

# Eternal Values and Personal Growth

A GUIDE ON YOUR JOURNEY TO  
SPIRITUAL, EMOTIONAL, AND SOCIAL WELLNESS

Allen E. Bergin

BYU Studies

Provo, Utah

2002

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*Dedicated to  
Elder Neal A. Maxwell*

*Who has inspired a generation of social scientists in their  
efforts to harmonize gospel doctrine and academic scholarship*

*For  
My Grandchildren*

*Jacob, Stephani, Gary, Meredith, James, Adam, Chelsie,  
Mariesa, Sam, Natasha, Leigh, Christian, McKaela, and . . .*



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# Acknowledgments

This work began in the late 1970s, when I introduced into the BYU curriculum Psychology 353: LDS Perspectives and Psychology. The content of that course has been evolving ever since. Crystallizing it into the present volume has been a culminating experience of my career.

I owe special acknowledgment to four outstanding individuals who made unique contributions to my thought and work over the past 25 years, when I turned my professional focus toward the gospel and mental health. During the winter and spring of 1977, five of us met weekly for five months under the auspices of the BYU Values Institute, discussing and debating ideas and practices that might form a framework for a gospel-centered approach to human behavior. These colleagues' influence has continued over the years as their own personal programs of inquiry, application, and publication have flourished. These persons and the chapters they especially influenced me in are Truman G. Madsen (identity), C. Terry Warner (integrity), Victor L. Brown Jr. (intimacy), and Stephen R. Covey (power). The agency chapter emerged from my own special concern with that topic.

Others who were especially helpful during the formative period of this work include Gary R. Collins (former President, American Association of Christian Counselors), Dillon K. Inouye (BYU professor of instructional science), Robert J. Lovinger (professor emeritus of psychology, Central Michigan University), Ann N. Madsen (BYU professor of ancient scripture), and H. Newton Malony (professor emeritus of psychology, Fuller Theological Seminary). My early mentors also had a continuing influence: Albert Bandura (professor of psychology at Stanford University) and the late Carl R. Rogers (world leader in psychotherapy). Erik H. Erikson, psychoanalyst extraordinaire, now deceased, also had a profound influence through his writings and two telephone conversations. I credit him with fundamental concepts that appear in several chapters. Many additional influential writers, thinkers, researchers, practitioners, and Church leaders are acknowledged in the text.

My students in LDS Perspectives and Psychology classes have been a great source of inspiration. Many of their personal experiences, published with permission, give real-life expression to the themes of this work. Their responsiveness, intelligence, and spiritual openness to change have been a continuing stimulus and inspiration. I love them and am indebted to them.

It should also be noted, especially in a spiritually oriented text like this one, that the experience of serving in BYU wards and stakes for ten of my twenty-seven years at BYU provided innumerable enriching associations with students and Church leaders who affected my views of all the themes considered in this work.

My wife of forty-seven years, Marian S. Bergin, a psychotherapist, clinical social worker, and gospel scholar, motivated me to search the scriptures and apply them to adjustment problems. Her tutoring in this area has taken my understanding of human experience far beyond what it otherwise would have been.

The influence of Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles is mentioned in the dedication. His public and private encouragement, friendship, and inspiration have been critically important in helping me maintain the motivation, courage, and vision necessary for such a work. He is a beloved friend and mentor.

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Although the majority of the content of this book is mine, several colleagues assisted me. Their names are noted below and at the beginning of each chapter to which they contributed. The final product is an integration of our joint efforts for which I am solely responsible. These colleagues' contributions have been, without question, essential to bringing this work to fruition. My daughter Sue Bergin has been an inspiration and an indispensable asset as editor, and Karen Todd at BYU Studies sensitively and creatively finalized the manuscript. Because of waning health and energy, I had to depend on all of them a great deal, and I extend to them my indebtedness and sincere gratitude. Without their generous and intelligent efforts, this book would not have been completed, and it would not have the breadth, depth, clarity, and balance it contains.

## THE CONTRIBUTORS

This book includes significant contributions from experts in several disciplines. The contributors are all affiliated with Brigham Young University. Their names and the chapters they contributed to are identified below.

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# Introduction

From a Latter-day Saint gospel perspective, spiritual and psychological health depend on understanding our eternal identity, listening to God’s Spirit, living in harmony with the teachings of the gospel, growing in faith, and loving and serving God and our fellow human beings. None of us starts out doing all these things well. We’re each on our own distinct path toward understanding these principles and aligning our behavior with that understanding. “Brian,” a student at Brigham Young University, eloquently described the gap we all experience between what we know and how we behave:

I’m embarrassed to admit how often my ideal and true self is overshadowed by my actions and earthly concerns. I believe that if I can make better decisions in my actions toward others, my shaky self-esteem will improve and others’ opinions will have a negligible effect upon my self-evaluations. With a true eternal perspective, I know I can make my actions correspond more closely to what I know to be my eternal self. I want to tear down the walls that keep my eternal self hemmed in and bring to the surface the loving and open person who is inside this temple of clay.

Brian recorded his insights during a course at BYU called LDS Perspectives and Psychology. I developed the course to improve psychological health using both research and gospel principles. This guide makes more widely available the material covered in that course and adds further discussion, self-study exercises, and supplemental readings.

As members of the Church of Jesus Christ, our highest aspiration is to become united with the Lord—or exalted. Exaltation requires that we become like God, line upon line. This book suggests concrete ways you can tap into gospel truths and secular wisdom to grow spiritually and emotionally. All truth comes from God, but it is arrived at through various channels (Bergin, 1979). Secular revelation comes to sincere scholars and sacred revelation comes to prophets (Lee, 1968; Collins, 1977). Both types of inspiration also come to ordinary truth seekers like most of us. Careful evaluation and spiritual discernment can help us discover, understand, and apply both kinds of revealed truth. In our limited human condition, we never fully comprehend all truth, but we can know enough to save ourselves to a large degree from ignorance, mistakes, and sin.

A spiritual approach to personal change and adjustment reveals why God has placed us in a mortal condition that veils our spiritual perception and forces us to struggle as we discover and apply eternal truths about ourselves. It is comforting to understand that our mundane circumstances have a higher purpose than may be obvious. As Elder Neal A. Maxwell has said, the Lord “will customize the curriculum for each of us” (1974, p. 1). No matter how strange or difficult that curriculum may seem, if we respond with faith and courage, we will eventually see the design of God in it. That is not to say that every harsh reality we confront is the will of God (Alma 14; Kushner, 1981), but rather that God allows us to face injustices, difficult problems, stresses, and evil so that our spirits can enlarge.

Our relationship with God our Heavenly Father, his Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost are crucial in this endeavor. They are devoted to revealing to us spiritual knowledge about ourselves and to helping us apply that knowledge in our quest for eternal life (Moses 1:39). My hope is that this book will lead you toward “becoming a disciple” in both the mortal and eternal sense (Maxwell, 1996).

The five overarching topics for chapters in this book—Identity, Agency, Integrity, Power, and Intimacy—result from an intensive study of the scriptures. Under each of these topics, numerous subtopics are considered, such as true personal identity, self-control, living by spiritual promptings, using power to serve and redeem, the way to Christlike love, development toward celestial life through marriage and family relations, and a value-regulated lifestyle.

Each chapter challenges you to assess your beliefs and your actions and reflect on them, yielding insight that will help you grow and change. If you read carefully and apply the principles presented, you can shed influences that darken your vision. Seeing more clearly, you will find the personal gifts and powers that can improve your relationships, enhance your capacity to love, make your life more joyful, and bring you closer to God.

## WHO CAN BENEFIT

This book is addressed to the cross-section of normal Latter-day Saint young adults, single or married, including those who suffer from the common distresses and obstacles to becoming mature in their ability to grow and cope. It is also useful to younger and older persons. It is not addressed to those with clinically diagnosable mental disorders, but suggestions are made about how such individuals can find professional assistance and integrate it, if they wish, with the self-help outlined in this book.

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book is designed to be useful as a text in an instructor-led course or as a guide for individual self-study. If you're using it on your own, here are suggestions for making the most of your reading and application:

- Go through the book from start to finish; don't skip around. Each chapter builds on the one before it.
- Read the information at the beginning of each chapter to give you a foundation for the exercises at the end of the chapter.
- Before you go on to the next chapter, work through any or all of the exercises at the end of each chapter. They are designed to help you put into practice the theory you've just read about.
- Try to complete this course in sixteen weeks. The following timeline will help you accomplish this.

## Timeline

If you are studying this text on your own, we suggest you complete your reading of the book and self-study journal in a sixteen-week time period—about the same duration as a college semester or a substantial series of counseling sessions. Below is a suggested course outline for the sixteen weeks:

Week 1	Introduction and Chapter 1
Week 2	Chapter 2, first half
Week 3	Chapter 2, second half
Week 4	Chapter 3, first half
Week 5	Chapter 3, second half
Week 6	Chapter 4, first half
Week 7	Chapter 4, second half
Week 8	Chapter 5, first half
Week 9	Chapter 5, second half
Week 10	Chapter 6, first half
Week 11	Chapter 6, second half
Week 12	Chapter 7, first half
Week 13	Chapter 7, second half
Week 14	Chapter 8, first half
Week 15	Chapter 8, second half
Week 16	Chapter 9

# 1 Secular and Sacred Views of Human Nature

## INTRODUCTION

We have many ways of knowing who we are and how we can change for the better. Secular views of human nature, long accepted in the scientific community, supply only part of the picture. We can see the full picture only when we add truth from sacred sources, which gives us an eternal perspective on who we are and who we can become.

In this chapter, we'll cover the following topics:

- What shapes our personalities?
  - Secular theories of personality
  - Spiritually based adjustment and growth
- Seven themes that guide our lives
- Personal development and the life span
- Exercises
  - Personal growth journal
  - Self-study questions
  - Developing a personal value system
- Enrichment
  - Social sciences vs. religion
  - "Becoming a Disciple" by Elder Neal A. Maxwell
  - Selecting a good counselor

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## WHAT SHAPES OUR PERSONALITIES?

The major secular theories of personality and change assume that human beings are shaped by two forces: biology and environment. Some theories emphasize biology while others emphasize environment, but few go much beyond these dual forces (Liebert & Spiegler, 1994). Despite limitations, these theories are valuable because they help us understand the great variety of personalities and behaviors we observe in people.

Consider, for instance, any cross-section of college-age young adults in North America. Such a group will be diverse in scholastic aptitude, athletic talent, artistic ability, political viewpoint, social attitude, religious commitment, spiritual sensitivity, family background, racial/ethnic origin, physical health, emotional stability, personality traits, sexual orientation, social skills, occupational skills, moral responsibility, motivation, life goals, and personal appearance. This variety is especially conspicuous in large urban cities and universities, but it is evident even in more homogeneous groups, such as students at Brigham Young University or within the Church Educational System (CES).

In one of the LDS Perspectives and Psychology classes at BYU-Provo, for example, sharp differences arose regularly between a middle-class white male returned missionary who grew up in a rural area of the Intermountain United States and an urban black female returned missionary who grew up in a Latin American city. Both were devoted to the gospel, but differences in personality and

perspective were dramatic. Equally intense differences showed up between students whose families were intact, healthy, and living an orthodox Latter-day Saint lifestyle and students whose families had been torn by divorce, abuse, or emotional pathology. Even within each of these groups, differences were considerable.

## Secular Theories of Personality

Social scientists have sought for more than a century to understand and explain this diversity, asking questions such as these: What accounts for human diversity and individual differences? How do we accurately describe and understand an individual's personality, adjustment, and relationship experiences? How does personal change occur? Can we facilitate or predict changes?

Decades of research answer these questions in part (Goethals, Worchel & Heatherington, 1999), but it is clear that there is more to human beings than biology and environment can explain (Bergin, 1980a). From a Latter-day Saint gospel perspective, two additional factors must be included in the equation: experiences during premortality and divine influence during mortality. About premortal experience, Elder Neal A. Maxwell has said, "Genes and environment by themselves will never provide an adequate explanation for human differences because there is a third factor in the equation of this life: all that occurred before we came here . . . trailing traits from our lengthy and extensive experience in the premortal existence" (1997, p. 264).

During the one hundred or so years that secular inquiry prevailed (about 1880 to 1980), a few researchers parted with the mainstream to include agency, spirituality, or inspiration in their theories of human behavior. These brilliant thinkers included William James (1902); Carl Jung (1938), Gordon Allport (1950); Abraham Maslow (1971), and Carl Rogers (1980). Their ideas didn't become influential until, beginning in the 1950s, a small movement gradually began to seriously investigate spiritual factors in human behavior (Shafranske, 1996; Richards & Bergin, 1997,

pp. 35–48). Such studies are increasingly common, and their results are heartening. We can now assert with more scientific evidence than ever before that any complete explanation of human behavior must include spiritual influences. (For a more complete review of secular inquiry into personality, see Enrichment 1.)

## Spiritually Based Adjustment and Growth

Our approach to personal change is based on a "theistic world view"—that a supreme being created the earth and its inhabitants (Richards & Bergin, 1997). We will now briefly outline a theory of personality, human adjustment, and therapeutic change that we believe is consistent with the principles and teachings of Jesus Christ.

1. The first principle of this approach is a belief in *theistic realism*—that "God exists, . . . human beings are the creations of God, and there are unseen spiritual processes by which the link between God and humanity is maintained" (Bergin, 1980a, p. 99 and elaborated in Richards & Bergin, 1997, pp. 88–92).
2. The second principle is a belief in spiritual holism—that human beings have both a spirit body and a physical body and cannot be reduced to mere biology.
3. Third, we endorse "epistemological pluralism," which says that human beings can learn truth in a variety of ways, including from authority, reason, sensory experience, intuition, and inspiration from God.
4. Fourth, divine revelation is the fundamental source of all truth. While truth can come to us in all the ways listed above, the standard scriptures, revelation through prophets, and inspiration through personal testimony of the spirit are the more authoritative sources.
5. Fifth, we believe God has revealed a plan to redeem his children through faith in Christ and obedience to divine laws, ordinances, and authority. This plan provides the information we need to live in a way that maximizes possibilities for spiritual, social, and emotional growth.

# A SPIRITUAL FRAMEWORK FOR ADJUSTMENT AND GROWTH

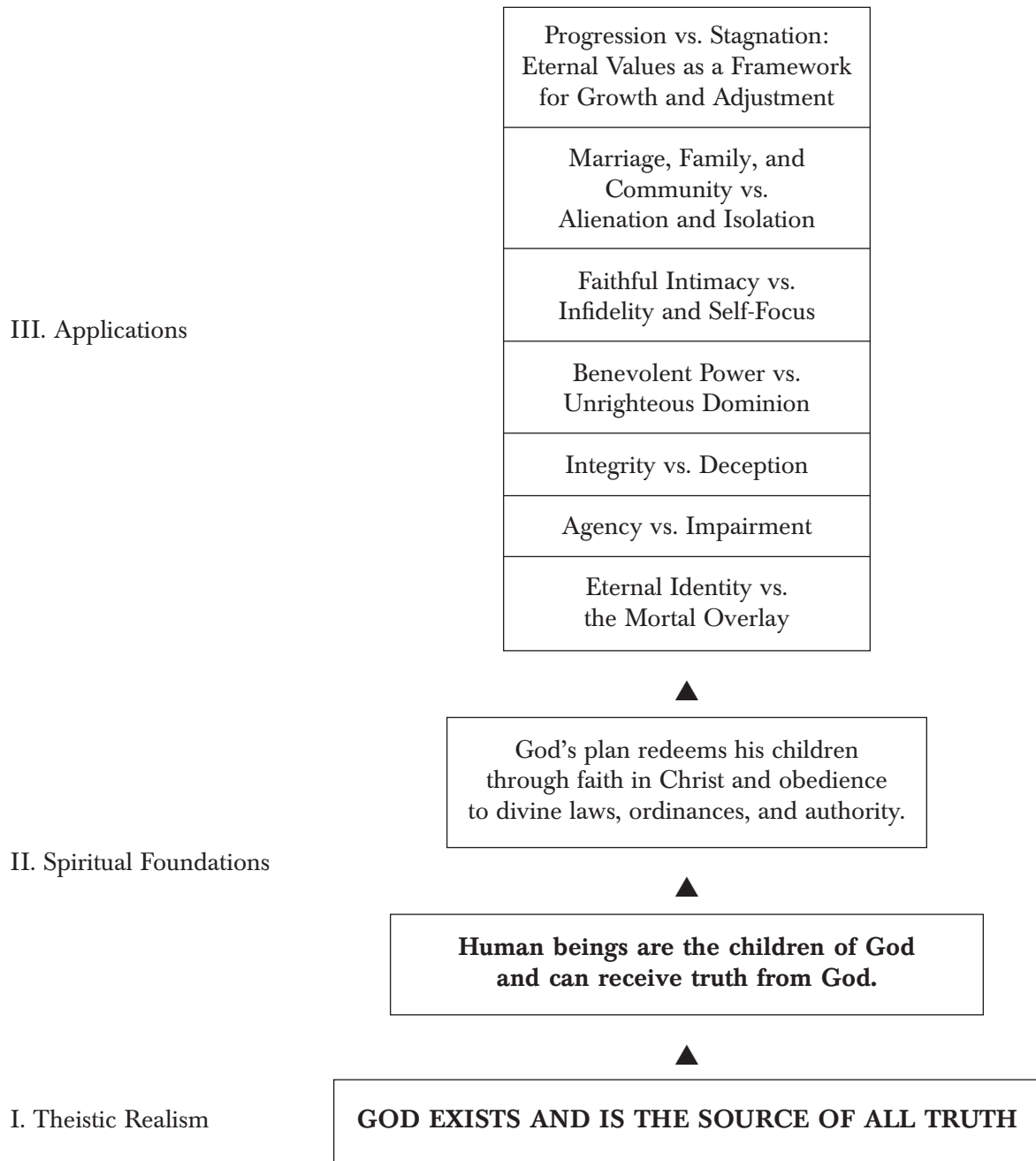


FIG. 1-1

*Note:* This framework is a blend of our professional thought and gospel doctrine. Its form and content were inspired in part by *The Rebuilding of Psychology: An Integration of Psychology and Christianity*, pp. 137–154, by G. R. Collins, 1977, Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House and by “The Life Cycle: Epigenesis of Identity” by E. H. Erikson, 1968, *Identity, Youth and Crisis*, pp. 91–141, New York: W. W. Norton.

## SEVEN THEMES THAT GUIDE OUR LIVES

We also propose that *seven psychosocial themes* can guide our social, emotional, and spiritual lives (fig.1-1). These themes, inspired in part by psychoanalyst Erik Erikson (1968) and clinical psychologist Gary Collins (1977), progress from individual personality outward toward interpersonal and communal interactions. We developed them carefully from our understanding of the scriptures and the teachings of modern prophets, from our analysis of studies of religion and mental health, from our study of spiritual experiences reported by college students, and from our efforts to integrate ideas culled from this spiritual study with current secular research, theory, and practice.

The opposite poles in each theme are end points along a continuum, and individuals may be at any point between the polar opposites. The closer people move toward the positive ends of the dichotomies, the fewer their pathologies and more benevolent their influence. As they move toward the negative ends of the themes, their psychological health and eternal potential are impaired or obstructed (Richards & Bergin, 1997, p. 111).

These seven themes form the foundation for the chapters in this book. The themes are as follows:

**Theme 1:** *Eternal identity vs. the mortal overlay:* We have an indestructible personal nature that persists through time and eternity and has infinite potential. This eternal identity is partially obscured by a mortal veil, and it can progress or regress.

**Theme 2:** *Agency vs. impairment:* We have the capacity to choose good over evil and to exercise our will creatively. This capacity can be impaired by poor choices, abnormal biology, or a pathological or abusive environment.

**Theme 3:** *Integrity vs. deception:* Acting with sensitivity to the spirit of truth makes us more psychologically and spiritually healthy, while acting with deceit, pretense, and betrayal moves us away from psychological and spiritual health.

**Theme 4:** *Benevolent power vs. unrighteous dominion:* When we are in a position of authority or influence, we can serve others through love, persuasion, and sacrifice, or we can control, dominate, and coerce.

**Theme 5:** *Faithful intimacy vs. infidelity and self-focus:* True love can develop only within a framework of principles that create a lawful structure for expressing affection and creating bonds of loyalty. Ignoring this framework through infidelity and self-centered intimacy creates false love, sorrow, and pain.

**Theme 6:** *Marriage, family, and community vs. alienation and isolation:* Faithful love and intimacy are ideally expressed through marriage, family, and commitment to the social community, while extreme individualism results in alienation and isolation.

**Theme 7:** *Progression vs. stagnation: eternal values as a framework for growth and adjustment:* Effort to become more like God is part of the gospel principle of progression toward exaltation, while inertia and self-satisfaction lead to stagnation or regression. God-given values guide healthy growth, while ethical relativism yields confusion and self-justification.

The central achievement is full identity formation, where all the bipolar themes are integrated.

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## PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE LIFE SPAN

We agree with Erik Erikson that personal identity development is a life-long process and that we all pass through stages that can be identified by crucial issues that arise during each stage. Growth can be enhanced if we are aware of the issues that are likely to become dominant during successive phases of our lives.

These phases are depicted in figure 1-2, which shows Erikson's original scheme of psychosocial and mental health themes. Figure 1-1 is our adaptation of Erikson's scheme, adding the spiritual and moral themes we encounter

# IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT OVER THE LIFE SPAN

AGE STAGES	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
VIII Mature Age							GENERATIVITY vs. STAGNATION	INTEGRITY vs. DESPAIR
VII Adulthood						INTIMACY vs. ISOLATION		
VI Young Adult							Leadership & Followership vs. Authority Confusion	Ideological Commitment vs. Confusion of Values
V Adolescence	Temporal Perspective vs. Time Confusion	Self-Certainty vs. Self- Consciousness	Role Experimentation vs. Role Fixation	Apprenticeship vs. Work Paralysis	IDENTITY vs. IDENTITY CONFUSION	Sexual Polarization vs. Bisexual Confusion		
IV School Age				INDUSTRY vs. INFERIORITY	Task Identification vs. Sense of Futility			
III Play Age			INITIATIVE vs. GUILT		Anticipation of Roles vs. Role Inhibition			
II Early Childhood		AUTONOMY vs. SHAME, DOUBT			Will to Be Oneself vs. Self-Doubt			
I Infancy	TRUST vs. MISTRUST				Mutual Recognition vs. Autistic Isolation			
Erikson's Emergent Strengths	Hope	Will	Purpose	Competence	Fidelity	Love	Care	Wisdom
Parallel Virtues: Latter-day Saint Perspective	Loyal Attachment	Moral Agency & Coping	Eternal Progression & Integrity	Self-Reliance & Work	Identity Fusion: Eternal & Mortal	Eternal Family & Social Kinship	Benevolent Power	Eternal Values

**FIG. 1-2**

*Note:* Adapted from "The Life Cycle: Epigenesis of Identity," by Erik H. Erikson, 1968, in *Identity, Youth and Crisis*, p. 94, New York: W. W. Norton. Used with permission.

during personal development. The two perspectives overlap to some degree, but both are needed for complete self-understanding and change.

As figure 1–2 indicates, critical concerns emerge during the eight phases of life: infancy, early childhood, preschool years, school years and adolescence, young adulthood, adulthood, and finally the mature years and old age. The same issues that begin in childhood reappear at the later phases, but in new forms. In a sense, Erikson captures the mortal phases of eternal progression in that as we mature and age, we cycle through the same issues in new ways that stimulate growth to higher levels. For instance, “trust vs. mistrust” is an issue in all eight stages but is critical at stage I, infancy.

The diagonal of figure 1–2 identifies personal traits that Erikson believes emerge after successful completion of each life phase, such as trust, autonomy, initiative, industry, identity, intimacy, generativity, and integrity. He also notes that ideally each phase produces moral strengths (near the bottom of the chart), such as hope, will, and purpose. We added to these our parallel list of virtues, such as loyal attachment, moral agency, and self-reliance.

The Erikson figure is a tool for exploring your personal growth, not a rigid or measurable formula. The themes affect individuals’ lives at different times and in different ways. Males and females especially may experience the themes in different order and with different prominence. Note that every theme involves *personal* traits in an *interpersonal* context. Identity develops within relationships, not in isolation:

Human personality is inherently relational. . . . The human race is a family, and people’s kinship flows from a common creation. When identity and agency are optimally functional, their nature and influence shape and are shaped by the basic sociality of humanness as expressed in integrity, intimacy, fidelity, kinship, benevolent power and communal structure, and a commitment to human welfare through personal responsibility. (Richards & Bergin, 112)

Studying figures 1–1 and 1–2 can help you create a personal framework for examining

and revising your own sense of identity as you work through this book. As you write in your personal growth journal (see Exercise 1 at the end of this chapter), you may find it helpful to evaluate yourself using the concepts in the figures. For example, ask yourself how trusting you are. How has trust vs. mistrust affected you, particularly in your ability to be close to others? Note that the “identity” square is at the core of figure 1–2. All other themes converge there during adolescence. Identity at that stage is affected by all preceding stages and, in turn, affects all later stages. Identity grows until maturity (Stage VIII), when a fully integrated personality becomes possible.

The concepts in figure 1–1 and figure 1–2 will be considered many times as you proceed through this guide, so reflecting on them as you begin your personal growth journal will facilitate understanding along the way.

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## CONCLUSION

The more enlightened we become about the shaping forces around us and inside us, the freer we become. The purer our hearts and the more righteous our conduct, the more receptive we are to divine illumination about our circumstances and the alternatives before us with their diverse consequences. The closer we are to our Savior through faith, obedience, and love, the more able we are to transcend the personal defects and corrupt pressures we experience as mortals. By being born again into a newness of life, provided by the Lord’s redeeming and healing power, the vision of our possibilities is clarified and our ability to harmonize our lives with eternal light and truth is enhanced. Two student reports illustrate everyday contexts in which such ideals were translated into deeply felt personal changes:

My overall adolescent experience greatly obscured my discovery and understanding of my spiritual identity. As a teenager I became so wrapped up in outward appearances that I failed to recognize what was truly important



in my life, such as family and membership in the Church. When I think back to my high school years and the beginning of college, I have bad memories of depression, eating disorders, self-hatred, and loneliness. Tears come to my eyes when I recall how obsessed I was with appearing beautiful to the world. I just wasn't "cool" if my clothes did not reflect the latest style, if I didn't own a certain car, if I didn't date so-called popular guys, and if my body wasn't in shape or thin enough. This obsession tore me to pieces inside and caused me grief despite my outward appearance. My preoccupation with false images blocked my spiritual growth in the gospel and my testimony of Christ for many wasted years during which I allowed the adversary to influence my values.

Recently I was awakened to how self-absorbed my life had been and how selfish my motives were. My mother was in charge of a camp for LDS girls who live in a violent, graffiti-covered inner city. I thought she was wasting her time, but I agreed to take time off from work to help her. In just one week, these strong and faithful young women permanently influenced my life for good in such a way that I will always be grateful. My eyes were opened to what matters in life. These girls, coming from difficult homes and environments, with none of the outward material benefits I had, knew what values are central in life. Their strong testimonies of Jesus Christ were such a great example to me that I began to change my attitudes and transform my lifestyle. By serving these girls, for once in my life I felt as though I was walking in the footsteps of my Savior and doing what he would have me do. Now, studying our readings and writing these essays is anchoring those changes as I learn to center my life in values of eternal worth.

\* \* \*

The acute identity experience that has had the most profound influence on me occurred during my patriarchal blessing. The patriarch was speaking when his hands began to tremble. Soon his voice faltered and he couldn't continue speaking. I felt as though electricity were surging through my body, making every fiber quiver. It was a force of great power, and I was awed by it but not frightened. This sensation continued for about thirty to forty-five seconds, although it seemed much longer. The patriarch regained

control of his voice and told me, "I don't have the words at this time to tell you of the love which our Heavenly Father has for you. But I feel of it and hope that you will feel it also, for as I place my hands upon your head I am able to know of the Lord's great love for you." In that moment I experienced a love greater than all human expression, a feeling that communicated to my soul more profoundly than thoughts, words, or actions ever could. When I read my blessing now, I am comforted by the promises and blessings contained in it, but they pale in comparison to the feeling of love that I experienced. To know that I am a child of God and that he loves me so completely and powerfully is the greatest knowledge I can possess. Looking back on that one moment has given me strength, courage, and hope through many difficult periods in my life.

As you progress through this book and apply the principles in each chapter, you will learn how to develop your divine potential and have insights similar to the ones quoted above. To help you as you embark on this path, please carefully and prayerfully read Elder Neal A. Maxwell's article, "Becoming a Disciple," included at the end of this chapter as Enrichment 2.

## EXERCISES

### EXERCISE 1

#### PERSONAL GROWTH AND ADJUSTMENT JOURNAL

The self-study exercises in this first chapter merely begin your self-analysis, but they lay an important foundation for the in-depth analysis you will build as your reading progresses. If you do the exercises before reading further, this book will become much more meaningful to you.

As you apply yourself diligently to this process of self-analysis, enlisting the Lord's help and the influence of a confidante, you will discover methods and practices unique to you that can help you acquire lifelong skills in problem-solving, inspired living, and good adjustment.

As you absorb the ideas in this book, writing down your reflections will help you make the material more concrete and more relevant to your life. We suggest that you purchase a special notebook and begin a personal growth journal to record your questions, insights, and progress. Also use this journal to complete the self-study exercises that follow each chapter.

### EXERCISE 2

#### SELF-STUDY QUESTIONS

##### Who Am I?

1. In your personal growth and adjustment journal, write your responses to the following questions as quickly as they come. Don't think about them.
  - What adjectives best describe me?
  - What are my strengths?
2. Think about the following question and take your time to respond:

- What are the main problems I need to face now?

Identify three to five core problems—people, stresses, weaknesses, or challenges.

- What is my general mission in life?
- What is my specific mission in life as I understand it today?

Be as specific as you can about your unique contributions, hopes, plans, and goals. If you don't know, write your feelings about not knowing. Write a few possibilities, if you can.

- What resources might help me expand and refine my understanding of my life mission as I work my way through this text?

Resources could include your patriarchal blessing, other blessings, fasting, temple attendance, and counseling with others, such as friends, parents, bishop, spouse, confidante, professional counselor.

- What are my current spiritual resources?
- What is my current ability to understand and apply the Savior's teachings to my life? What personal problems interfere with my doing this?
- How close do I feel to the Lord and his Spirit?
- What obstacles do I face in drawing closer to the Lord and coming to him as a source of healing and inspired change?
- What might help me overcome or manage these obstacles?
- Will I sincerely repent, as needed, in the process of coming to him?
- How strong is my ability to pray and to make plans or decisions based upon prayer?
- Will I pray and seek help from the Lord as I outline my plan for personal change during this course?
- What is my plan for improving the quality of my communications with the Lord, including their frequency, depth, and intensity?

It is often helpful to combine scripture study, prayer, and journal writing in a single private session that you schedule

each day. Take time to meditate and to listen for the subtle whisperings of the Spirit.

- Whom can I confide in and share my journal with?

Changing and growing is not easy. Sharing your thoughts with a confidante can anchor self-evaluation and change in reality. A confidante should share your values, be trustworthy, able to keep confidences, and be emotionally stable. Consider your choice carefully. This person can be a spouse, parent, other family member, friend, Church leader, or professional counselor. Professional counselors are available free of charge in most colleges. Before you choose one, ask questions that will help you discern

whether he or she understands and supports your gospel commitments. (See Enrichment 3 for more information about selecting a counselor.)

- Can I link my self-study with other life activities that are helping me grow?

For example, tie your self-study and journal writing to scripture study, pondering, prayer, classes, Church meetings, family home evenings, Church callings, service activities, musical participation, and conversations with significant people in your life. New thoughts and impressions can come to you in such positive settings. They may be subtle or fleeting, so catch them and record them as soon as you can.



FIG. 1-3

Note: From *The Divine Center*, p. 66, by S. R. Covey, 1982, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft. Reprinted with permission.

## EXERCISE 3

### DEVELOPING A PERSONAL VALUE SYSTEM

#### Introduction

*Personal values* are your beliefs about what is desirable or good. *Valuing* is using your personal values to evaluate actions, thoughts, feelings, persons, interactions, and events. The ability to establish valued goals and evaluate events related to them varies from person to person and within the same person across time. As people progress, their valuing develops from “relatively simple, immature states toward more complex, wider-ranging, more balanced states” (Mitchell, 1983, p. 3).

The key to developing a true and lasting personal value system is centering our lives on Heavenly Father, his Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost. Stephen R. Covey explores this key concept in his book *The Divine Center: Why We Need a Life Centered on God and Christ and How to Attain It* (1982). In this popular volume, now in its fourteenth printing (1998), Dr. Covey outlines doctrines, applications, and practical

examples of how to center our lives on the divine. He shows persuasively how focusing our central motives on anything else leads us away from God’s plan, decreases our satisfactions, and ultimately prevents our exaltation.

Strange as it may seem, he advises against centering ourselves on family or even on the Church. He also shows the negative results of focusing mainly on work, friends, leaders, or heroes. Finally, he gives examples of problems that arise from centering our hearts on self, possessions, pleasures, and enemies. By centering ourselves on Christ, we can truly become his disciples, which in turn leads to optimal adjustment and growth (Maxwell, 1996, 2001). This divinely centered life is represented in figure 1–3, taken from Dr. Covey’s book (p. 66). The term “combination” in the figure refers to centering life on combinations of two or more sources, which is the common approach.

#### Developing Your Own Personal Values System

- Briefly scan chapter 9 concerning values.
- Complete the Personal Values Assessment Exercise (following).

### Personal Values Assessment Exercise

Listed below are values that may or may not be important to you. (Omit any item that seems irrelevant or inapplicable to you at this time.)

In the left-hand column, rate how important each value is to you personally.

- 1 = very unimportant to me
- 2 = unimportant to me
- 3 = somewhat important to me
- 4 = important to me
- 5 = very important to me

In the right-hand column, rate to what degree that value is currently characteristic of you.

- 1 = very uncharacteristic of me
- 2 = uncharacteristic of me
- 3 = somewhat characteristic of me
- 4 = characteristic of me
- 5 = very characteristic of me

#### Spiritual Foundation Values

(See D&C 4, 19, 20, 42, 76, 84, 88, 89, 93, 107, 121, 134.)

(The term “God” here refers to Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost.)

Value/Ideal	Degree of Importance to Me	How Characteristic of Me
1. God’s love and will provide the central motives for my life.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
2. My decisions, relationships, and work are guided by this core commitment.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
3. I strive to know the truth about God and to receive the witness of his Spirit.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
4. I accept the atonement of Jesus Christ as central to my life.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
5. I repent of sin and seek forgiveness from God and others regularly.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
6. I seek and follow God’s spiritual direction daily, and I understand it.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
7. I strive to abide by the doctrines, covenants, and commandments that qualify me for temple worthiness and eternal life as outlined in the scriptures, teachings of the prophets, and temple recommend criteria.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
8. I know God’s will for my life reasonably well.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
9. I have formulated a personal life mission plan.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
10. I serve, teach, bless, love, forgive, sacrifice for and, when necessary, confront and redirect other people.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
11. Whether single or married, I strengthen my family; or, where family ties are nonexistent or destructive, I seek alternative constructive and lasting connections.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
12. If not temple married, I prepare myself for eventual eternal marriage and family relations.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
13. I strive to attain purity of thought, feeling, and action.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
14. I attempt to understand and develop my spiritual gifts.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

<b>Spiritually Grounded Mental Health Values</b>		
<b>Value/Ideal</b>	<b>Degree of Importance to Me</b>	<b>How Characteristic of Me</b>
<b>Identity</b>		
1. I have self-worth and eternal dignity as a child of God.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
2. I am self-aware or knowledgeable about myself. I am nondefensive. I am insightful.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
3. I pursue constructive self-enhancement opportunities.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
4. I meditate, reflect, and pray for inspiration about personal strengths, weaknesses, gifts, and potential.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
<b>Agency</b>		
5. I have adequate self-control or self-discipline in private and in social, family, or work settings.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
6. I am able to regulate self by anticipating consequences.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
7. I think or plan before I act.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
8. I am obedient to divine, natural, and positive human laws as I understand them.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
9. I sacrifice personal needs for the sake of higher goals as required.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
10. I strive to be free, independent, and appropriately autonomous.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
<b>Integrity</b>		
11. I am honest. I feel and follow the spirit of truth. I do not lie, cheat, steal, or bear false witness.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
12. I am open, congruent, and authentic in my emotions and relationships.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
13. I do not deceive myself or others.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
14. I have a truth-oriented lifestyle. I do not cut corners.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
15. I am moral and virtuous.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
16. If I am guilty, I accept it and try to change.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
17. I seek to know truth about all things in general; that is, to be intelligent and full of light and truth.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
<b>Power</b>		
18. If I have opportunities to lead, I use my authority to help others rather than advance my own status.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
19. I am tolerant of diversity and patient with others who differ from me or with me.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
20. I share power and cooperate rather than subjugate.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
21. I facilitate the growth of others.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
22. I sublimate, dissolve, or resolve anger, hatred, or bitterness.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
23. I prefer mentoring over controlling others.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
24. I believe in justice and equality. I do not discriminate.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
25. I am appropriately meek and teachable.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
<b>Love, Intimacy, Marriage, Family and Community</b>		
26. I am able to give and receive love and affection.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
27. I sensitively perceive the feelings and needs of others (empathy).	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

28. I provide care and nurturance for others (sympathy).	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
29. I am kind.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
30. I am a loyal and committed friend, marriage partner, and/or family member.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
31. I have secure interpersonal attachments.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
32. I am charitable emotionally and temporally.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
33. I am able to relate to people and elicit their friendship.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
34. I participate actively in mutually supportive social or community and church groups and have a social identity.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
35. I am able to give and receive forgiveness.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
36. I am loyal and trustworthy.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
37. I am able to resolve conflict with or between others.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
38. I appropriately express physical affection toward those I am close to.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
39. I am chaste (if not married) or faithful to my spouse (if married).	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
40. In marriage, I am able to give and receive sexual love and to feel physical and emotional communion with my spouse.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
41. I am committed to the needs, welfare, and growth of my marriage partner, children, and other family members.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
42. I serve my community and/or the larger world regularly.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
<b>Work and Achievement</b>		
43. I work to achieve proficiency in skills and worthwhile achievement.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
44. I am diligent and persevere in my responsibilities.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
45. I am able to financially support myself or family or am conscientiously preparing to do so.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
46. I strive to be self-reliant in all aspects of my life.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
47. I take initiative to do new things in study, work, family, home, and other duties.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
48. I serve in Church callings willingly and effectively.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
49. I am creative.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
50. I am anxiously engaged in good causes.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
<b>Coping and Adaptation</b>		
51. I have learned techniques for coping with stress.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
52. I have balance in my life and take adequate time for diversion, recreation, and self-renewal.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
53. I keep myself physically healthy through wholesome nutrition and regular exercise.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
54. I have or know how to obtain help in resolving personal complex problems when necessary, including losses, failures, interpersonal conflicts, doubts about faith, or conflicts in Church.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
55. I am flexible enough to alter my plans or habits in order to manage unexpected distresses, problems, or crises of various kinds.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
56. I have a good support network.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
57. I am able to find resources in my value system for maintaining my lifestyle in the face of difficulties.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

**Practical Values**

Value/Ideal	Degree of Importance to Me	How Characteristic of Me
I seek proficiency in:		
1. Homemaking and child rearing skills	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
2. Athletic performance	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
3. Physical fitness and/or strength	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
4. Music, dance, and/or performing arts	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
5. Fine arts	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
6. Writing	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
7. Arts and crafts	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
8. Business-related skills	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
9. Humanities, literature, history, etc.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
10. Mechanical and/or construction skills	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
11. Agriculture, gardening, natural resources	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
12. Animal knowledge and care	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
13. Financial management, economics	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
14. Organizational development and leadership	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
15. Social graces, entertainment, hosting	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
16. Missionary work	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
17. Community and humanitarian service; social sciences	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
18. Teaching	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
19. Research, science, math, engineering	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
20. Sales and marketing	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
21. Military and/or defense skills	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
22. Computers, electronics, and technology	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
23. Health profession or sciences	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
24. Other (specify)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
25. Other (specify)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

**Additional Personal Values and Goals (See Values Appendix)**

Value/Ideal	Degree of Importance to Me	How Characteristic of Me
1.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
2.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
3.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
4.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
5.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
6.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
7.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5



## ENRICHMENT

### ENRICHMENT 1

#### SOCIAL SCIENCES VS. RELIGION: THE HISTORICAL ALIENATION BETWEEN PSYCHOSOCIAL AND SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVES

During the one hundred years or so that secular models of behavior prevailed (about 1880 to 1980), religious and spiritual issues were neglected in the mainstream mental health professions (e.g., Bergin, 1980a, 1980b; Campbell, 1975; Collins, 1977; Lovinger, 1984; Strommen, 1984). According to Dr. Gary Collins (1977), a clinical psychologist:

During the course of its history, psychology has never shown much interest in religion. General psychology books tend to give the topic scant if any attention. Apart from a few classic studies like those of James, Freud, and Allport (James, 1902; Freud, 1927; Allport, 1950), the topic of religious behavior has been largely bypassed by psychological writers (p. 95).

When early leading social scientists did write about religion, they tended to portray religious beliefs and behaviors negatively. For example, in *The Future of an Illusion*, Sigmund Freud stated that religious ideas “are illusions, fulfillments of the oldest, strongest and most urgent wishes of mankind” (Freud, 1927/1961, p. 30). Some have argued that religion is harmful or irrelevant to mental health (e.g., Ellis, 1980; Watson, 1919). Many adopted assumptions about the world and human nature that conflicted with spiritual understandings (Richards & Bergin, 1997).

Perhaps the most basic assumption of early social scientists was that human behavior could be accounted for naturalistically; that is, without any spiritual or transcendent explanations (Bergin, 1980a). God, they decided,

could and should be left out of theories about human nature. This view starkly conflicts with the scriptures, which teach that God the Father through his Son Jesus Christ created the world and all living creatures and that they continue to influence the lives of human beings. According to the gospel, a commitment to its spiritual truths is essential for optimal human growth and fulfillment. Social science’s use of determinism, reductionism, and atomism to explain human behavior (Slife, 2002) also conflicts with gospel precepts that human beings are responsible agents who have eternal identity and the capacity to become like God.

Values and morality were another major area of conflict between early psychological theories and a Latter-day Saint perspective. Donald Campbell, president of the American Psychological Association, argued that psychology and psychiatry were hostile toward the moral teachings of traditional religion (Campbell, 1975). The two disciplines, he said, endorsed the view that people should do what feels good in any given situation while most religions teach that people can and should control pleasure-seeking impulses in favor of higher values such as spiritual growth and the welfare of others. Contrary to social science’s emphasis on ethical relativism, the scriptures teach that God has revealed universal principles to guide human behavior and social relations.

The Church does not reject empirical ways of knowing, but it does reject the view that empirical knowledge is the only valid source of truth or that data gathering alone can lead to a full understanding of humans and the universe. The scriptures teach that transcendent, spiritual truths are real, though they cannot be empirically observed, replicated, or verified by science. Through inspiration and revelation, human beings can learn important truths about their existence (1 Cor. 2:7–16).

## Changing Assumptions of Scholarship Open the Way to a Spiritual Approach

Although naturalistic beliefs had a long and powerful impact on the social science and mental health professions, their influence has weakened during recent decades. Just as the hard sciences are becoming less rigidly mechanistic and more open to alternative views of the world, the mental sciences are gradually becoming more open to spiritual perspectives.

Many factors have contributed to this more spiritually open *Zeitgeist* or “spirit of the times” (Richards & Bergin, 1997, pp. 35–48). For example, the theories of the universe provided by modern physics are much more compatible with spiritual views than were previous theories (Appleyard, 1992; Barbour, 1990; Lucas, 1985; Polkinghorne, 1990; Templeton & Herrmann, 1994; Tipler, 1994). In the last few decades, several prominent physicists have written openly that they believe God is the creative force behind the universe (Polkinghorne, 1990; Templeton & Herrman, 1994; Tipler, 1994).

Among evolutionary biologists a sentiment is growing that current understanding about the origins and evolution of life leave the door open for a divine role (e.g., Griffin, 1989; K. R. Miller, 1999; Schroeder, 1997). Even some evolutionists who vigorously oppose creationist accounts acknowledge that a “miraculous creation is *compatible* with what we know” (Bowler, 1989, p. 358).

Philosophers, too, more widely recognize that scientific and religious ways of discovering truth are more compatible than was once thought. Scientific knowledge is not as objective, value-free, and rational as was formerly believed, and religious understanding is not as subjective or irrational. With this recognition has come a higher regard for the ways religious perspectives might contribute to scientific understanding of the universe (Barbour, 1990; Griffin, 1989; Jones, 1994).

In the medical and behavioral sciences, prominent researchers on the human brain, cognition, and consciousness have concluded

that our thoughts have a causal impact on our brain physiology, not just vice versa, as has so long been the main viewpoint. They acknowledge that this and other findings are more consistent with religious understanding about the human spirit than were earlier materialistic views (e.g., Eccles & Robinson, 1984; Popper & Eccles, 1977; Sperry, 1988, 1995). Research on near-death and visionary experiences has led some scholars to believe that human identity persists beyond bodily death (Morse, 1994; Griffin, 1989; Ring, 1980).

Studies about how religion influences mental health increasingly show that some common religious beliefs and behaviors tend to be positively related to emotional adjustment and social conduct (Gartner, Larson & Allen, 1991; Larson, Swyers & McCullough, 1998; Payne, Bergin, Bielema & Jenkins, 1991). These findings have helped reverse the once widely held belief among mental health professionals that religion is a form of irrationality or emotional disturbance (Ellis, 1980). Although some studies show that certain forms of religiosity can be harmful, a consensus is growing that religion and spirituality can be valuable resources to promote health and well-being (Bergin, 1991; Koenig, 1997; Paloutzian & Kirkpatrick, 1995; Richards & Potts, 1995; Shafranske, 1996).

Many therapists now view humans more holistically and agentively. The majority believe that values such as personal responsibility, family commitment, self-control, self-sacrifice, forgiveness, and honesty promote mental health and should help guide therapy (Bergin, Payne, & Richards, 1996; Doherty, 1995; Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000; Jensen & Bergin, 1988; Richards & Bergin, 1997). This is a sea change in the mental health field.

These changes go along with renewed interest in spiritual phenomena throughout the world and particularly in North America. The last decade has seen an explosion of symposia, books, magazine articles, and television programs on spiritual topics. Though some of this interest may be misguided by self-interested spiritual gurus, the overall movement has contributed to scholarly interest in spirituality (e.g., Antoun & Hegland, 1987; Kantrowitz et al., 1994; Shine, 1996; Taylor, 1994).

## A Recent History of Integrating Latter-day Saint Spiritual Perspectives and the Behavioral Sciences

During the late 1970's and early 1980's, several important events occurred at Brigham Young University (BYU) that were part of a larger movement to integrate spiritual perspectives into the mental health professions. In February 1976, BYU held a centennial symposium entitled "The Gospel and the Behavioral Sciences." The keynote speaker was Elder Neal A. Maxwell, then an assistant to the Council of Twelve Apostles. He commended scholars who "are striving to join their gospel scholarship and their academic scholarship" and suggested that Latter-day Saint "behavioral scientists become more of a link between revealed truth" (p. 70) and secular ideas. He promised:

When we start building the proper and needed bridges, God will help us—individually and collectively. It will not surprise me in the least if some of the insights and methodologies of able, orthodox, LDS behavioral scientists will exert an increasing gravitational pull on some of our thoughtful nonmember colleagues in the years ahead (1976, p. 70).

Elder Maxwell's talk became a charter mandate, an inspired agenda that marked the beginning of serious efforts by Latter-day Saint scholars to integrate gospel truths and the behavioral sciences.

Another important event occurred in 1975 with the formation of the Association of Mormon Counselors and Psychotherapists (AMCAP), which grew out of the earlier LDS Personnel and Guidance Association. AMCAP was created to provide a forum for Latter-day Saint counselors and psychotherapists and "to actively promote within their other professional organizations and the society at large the adoption and maintenance of moral standards and practices that are consistent with gospel principles" (Article 1, Section 2, AMCAP by-laws, as amended Sept. 30, 1981). In 1976,

partly in response to Elder Maxwell's challenge, BYU established a Values Institute to explore theory and promote research about Latter-day Saint values, the behavioral sciences, and mental health. A number of publications were influenced in part by work done at the Institute (e.g., Bergin, 1980a, 1980b, 1983; Brown, 1981; Covey, 1982). During the administration of BYU President Jeffrey R. Holland, the Institute's mission was merged into academic departments and the BYU Comprehensive Clinic.

Efforts to integrate spiritual perspectives with the behavioral sciences were occurring simultaneously outside the Latter-day Saint community. One year after Elder Maxwell's address, Christian clinical psychologist Gary Collins published a book entitled *The Rebuilding of Psychology: An Integration of Psychology and Christianity* (1977). He made a revolutionary proposal to rebuild psychology by, first, founding it on evangelical Christian theology and morality, and second, adding aspects of secular psychology congruent with Christian biblical perspectives (Collins, 1977). In 1978 the BYU Values Institute recognized Dr. Collins with an award for his creative effort.

During the same year, psychiatrist M. Scott Peck published *The Road Less Traveled: A New Psychology of Love, Traditional Values and Spiritual Growth* (1978), which was a bestseller for nearly 20 years. Many other individuals and organizations furthered the integration effort. The history of this movement, beginning in the 1950's and culminating in the 1990's, has been richly documented by Hendrika Van de Kemp (1996).

Three years after Dr. Collins's book, which was distributed by a Christian publishing company, similar ideas were extended into the mainstream mental health literature with an article entitled "Psychotherapy and Religious Values" in the *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, a prestigious worldwide journal published by the American Psychological Association (Bergin, 1980a). The article proposed premises for a theistic, spiritual approach in psychology and psychotherapy. It argued that therapists did not

sufficiently understand or respect the values of religious psychotherapy clients and too often imposed on them their own atheistic and naturalistic beliefs. I called on mental health professionals to be more open about their values, more sensitive to and respectful of religious clients, and more receptive to the benefits of religious beliefs and values. I concluded by offering several testable hypotheses about the positive effects of religious beliefs, values, and communities.

In response to this article, I received more than 1,000 requests for reprints and letters from professors, practitioners, and administrators throughout North America and Western Europe, including past leaders in both the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association. The vast majority agreed with my ideas. The article, following on the heels of the Collins and Peck books, further opened the door to an outpouring of spiritual feeling that had been pent up within the scholarly and professional mental health community.

During the 1980's, faculty at BYU and other scholars throughout the world published hundreds of research articles, book chapters, and books on religion, mental health, adjustment and psychotherapy (e.g., Bergin, 1983, 1985, 1988; Donahue, 1985; Lovinger, 1984; Miller & Martin, 1988; Propst, 1988; Spero, 1985). These writings helped legitimize an international movement to bring religious and spiritual perspectives into the mainstream of the behavioral sciences and mental health professions.

During the 1990's, this trend continued to grow. An important milestone came in 1992 when the American Psychological Association for the first time included religion in its ethical guidelines as a category of diversity that psychologists are obligated to respect and obtain competency in. Other national organizations acted similarly, including the American Psychiatric Association (1990, 1995), which began requiring psychiatry residents to take courses with spiritual and religious themes.

Articles on this topic continued to multiply in mainstream psychological journals (e.g., Bergin, 1991; Chandler, Holden & Kolander,

1992; Jones, 1994; Koltko, 1990; McCullough & Worthington, 1994; Payne, Bergin, Bielema & Jenkins, 1991; Payne, Bergin & Loftus, 1992; Propst, Ostrom, Watkins, Dean & Mashburn, 1992; Richards, 1991; Richards & Potts, 1995; Worthington, Kurusu, McCullough & Sandage, 1996), and more books than ever on religion, spirituality, healing, and psychotherapy were published by mainstream publishers (e.g., Benson, 1996; Emmons, 1999; Kelly, 1995; Koenig, 1997; Larson, Swyers & McCullough, 1998; W. R. Miller, 1999; Pargament, 1997; Richards & Bergin, 1997, 2000; Shafranske, 1996; Wulff, 1991). In 1996, the American Psychological Association published its first book on the topic (Shafranske, 1996) and in 1997 published its second, *A Spiritual Strategy for Counseling and Psychotherapy* (Richards & Bergin, 1997).

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## ENRICHMENT 2

### “BECOMING A DISCIPLE”

by Elder Neal A. Maxwell  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

How grateful I am that we may rejoice in God's great gift of immortality, unearned and universally given to mankind through the Resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:22). However, God's greatest gift—eternal life—will be given only to a comparative few: those who respond to Jesus' invitation, “Come, follow me” (Luke 18:22). The great gift of the Resurrection, therefore, will be “added upon” by the exaltation inherent in eternal life, which is contingent upon the degree of our discipleship. Thus, it is Jesus' invitation to discipleship that I would like to discuss.

When Jesus took upon Himself the heavy, atoning yoke in order to redeem all mankind by paying the agonizing price for our sins, He

thereby experienced what He Himself termed the “fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God” (D&C 76:107). The phrase itself makes the soul tremble. Jesus also volunteered to take upon Himself additional agony in order that He might experience and thus know certain things “according to the flesh,” namely human sicknesses and infirmities and human griefs, including those not associated with sin (see Alma 7:11–12). Therefore, as a result of His great Atonement, Jesus was filled with unique empathy and with perfect mercy.

In turn, He who bore the atoning yoke has asked us to “take my yoke upon you, and learn of me” (Matt. 11:29). So the taking of Jesus’ yoke upon us constitutes serious discipleship. There is no greater calling, no greater challenge, and no greater source of joy—both proximate joy and ultimate joy—than that which is found in the process of discipleship. This process brings its own joys and reassurances. We must not, however, expect the world to understand or to value our discipleship; they will not. In a way, they may admire us from afar, but they will be puzzled about the priorities resulting from our devotion.

Shouldering the yoke of discipleship greatly enhances both our adoration and knowledge of Jesus, because then we experience, firsthand, through our parallel but smaller-scaled experiences, a small but instructive portion of what the Savior experienced. In this precious process, the more we do what Jesus did—allow our wills to be “swallowed up in the will of the Father”—the more we will learn of Jesus (Mosiah 15:7). This emulation directly enhances our adoration of Jesus.

Simultaneously, in this same process, the more we become like Jesus, the more we come to know Him. There may even be, more than we now know, some literalness in His assertion, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matt. 25:40). We lack deep understanding of the implications of that remark of Jesus. As with so many things, He is telling us more than we are now prepared to receive.

The Prophet Joseph Smith, writing redemptively to his rebellious brother, said to William, “God requires the will of his creatures, to be swallowed up in his will.” The Prophet Joseph then pled with William to make “one tremendous effort . . . [to] overcome [his] passions, and please God” (Jessee, 1984, 115). Alas, William didn’t do it, just as some of us fail to overcome our passions and thereby fail to please God. We are too busy pleasing ourselves.

In contrast, meek Enoch reached a point in his discipleship, wrote Paul, when he received a testimony that he pleased God (see Heb. 11:5). Ponder that. One can come to that point where one knows that he or she pleases God.

## Knowledge Alone Cannot Save Us

One mistake we can make during this mortal experience is to value knowledge apart from the other qualities to be developed in submissive discipleship. Knowledge—discovery, its preservation, its perpetuation—is very important. Yet, being knowledgeable while leaving undeveloped the virtues of love, mercy, meekness, and patience is not enough for full discipleship. Mere intellectual assent to a truth deprives us of the relevant, personal experiences that come from applying what we profess to believe. There were probably orientation briefings in the premortal world about how this mortal life would unfold for us, but the real experience is another thing!

Thus, while knowledge is clearly very important, standing alone it cannot save us. I worry sometimes that we get so busy discussing the doctrines in various Church classes that talking about them almost becomes a substitute for applying them. One cannot improve upon the sobering words of King Benjamin, who said, “Now, if you believe all these things see that ye do them” (Mosiah 4:10). Such is still the test. Deeds, not words—and becoming, not describing—are dominant in true discipleship.

Of necessity, of course, we are to teach and learn the doctrines. We would be spiritually

stranded without them and, likewise, without the saving and exalting gospel ordinances, because “in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest.

“And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh” (D&C 84:20–21).

So it is that discipleship requires all of us to translate doctrines, covenants, ordinances, and teachings into improved personal behavior. Otherwise we may be doctrinally rich but end up developmentally poor.

The celestial attributes, such as love, patience, mercy, meekness, and submissiveness, embody what we are to become. They are not just a litany of qualities to be recited. Awareness of them—even articulate awareness—without their application will not do. Furthermore, these same attributes cannot be developed in the abstract. The relevant experiences are required, even when you and I would try to avoid them. Moreover, in an ultimate sense our individual developmental schedules reflect God’s timetable, not ours, for God will not withhold from us certain growing experiences that He, in His infinite wisdom, allows us to undergo for our eternal benefit. His timetable, if followed, prepares us incrementally for the journey of discipleship and for going home.

Any serious disciple yearns to go home to Heavenly Father and to be welcomed there by Jesus. But the Prophet Joseph Smith declared we cannot go where They are unless we become more like Them in the principles and attributes and character They possess (see *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 216).

Of the many restored truths, God has surely given us enough and to spare. Soberingly, however, we have been told that “unto whom much is given much is required” (D&C 82:3). I hope we feel the cutting edge of the word *required*. It is used instead of the milder *expected*. Neither does the Lord say, “It would be nice if . . .” The word is *required*, bringing us back again to the need for submissiveness in discipleship.

## The Burden of the Natural Man

The gospel’s rich and true doctrines combine to constitute a call to a new and more abundant life, but this is a lengthy process. It requires much time, experiencing the relevant learning experiences, the keeping of covenants, and the receiving of the essential ordinances—all in order to spur us along the discipleship path of personal progression. In the journey of discipleship, we lose our old selves. The natural man and the natural woman are “put off,” and then we find ourselves become more saintly (see Mosiah 3:19). One sees such saintliness all about him in the Church—quiet, good women and men, not particularly concerned with status, who are becoming saintly. This is what should be happening in the lives of members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Yet, walking and overcoming by faith are not easy. For one thing, the dimension of time constantly constrains our perspective. Likewise, the world steadily tempts us. No wonder we are given instructive words from Jesus about the narrowness and the straightness of the only path available to return home: “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). He also said in that same verse, “No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” Jesus has laid down strict conditions.

We live in a world in which, happily, many others regard themselves as Christians. Some live rich and marvelous lives. But there are some who style themselves as Christians who admire but do not worship Jesus. Some regard Him as a great teacher but not as the Great Redeemer. Yes, Jesus is the generous Lord of the expansive universe, but He is also Lord of the narrow path! Some people forget His latter Lordship.

The ravines on both sides of that narrow path are deep and dangerous. Moreover, until put off, the shifting, heavy, unsettling burden of the natural man tilts us and sways us. It is dangerous.

Nor does the natural man or the natural woman go away quietly or easily. Hence the most grinding form of calisthenics we will

ever know involves the individual isometrics required to put off the natural man. Time and again, the new self is pitted against the stubborn old self. Sometimes, just when at last we think the job is done, the old self reminds us that he or she has not fully departed yet.

A vital, personal question for each of us, therefore, is, Are we steadily becoming what gospel doctrines are designed to help us become? Or are we merely rich inheritors of an immense treasure trove of truth but poor investors in the process of personal development so essential to discipleship?

Significantly, when the Lord God described His purposes by saying, “This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39), He uses the word *work*, even though His is a “marvelous work.” For us, becoming like His Son, or “even as [Jesus is],” certainly is work! (3 Ne. 27:27). Of necessity, this process requires the cross of discipleship to be taken up daily—not occasionally or seasonally.

Sometimes, as we commence taking up the cross, we ignore or neglect the first part of Jesus’ instruction. He said, “Deny [yourselves], and take up [your] cross daily, and follow me” (Luke 9:23). This self-denial is especially challenging in a world filled with so many sensual and secular stimuli. In our time, greed and lust, though they have always been friends, have never formed quite the cartel they have formed now. It is global; it is so profitable.

Denying oneself has never been popular as a lifestyle, and it is clearly not today. Self-denial is portrayed by many as too puritanical and too ascetic. Scoffers have acquired powerful pulpits from which they bray their message, which constantly puts down discipleship and encourages the natural man to think highly of himself and to please himself.

What is it that we are to deny ourselves? The ascendancy of any appetites or actions which produce not only the seven deadly sins but all the others. Happily, self-denial, when we practice it, brings great relief. It represents emancipation from all the “morning after” feelings, whether caused by adultery or gluttony. Being concerned with tomorrow, true

disciples are very careful about today! Self-denial also includes not letting our hearts become too set on any trivial or worldly thing. Then we can learn the great lessons about the relationship of righteousness to the powers and the joys of heaven.

The fundamental fact is that if we do not deny ourselves, we are diverted. Even if not wholly consumed with the things of the world, we are still diverted sufficiently to make serious discipleship impossible. As a consequence, all the gifts and talents God has given us are not put meekly on the altar to serve others and to please God. Instead, we withhold to please ourselves. Diversion, therefore, is not necessarily gross transgression, but it is a genuine deprivation, especially if we consider what we might have become and what more we might have done to bless and to help others.

Ironically, the natural man, who is so very selfish in so many ordinary ways, is strangely unselfish in that he reaches for too few of the things that bring real joy. He settles for a mess of pottage instead of eternal joy.

By denying the desires of the natural man to the degree that they exist in each of us, we avoid this diversion, making it easier for us to take up the cross of discipleship. Of course, when it occurs in our lives, emancipation from various forms of bondage brings no celebrating parades, nor does it make the evening news. But it is big news because we “come off conqueror” (D&C 10:5).

So it is that discipleship, far from being ascetic, is to choose joy over pleasure. It is to opt for the things of eternity over the trendy and appealing things of the moment. Eventually, we become readied for the final moment of consecration, when, gladly and completely, we let our wills be swallowed up in the will of the Father. Jesus did this in Gethsemane, where he said, “Not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42). What was God’s will? That Jesus complete the Atonement. Even so, Jesus prayed, “Take away this cup from me” (Mark 14:36); and still later he cried out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46). Yet Jesus yielded.

## The Great Pivot

Is it possible to develop discipleship when one has no initial, inner desires for discipleship? Can we plant inner desires in someone against his or her will? External exhortation of such individuals won't usually produce much change. For most of us, however, even when the inner desire is there, it requires periodic sharpening by outward circumstances to quicken any existing inner desires and to get us to act upon them. It was so with Abraham. Abraham desired a better life: more happiness and the blessings of the holy priesthood (see Abr. 1:1–2). Outward circumstances were a spur to Abraham's yearnings, but clearly he had firm and basic desires of discipleship.

It's different in the case of prodigals. Turning away from the world and toward God, toward home, requires of them to make what I call the Great Pivot. This Great Pivot begins slowly and tentatively when the mind perceives *what is* in comparison with *what might be*. This represents the first tentative steps in the process of beginning to develop "the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16). Regarding the varying degrees of progress we have made in our personal development, what if our individual lack of inner, spiritual symmetry were somehow visibly reflected in our outward physiology? How odd, swollen, and misshapen or anemically underdeveloped some of us would appear! All intellect and no heart! Earnest and eager, but without a trace of empathy! Egoistic with not a single sinew of mercy! Or perhaps fixated on pleasing self with little concern for neighbors.

Of course, our actual degree of inward, spiritual symmetry is somewhat hidden—at least until we get to know each other and to experience each other! So, the lingering question should not be, How many imperfections do I have? but rather, Is my discipleship sufficiently serious that I am working patiently and steadily to overcome my weaknesses, perhaps even changing some of them into strengths? (see Ether 12:27).

If, however, discipleship becomes a daily duty, it genuinely helps us in developing our

spiritual symmetry and character. We then have much less concern, for instance, with things of the moment. The banter in the cafeteria with peers or at the office round table with colleagues would so reflect, and, likewise, family discussions around the dinner table. We would also be much less concerned with our public image and with what "they" think, being, instead, much more concerned with having Jesus' image in our countenance. The one-upmanship we typically see connected with intellectual prowess and other forms of prowess is opposite to what discipleship calls for. Jesus' aim is to lift us up, not to put people down.

Given all you and I yet lack in our spiritual symmetry and character formation, no wonder God must use so intensively the little time available to develop each of us in this brief second estate. One's life, therefore, is brevity compared to eternity—like being dropped off by a parent for a day at school. But what a day!

For the serious disciple, the resulting urgency means there can be few extended reveries and recesses and certainly no sabbaticals—all this in order to hasten God's relentless remodeling of each of us. Reveries and special moments may come, but they are not extended. Soon the drumroll of events, even difficulties, resumes. There is so much to get done in the brief time we have in this mortal classroom.

Comparing what we are with what we have the power to become should give us great spiritual hope. Think of it this way: There are some very serene, blue lakes on this planet situated in cavities which once were red, belching volcanos. Likewise, there are beautiful, green, tropical mountains formed from ancient, hot extrusions. The parallel transformation of humans is much more remarkable than all of that—much more beautiful and much more everlasting!

So it is, amid the vastness of His creations, God's personal shaping influence is felt in the details of our lives—not only in the details of the galaxies and molecules but, much more importantly, in the details of our own lives. Somehow God is providing these individual



tutorials for us while at the same time He is overseeing cosmic funerals and births, for as one earth passes away so another is born (see Moses 1:38). It is marvelous that He would attend to us so personally in the midst of those cosmic duties.

Are we willing, however, to be significantly remodeled even by His loving hands? Enoch was. He marveled over God's vast creations and fervently exclaimed, "Yet thou art there" (Moses 7:30). God is ever "there"! Significantly, Enoch also exclaimed over three attributes of God's character, declaring that God is just, merciful, and kind forever. You and I count on those attributes of God every day. And the fact that God uses those qualities to bless us should stir us to develop them in ourselves to operate in behalf of others.

### **Becoming Alive in Christ**

God is very serious about the joy of His children! Why should we be surprised? God desires us to become more like Him so we can go home to Him. He is a perfect Father!

Where would we be, in fact, without God's long-suffering? Given the divine sorrow each of us has caused our God and our Savior, what a divine comfort to know that "he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more" (D&C 58:42). No more reassuring and important words could be said to any of us.

What ineffable love! What stunning patience! How wrenching it would otherwise be to be resurrected and forever wincing over having displeased Him. Oh, the marvel of His divine mercy and His plan of happiness! One day, if we remain faithful, we will, as the man or the woman of Christ, know that we, too, please God. Discipleship's enlarged capacity to serve will bring enlarged joys. No wonder we read lamentations from the Lord about those who do not accept His invitation to discipleship. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and

ye would not!" (Matt. 23:37). Or, from the Book of Mormon, "O ye fair ones, how could ye have departed from the ways of the Lord! O ye fair ones, how could ye have rejected that Jesus, who stood with open arms to receive you!" (Morm. 6:17). These lamentations measure the deep love Jesus has for us and underscore the importance of our accepting His invitation to discipleship.

Even so, Jesus prayed for us and for all of His followers not to be taken out of the world but that we might be kept from evil (see John 17:15). We stay in the classroom until school is out because there appears to be "no other way."

It is left to each of us to balance contentment regarding what God has allotted to us in life with some divine discontent resulting from what we are in comparison to what we have the power to become. Discipleship creates this balance on the straight and narrow path.

Discipleship turns on our spiritual sensitivities. It increases the "aliveness" in each of us. These sensitivities are enhanced, not diminished, with discipleship. It's part of what the scriptures call becoming "alive in Christ because of our faith" (2 Ne. 25:25; see also Rom. 6:11; 1 Cor. 15:22). In contrast, there's a dullness and a sameness about sin. With discipleship we learn to act for ourselves rather than merely letting ourselves be "acted upon" by circumstances (see 2 Ne. 2:13).

One of the dangers we face in discipleship is drifting. This can occur when we become "wearied and faint in [our] minds," to use Paul's phrase (Heb. 12:3). This is one of the tragedies of failing to be serious disciples; not that we become necessarily wicked, but rather that those who drift merely exist and are not truly alive in Christ.

Paul warns those of us on the path of discipleship to be diligent, "lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you" (Heb. 12:15). Travel on the straight and narrow path occurs in company with other disciples, imperfect as we all are. Side by side, as we all are, means that there are ways in which we can become offended or even embittered. Given the imperfections of all of us in the Church, offenses will come and disappointments will occur. How we

handle these is crucial. We must be quick to prune any personal sprig of bitterness so that our wills can be truly swallowed up in the will of the Father as we put off the natural man and the natural woman. Jealousy, resentment, and self-pity can all keep us from becoming alive in Christ.

## Defining Moments

We sometimes speak of defining moments. Long ago in May 1945 there was such a moment for me on the island of Okinawa at age eighteen. There was certainly no heroism on my part but rather a blessing for me and others during the shelling of our position by Japanese artillery. After repeated shellings which overshot our position, the enemy artillery finally zeroed in. They should have then fired for effect, but there was a divine response to at least one frightened, selfish prayer. The shelling halted. The prayer was accompanied by my pledge of a lifetime of service—a pledge which, though imperfectly, I've tried to keep. With this blessing and pledge, I was nudged toward discipleship without realizing what service would be required. I had been blessed, and I knew that God knew that I knew. I remembered the pledge after the war when my overseas savings gladly went to finance a mission. This mission, of course, was yet another step in the direction of discipleship.

Many subsequent and subtle moments have been at least as important to me as that defining moment in Okinawa. Unlike the roar and crash of artillery followed by a delivering silence, these smaller moments involve the Lord's periodic whisperings to my mind. Over the years, these whisperings have guided me and reassured me. They give me, from time to time, in the words of the Prophet Joseph, sudden strokes of ideas and occasionally the pure flow of intelligence (see *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 151). These moments are as real for me as what happened on Okinawa. These are inward things, often taking the form of a directing phrase. I have found that the Lord gives more instructions than explanations.

Our spiritual experiences are personal and spiritual. Often they are not sharable. Some may be, but it takes inspiration to know when to share them. President Marion G. Romney, who often combined wit and wisdom, said, "We'd have more spiritual experiences if we didn't talk so much about them."

Be assured that God is in the details and in the subtleties of the defining and preparatory moments of discipleship. He will reassure you. He will remind you. Sometimes, if you're like me, He will brace or reprove you in a highly personal process not understood or appreciated by those outside the context.

In the revelations, the Lord speaks of how the voice of His spirit will be felt in our minds. He also says that if we read His words—meaning the scriptures—we will hear His voice. Many disciples have had private moments of pondering and reading the scriptures when the words came through in a clear, clarion way. We know Who it is who's speaking to us! We've all had the experience of going over a scripture many times without having it register. Then, all of a sudden, we're ready to receive it! We hear the voice of the Lord through His words.

So it is in the process of discipleship. There are more meaningful moments than we use profitably, just as in terms of service there are more opportunities around us than we now use. God is ever ready; if only we were always ready.

President Brigham Young taught, "There is not a single condition of life . . . [and] not one hour's experience but what it is beneficial to all those who make it their study, and aim to improve upon the experience they gain" (1862, p. 292). I hope we realize that. We may fritter away our time, but life is always drenched with more opportunities for discipleship than we use. Therefore, all the minutes and hours and moments can be, at least incrementally, defining moments.

God is in the details of our lives. He knows us perfectly, just as Jesus knew the woman of Samaria whom He quizzed as to her belief in the Messiah. She said, "I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things" (John 4:25).

And Jesus said, “I that speak unto thee am he” (v. 26). She went back to her village all excited and said she’d found the Messiah, and then, significantly, she said to the villagers, “He told me all that ever I did” (v. 39).

God knows us perfectly. He loves us perfectly. His only begotten son, Jesus, has invited us to “come, follow me.” In a real and majestic sense, each of us has been called to serve in His holy discipleship. May we all renew our desires and efforts to do so.

*Note:* From “Becoming a Disciple” by Elder Neal A. Maxwell, 1996, *Ensign*, June, pp. 12–19. © by Intellectual Reserve, Inc. Reprinted with permission.

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## ENRICHMENT 3

### SELECTING A GOOD COUNSELOR

#### Three good reasons to find a counselor or therapist:

1. You find yourself unable to cope with life.
2. You believe you have problems that could be better and more quickly solved with professional help.
3. Two or three people who matter to you have suggested it (even insisted).

#### Three suggestions for finding a good counselor:

1. Ask people you know and trust for a recommendation. Good resources include friends (especially those who have been in therapy), teachers, physicians, attorneys, Church leaders, and LDS Family Services. Don’t let any lingering stigma about being in counseling deter you. Most people realize that seeking help for psychological distress is as necessary and wise as seeking medical help for physical problems.

2. Check the rosters of state professional agencies: Marriage and Family Therapist Association, American Medical Association, Psychological Association, Association of Clinical Social Workers. See if there is a branch of LDS Family Services near you or a counseling center staffed by at least some Latter-day Saint or other counselors with similar values.
3. Seek prayerful assistance.

#### Questions to ask a prospective counselor:

1. Are you licensed in the state in which you practice, and do you belong to professional organizations? Where did you earn your degree and in what department? (Diplomas and licenses should be posted.)
2. What are your fees? Do you take insurance? If I don’t have insurance, would you make special arrangements?
3. What is your theory of how people change? What interventions will you use?
4. What problems do you specialize in treating?
5. Do you base your work in a traditional moral and spiritual foundation?
6. What do you know and think about the Latter-day Saint religion?

A caution: If you begin to feel uncomfortable about the therapist’s stance toward your religion, ask yourself, “Is he/she subtly belittling my religion?” or “Is he/she pushing me to honestly examine my values in a healthy way?” If it is the former, find another therapist. If it is the latter, tolerate the temporary distress and work to articulate what you truly believe. Good therapists, whether Latter-day Saint or non-Latter-day Saint, can help you discern between behavior that legitimately follows from doctrine as opposed to behavior that might appear doctrinal but in reality could be a harmful cultural prescription.

### **Harmful Therapy vs. Helpful Therapy**

Unfortunately, professional standards for state licensure of therapists are uneven. Many poorly trained therapists are able to practice. If a therapist seems aggressive, intrusive, cold, or eccentric, seek another therapist.

Useful books on this topic include:

Striano, J. (1987). *How to find a good psychotherapist: A consumer guide*. Santa Barbara, CA: Professional Press.

Striano, J. (1988). *Can psychotherapists hurt you?* Santa Barbara, CA: Professional Press. POB 50343, Santa Barbara, CA 93150.

Jones, S. L. & Butman, R. E. (1991). *Modern psychotherapies: A comprehensive Christian appraisal*. Downers Grover, IL: Inter-iversity Press.

Bergin, A. E. & Garfield, S. L. (Eds.). (1994). *Handbook of psychotherapy and behavior change: An empirical analysis*, 4th Ed. New York: Wiley (see also, 5th Ed., 2003, edited by Dr. Michael Lambert of BYU).

### **Therapy vs. Self-Help**

Many of life's normal problems can be solved by self-help, including prayer, inspiration, and counsel from family, Church leaders, trusted friends, teachers, and physicians. Many self-help strategies are described in this book. Numerous self-help books are published every year concerning every kind of problem. They vary tremendously in quality, so seek recommendations and be cautious in your selections.

When a problem becomes a clinical disorder, professional help is usually needed. Please see chapter 4 and figure 4-1 for information about when a problem becomes a clinical disorder and how professionals can help.

The Church recognizes the need for competent and morally sound professional counsel and thus provides financial support for Family Services and for counseling centers at Latter-day Saint colleges. But Church leaders also encourage members to cultivate emotional self-reliance and avoid long-term dependence on counselors or medication except in unusual cases.