

## “Building Our Foundation upon Jesus Christ through Covenants”

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BYU-Pathway Worldwide

**President Ashton:** Our beloved BYU-Pathway students, missionaries, and employees. It is wonderful to be with you. Welcome! We pray that each of you will be greatly blessed and prospered this semester.

**Sister Ashton:** In the October 2021 General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, our prophet, President Russell M. Nelson, said the following:

My dear brothers and sisters, these are the latter days. If you and I are to withstand the forthcoming perils and pressures, it is imperative that we each have a firm spiritual foundation built upon the rock of our Redeemer, Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup>

President Nelson’s reference to building “upon the rock of our Redeemer” comes from Helaman 5:12, a scripture found in the Book of Mormon. This verse reads as follows:

... remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall.<sup>2</sup>

Now each of us face “perils and pressures.” We will also have times in our lives when the devil will send forth his mighty winds, hail, and storms to beat upon us. As President Nelson pointed out, safety in those times will come from having a spiritual foundation built upon Jesus Christ.

**President Ashton:** So, what does it mean to build our foundation upon “the rock of our Redeemer?”<sup>3</sup>

First, it means we *choose* to trust that God:

- Loves us;
- Only wants what is best for us;
- Knows what we and those we love need, even better than we do;
- Has the power to bless us with the things that we need; and
- Will bless us with those things as we follow His commandments.

Second, it means that we allow that trust to motivate us to repent. In other words, because we *choose* to trust God, we forsake evil and turn our hearts and will to God by *choosing* to keep His commandments.

And third, it means that we *choose* to make and keep covenants with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. A covenant is a sacred promise between God and man, in which the terms or conditions of the covenant are set by God.

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<sup>1</sup> Russell M. Nelson, “[The Temple and Your Spiritual Foundation](#),” *Liahona*, Oct. 2021

<sup>2</sup> [Helaman 5:12](#)

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*

Because God cannot lie,<sup>4</sup> He is bound or is required to give the blessings He has promised when we keep our covenants.<sup>5</sup>

We make these covenants through the ordinances of baptism, confirmation, ordination to the Melchizedek priesthood, and the temple. We renew those covenants by partaking of the sacrament. In those ordinances, the covenants we make include serving Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, being witnesses in word and deed of Them, always remembering Them, and keeping Their commandments. In return, They covenant, among other things,<sup>6</sup> to:

- Be merciful to us,<sup>7</sup> including forgiving our sins;<sup>8</sup>
- Pour out Their Spirit upon us<sup>9</sup> to cleanse us,<sup>10</sup> strengthen us,<sup>11</sup> and give us knowledge<sup>12</sup> and access to Their power;<sup>13</sup>
- Make things work for our good,<sup>14</sup>
- Bless us “in all things, both temporal and spiritual”;<sup>15</sup> and
- Grant us eternal life.<sup>16</sup>

**Sister Ashton:** For me, building a foundation upon Jesus Christ works like this. The more I study and understand God’s character and the Atonement of Jesus Christ, the easier it is to *choose* to exercise faith in Jesus Christ’s ability to bless, heal, and lift me, because I recognize that He can and will do what He says He will do. This leads me to want to make and keep covenants with Him because I want the promises He makes in those covenants. Through those covenants I am endowed, or blessed, with power and confidence. My ability to work through problems and keep my covenants increases or, in other words, I have increased strength to keep the commandments and develop Godlike attributes. As I strive to become like Him, He increasingly reveals Himself to me. My faith in God’s character and Jesus Christ’s Atonement increases and so does my desire to keep my covenants and become increasingly like the Savior.

I’ve learned that we must *choose* to build our spiritual foundation on Jesus Christ. It is about making intentional *choices* to believe and to act often in the face of difficulty and uncertainty. It’s also important to remember that the key to consistently receiving God’s power in our lives is making and keeping covenants.

**President Ashton:** We would now like to share a couple of experiences about making intentional choices based on faith in Jesus Christ and covenants to build one’s spiritual foundation on the “rock of our Redeemer.”<sup>17</sup>

The first story occurred while I served a mission as a young man in Peru. It was during a time of high unemployment and hyperinflation. These economic challenges often made it difficult for people to obtain enough to eat. I remember a faithful woman telling a story at church about how she dealt with this challenge. She often

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<sup>4</sup> See [Titus 1:2](#); [Enos 1:6](#); [Ether 3:12](#); [Doctrine and Covenants 62:6](#)

<sup>5</sup> See [Doctrine and Covenants 82:10](#)

<sup>6</sup> By no means is this a complete list of the promises made to God’s covenant people.

<sup>7</sup> See [Luke 1:71–72](#)

<sup>8</sup> See [2 Nephi 31:17](#); [3 Nephi 27:20](#); [Doctrine and Covenants 76:51–52](#)

<sup>9</sup> See [Mosiah 18:10, 13](#); [Moroni 4:3](#); [5:2](#); [Doctrine and Covenants 20:77, 79](#)

<sup>10</sup> See [3 Nephi 27:20](#)

<sup>11</sup> See [Psalms 29:11](#); [Proverbs 10:29](#); [Isaiah 40:31](#); [Doctrine and Covenants 84:33](#); [113:8](#)

<sup>12</sup> See [John 14:26](#); [2 Nephi 32:3, 5](#); [Doctrine and Covenants 121:26](#)

<sup>13</sup> See [1 Nephi 14:14](#)

<sup>14</sup> See [Doctrine and Covenants 90:24](#)

<sup>15</sup> See [Mosiah 2:41](#)

<sup>16</sup> See [2 Nephi 31:17–20](#); [Mosiah 2:41](#); [Doctrine and Covenants 76:50–70](#); [84:33–39](#)

<sup>17</sup> [Helaman 5:12](#)

woke up with no food in her house. When this occurred during the week, she would get up and go out and work to earn the money she needed to purchase food. She was industrious and creative, and with the Lord's help she usually had success earning enough to eat and meet her other needs for the day.

However, on Sundays she did something totally different. While she did all in her power during the rest of the week to make sure she had food on Sundays, sometimes there still wasn't enough. This woman had made a covenant at baptism to keep the Sabbath day holy, in part by not working.<sup>18</sup> Consequently, when she didn't have food on Sundays, she would get down on her knees, explain to Heavenly Father that she had done her best, and then ask Him to provide her with the food that she needed. She would then go sit on a chair outside of her front door and wait. She testified that inevitably someone always brought her food. Her covenants gave her access to the faith and strength to trust that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ would provide for her needs.

**Sister Ashton:** The second story happened during our mission in Houston, Texas. At one point, I was overwhelmed and exhausted by all of my responsibilities. The successful business we had left was not doing well. We had a son who was struggling, and I was worried about him and his future. I was praying for inspiration to know how to help my son but didn't seem to be receiving it. To be honest, I was feeling sorry for myself, and I felt abandoned by the Lord. I felt like I had sacrificed so much to serve a mission, and yet I felt like everything was falling apart. In my desperation, I reminded myself of what I knew God to be — a loving and kind Heavenly Father who desires to bless His children. I knew that I had a Savior who had performed an Atonement so that I could repent and ask and receive strength to endure the difficulties I was facing. I had made covenants, and I was striving to honor them, so I simply *chose* to believe that the promised help would come when I needed it. My burden was not lifted immediately. In fact, I would get on my knees multiple times a day and tell the Lord, "I want to believe, please help my unbelief." It was difficult, but I was blessed with the strength I needed to keep moving forward, including some moments of peace and assurance. I also began to focus on the most important things and let go of the temporal things that were of less significance. Eventually, I started receiving inspiration from time to time and power that allowed me to help our son. And in the end, my burden was lifted.

**President Ashton:** Thanks for sharing that story. As we can see in both of these experiences, if we make and keep covenants with Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, they will bless us in the ways that we need and give us access to inspiration and their power. They cannot do otherwise!<sup>19</sup> Sometimes, as in the first story, we will be given the blessings we seek in the timeframe we seek them. At other times, as in the second experience, the blessings might be different than we expected and only happen in God's time. But God will sustain us and bless us in the ways that we need so that we can become more like Jesus Christ. The key for each of us is to make sacred covenants with God and then keep them.

**Sister Ashton:** I have learned from experience, that when life is overwhelming and I feel uncertain and confused, that I can turn to my Heavenly Father and Savior and choose to believe that they are mindful of me and my circumstances and will help me. I testify that as you exercise faith in Their character and love, you will find strength to open your mind and heart to Their guidance.

**President Ashton:** I bear witness that by exercising faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement and making and keeping covenants, you will build your life upon the "rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ."<sup>20</sup> In so doing, you will receive strength, power, and inspiration to meet the challenges in your life. And as you come to trust in God's promise, you will find peace and joy. If you have not yet made these covenants with God, I invite you to do so. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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<sup>18</sup> See [Exodus 20:8–11](#)

<sup>19</sup> See [Judges 2:1](#)

<sup>20</sup> [Helaman 5:12](#)