

Following Christ

Cooper Mountain Ward Sacrament Meeting January 1, 2023

Mike Baird

Intro

- Beautiful wife Nancy & I
- Been in this ward since 1990
- Have served and been served by many of you
- Today share my feelings and thoughts on the topic of Following Christ
- Hope today what I share of my thoughts and feelings may be of service and uplifting to you

Why Follow Christ - The Challenge to Become

- I Attended October 2000 General conference
- Heard there most transforming talk in my life
- As I listened, I had a combination of
 - Deep Spiritual impression upon me
 - “Ah hah!” moments of understanding and clarification
- I still remember 22 years later how I felt
- President (then elder) Dallin H Oaks: “Challenge to Become”
- Dallin H Oaks:

“Final Judgment is not just an evaluation of a sum total of good and evil acts—what we have done. It is an acknowledgment of the final effect of our acts and thoughts—what we have become... The commandments, ordinances, and covenants of the gospel are not a list of deposits required to be made in some heavenly account. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a plan that shows us how to become what our Heavenly Father desires us to become.”
- The realization that:
 - Judgement is not a set of scales balancing the good vs bad things we have done
 - It is about who we have become
 - We do – not to pile up points on the “good” side of the scale
 - We do – not to check off items in our checklist so that we may be worthy to live again with our heavenly father
 - We do – so that in doing we change and become what we are striving to become
- To me this is the core of why I choose to follow Christ
 - Both a logical and spiritual element to this choosing

Why Follow Christ - The logical

- I'm an analytical type of person – I'm an engineer by vocation
- To me it is obvious that the person or persons that I choose to emulate and follow set a standard or type of what I'll become like as I do as they do or have done
 - Cause and effect
- A challenge in life is to choose the right Example to follow
- It is obvious that if I wish to become as Heavenly Father would have me become Christ is whom I need to choose to follow
- A reality, however, is we also choose to follow and emulate others in our life
 - Friends, relatives, leaders

Why Follow Christ – The Spiritual

- Logic alone is not enough to be a follower of Christ
- We can listen to our parents, attend church and say
 - “yes, that is logical, yes, it makes sense” – but that is not enough
- We can make habits based on these things – but it is not enough
- We must have a desire to believe this is truth
- We must receive a witness for ourselves that this is truth
 - The witnesses we receive must generate faith and testimony
- We must do so that our testimonies remain bright
- This is what will carry us to follow Christ and continue to follow Him
- Without this Spiritual element to our discipleship when the winds of adversity come or when the enticements of Satan come to follow something else too many will do so
 - Another way to put it:
 - If our testimony and what we do are not grounded on the rock of Christ when “rains come down and the floods come up” our house may be washed away

TESTIFY

- I follow Him not because it is logical that I do, but because of the witnesses I've received
 - He is the Christ, our Savior, Our Redeemer

What does it mean then to Follow Christ

- Talked about why, now some thoughts and feelings about what it means to Follow Christ
- In my prayers, pondering and temple visit this week in preparation I have felt to share 3 thoughts about what to do in following Christ
- There are other things of course but I will focus on these three

#1 – Importance of Messengers

- The Lord sends messengers in our lives
 - Give guidance, spiritual strength to us
 - Could be angels but most of us don't receive those type of messengers
 - Prophets, apostles are the messengers we receive
- Our Prophet is both a messenger and an exemplar
- To follow Christ we need to follow the prophet
- There are many things which President Nelson has done, said and asked us to do
- Focus on just one thing as it relates to following Christ
- **Russel M Nelson:**
"in coming days, it will not be possible to survive spiritually without the guiding, directing, comforting, and constant influence of the Holy Ghost."
- In the parable of the 10 virgins:
 - Of the five who were wise, The Lord said they "have taken the Holy Spirit for their guide, and have not been deceived," while the lamps of the foolish "are gone out" for lack of oil.
- Our messenger, the prophet is telling us to follow Christ in our times we must have the Holy ghost with us
- How is that we have the Holy Ghost with us?
- This is where the 2nd thought I wish to share about following Christ comes into play

#2 – Importance of Covenants

- In following Christ, we make covenants with our Heavenly Father
 - Our Prophet describes this as following the covenant path
- Our covenants that we make bind us to Him

- It is in the ordinances wherein we make covenants that the power of Godliness found
 - What does that mean and how is that?
 - Let's look at the ordinance of the Sacrament - today we covenanted:
 - Take upon us the name of Christ
 - To remember Christ always
 - To keep the commandments
 - In turn we receive Spiritual power and guidance:
 - "That they may always have his Spirit to be with them"
- The Holy Ghost
 - Jacob 4:13: (Jacob)
"speaketh of things as they really are, and of things as they really will be"
 - Moroni 10:5: (Moroni)
"And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things"
- As we have the Holy Ghost in our lives we can "see" and are not be blinded or deceived by Satan or the things of the world
- Kevin W Pearson (quorum of the 70):
"We place Christ at the center of our lives and pledge our willingness to obey His commandments not because we are blind but because we can see."
- The foolish virgins did not carry oil in their lamps – they were blinded and deceived
 - We can probably think of multiple reasons why this might be
- Kevin W Pearson (quorum of the 70):
Whatever the reason, they were deceived about the crucial role of Christ. This is Satan's fundamental deception and why their lamps of testimony eventually went out for lack of spiritual oil. This parable is a metaphor for our time. Many leave the Savior and their covenants long before they leave His Church."

Do that we become

- Following Christ is not a passive thing – we must do as he did and would have us do
- As we do we become – become more like the Savior
- Many things we would do as followers of Christ
 - Mentioned already making and keeping sacred covenants & following the prophet
- The Savior served others and in following him we would love and serve our fellow
 - I mention this because I believe thing that has shaped who I have become the most is service to others
- As we serve and lift others, we in turn are lifted and changed
 - **Joseph Smith:**
“If you will elevate others, the very work itself will exalt you”
- Some are “big” acts of service that can be hard or difficult and can come with big changes to others and to us
- Many callings in the church have lifted me as I’ve served others
 - I served for 2 years in Sweden as a missionary
 - Scout master
 - I served as the bishop of this ward
- Our service doesn’t have to be big though and you certainly don’t have to serve as the bishop to lift others and be lifted
- Share some experiences

- Temple and Family History work

Jennifer Baird Warnick

" So yeah it was a tough day with Axel. The last thing I wanted to do was take him to church but we went. I was sitting in Relief Society waiting for it to start and some lady came in and asked if I was Axel's Mom. Of course I went immediately to he was being bad. But she just went on and on about how sweet he is and how she would love to just sit and talk with him because he had so many interesting things to say and she loved his hair.

I don't know who it was but it brought tears to my eyes. So if anyone mentions him when you get back could you tell her how much I appreciated it and was thankful that she could see his sweet spirit."

- Steve Cole in the line at the grocery store
 - Wife left him and their children
 - How are you doing?

*****Testify