



A Message from the Quorum of Twelve Apostles

GRAB HOLD OF THE SPIRIT AND LET GOD TAKE US ALL THE WAY

Making the most of our service to God is not always a matter of constantly pushing ourselves. When we fully embrace the Spirit of God, we have limitless opportunities and power, and the Church is everything that it was intended to be. In fact, the term “limitless” in ordinary context is actually quite limited by human and natural boundaries and pales in comparison to the “limitless” we know as followers of Christ. In so many ways, the Church has been receiving encouragement from the Lord to prepare ourselves for the unlimited blessings He has in store for us. Frequently, we hear the question: What does it mean to prepare? Is God not just asking us to allow His Spirit to make the most of us and His church?

In the word of God, we encounter many **individuals** who faced that same challenge. Although some of them were weighed down by overrating their own human frailties, these men ultimately accepted that call. When we review their stories, we almost always focus on the **featured individuals**, to name a few: Noah, Joshua, Gideon, Nephi, Moroni. But every one of these remarkable leaders was accompanied by his “battalion” of “soldiers” whose faithfulness proved to be essential to the mission.

What common factor did God seek in all of these groups? A powerful, life-determining, embrace of the Spirit and truth that backed their respective leaders. Through **unity** in **believing** the **word of God**, whether from recorded scriptures or from prophecies and inspiration, a resultant trust in God’s promises allowed them to be blessed magnificently. The faithfulness of the groups determined their expectations and their behaviors such that each member also became all that they ever could hope to be in a given time and for a given purpose.

Let’s look a bit closer at some of their stories.

Noah was told to prepare for a restart of mankind as God would wipe out the entire human race with an overwhelming flood while sparing Noah, his family, and all the beasts of the earth in an ark which Noah had to build to God's specifications. God's plan involved an unprecedented event of incalculable manifestation, but Noah heard the voice of God and obeyed. In so doing, he became a standard of faith for the ages. Meanwhile, Noah's sons and their wives were challenged to believe that Noah indeed was receiving God's instructions, that an earth-covering flood was imminent, and that the massive boat he was building in the middle of nowhere would actually hold together. No doubt they shared in enduring scathing mockery toward their father from an unbelieving public. Still, it was one thing to go along with the very old man while he built the ark, but their true test came a week before it started to rain when the order came from God to prepare the animals and provisions and to board the ark - even before there was any evidence of the impending doom. (Matthew 24:38-39 tells us that life was as usual right up to the start of the rain.) A week later was too late, but they had been saved because of their belief and obedience. Genesis 9:19 states: *These are the three sons of Noah: and of them was the whole earth overspread.* Through their belief, the sons of Noah and their wives became the fulfillment of God's plan, and the earth was repopulated. Was it any less important for them to fulfill their potential than it was for Noah?

As Joshua led the children of Israel into Canaan, miracles accompanied them. Joshua prepared the people and God prepared Joshua. But Jericho was totally shut up, sealed, and protected by formidable walls. God promised victory to Joshua, but strangely, His instructions for the people seemed to have nothing to do with tearing down walls or combatting defenders. Instead, they were all about unity, patience, and obedience in following meticulous instructions for seven days during which all the people were forbidden to speak a word or to make any sounds with their voices. Here was a multitude of thousands mandated to silence (except for specifically designated music) every day for seven days. Picture yourself amongst the crowd. Wouldn't it have been too tempting to utter a word to a friend or family member at some point? Would you have been able to keep the faith in silence? But they did it, all of them, and upon the command and their united shout, the walls fell down flat. Here again, we see that the fulfillment by the people - every single person - was equally essential as the faithfulness of Joshua in taking the city. They had been all that they could be. (See Joshua chapters 1-6).

Gideon lived in tough times for Israel, tough times brought upon them by the Midianites due to their evildoings before the Lord. (See Judges 6:1 - 8:28). God's angel approached Gideon greeting him, *The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour... Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?* Gideon's answer was basically the equivalent of, "Who? Me?" And we are familiar with all that followed as Gideon tested the Lord again and again before he would accept the challenge to realize his potential for the Lord. When he finally accepted and took the lead

of Israel's army, we remember that God pared down his army to just 300 men whom he would lead down to meet the host of *the Midianites and the Amalikites and all the children of the east who lay along the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude*. It is those 300 that we consider today. What faith they must have had to be willing to continue forward to meet that numberless host of the enemy! Certainly, they had no idea what sort of tactics could overcome the gross disadvantage of their small number. Still they followed Gideon and found victory. Those 300 along with Gideon became much more than they could have ever hoped to be, and, by the power of God, it was plenty.

Nephi's is a little different story that begins with the account of his father Lehi, a descendant of Joseph, son of Jacob. Lehi was a prophet in Jerusalem and a contemporary of other prophets such as Jeremiah and Ezekiel who, like Lehi, prophesied the demise of Jerusalem to an audience unwilling to heed them. The rejection of Lehi was so extreme that his life was targeted, and *he departed into the wilderness. And he left his house, and the land of his inheritance, and his gold, and his silver, and his precious things, and took nothing with him, save it were his family, and provisions, and tents, and departed into the wilderness* (1 Nephi 2:4). Lehi's "battalion" consisted of his wife, his sons, their wives and in-laws, and a man named Zoram.

In saving these people from the destruction of Jerusalem, God was implementing His great plan for mankind that required delivering this remnant of Joseph to a very special but unknown promised land lying far away across an uncharted wilderness and a vast ocean. Complicating matters were two great issues: 1) while Lehi and his young son Nephi were firm believers, unbelief and rebellious episodes frequently rose among others in the group. And 2) they really didn't know where they were going or how to get there. At face value, this seemed to be an unsolvable dilemma, but Lehi and Nephi remained undeterred and continually received revelation from God to support their faith. Still the lack of unity and belief within their group was problematic for God to achieve His purposes.

One morning, having received the commandment to start their journey into the wilderness, Lehi arose to find *upon the ground a round ball of curious workmanship; and it was of fine brass. And within the ball were two spindles; and the one pointed the way whither we should go into the wilderness* (1 Nephi 16:10). *And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld the pointers which were in the ball, that **they did work according to the faith and diligence and heed** which we did give unto them* (1 Nephi 16:28).

For comparison to a natural compass, anyone who has made serious use of a compass knows the following:

1. There are two pointers

2. One pointer always points North and South
3. The other pointer is set by the user toward the next point in the journey. This requires:
 - a. Having a map to reference where the user is currently located.
 - b. Knowing what is the direction to the next point as an angle to the North-South direction.

However, with the ball that Lehi found (ball or director, later named Liahona, referred to as the compass prepared by the Lord in 1 Nephi 18:12), God took care of items 3, 3a, and 3b because Lehi and his group could not use this special compass without God's help. Therefore (and we know the story) **traveling the best routes and finally reaching the promised land was fully dependent upon the faith and diligence and heed maintained by the group.**

This may be our most intriguing example of leaders needing their followers' implicit trust in order to be able to reap the benefits of God's promise to them. Nephi was consistently faithful, but, anytime the entire group did not align with him, Liahona would not provide directions for their journey, and they instantly found themselves lost with no idea how to proceed. Effectively, Liahona served as a physical tool which measured the faith and diligence of the group as a whole. For some of them, unity and faith came reluctantly only as a matter of self-preservation when they saw the "tool" going haywire.

Let's apply this example to ourselves today as we are still part of that Plan of God which is in progress. As recipients of the Restored Gospel and *The Book of Mormon*, we are on another leg of the journey Nephi led centuries ago. God's messaging repeatedly calls upon us to prepare our hearts. He calls upon us to rise to His standards in unity and righteousness. A revelation from January 2021 states: *See now what is before you and know that your heart must be sure and your heart must be right and you must be anchored, anchored, anchored to the principles of My Son, Jesus Christ, the Rock of Salvation that was given through Him and the sacrifice! Are you there? Is your vision clear? Are your eyes focused? Is there love in your heart or is there malice? Cleanse it now that you may see and you may be part, thus saith the Lord.*

If we had the Liahona with us today, we would be able to see the pointers line up to direct us when we all answer the questions above: "Yes, yes, yes, and yes!" We don't have the Liahona, but we can use these questions to guide us directly. Can we answer "Yes" every time? If any of us struggles to honestly reply, perhaps Moroni's final advice will help:

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; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in

nowise deny the power of God. And again, if ye by the grace of God are perfect in Christ, and deny not his power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy, without spot. (Moroni 10:32-33)

God wants all of us to be united... perfected in Christ, free of all ungodliness, blanketed with His grace, trusting in His power, sanctified, holy...so that we can complete our mission. Let us hold tightly to the Spirit of God and take the whole journey under His power.

In the love of God,

The Quorum of Twelve Apostles

James Crudup, Joel Gehly, Pete Giannetti, John Griffith, Scott Griffith, Paul Liberto, Thomas M. Liberto, Leonard A. Lovalvo, Frank Natoli, Paul A. Palmieri, Peter Scolaro, Jerry Valenti

To learn more about *The Church of Jesus Christ*, with Headquarters in Monongahela, PA, please visit our website. The World Operations Center for world-wide missionary efforts is in Greensburg, PA.

www.thechurchofjesuschrist.org