

*“Replenishing and Fortifying our Spiritual Reserves”*

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Over 50 years ago, my husband and I were married and left Salt Lake for our California honeymoon. Times were different then. There was no interstate highway. We had a little red Volkswagen bug to drive, and a gas war was in progress. A gallon of gasoline was only 19 cents. The price fit our budget perfectly. It was the middle of June and the weather was beautiful. As the miles passed by, it was such a joyous time to laugh and talk and enjoy each other’s company.

The only pitfall was in losing track of both the time and the gas gauge. The consequence was to have the car sputter and stop. My new husband assured me that we had a reserve tank of one gallon of gas. All that was needed was to turn a little toggle switch, and off we would drive again towards our destination. Furthermore, he had placed a gallon of gas in the trunk for a secondary reserve. How grateful we were for the reserve tank that held gas for a later time, when it would be needed more. In the process, we learned some valuable lessons.

Not only was it important to have a reserve supply of gas in the tank, but also to put money in a little envelope and save it for the fourth week of the month, prior to receiving our paycheck. Quickly we learned to have a little food supply reserved for hard times.

It’s so obvious to see the value of reserves in physical areas. However, in spiritual areas it’s not quite as visible but even more significant. For example, through the early years of raising children, parents must learn to fill the family bank with the gospel of Jesus Christ, love, scriptures, good examples, and prayer, in order to have enough in reserve for the teenage years.

While my husband and I were serving as missionaries in the Philippines, an interesting event took place. We were walking into the Naga Stake Center when a small child of three or four years stopped me. He reached out his little hand and shook mine, and then brought both our hands to touch his forehead. His mother was so proud of her little son. When she was asked, “What was the meaning of your little boy’s gesture?” she replied, “He is honoring the wisdom of your age.”

Although few people ask the elderly for their opinions, they still have the wisdom accumulated through a lifetime. Or do they? One of the challenges of growing older is to learn as much every day as the mind is forgetting, just to stay even. But perhaps we all begin to forget what we are not using. One day while driving along the road, a marquee was noticed with these words: “God gives and forgives. Man gets and forgets.”<sup>1</sup>

Our spiritual reserves require replenishing every day, or they eventually dry up. The choice is whether to nourish our spiritual growth or to let it wither and die. It’s up to us which direction we choose to go. Many things compete with the invitation of the Lord to “Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you.”<sup>2</sup> “For you shall live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God.”<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps each stage of womanhood has its share of difficulties in setting aside the time needed to develop our spiritual selves and their reserves. Another name might be our spiritual treasure chest. Young womanhood is full of many places to go and things to do. Women with careers have important responsibilities that fill the workweek and often spill over into the weekends. Young mothers with children have difficulty even finding time for themselves. When our children grow up, marry and have children of their own, we are left with an empty nest and a family increasing in number. We may become even busier. As we grow older, increasing health problems may slow us down and limit our activities. It is part of the Lord’s plan that there must be opposition in all things that we may exercise our agency to choose.<sup>4</sup>

President Spencer W. Kimball stated, “I stress again the deep need each woman has to study the scriptures. We want our homes to be blessed with sister scriptionaries—whether you are single or married, young or old, widowed or living in a family. As a consequence, we shall have great wisdom with which to guide ourselves and our families.”<sup>5</sup>

You may ask, how will becoming a sister scriptionary provide the benefits to warrant the time spent?

President Kimball provides the answer: “The years have taught me that if we will energetically pursue this worthy personal goal [of scripture study] in a determined and conscientious manner, we shall indeed find answers to our problems and peace in our hearts. As a consequence, we shall have greater wisdom with which to guide ourselves and our families.”<sup>6</sup>

Would the Lord really reveal the answers to our problems in the scriptures? Would the Lord help us to liken all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning?<sup>7</sup> May I share with you a stark example of this promise?

After my husband and I had served 17 months of a humanitarian mission in Egypt, there was a political revolution that suddenly swirled around us. The Internet and cell phones were shut down. The police guards disappeared, [those] who normally lined the streets to keep the peace. Banks were closed and grocery stores were emptied. We felt isolated from the world. With our pajamas and a toothbrush, we fled to our dear friends John and Sherie Gerrard’s apartment for safety.

Within the period of a few days, we saw the government crumbling around us into total anarchy. The American embassy asked all its citizens to leave the country. The TV news broadcast stated that every father and husband now had the responsibility to protect [his] own [family]. Both my husband and I knew our mission had come to a sudden end and wondered if our lives too were over. Desperately we needed the Lord to speak to us, and so naturally we turned to the scriptures.

In moments, a verse jumped off the page in Doctrine and Covenants 105:19. We had often referred to our mission as our offering to the Lord. As we read this verse together, it seemed as though the Lord spoke to us personally and said, “I have heard [your] prayers, and will accept [your] offering; and it is expedient in me that [you] should be brought thus far for a trial of [your] faith.” The days and nights following were tense and alarming, but our hearts were at peace.

This scriptural verse would eventually sustain us as we walked through the street barricades, pass[ing] the neighborhood guards protecting their families with pipes, samurai swords, butcher knives and wooden clubs. These comforting words filled our hearts as we boarded a large bus and drove to the airport, passing army tanks that lined the way with their gun turrets pointed directly at us. At the airport, the 3:00 p.m. curfew passed, and still we waited. Food and water were no longer available. Finally, late in the evening, we boarded a plane for London with British Petroleum executives and their families. Church Security had made the arrangements. Through it all, this scripture filled our hearts with the assuring Spirit of the Lord that all would be well. The following day was spent in the London Temple as our souls began to heal in that holy place.

The scriptures we read do provide the answers to our problems. Man’s extremity is God’s opportunity.<sup>8</sup> We truly felt the Lord God as our sun and shield.<sup>9</sup> Hopefully none of you will be caught in a similar situation. But certainly we will all face problems every day that need to be solved.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks explained how the scriptures we read can give us answers to the problems we face currently. “The idea that scripture reading can lead to inspiration and revelation opens the door to the truth that a scripture is not limited to what it meant when it was written but may also include what that scripture means to a reader today. Even more, scripture reading may also lead to current revelation on whatever else the Lord wishes to communicate to the reader at that time. We do not overstate the point when we say that the scriptures can be a Urim and Thummim to assist each of us to receive personal revelation.”<sup>10</sup>

Summarizing Elder Oaks’ statement, a scripture can mean three things:

1. What it meant when it was written.
2. What it means to the reader today.
3. Whatever the Lord wishes to communicate to the reader.

As we daily read the scriptures, we may want to be sensitive to whatever the Lord wishes to communicate to us. It is called personal revelation. Unread scriptures cannot bless our lives. Consider some of the problems that you may have today and how the scriptures can provide solutions. We may wish to write down a verse here and there that would be a vital solution to a

past, present or future problem. By doing so, we would be learning to “live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God.”<sup>11</sup> “Line upon line, precept upon precept”<sup>12</sup> until “that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day.”<sup>13</sup>

Ponder on how vital it would be to have in reserve a spiritual treasure chest filled with scriptures. Let us begin by examining some everyday problems and their scriptural solutions.

Most of us have something to do with money on a daily basis. This scripture is from 2 Nephi 9:51: “Wherefore, do not spend money for that which is of no worth, nor your labor for that which cannot satisfy.” This scripture forms a basis of truth upon which we can make decisions. Think of how much more valuable this verse would be if it were committed to memory. You will find other scriptures, such as “Pay the debt thou hast contracted . . . release thyself from bondage.”<sup>14</sup> And finally a verse familiar to most: “Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse.”<sup>15</sup> Let us allow these verses to be the truths that govern our decisions and subsequent actions.

Another area is discouragement. Perhaps we all feel a touch of it from time to time. In Doctrine and Covenants 64:33 is an uplifting verse: “Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great.” There is something magnificent in the spirit of these words.

The death of a loved one or the contemplation of our own can be a great trial. Listen to these comforting words: “Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live” (John 11:25). Can you see the benefit of having these beautiful words from the Lord written in our hearts? The apostle Paul shared this idea: Whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s.<sup>16</sup>

Hastening the work<sup>17</sup> is paramount in the Lord’s restored Church today. One of our responsibilities is to share the gospel.

The apostle Paul has given us encouragement when he said, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Romans 1:16).

Several months ago, my husband and I were in the Buenos Aires airport in Argentina. There were hundreds of passengers waiting in the ticket counter lines that wrapped back and forth in close proximity. I noticed a woman who was carrying a cloth bag with these words embroidered on it. “If you want to be my friend, give me a book I haven’t read yet.” Courage was taken as I stepped forward and said, “Excuse me, but are you serious about what’s written on your bag?” She replied, “Yes, I am. I’m halfway through one book, and I have two more in my bag.” We were separated momentarily as the line moved forward.

I consulted with my husband. He nodded. With my luggage laid out on the floor and every passenger close by watching, I found my Book of Mormon, put a pass-along card in it, and took a deep breath. My new friend was coming by again. With a smile, I extended the golden treasure, the Book of Mormon, for her to accept. Instead, she said, “No! Not that book,” and pulled away as though she had been bitten by a snake. More passengers were looking on. We shared one more short conversation the next time we passed. But that is not the end of the story. It will

continue. One day perhaps the Spirit will touch this lovely woman, and she will yet converse with the missionaries that knock on her door or meet her on the street. What about the passengers that were looking on? How were they affected?

Next, imagine that you are all alone facing serious health problems. A verse that you memorized years prior comes to mind: “Know ye not that ye are in the hands of God?” (Mormon 5:23). Can you feel the peace that emanates from this beautiful verse?

Sometimes we may lose sight of our self-worth in this journey we call life. “Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God” (D&C 18:10). This is our standard of truth. Whenever we feel otherwise, we know it is not from God. Can you feel the Lord speaking to you in this scripture?

The last verse we will consider can be a great solution to many trials that are suffered silently. It is found in the book of Joshua. “Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest” (Joshua 1:9). This verse can also apply to so many areas of our lives.

The Lord has said: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”<sup>18</sup> It’s not just a matter of setting aside time only. It’s a matter of faith—faith that we must nourish our testimonies each day as admonished by President Thomas S. Monson in the last general conference.<sup>19</sup> Faith that as we set aside time to draw near unto the Lord, he will magnify our abilities to accomplish the work at hand. Faith that He will increase our organizational skills to work smarter. Faith that He will expand our capabilities to be more tender, kind, refined, good and virtuous. Faith that the Lord will draw near to us and fill our hearts with His love. Faith that God will help us solve our problems and challenges. Faith that God will make weak things become strong unto us if we humble ourselves before Him.<sup>20</sup> Because “faith precedes the miracle”<sup>21</sup> and you “receive no witness until after the trial of your faith.”<sup>22</sup>

While preparing these remarks, there was a flood in our basement storage room. Water was visible seeping from the ceiling to the floor, soaking everything in its path. When the plumber came, he explained that there was a small pinhole in the water pipe. The water had been dripping, a drop at a time, for a week or more. What an object lesson if we turn it to the positive side! If one drop of water at a time can reach out and impact everything in its path, then by the same token, think of one small amount of time each day studying the scriptures. What a broad, righteous influence would result! It would be as butterfly wings heard round the world.<sup>23</sup>

May we “feast upon the words of Christ, for . . . [they] will tell [us] all things what [we] should do.”<sup>24</sup>

I solemnly bear testimony that our Father in Heaven lives! He loves each one of us! Because of that love, He gave his Only Begotten Son, even Jesus Christ, “that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”<sup>25</sup> Our Savior has restored His Church in these latter days upon the earth and given us many great gifts, the greatest of which is the Atonement. Other gifts would include the scriptures. Our Redeemer has said, “Search the scriptures; for in them ye

think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.<sup>26</sup> As we do so, we replenish and strengthen our spiritual reserves.

“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”<sup>27</sup>

I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Quote on a Lutheran school marquee.

<sup>2</sup> Doctrine and Covenants 88:63.

<sup>3</sup> Doctrine and Covenants 84:44.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Nephi 2:11.

<sup>5</sup> See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball*, Chapter 6; and *Ensign*, Sept. 1975, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> “Always a Convert Church,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1975, 2–3.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Nephi 19:23.

<sup>8</sup> 1629 *Works* 619, *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Proverbs*.

<sup>9</sup> Psalm 84:11.

<sup>10</sup> Dallin H. Oaks, “Scripture Reading and Revelation,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1995.

<sup>11</sup> Doctrine and Covenants 84:44.

<sup>12</sup> Doctrine and Covenants 98:12.

<sup>13</sup> Doctrine and Covenants 50:24.

<sup>14</sup> Doctrine and Covenants 19:35.

<sup>15</sup> Malachi 3:10.

<sup>16</sup> Romans 14:8.

<sup>17</sup> Doctrine and Covenants 88:73.

<sup>18</sup> Matthew 6:33.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas S. Monson, “Until We Meet Again,” *Ensign*, May 2014.

<sup>20</sup> Ether 12:27.

<sup>21</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, *Faith Precedes the Miracle*. Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 1972.

<sup>22</sup> Ether 12:6.

<sup>23</sup> Reference to the “butterfly effect.”

<sup>24</sup> 2 Nephi 32:3.

<sup>25</sup> John 3:16.

<sup>26</sup> John 5:39.

<sup>27</sup> 1 Corinthians 2:9.