go here and we believe in the Book of Mormon and suddenly they were disarmed and not able to say, 'Well you are not Christian' because they had already assumed that he was. He thought that was a neat tactic.

Dad taught in the inner city for 35 years but his first job was in a little town just south of here. He showed it to me once. I think it had a grave yard in the back. He immediately went from rural to inner city. He taught in the Kansas City school district for 15 years and in the Center school district for about 20. Those aren't the calmest districts. I remember one time when I was with him I was coming downstairs and I saw him and our vice principal tackle two kids. There was one kid who hit puberty way earlier than the other one and they were fighting like they were equal. One kid weighed 250 and the other kid was maybe 125 so they knew which way it was going to go. My football coach, the vice principal, was the one who tackled the big kid and Dad just breathed on the other kid and was able to stop them. He was in rough situations but what he did was use that as a ministry tool.

Towards the end of his teaching he was getting more and more bold in what he was doing. He said, 'I don't care what people think. I'm going to take these kids who don't have fathers and I'm going to be a father to them.' So he would take kids to the movies and he would take them out to lunch. He would give them things and say, 'I want you to have this pen and every time you look at it know that I'm praying for you.' Now that was coming from a man who was also comfortable in knowing he was going to retire in a year or two. If they fired him he was just going to have to make due for a little bit but it was boldness none the less. We were constantly saying, 'Dad, you can't do that. You are going to get fired or someone is going to say something about you.' We weren't having faith because if we had had faith we wouldn't have worried.

Romans 8:28 says that all things work together for the greater good of those who love God and are called

according to His purposes. Do we love God and are we stepping out in faith? Right after I got in a wreck, someone t-boned us in her car and drove off and left us at the scene having to take care of ourselves. Jazmyn was shaken up and I was a lot angrier than I normally allow myself to get. When we finally got everything said and done and we got the car back to our house. We sat down on the couch and started praying thanking the Lord for our safety. Similar to how God has to remind me of things I kind of felt a strong hand come up and slap me in the back of the head and say, 'Pray for that person' because I had hate in my heart. I had a whole lot of hate in my heart. Immediately we started praying for that person who hit us, praying for their wellbeing and praying for their safety and their life and praying for them to not even get caught. We took down all of our social media posts begging for people to get out there and find this guy. We retracted our statements to our family to be patrolling the area for them. We were ready for war but God said don't go to war today. That person's mine. Who knows if they had gotten caught maybe they had warrants, maybe they had drug addictions, maybe they had something that we didn't understand that God needed in that moment for us to pray for them. But, why not every time? Why does it take such huge circumstances for us to trust God, to remember whose we are and remember that everything is working together for our good because we already know we love God and are called according to His purposes.

In the Book of Mormon we read about Alma and the sons of Mosiah. They didn't do what they did because they just loved it so much. I imagine they did but we're told that they said that they couldn't bear the thought of a single soul perishing in hell. To be honest I don't think I'm in that place or I'd be so much more radical than I am. I'm not going to Iraq or Afghanistan or somewhere where they want to kill me on sight for preaching the gospel. I'm not saying to go ahead and go nuts. I think it's all really important for us to be following what God is telling us to do in our lives and to be searching for what that is. They were able to do that because they had done a lot of preparation so that's a big important part too. But they didn't do anything out of the ordinary that we couldn't do. We are told that they were able to crumble prison walls and comfort kings. Not because they were special people but through much prayer, fasting and study. It's within each and every one of us to go convert nations. We just have to do the work



and love the people. We're told that if we have the desire to serve we're called to the work.

So we have to trust, trust that God is going to lead us and that everything is going to work together for our good if we'll just listen, if we'll just follow, if we'll believe and have faith we can do anything. Lately the practicality of all these things has been really prevalent in my mind. I don't think we've sat down and talked about it enough because often times we just think that things are going to come together and when they do we'll know it. But sometimes I think we might need to have talked a little bit ahead of time about how and what. What does our faith look like on a daily basis? What is me living the principles of the kingdom of God look like on a daily basis? How am I submissive to the Lord on a daily basis?

George Thomas came and taught a session of a study group that I was a part of in the formative years of my ministry. It was a six month really intensive period where we had three classes a week, three hours each going through the Call at Evening, not just reading the book. A couple of people had pulled out all of the scriptures and had lined them in a way for us to learn. We had King James versions of the Bible chain referenced with all the lessons taught in there. That was supposed to be the culmination of that study. George Thomas came and taught one of those sessions. He asked us to get organized. Now I am not an organized person. I'm pretty terrible at it. If you need anything just ask Jazmyn because I forget details very quickly. He asked us to do this and so he put up a grid. He made copies for us so we filled in the month, the week and the day. Then on the side we filled in our spiritual goals for the day so you could have fast one time a week, pray every day, read the scriptures every day, witness to somebody every day or whatever you had for your personal goals. At night I would sit down and look at the wall before I fell asleep and I would check off what I had done. I would look at what I hadn't or make sure to do it the next day. My faith was very organized and I was stronger for it but we don't like to do that. I don't really understand why. I think that's more of an open question for us. Why don't we want to get organized? I think sometimes we worry about taking the Spirit out of it and I think that's a valid concern if you get too organized, but I think just a little bit is still good enough because we are given some structure, some organization in a lot of things.

To close I would like to read out of the book of

Philippians. I think when we wonder and ask for me at least the practical application is daily how can I do this? How can I keep the commandments? How can I have the strength to do that or whatever it is? I would like to read Philippians 4:7-10. *And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just; whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do; and the God of peace shall be with you. But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.*

I like to think we don't lack opportunity and that we can be careful. The gospel is really simple when you are talking about it from the pulpit or when you are hearing it from someone telling you how to do it. It's really easy and I think almost every Sunday we leave super charged and we're ready to go. I've said, 'Ok I got my list in my heart. I'm ready to go. We're going to do this. This is what I need to do' and then we don't do it. So I would just like to recommend that we make some goals for ourselves of how we're going to serve the Lord, what we want to do and how we're going to do it because when the people lack vision they perish.



## TESTIMONY OF LIBERIA

*Patriarch Ron Smith*

*Lamoni, Iowa*

**February 2019**

Ron Smith had the privilege of accompanying Gary Whiting and Jim McKay, Sr. on a missionary trip to Liberia from January 31 to February 15 of this year.

Our first destination was Buchanan, the second largest city in Liberia. While in Buchanan, we stayed in



the home of brother Milton Zeon and his wife Elizabeth. On the first Sunday, we worshipped with the branch in Buchanan, which meets in a school building that is run by the church, and which employs a number of church members. On Tuesday we visited the school while it was in session. We enjoyed the company of the pastor, Artis, brother Jimmy, sister Sophia, and many others.

On Wednesday, we took a wild ride to Sinoe county. The rough road required seven and a half hours to cover just over 90 miles. We stayed in Teah Town in the home of the pastor, Gabriel Tobey. He took us to Coons Town, where we met with the pastor, Andrew Smith. Gabriel also took us to Maanah Town, where we met with Samuel Swem, his wife, Sarah, and the local

with our adopted daughter, Ruth, for first time since 2009. She came to see me again on Thursday, and we spent a wonderful Valentine's day together. In the evening, I gave my first Patriarchal blessing in Africa.

Two of the most memorable things on this trip occurred when the truck broke down. Twice. The first time, we were close to a river, and I went down there to seek some shade and respite from the sun and the 95 degree heat while we were waiting for our driver to try fixing the clutch on his truck. Gary and Jim followed me, and we had a prayer service, thanking God for life, for our safety, and for His many blessings. When we finished, we went back to the truck, and found a nearby house that had some shade on one side. We sat down in the shade and I started playing my guitar. Soon the kids from the house came to listen.

Then their mother Martha joined us, gave us a couple of pineapples, and sang with gusto. When their father, Godfrey came in from work, we discovered that he was best friends with Immanuel, one of the elders who had accompanied us on the journey. It was a joyful reunion, and the truck was able to limp along. The driver assured us that the truck was totally fixed during our stay at Teah Town, but it broke down again about 10 minutes out on our way back.

This time, we were near a broken down Caterpillar with two security guards making sure that no one stole parts from it until it could be fixed. One of the guards used his own phone to call his company mechanic to come and look at our truck.

Then he took us about a quarter mile away to his house so we could be out of the sun. We sat on a beautiful, tiled veranda. I got out my guitar, and soon we had an audience of over 30 people. I told the story of Abish from the Book of Mormon, and sang Abish's song. We sang Redeemer of Israel and talked of our hope of Zion. We were offered some of the sweetest pineapple I have tasted, and sugar cane. It took nearly 3 hours for the mechanic to diagnose the problem, go to Greenville to get the part, and fix the truck. He charged \$45. It turned out that the lady of the house knew Gabriel Tobey, and we had a wonderful opportunity to share the gospel. The scripture says, "In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." We certainly had many reasons to thank to the Lord!



pastor, Elijah Topoe, as well as a number of others. On Sunday, we held services in Teah Town, administered to some, and said goodbye in the midst of many tears, and made the return trip to Buchanan. On Monday, we took a shorter excursion to River Cess county and the town of Zas-wulum, where we met with a young pastor, Otis, and his family. He showed us the new church they are building. It is made of sticks and unfired mud bricks, and has a zinc (tin) roof. On one of the houses in the village, there was a picture of Ammon, and that story of the Lamanites who were converted to the Lord and refused to fight. We were told most of the children in the village do not go to school, because it is too far to walk.

We made the journey back to Buchanan on Wednesday, and I was able to make face to face contact



## FEAR GOD AND NOT MAN

***Priest Rodney Bastow***

***Mount Ayr, Iowa***

***February 17, 2019***

My scripture for this morning is taken from 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13. *If I do not love, I am nothing. I may be able to speak different languages that people use. I may be able to speak languages that angels use but that is worth nothing unless I love. It is only like someone who is making a loud noise. It is only like someone who is hitting a loud bell. I may be able to speak messages from God. I may know all the facts and I may understand all the secret things. I may believe God enough so that I could move mountains but I am nothing if I do not love. I may give all the things that I have to poor people. I may even let other people burn my body so that I die but that is worth nothing if I do not love. If I love I will be very patient. I will be kind. I will not want to be like other people so much that I get angry with them. I will not tell people how good I am. I will not think that I am better than other people. If I love I will always be polite.*

*I will think about what other people want. I will not think only about what I myself want. I will not get angry quickly and I will not always be remembering the wrong things that other people have done to me. If I love I will not be happy about bad things but instead I will be happy about things that are right and true. If I really love people I will never stop loving them. It will not matter what happens. Whatever things may happen I will still continue to love. If I love then during all things I will still continue to believe. If I love then during all things I will still continue to hope for good things. If I love then during all things I will still continue to be patient and strong. If I love that will never come to an end but it is different for all those gifts that God has given us. The time will come when we do not need them any longer. People will stop telling messages from God. They will stop speaking in special languages. The many things that people know will finish. Now at this time we know only a small part of everything that is true and we can tell other people only a small part of the messages that come from God. Now we have only a part of what God wants to give us but the time will come when He will give everything to us completely. Then we will not have only a part any longer. When I was a child I talked like a child. I thought like a child thinks. I understood only what a child understands but now that I am a man I have stopped being like a child. Now we see things as if we were looking at them in a dark mirror. What we see is not clear but the time will come when we will see everything clearly. Now we know some things but then we will understand all things. God knows this and He understands us completely and we will understand like that too then so there are three things that continue. We continue to believe God. We continue to hope good things. We continue to love but the greatest of these things is love.*

**I** am pleased with this opportunity to be here today and I hope that when you leave here you will be pleased that you were here as well especially with the effort that it took for you to get here. We come today to glorify God and praise His name. I pray that He will be pleased with our worship here today.

A week ago I didn't know if I would be able to make it here today. I came down with that winter cold that everyone gets that I didn't think I was going to get this year and it really got me. I was coughing and had a runny nose, just not feeling very good. About midweek it finally let up and I am feeling a lot better.

The other concern I had, of course, today was the



weather and it turned out like I expected it to. I really appreciate you making an effort to get here. Maybe satan is trying to keep us away from here for some reason so we must be doing something good.

I wasn't sure what to talk about today. Wrestling season is over so nothing more I can add there. The farm situation is fairly stable considering the weather so nothing really much to report there either. It takes a lot of faith to believe that God will provide and I hope my faith in Him has been rewarded today.

The last time I spoke to you I told you that I had need for daily prayer and a meditation every day. Since that last message I have been trying to do that. Debbie will even witness that I have been trying to do that every day. Sometimes the devotional is what Joe puts on Facebook which I really appreciate or it might be something somebody else puts on Facebook. Or it might be from a devotional book that I have had for 13 years now. It just seems like every time I read it it's brand new again. It kind of fits a lot of times with what I'm thinking or what I need to hear.

One day the devotional that I read was entitled "Power and Not Fear" and it had this scripture from 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 1:7. *For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power and of love, and of a sound mind.* The message to that devotional was that the only fear that God encourages in a Christ-like life is the fear of God. Fear of people doesn't come from God but the problem is that many Christians fear people more than God.

Last month the school here put on the Todd Becker program. It was sponsored by the community Ministerial Association. The program is Christian-based and from what I can tell it promoted the idea that kids should turn to Jesus instead of drugs and alcohol. It promoted making the right choices. To me it sounds like a really good program but I was not surprised that the school met with some opposition to this presentation of this program. For some reason there are some groups, why they care about what we're doing here in Ringgold County Iowa, I have no idea but it's like satan again is trying to keep the things that are good away from us. There were a few local people that also objected to this program. Why wouldn't you want the best for your kids? Why wouldn't you want your kids learning more about Jesus or being in a situation where it's a Spirit-filled atmosphere where they talk about turning away from alcohol, turning away from drugs, not considering suicide and things like that? I don't understand why they would be opposed to something like that.

It reminded me a little bit of when I was an

administrator and I was told one year at graduation that if someone got up to pray, I had to stop them. I'm not sure I could have done that but that's what I was told that I would have to do. Fortunately, that soon changed so that if it was student-led that was OK. I thought that was a good change. That was a real good thing to have happen because the students wanted it. They wanted prayer at graduation. They wanted prayer at some of their other services that they had and there was always someone willing there to offer that prayer. I was very proud of them because to me that would have taken some courage to be able to do that.

Also, another experience is we used to have Rally Around the Flag. I don't know if you have ever heard of that but this was student-led too. We would all gather around the flagpole and hold hands and each one of us would say a prayer as we went around. It was mostly all students. I was really proud of the kids for doing things like that. It really told me a lot about them. **W h e n** I have thought about those things I thought do I fear God?

At the end of the wrestling season I received some thank-yous and I was told what a good season it was. I had comments such as, 'I hope you enjoyed the season' and I did. I expected to enjoy the season but it went really well and I was really glad that I had done it but there were a couple of little things that went on during the season that bothered me a little bit. I only had four kids. We took a couple of managers along with us and drove in a Suburban. I had another person drive. Well, you forget when you're in a school bus you really can't hear the kids too much. There's a lot of background noise but you really don't know what they're saying. You don't know what they're doing. You get in a Suburban and you are all on top of each other. I don't hear very well but I could tell that some of the things that the kids were doing maybe they shouldn't have been. It's amazing to me what they could do with a little phone. You used to have the kids bring their laptops on the bus and they'd kind of get a little too rowdy with that and I would ban them. You can't take away their phones really. I don't know that they were doing anything wrong. I don't know. Sometimes it didn't sound too good. Sometimes it sounded like they were making fun at someone else's expense. I should have talked to them about how they should treat others. What was I afraid of?

Another thing that bothered me was that we practiced with the high school team quite a bit and the high school team has their own sound system so when you go into the wrestling room, they plug a phone into



the sound system and it plays music. Well, for some reason the one kid that usually did this liked to play rap music. Maybe you like rap music, maybe you don't. Personally I think it's vulgar. It didn't seem to bother anybody else there. It must have bothered his Dad a little bit because one day he put in his own music and that was a welcome change listening to Kenny Rogers instead of rap music. I couldn't tell if the kids practiced any different with Kenny Rogers as opposed to rap music but it bothered me. If I had been the one in charge I might have banned it but since I was just kind of there as the Middle School coach I didn't feel like I had any control about the music. I wished now I would have been more vocal about my objection to it. Again, what was I afraid of?

I had one of the parents this year for both football and wrestling. This parent can be very, very vocal. We played down at Maryville one afternoon. We were on the opposite sidelines from the stands and the officials said, 'You've got that one fan over there that is really yelling loudly.' We say, 'We know. We don't pay much attention to it.' He was very outspoken.

I was surprised but he didn't come to the first of the wrestling meets and I was really surprised at that because his son is really good. This father was a really good wrestler and really knows wrestling. Toward the end of the season, he started coming. He would tell the boys what they were doing wrong and he would be very critical of what they were doing. Some of the boys could handle this but some of them couldn't. His own son took it very well. I was amazed at how well his own son took it. At the last meet Preston was wrestling and he is a pretty good wrestler. He's just a 7<sup>th</sup> grader so he's not always real solid about how he wrestles. In his first match he was kind of sloppy. I wasn't sure whether he'd gotten the takedown or the other one had. They were just kind of both rolling around back and forth. Preston eventually landed on top of him and pinned him. You have to be pleased with that kind of an outcome but once he got done this parent really let him hear it. Told him everything he did wrong and just kind of scolded him a little bit.

The second match that Preston had he went out there and did a pretty good takedown and pinned the kid within 30 seconds. I was very proud of him and let him know that. I was sitting there talking to him and said, 'J.K. had to have been really pleased with how you did this one.' He said, 'No, no he said I did my takedown all wrong. That I was really wrong in that.' I said, 'Oh.'

In his third match he went out and took the kid right

down and pinned him in 20 seconds. When he got done I said, 'OK now go talk to J.K. and ask him how you did.' He said, 'No, I'm staying away from him. I want nothing to do with him at all.' I don't know this parent very well. He was one of those that grew up when we were gone. I knew his dad really well. I watched him wrestle a lot. If I did know him a little better I would probably go to him and tell him, 'You are way too negative. You need to be a lot more positive. You need to give the guys some good vibes instead of always being negative with how they're doing.' But I didn't do that. Once again, what was I afraid of? Why should I be afraid to do that?

Sometimes here at church I think we focus too much on the negatives. What bad people we are. What sinners we are. I found another devotional but I couldn't find it again when I wanted to use it today that talked about God forgiving your sins. You know we do things that are wrong and He knows that but He forgives us. He still loves us and continues to love us. I am hoping when that day comes when I'm up there and facing the Lord that He won't just dwell on my negatives but He will talk some about my positives. Hopefully, He'll be able to find some that He can talk about.

The other day the Jehovah's Witnesses came to see us. It's odd how they always come on the week that I'm speaking at church. They must get a schedule from Sandy so that they know what week to visit us. For a long time they hadn't found our house in town but now they have. Debbie was very nice. She invited them in. I was gone unfortunately. She said she had a nice visit with them. They talked to her and things went well. I just think about those people and how brave they are to go around to other people spreading God's message.

In this scripture that I read to you Paul was telling Timothy to spread the gospel message. He said, 'Don't worry. Don't worry about the persecution even though I am here in jail. Don't worry about what these people can do to you. It's what God can do to you that's important and that you are serving the Lord.' That's what I think we need to keep in mind too. Are we brave enough to tell others that we love Jesus and that we're trying to serve Him? Are we brave enough to ask them to love God also? God wants us to love others. He wants us to spread His message that Jesus loves us and that He died for us and is returning for us and we should not be afraid.

Reading the devotions has really paid off. I'd have been lost today without some of the devotionals that I read. The one I want to close with is called:

**I Choose Love**

*It's quiet. It's early. My coffee is hot. The sky is still black. The world is still asleep and the day is coming. In a few moments the day will arrive. It will roar down the track of the rising of the sun. The stillness of the dawn will be exchanged for the noise of the day. The calm and solitude will be replaced by the pounding pace of the human race. The refuge of the early morning will be invaded by decisions to be made and deadlines to be met. For the next twelve hours I will be exposed to the day's demands. It is now that I must make a choice. Because of Calvary I am free to choose and so I choose, I choose love. No occasion justifies hatred. No injustice warrants bitterness. I choose love. Today I will love God and what God loves.*

*I choose joy. I will invite my God to be the God of circumstance. I will refuse the temptation to be cynical, the tool of the lazy thinker. I will refuse to see people as anything less than human beings created by God. I will refuse to see any problem as anything but an opportunity to God.*

*I choose peace. I will live forgiven. I will forgive so that I may live. I choose patience. I will overlook the inconveniences of the world. Instead of cursing the one who takes my place I'll invite him to do so. Rather than complain that the wait is too long, I will thank God for a moment to pray. Instead of clinching my fists at new assignments I will face them with joy and courage.*

*I choose kindness. I will be kind to the poor for they are alone, kind to the rich for they are afraid and kind to the unkind for such is how God has treated me. I choose goodness. I will go without a dollar before I take a dishonest one. I will be overlooked before I will boast. I will confess before I will accuse. I choose goodness.*

*I choose faithfulness. Today I will keep my promises. My debtors will not regret their trust. My associates will not question my word. My wife will not question my love and my children will never fear that their father will not come home.*

*I choose gentleness. Nothing is won by force. I choose to be gentle. If I raise my voice it may be only in praise. If I clench my fist may it be only in prayer. If I make a demand may it be only of myself. I choose self-control.*

*I am a spiritual being. After this body is dead my spirit will soar. I refuse to let what will rot rule the eternal. I chose self-control. I will be drunk only by joy. I will be impassioned only by my faith. I will be influenced only by God. I will be taught only by Christ. I*

*choose self-control.*

*Love and joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control to these I commit my day. If I succeed I will give thanks. If I fail I will seek His grace. Then when this day is done I will place my head on my pillow and rest.*



# WE ARE DAUGHTERS OF THE KING

## JCRB Women's Retreat Cheryl Phipps

On Friday, February 22<sup>nd</sup> Deni Loving, Julia Jordison, Jennifer Rowland and Cheryl Phipps traveled to Keosauqua, Iowa for a women's retreat sponsored by the Restoration Women's Ministries. There were also retreats held the same weekend in Independence, MO and Dallas, TX. There were 12 of us in attendance in Keosauqua. Those of us from Lamoni spent Friday evening in the home of Keri and Tim Halbrook in Bonaparte, IA.

The retreat began at 8:30 AM the following morning. Several of the men provided breakfast, lunch and supper for the women who attended. It was nice not to have to fix our own meals. Lamoni, Montrose, Coralville, North Liberty, Bonaparte and Keosauqua were represented by those in attendance.

Betty Vickery and Rita Woolery each presented two classes. The theme was: We are Daughters of the King. Betty taught: The Invitation to be Fully His and Dedication-Tools to Meet our Goals. Rita taught: How do Pleasant Daughters of the King Behave and Challenge-Setting Clear Goals to go Forward. For each class we looked up scriptures and talked about what they meant to us.

Before we closed we were invited to share concerns that we had and then someone offered a prayer for that individual. All four of us from Mount Ayr were very glad that we had gone to the retreat even though the weather was challenging.

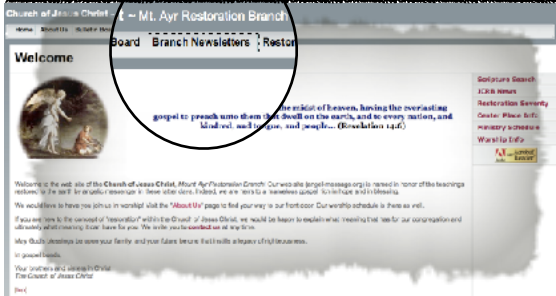


## Church of Jesus Christ Mount Ayr Restoration Branch

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at:

[www.gospelrestored.org](http://www.gospelrestored.org)



*And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come; and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. (Revelation 14:6-7)*

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Mar 7, 14, 21, 28**

**Book of Mormon Night.** Every Thursday evening in Lamoni at 6:45 PM. Ron & Di Smith's home.

**Mar 9** Men's Breakfast at Pizza Hut 11:00 AM

**Mar 17** Sharing Service at MARB - Plan to Participate!!

**Mar 17** Food for Center due.

**Mar 22-24** Habitations of the Home - Branch Retreat at Camp Wesley Woods, Indianola, Iowa. There are **NO SUNDAY SERVICES AT MARB THIS WEEKEND**

**Apr 15-19** **JCRB Conference** at Good Shepherd Community of Christ in Independence. High Priest Sherman Phipps is conference President and solicits your prayers for the proceedings.

**Apr 17** Breakfast with the Master - Our morning to help with serving/cleanup and providing music. Come early.

