

“The Two Great Commandments”

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This address was given Friday, April 29, 2016 at the BYU Women’s Conference

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My beloved sisters and brothers, both here in the Marriott Center and those who are joining by other means, it is good to be together. It has been a soul-stretching experience to try to find the words Heavenly Father would have me share today. Like all those who have or yet will present in this conference, I have earnestly sought direction from the Lord through fasting, on my knees in prayer, in the scriptures, and at the temple. I think I can speak for all of us when I say we have each tried to tune our listening ears and feeling hearts to impressions of the Spirit. I pray that the Holy Ghost will be the teacher in this session as in all the other sessions of this wonderful Women’s Conference.

Introduction

Recently our darling eight-year-old granddaughter, Eliza, had a high fever and pains in her leg that concerned her mother enough to take Lizie to the doctor. The doctor confirmed that Lizie was indeed sick, the sickest patient she had seen all that day. She felt that the symptoms were worthy of further investigation and ordered some blood tests right away. Our daughter Annie said Lizie was surprisingly brave as vial after vial of blood was drawn, but Annie herself got so woozy that she had to lie down on the floor so she wouldn’t pass out.

Annie related that as soon as the nurse left the room with the blood samples she had collected, Lizie crossed the “bravery threshold” and burst into tears. It was as if her courage could last only as long as the nurse was present. But as soon as she was alone with her sweet mommy, safe in her presence, she could express honestly and openly how she truly felt.

It happened again the next day when Lizie was in the hospital awaiting surgery. Her condition had worsened, and the MRI results showed an infection in her femur and an abscess behind the bone that required draining. Lizie’s fever was high and the pain in her leg so great that the slightest touch was excruciating. While waiting for the surgery, Annie, my husband and I watched helplessly as Lizie lay in agony, biting her lip and trying not to cry. But as soon as Lizie’s daddy entered the room, tears started rolling down her cheeks. Her daddy tenderly approached her hospital bed and laid his face cheek to cheek against hers. Tears streamed down

his face while he lovingly held her, whispered words of reassurance in her ear, and cried softly with her.

President Ezra Taft Benson declared, “Nothing is going to startle us more when we pass through the veil to the other side than to realize how well we know our Father [in Heaven] and how familiar his face is to us.”¹ I wouldn’t be surprised if each of us—in that moment when we finally have the opportunity to see Him—will similarly melt into tears as we run to be embraced in His loving arms, having endured the mortal challenges of this world as courageously as we could.

With that as a backdrop, I address the subject of “The Two Great Commandments.” You will recall from the New Testament that “a lawyer, asked [Jesus] a question, tempting him, and saying, ‘Master, which is the great commandment in the law?’ Jesus said unto him, ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.’”²

What does it mean to truly love our Heavenly Father? President Benson taught: “To love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength is all-consuming and all-encompassing. It is no lukewarm endeavor. It is total commitment of our very being— physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually—to a love of the Lord.”³

How can we increase our love for our Heavenly Father?

As I have pondered the first of these two great commandments, the lyrics from an “oldie but goodie” keep coming to my mind. The song’s simple lyrics include this line: “To know, know, know him is to love, love, love him and I do.”⁴ Not exactly the poetic language of Isaiah but nevertheless applicable to our topic today.

Like many of you, I was moved by the words of Elder Donald L. Hallstrom in General Conference. Remember the story of his six-year-old daughter’s first-grade writing assignment on Halloween? The teacher passed out papers with a picture of a witch and her cauldron at the top of the page and an accompanying question that said, “You have just drunk a cup of the witch’s brew. What happened to you?”

Do you remember the childlike, faith-filled, yet profound response? She wrote: “I will die and I will be in heaven. I will like it there. I would love it because it is the best place to be because you are with your Heavenly Father.”⁵

I couldn’t help but wonder how our own children or grandchildren would have responded to that same question. In order to have that kind of trust in eternal life, we need to come to know our Father and love Him and His Only Begotten Son now. “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”⁶

What do we know about our Heavenly Father that can help increase our love for Him? There are clues throughout the scriptures. For example, we learn in the Doctrine and Covenants essential virtues or attributes for maintaining priesthood power and influence. They include “persuasion,

... long-suffering, ... gentleness ... meekness, ... love unfeigned; ... kindness, ... charity towards all men, and ... virtue.”⁷ Because Heavenly Father is the personification of priesthood power, we know these attributes are embodied in Him.

Our righteous earthly fathers and husbands can serve as types of our Heavenly Father if we have “eyes to see, and ears to hear.”⁸ Let me share a couple of personal examples. I was blessed to grow up in a home with a darling daddy. He was the kind of person who exuded kindness, gentleness, meekness and love unfeigned. Children and young people not only felt safe in his presence, but they also wanted to be with him. I remember well the doorbell ringing on more than one occasion—usually during dinner—and a bunch of neighborhood kids standing on our doorstep asking, “Can Mr. Kjar come out to play?” He was the dad who would give wheelbarrow rides across our front lawn on summer nights when he was gathering lawn clippings. He was the one who taught the kids in our neighborhood games like kick-the-can, and he made the games fun as he joined in and played with us.

Because I absolutely adored my daddy, I remember forcing myself to like otherwise disgusting things like tomatoes, mustard, and even buttermilk because I knew he loved those things! He took his role seriously as a prime gospel teacher in our home. He loved the Book of Mormon and shared it freely in our home and with anyone who had a listening ear. He followed the living prophets and understood the importance of complete fidelity and loving our mother. He also understood the importance of qualifying for priesthood power and worthily using the gift and power of the priesthood often to bless our family and many others.

The older I get, the more I am convinced that parenthood is a key to understanding Heavenly Father’s love for us. After all, what better way to learn the depth and breadth of His love for us than learning to love and sacrifice for the children He lends to us?

There is no doubt in the minds of any of our six children that their beloved dad, Craig, would do anything for any of them at any time. And that goes for our grandchildren and neighbors as well. Just recently he was found once again serving with love. Although he was recovering from the surgery he had on his foot earlier in the week, he mowed the lawn of our daughter and son-in-law just days later while they cared for Lizie in the hospital. It could be said of him that he truly has “charity towards all.”⁹

We have a grandson who is losing his baby teeth, and he is convinced that Grandpa is the only one capable of removing his teeth in a way that doesn’t hurt. He trusts him implicitly, as do I! President David O. McKay used to teach, “To be trusted is a greater compliment than to be loved.”¹⁰ It can be lovingly said of Craig as was said of the Savior, “We love him, because He first loved us.”¹¹

Perhaps if we regularly remind ourselves that our loving Heavenly Father is just that, a loving Heavenly Father, we can view our mortal challenges as an opportunity to draw near to Him and for Him to draw near to us.

I will never forget hearing Filipino Primary children sing, “Heavenly Father, are you really there? And do you hear and answer ev’ry child’s prayer?”¹² It was two months after the most devastating typhoon on record in the Philippines, and I was visiting in the hardest-hit area,

Tacloban. Earlier that morning, we had seen the piles of rubble stacked as high as could be reached and as far as one could see in every direction. Yet, when the children sang, they did not sing with feelings of doubt or hopelessness. In fact, the experience was quite the opposite. They sang with hope and love and trust in their Heavenly Father, and their eyes shone with the light that can be found in every child of God.

As I listened, I felt assured that the answer to those beautiful lyrics was surely, “Yes! I do hear and answer EVERY child’s prayer.” If we really want to get to know and love our Heavenly Father, we need look no further than the life of His Only Begotten and perfect Son, Jesus Christ. Never is the scripture “by their fruits ye shall know them”¹³ more applicable.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland taught: “In all that Jesus came to say and do, including and especially in His atoning suffering and sacrifice, He was showing us who and what God our Eternal Father is like, how completely devoted He is to His children in every age and nation. In word and in deed Jesus was trying to reveal and make personal to us the true nature of His Father, our Father in Heaven.

“He did this at least in part because then and now all of us need to know God more fully in order to love Him more deeply and obey Him more completely.”¹⁴

In our most recent General Conference, President Henry B. Eyring spoke of two converts who wrote to him separately, but within a relatively short period of time, sharing their testimonies but also confiding a feeling of their love of the Lord lessening—as well as the Lord’s love for them.¹⁵

President Spencer W. Kimball gave relevant counsel for such situations— counsel that I have tried to use in my own life: “I find that when I get casual in my relationships with divinity and when it seems that no divine ear is listening and no divine voice is speaking, that I am far, far away. If I immerse myself in the scriptures the distance narrows and the spirituality returns. I find myself loving more intensely those whom I must love with all my heart and mind and strength, and loving them more, I find it is easier to abide their counsel.”

He continued, “I find that all I need to do to increase my love for my Maker and the gospel and the Church and my brethren is to read the scriptures.”¹⁶

I remember a time in the mission field when I was feeling distanced from my Heavenly Father. I was surprised that I could be serving a mission and feel that way, but I had let myself become overwhelmed by little things that needed my attention. I was merely going through the motions of scripture study.

About that time, my inspired husband and faithful mission president invited the missionaries to read the Book of Mormon again. He asked that they read it this time underlining every reference to Jesus Christ—His words, attributes, names, titles, and doctrine. I accepted this challenge and found it to be life changing. Doing so drew me closer to my Heavenly Father and assured me of His love—as manifested in the life, attributes, and teachings of His Beloved Son. I quickly came to realize that the Son was revealing to me the attributes of our Father, and I wanted to be more

like Them. The more I knew of Them the more I came to truly love Them. I found Elder Holland's words to be true:

“Jesus did not come to improve God's view of man nearly so much as He came to improve man's view of God and to plead with them to love their Heavenly Father as He has always and will always love them....

“So feeding the hungry, healing the sick, rebuking hypocrisy, pleading for faith—this was Christ showing us the way of the Father, He who is ‘merciful and gracious, slow to anger, long-suffering and full of goodness.’ In His life and especially in His death, Christ was declaring, ‘This is God's compassion I am showing you, as well as that of my own.’ In the perfect Son's manifestation of the perfect Father's care, ... we see ultimate meaning in the declaration: ‘For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’”¹⁷

The purpose of Relief Society is to help women prepare for the blessings of eternal life. One way to do this is to increase our faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement. The more our faith in the Savior increases, the more we come to know and love our Heavenly Father.

Why is it so important for us to come to know, love, and trust our Heavenly Father? God's life is family life. We are His children. No wonder that “nothing is going to startle us more when we pass through the veil to the other side than to realize how well we know our Father [in Heaven] and how familiar His face is to us.”¹⁸ In this life, we are learning the lessons He wants us to learn and making choices that will qualify us to return to live with Him.

An unforgettable General Conference moment occurred for me in the April 1988 General Conference. President Ezra Taft Benson was our aging prophet, the same age President Thomas S. Monson is today—88 years old. Although President Benson was frail and it was difficult for him to speak, his words sank deep into my heart when he said, “When we put God first, all other things fall into their proper place or drop out of our lives. Our love of the Lord will govern the claims for our affection, the demands on our time, the interests we pursue, and the order of our priorities.”¹⁹

As sister leaders in the Church, we often hear sisters' concerns. One universal concern is the difficulty of determining priorities among the everyday pressures of life. Because most of us struggle with this concern, we might ask ourselves the following:

What difference would putting Heavenly Father first make in my daily life?

Would putting Him first help me “lay aside the things of this world, and seek for the things of a better”?²⁰

Would putting Him first help me keep my covenants with more exactness and more cheerfulness?

Would putting Him first make it easier for me to delight in the Sabbath day?

Would putting Him first help me to follow His chosen servants more willingly, even when what they ask seems difficult and even when they may make mistakes as do all human beings?

Would putting Him first help me see His children through His eyes rather than through my own impaired mortal vision?

When we put Him first, we become one with Him in charity and can “find ... strength beyond [our] own”²¹ to serve His beloved children. Why keep the first great commandment? President Benson gave these profound promises, “Men and women who turn their lives over to God will find out that he can make a lot more out of their lives than they can. He will deepen their joys, expand their vision, quicken their minds, strengthen their muscles, lift their spirits, multiply their blessings, increase their opportunities, comfort their souls, raise up friends, and pour out peace. Whoever will lose his life in God will find he has eternal life.”²² What precious promises to live for!

The second great commandment: Therefore, what?

The second great commandment, to me, is really the “therefore, what” of the first great commandment? To love Heavenly Father with all our heart, soul, and mind. It is a call to action. What is the second commandment? “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”²³ And who are our neighbors? Those within the walls of our own homes, our extended families, ward and community families, all qualify as our neighbors.

As parents and grandparents, nothing touches us quite as deeply as seeing our own children or grandchildren serving and loving each other. Our daughters and daughter-in-law are experts at this. With a mostly absentee mother and grandmother for many years, they have helped each other through pregnancies, miscarriages, sicknesses, and accidents and they have loved each other’s children as their own. It warms my heart like nothing else. The scripture in 3 John comes to mind, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.”²⁴

Recently one of our daughters taught me something powerful. I was telling her about some darling young single adult sisters who figured out that visiting teaching is all about friendship. My daughter looked at me and said, “Mom, that’s how I used to feel about visiting teaching, but I don’t feel that way anymore.” (I have to admit, I started to panic.)

She then said, “I have learned that if I am really visiting teaching in the way I think Heavenly Father would want me to do it, I have to view the women on my list as my ‘sisters’ rather than just ‘friends.’ I will do just about anything for my sisters!”

That lesson rang true and captures the essence of what it means to love our neighbors as ourselves.

The purpose of Relief Society is to help prepare women for the blessings of eternal life. One way to fulfill this purpose is to strengthen individuals and families through ordinances and covenants. We have covenanted in the waters of baptism to always remember Him, meaning our Savior, Jesus Christ. Is there a better way to strengthen individuals and families than always remembering Him doing the things He would do to help others?

One of my favorite Primary songs is “He Sent His Son.” The last part of that song invites us to “have faith, have hope, live like his Son, help others on their way.”²⁵ We demonstrate that we truly love our Heavenly Father by following the example of His Beloved Son.

I have been blessed by Christ-like family and friends who have helped me on my way, showing by their actions that they keep the second great commandment. And it doesn’t always mean doing big things. For example:

Years ago one of my “sisters” showed up on my doorstep with a rose in her hand on the day our son left for his mission to faraway Poland. Her own son had gone the year before, and she knew exactly what my mommy heart was feeling that day. I loved her for it!

Another “sister” has called on numerous occasions—particularly when she knows our family has been under stress with illness or newborns or heavy Church callings—and cheerfully said, “I’m on my way to the grocery store. Do you need me to pick up some milk, eggs, or anything else while I’m out and about?”

Without fail, another “sister” consistently wrote a little personal note of encouragement on a 3x5 card, attached a package of gum or some other little treat, and left it on the front doorstep whenever one of our children gave a talk or participated in a school program, athletic competition, or whatever. What a blessing to our children to know that someone beside Mom and Dad was cheering them on!

On a particularly difficult day, I answered my door to find one of my “sisters” asking if she could borrow a potato. The minute I saw her, I dissolved into a puddle of tears. She opened her arms and hugged me, loving me without judging me.

Numerous loving texts or phone messages prompted by the Holy Ghost have been simple ways I have been loved by my neighbors as you have been I am sure.

Other examples? Think of how much love it took for another of my “sisters” to not only care for our children when we were out of town for a week, but also to potty train our two-year-old while we were away!

I have a sister-in-law who works full-time as a schoolteacher and spends her one day off every week helping my aging mother with laundry, shopping, errands, and a myriad of other things! She is truly an angel.

My angel sister from Houston (this one I am actually related to) used up her sky miles recently to help my mother following surgery, to care for her own daughter and five grandchildren at the birth of a new baby, and then to come and support me when I talked in the general women’s session of conference.

My other angel sister (also a sibling) provided care on an almost daily basis for 18 months while our mother transitioned into widowhood.

When our daughter Mandi was on bed rest prior to delivering twins prematurely at 30 weeks, and with a mother thousands of miles away in Korea, Mandi was the recipient of numerous loving acts from many ward and sibling “sisters.” One I remember her telling us about happened a couple of days before Valentine’s Day. This sweet sister must have mentally walked in our daughter’s shoes or, in this case, must have imagined herself on bed rest. She went to the store and bought a number of Valentine’s Day cards and treats for Mandi to choose from so she wouldn’t find herself without something to give her sweetheart on Valentine’s Day.

May I share a few other examples of what it means to love our neighbor as ourselves? One sister told of a time several years ago when she was going through a difficult divorce. Her visiting teacher, a “sister,” knew what it meant to keep that second great commandment. She remembers: “One of the sweetest things my visiting teacher did was watch over me. I remember one Sunday I was playing the piano for Primary, and the song we were practicing was ‘Love Is Spoken Here.’ This sweet sister was watching from the sidelines (I have no idea what her calling was at the time or why she was even in the room), but she saw how difficult it was for me emotionally to play that song. Like an angel from above, I felt her slip beside me on the piano bench and take over playing the song without skipping a beat, as I dashed off to the bathroom for an emotional breakdown. I can’t remember how long it took me to gain my composure, but it didn’t matter to this angel. Her ‘first observe, then serve’ actions rescued me that day.”²⁶

I love another story of a young woman named Alicia. As a teenager, this young woman “had drifted far from the Church, but later she felt stirrings to return. She often visited her grandfather in a retirement home on Sundays. On one of those days she decided to attend a Relief Society meeting, but [saw] no empty seats. As she was about to leave, a woman motioned to her and scooted over to make room for her on her chair. Alicia said: “I wondered what the woman would think of me. I was covered with body piercings, and I smelled of smoke. But she didn’t seem to mind; she simply made a place for me at her side.” Alicia, heartened by this woman’s charity, returned to activity” and served a mission.²⁷

Think of the far-reaching effect our actions have on our children as they see us loving our neighbor as ourselves. Recently, a beloved niece posted this on Instagram. These are Julia’s two little daughters, Annie (age 5) and Kate (age 3). Notice their Sunday dresses on top of their pajamas and their sparkling Sunday shoes. They are making pretend soup for a pretend funeral meal, complete with tinfoil on top! Where did they learn this? From their mother, of course, who learned it from her own mother, who has provided many delicious meals for my own family.

After seeing this cute post, I quickly sent off an email to Julia acknowledging that these darling little girls surely learned this from their mommy. I jokingly suggested we induct Miss Annie and Miss Kate into the Relief Society Hall of Fame as honorary members! Surely they set a record for being the youngest sisters to make a funeral meal. The next day I heard back from Julia, who said: “In fact, last night I was indeed making a dessert (with Miss Annie as my helper; Kate had gone to bed) for the funeral of a sweet lady who had passed away in our ward. It was just Annie and I and a sweet one-on-one moment.

“As we were talking back and forth about death and eternal families, I said, ‘Doesn’t it make you feel good to do something for someone? Especially for their family who are so sad with the loss of their mother, grandmother, sister, and friend?’

“She then plainly and most sincerely said, ‘Yes, like what I did last night making soup with Kate?’

“‘Yes, that was so fun, and I was so proud of your thoughtfulness,’ I replied. “She then continued, ‘I love to do it. I think I’ve pretty much loved it since I was a baby! I think that’s what I want to do when I grow up: be a servant! Everybody likes to be served!’

“... So Miss Annie doesn’t want to be a teacher, doctor, or vet but rather a servant— going about doing good.”²⁸

How I love the wonderful sisters in this Church of every age. I am grateful for those who courageously go about doing good and those who encourage others to do the same in both word and deed. Thank you to mommies and schoolteachers and den mothers and Activity Day leaders and piano teachers, Young Women leaders and coaches and grandmas and Primary teachers who mentor and help children and youth learn to keep the two great commandments.

Back to Lizzie’s story: I can’t even begin to number the ways or people who have reached out to lift and bless and brighten and serve and serve and serve this little girl and her family during a very stressful and tender time. Here is a one small sample: I clicked a photo with my iPhone in Lizzie’s hospital room. The note is from one of Lizzie’s “neighbors,” Nathan. While Nathan’s mother was making dinner to take to Lizzie’s parents, who were in the hospital 24/7, Nathan, age 11, and his siblings were making cards to deliver to Lizzie along with the dinner.

In case you can’t read the note, here’s what it says: “Dear Eliza, I know you are going through some tough times, but you can fight through them and be strong. Remember, Eliza, you are in our prayers, and I know you are going to get better. Love, Nathan.” Now what 11-year-old boy writes something like that unless he has been well taught by loving parents?

Sometimes a family history story can serve as a tool as we seek to raise children like Nathan. These stories can serve as a great resource for helping our children—and ourselves— develop a desire to keep the second great commandment. I share one such cherished story from my own family history.

In Denmark in 1873, my great-great-grandfather stepped on a rusty nail, got blood poisoning, and was in serious condition in the hospital for 26 weeks. This left the burden of providing for the family of five children to his wife, Karoline. Although she worked as hard as she could to provide for her family, she was unable to make enough money to pay the rent. After the rent was several months behind, the landlord told her she would have to move unless she could pay all that was due.

Feeling overwhelmed and very tired, Karoline wept, but in faith she gathered her five little children to kneel with her in prayer to petition the Lord for His help, testifying to her children that “the Lord will hear our prayer.” She then offered a fervent prayer and told the Lord she had done everything she could but was unable to pay the rent. Then she humbly asked for His help.

Upon finishing her prayer, she said, “I have a feeling that somebody will be inspired by the Lord to give us help.”

The next day was a day of heavy snow, and two of Karoline’s little boys, one of them my great-grandfather, stood looking through the front window. They saw a big man dressed in what looked like a uniform coming across the front yard. They called to their mother to come and look. She was afraid the man was a police officer coming to serve her with a notice to move out because she had not paid her rent. The man walked up the inner stairway and knocked on the door. Karoline opened it. The man said, “Is this the place where Mrs. Kjar lives?” She nodded affirmatively. He then introduced himself and explained, “My name is Johan Nicolai Madvig. Last night I had a dream from the Lord in which I was told that there was a poor, hard-working woman living in Fiolsthede 29 on the second story in the rear who was in need. Now I came here to help you. How much money do you need?”

Karoline reluctantly told him how much she owed the landlord. The stranger gave her the needed money and said, “If you ever need any more money, don’t be afraid to ask me.” He then gave her his address.

Overwhelmed with gratitude, Karoline thanked him for his great kindness.

“Don’t thank me,” replied the man. “Thank the Lord, for this dream that I had came from Him.”

After the generous man left, Karoline gathered all the children to kneel in prayer again. She thanked the Lord for His kindness in inspiring someone to help them. Then she said to her children, “May you ever remember this testimony of what has happened to us today. For it is indeed a real revelation from God.... Blessed be the name of God and of His Son, Jesus Christ, forever!”

Many of you share this same kind of heart. You are like the good Samaritan who go out of your way to love your neighbors as yourselves. Many have heeded the recent call to kneel in prayer and ask Heavenly Father what you can do to help His children— especially those who are among the 60 million refugees throughout the world. We have been deeply moved as some have already shared what they have done or are doing to selflessly love their neighbors— even those who may seem as strangers to them. Thank you for keeping the two great commandments—loving your neighbors to demonstrate your love for Heavenly Father!

That is what Relief Society is all about. Our purpose is to help prepare women for the blessing of eternal life. One way we do this is by working in unity to help those in need. Working in unity with whom? With our Heavenly Father and our Savior, Jesus Christ, by following the promptings of the Holy Ghost to love our neighbors— our sisters and our brothers, His sons and His daughters, as ourselves.

If we were to choose only one attribute to try to develop in order to become most like our Heavenly Father, it would surely be charity. Our beloved prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, has described charity this way:

“I do not ... have in mind the relief of the suffering through the giving of our substance. That, of course, is necessary and proper. ... I have in mind the charity that manifests itself when we are tolerant of others and lenient toward their actions, the kind of charity that forgives, the kind of charity that is patient.

“I have in mind the charity that impels us to be sympathetic, compassionate, and merciful, not only in times of sickness and affliction and distress but also in times of weakness or error on the part of others.

“There is a serious need for the charity that gives attention to those who are unnoticed, hope to those who are discouraged, aid to those who are afflicted. True charity is love in action.”²⁹

Lizie’s hospital experience provides an interesting metaphor for the depth and breadth of our Heavenly Father’s pure love, or charity, for us. As her hospital stay wore on, Lizie not only wearied of being poked and prodded to do things that caused her tremendous pain, but she also began to be fearful and angry. Interestingly, all her anger was directed at her loving parents, who Lizie must have felt were betraying her. After all, from what she understood in her eight-year-old mind, weren’t her parents supposed to protect her from experiencing pain and from the injustices she was being forced to endure?

But because Lizie’s parents loved her so deeply and unselfishly, nothing Lizie did could separate her from the love they had for this precious daughter. Though her pain and fear of pain caused her to act out aggressively against the two of them, they were able to keep the big picture of hope, healing, and returning home in mind even when Lizie’s pain and illness temporarily obscured her view of the hoped-for goal.

Perhaps, we too, are sometimes distracted by the pains of life that obscure our eternal perspective. But we are assured in the scriptures that “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”³⁰

My beloved sisters and brothers, I am not sure what our experience will be when we see our loving Father in Heaven and the Savior again, but I hope our experience is similar to what Elder Melvin J. Ballard described: “I saw, seated on a raised platform, the most glorious being my eyes have ever beheld or that I ever conceived existed in all the eternal worlds.

“As I approached to be introduced, He arose and stepped towards me with extended arms, and He smiled as He softly spoke my name. If I shall live to be a million years old, I shall never forget that smile. He took me into His arms and kissed me, pressed me to His bosom, and blessed me, until the marrow of my bones seemed to melt! ... The feeling that I had in the presence of Him who hath all things in His hands, to have His love, His affection, and His blessing was such that if I can receive that of which I had but a foretaste, I would give all that I am, all that I ever hope to be, to feel what I then felt!”³¹

I testify that as we keep the two great commandments, loving our Heavenly Father with all our heart, soul, and mind and our neighbors as ourselves, we will qualify for a similarly exquisite experience. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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- ¹ Ezra Taft Benson, "Jesus Christ—Gifts and Expectations," in *Speeches of the Year, 1974* (1975), 313.
- ² Matthew 22:35–39.
- ³ *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson* (2014), 39.
- ⁴ Phil Spector, "To Know Him Is to Love Him," recorded by The Teddy Bears.
- ⁵ Donald L. Hallstrom, "I Am a Child of God," *Ensign or Liahona*, Apr. 2016.
- ⁶ John 17:3.
- ⁷ Doctrine and Covenants 121:41, 42, 45.
- ⁸ Deuteronomy 29:4; see also Isaiah 6:10; 2 Nephi 16:10.
- ⁹ Doctrine and Covenants 121:45
- ¹⁰ *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: David O. McKay* (2003), 56.
- ¹¹ 1 John 4:19.
- ¹² "A Child's Prayer," *Children's Songbook*, 12.
- ¹³ Matthew 7:20; 3 Nephi 14:20.
- ¹⁴ Jeffrey R. Holland, "The Grandeur of God," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2003, 70.
- ¹⁵ See Henry B. Eyring, "Where Two or Three Are Gathered in My Name," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2016.
- ¹⁶ *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* (2006), 67.
- ¹⁷ Jeffrey R. Holland, "The Grandeur of God," 72.
- ¹⁸ Ezra Taft Benson, "Jesus Christ—Gifts and Expectations," 313.
- ¹⁹ Ezra Taft Benson, "The Great Commandment—Love the Lord," *Ensign*, May 1988
- ²⁰ Doctrine and Covenants 25:10.
- ²¹ "Lord, I Would Follow Thee," *Hymns*, no. 220.
- ²² Ezra Taft Benson, "Jesus Christ—Gifts and Expectations."
- ²³ Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 19:19; Matthew 22:39; Mark 12:31; Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8; see also Matthew 5:43–44; Luke 10:27; Doctrine and Covenants 59:6.
- ²⁴ 3 John 1:4.
- ²⁵ "He Sent His Son," *Children's Songbook*, 35.
- ²⁶ Email from Marsha Decker.
- ²⁷ Kathleen H. Hughes, "That We May All Sit Down in Heaven Together," *Ensign or Liahona*, Oct. 2005.
- ²⁸ Email from Julia Crosby.
- ²⁹ Thomas S. Monson, "Charity Never Faileth," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 124–25.
- ³⁰ 1 Corinthians 2:9.
- ³¹ Melvin J. Ballard, "I Know That He Lives," *Ensign*, Dec. 2014.