Great questions allow us to see a fuller picture. Great questions can motivate us to change because they invite us to reflect. They help us to see some part of ourselves or others or a situation we’ve never been able to see before!

A wise Chilean biologist defined the term “reflection” in exactly that way: “The moment of reflection…is the moment when we become aware of that part of ourselves which we cannot see in any other way.”…

Alma invites us to look at our lives through the mirror of the Lord—the most important mirror of all. Alma invites us to reflect upon our standing before the Lord and increase our desire to change and to be better—all through the use of great questions.

Wendy Walson Nelson, Change Your Questions Change Your Life, pp.6,7.

50 Questions of Alma 5

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Have you sufficiently retained in remembrance the captivity of your fathers?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Have you sufficiently retained in remembrance God’s mercy and long-suffering towards your fathers?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Have you sufficiently retained in remembrance that he has delivered their souls from hell?</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Were your fathers destroyed?</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Were the bands of death broken, and the chains of hell which encircled your fathers about, were they loosed?</td>
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<th>Question</th>
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<tr>
<td>6. On what conditions were your fathers saved?</td>
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<td>7. On what grounds had they to hope for salvation?</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. What is the cause of your fathers’ being loosed from the bands of death, yea, and also the chains of hell?</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Did not my father Alma believe in the words which were delivered by the mouth of Abinadi?</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Was Abinadi not a holy prophet?</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Did Abinadi not speak the words of God?</td>
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<td>12. Did my father Alma believe them?</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. Have you spiritually been born of God?</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Have you received his image in your countenance</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Have you experienced this mighty change in your heart?</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. Do you exercise faith in the redemption of him who created you?</td>
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<tr>
<td>17. Do you look forward with an eye of faith?</td>
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<tr>
<td>18. Do you view this mortal body raised in immortality, and this corruption raised in incorruption, to stand before God to be judged according to the deeds which have been done in the mortal body?</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>19. Can you imagine to yourself that you hear the voice of the Lord, saying unto you, in that day: Come unto me you blessed, for behold your works have been works of righteousness upon the face of the earth?</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Or do you imagine to yourself that you can lie unto the Lord in that day, and say—Lord, my works have been righteous works upon the face of the earth—and that he will save you?</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>21. Or otherwise, can you imagine yourself brought before the tribunal of God with your soul filled with guilt and remorse, having a remembrance of all your guilt, yea, a perfect remembrance of all your wickedness, yea, a remembrance that you have set at defiance the commandments of God?</td>
<td>18</td>
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</table>
22. Can you look up to God at that day with a pure heart and clean hands?  
23. Can you look up, having the image of God engraven upon your countenance?  
24. Can you think of being saved when you have yielded yourself to become subject to the devil?  
25. How will you feel if you shall stand before the bar of God, having your garments stained with blood and all manner of filthiness?  
26. What will these things testify against you?  
27. Will they not testify that you are a murderer?  
28. Will they not also testify that you are guilty of all manner of wickedness?  
29. Do you suppose that such an one can have a place to sit down in the kingdom of God, with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob, and also all the holy prophets, whose garments are cleansed and are spotless, pure and white?

### Assessing One’s Spiritual Condition

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<tr>
<td>30. If you have experienced a change of heart, and if you have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, can you feel so now?</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Have you walked, keeping yourself blameless before God</td>
<td>27</td>
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<tr>
<td>32. Could you say, if you were called to die at this time, within yourself, that you have been sufficiently humble?</td>
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<tr>
<td>33. Could you say that your garments have been cleansed and made white through the blood of Christ?</td>
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<tr>
<td>34. Are you stripped of pride?</td>
<td>28</td>
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<tr>
<td>35. Is there one among you who is not stripped of envy?</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. Is there one among you that doth make a mock of his brother, or that heapeth upon him persecutions?</td>
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### Identifying with a “Fold”

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>37. If you are not the sheep of the good shepherd, of what fold are you?</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. The devil is your shepherd, and you are of his fold; and now who can deny this?</td>
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### Obtaining Spiritual Knowledge

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<tr>
<td>39. Do you not suppose that I know of these things myself?</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. How do you suppose that I know of their surety?</td>
<td>46</td>
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### Refusing to Repent

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<tr>
<td>41. Can you withstand these sayings?</td>
<td>53</td>
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<tr>
<td>42. Can you lay aside these things and trample the Holy One under your feet?</td>
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<td>43. Can you be puffed up in the pride of your heart?</td>
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<td>44. Will you still persist in the wearing of costly apparel and setting your heart upon the vain things of the world, upon your riches?</td>
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<td>45. Will you persist in supposing that you are better than another?</td>
<td>54</td>
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<tr>
<td>46. Will you persist in the persecution of your brethren, who humble themselves and do walk after the holy order of God, wherewith they have been brought into this church having been sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and they do bring forth works which are meet for repentance?</td>
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<tr>
<td>47. Will you persist in turning your back upon the poor and the needy, and in withholding your substance from them?</td>
<td>55</td>
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<tr>
<td>48. The names of the righteous shall be written in the book of life, and unto them will I grant an inheritance at my right hand. What have you to say against this?</td>
<td>58</td>
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<tr>
<td>49. What shepherd is there having many sheep doth not watch over them, that the wolves enter not and devour his flock?</td>
<td>59</td>
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<tr>
<td>50. If a wolf enter his flock doth the shepherd not drive him out?</td>
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Compiled by John W. Welch and J. Gregory Welch
Alma 5

In April 1951, President Spencer W. Kimball declared, “There are many people in this Church today who think they live, but they are dead to the spiritual things. And I believe even many who are making pretenses of being active are also spiritually dead. Their service is much of the letter and less of the spirit” (Be Valiant 432-34). President Ezra Taft Benson has reminded us of the Lord’s definition of Church membership: “Whosoever repenteth and cometh unto me, the same is my church” (D&C 10:67). And he has taught that an “important principle for us to understand if we would be true members of the Church is that repentance involves not just a change of actions, but a change of heart” (Mighty Change 2).

Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr., eds., Alma, the Testimony of the Word [Provo: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1992].

Alma 5:6

Remembrance—Major Purpose of Holy Ghost

The gift of the Holy Ghost adapts itself to all these organs or attributes. It quickens all the intellectual faculties, increases, enlarges, expands and purifies all the natural passions and affections, and adapts them by the gift of wisdom, to their lawful use. It inspires, develops, cultivates, and matures all the fine-toned sympathies, joys, tastes, kindred feelings and affections of our nature. It inspires virtue, kindness, goodness, tenderness, gentleness, and charity. It develops beauty of person, form and features. It tends to health, vigor, animation and social feelings. It invigorates all the faculties of the physical and intellectual man. It strengthens and gives tone to the nerves. In short, it is, as it were, marrow to the bone, joy to the heart, light to the eyes, music to the ears, and life to the whole beings.

In the presence of such persons, one feels to enjoy the light of their countenances, as the genial rays of a sunbeam. Their very atmosphere diffuses a thrill, a warm glow of pure gladness and sympathy, to the heart and nerves of others who have kindred feelings or sympathy of spirit.

Pratt, Key to the Science of Theology, p. 101.

Alma 5:6-7

God is the one who delivers our souls from hell and changes our hearts.

C. S. Lewis wrote that as we begin to become new creatures in Christ, as we mature in the things of the Spirit, “we begin to notice, besides our particular sinful acts, our sinfulness; begin to be alarmed not only about what we do, but about what we are. This may sound rather difficult, so I will try to make it clear from my own case. When I come to my evening prayers and try to reckon up the sins of the day, nine times out of ten the most obvious one is some sin against charity; I have sulked or snapped or sneered or snubbed or stormed. And the excuse that immediately springs to my mind is that the provocation [against me] was so sudden and unexpected: I was caught off my guard, I had not time to collect myself. Now that may be an extenuating circumstance as regards those particular acts; then would obviously be worse if they had been deliberate and premeditated. On the other hand, surely what a man does when he is taken off his guard is the best evidence for what sort of a man he is? Surely what pops out before the man has time to put on a disguise is the truth?”

“If there are rats in a cellar you are most likely to see them if you go in very suddenly. But the suddenness does not create the rats: it only prevents them from hiding. In the same way the suddenness of the provocation [against me] does not make me an ill-tempered man: it only shows me what an ill-tempered man I am....And if (as I said before) what we are matters even more than what we do—if, indeed, what we do matters chiefly as evidence of what we are—then it follows that the change which I most need to undergo is a change that my own direct, voluntary efforts cannot bring about....I cannot, by direct, moral effort, give myself new motives. After the first few steps in the Christian life, we realize that everything which really needs to be done in our souls can be done only by God”

C. S. Lewis, Merely Christianity, 164-65.
Alma 5:7, 12-14

Change of Heart

The verb *convert* means “to turn from one belief or course to another,” [and] *conversion* is “a spiritual and moral change attending a change of belief with conviction.” As used in scriptures, *converted* generally implies not merely mental acceptance of Jesus and his teachings, but also a motivating faith in him and in his gospel, a faith which works a transformation, an actual change in one’s understanding of life’s meaning and in one’s allegiance to God—in interest, in thought, and in conduct. While *conversion* may be accomplished in stages, one is not really converted in the full sense of the term unless and until he is at heart a new person.


Would not the progress of the Church increase dramatically today with an increasing number of those who are spiritually reborn? Can you imagine what would happen in our homes? Can you imagine what would happen with an increasing number of copies of the Book of Mormon in the hands of an increasing number of missionaries who know how to use it and who have been born of God?...The Lord works from the inside out. The world works from the outside in. The world would take people out of the slums. Christ takes the slums out of people, and then they take themselves out of the slums. The world would mold men by changing their environment. Christ changes men, who then change their environment. The world would shape human behavior, but Christ can change human nature.


I do not believe that the method of accountability at the Judgment Day regarding this book will come in the form of an academic exam that will test our knowledge of the peoples, places, and events among the Nephites. However, the test may come in our willingness to expose ourselves to its pages and then to use the book to bless the lives of those around us.

Over the years I have come to understand that the real test for us personally goes beyond that of just obtaining a testimony. It does not come down to just knowing the Book of Mormon is true, but whether we are true to the Book of Mormon. In the final analysis it is not if we have digested the Book of Mormon, but if the Book of Mormon has digested us. Therein lies the test. The process becomes finalized when a person can stand before the Lord as a living witness to the power of the Book of Mormon in aiding an individual and attain “the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13)

Elder Dallin H. Oaks said: “This process requires far more than acquiring knowledge..... We must act and think so that we are converted by it..... The Final Judgment ... is an acknowledgement of the final effect of our acts and thoughts—we have become” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2000, 40-41).


There is beauty in all peoples. I speak not of the beauty or the image that comes of lotions and creams, of pastes and packs, as seen in slick-paper magazines and on television. Whether the skin be fair or dark, the eyes round or slanted, is absolutely irrelevant. I have seen beautiful people in every one of the scores of nations I have visited. Little children everywhere are beautiful. And so are the aged, whose wrinkled hands and faces speak of struggle and survival of the virtues and values they have embraced. We wear on our faces the results of what we believe and how we behave, and such behavior is most evident in the eyes and on the faces of those who have lived many years.....

My wife and I have walked together through much of storm as well as sunshine. Today, neither of us stands as tall as we once did. For both of us, the rivets are getting a little loose and the solder is getting a little soft. As I looked at her across the table one evening recently, I noted the wrinkles in her face and hands. But are they less beautiful than before? No; in fact, they are more so. Those wrinkles have a beauty of their own, and inherent in their presence is something that speaks reassuringly of strength and integrity, and a love that runs more deeply and
quietly than ever before. I am thankful for the beauty that comes with age and perspective and increased understanding.


As I look at the young people I have served over the years, I get the feeling that many of them do not see themselves as dual (physical and spiritual) beings.

This brings to mind the analogy of the football coach and his staff who spend the week prior to a big game ironing their players' uniforms. I suppose the appearance of the team is important to a degree, but what about the more urgent preparations regarding the players' performance that needed to be considered for the upcoming game? Uniforms are important, but that's not really what football is all about. I feel that some of the problems with drugs, alcohol, and morality that engulf the physical lives of our youth might be avoided if they truly saw their bodies as an extension of their spirits. As parents, we may find it easy to get caught up in "ironing the uniforms" to be worn by the spirits God has placed in our care.

In this day and age it seems somewhat fashionable to speak of self-image. The world teaches that self-image is tied to the body and being productive in those things valued in a materialistic world. We...[need] to expand...[our] understanding beyond the physical realm and...[accept] that true self-image has much less to do with how he views himself that it does with how he views his Heavenly Father in relation to himself. "Having the image of God engraven upon your countenances" (Alma 5:19) is the only manner in which we can truly feel good about ourselves. In this regard, self-image becomes selfish unless it becomes a God-image that reflects upon our behavior. In a sense, our bodies become the classroom where life's most important lessons are learned. But our true self here in mortality is our spiritual self, simply because our mortal bodies will separate from us at death.


**Alma 5:14**

Conversion is effected by divine forgiveness, which remits sins. The sequence is something like this. An honest seeker hears the message. He asks the Lord in prayer if it is true. The Holy Spirit gives him a witness. This is a testimony. If one's testimony is strong enough, he repents and obeys the commandments. By such obedience he receives divine forgiveness which remits sin. Thus he is converted to a newness of life. His spirit is healed.


In the full gospel sense, however, conversion is more—far more—than merely changing one's belief from that which is false to that which is true; it is more than the acceptance of the verity of gospel truths, than the acquisition of a testimony. To convert is to change from one status to another, and gospel conversion consists in the transformation of man from his fallen and carnal state to a state of saintliness. A convert is one who... has been born again; where once he was spiritually dead, he has been regenerated to a state of spiritual life.... He changes his whole life, and the nature and structure of his very being is quickened and changed by the power of the Holy Ghost.

*Mormon Doctrine* 162; emphasis added.

The rebirth process was described by Elder Mark E. Peterson as follows:

That birth of the spirit means something more than most of us normally realize. Through proper teaching, a conviction is born in our soul. Faith develops. Through it we see how important it is to become like Christ. We see ourselves as we are in contrast to a Christ-like soul. A desire for a change-over is born within us. The change-over begins. We call it repentance. Through our faith and as part of our conversion or change from one state to another, we begin to see sin in its true light.... We strive with all our souls to become like the Savior. (11 July 1956; emphasis added)
While on a mission tour to the South Pacific, Elder David O. McKay had the following experience:

“I then fell asleep, and beheld in vision something infinitely sublime. In the distance I beheld a beautiful white city. Though far away, yet I seemed to realize that trees with luscious fruit, shrubbery with gorgeously-tinted leaves, and flowers in perfect bloom abounded everywhere. The clear sky above seemed to reflect these beautiful shades of color. I then saw a great concourse of people approaching the city. Each one wore a white flowing robe, and a white headdress. Instantly my attention seemed centered upon their Leader, and though I could see only the profile of his features and his body, I recognized him at once as my Savior! The tint and radiance of his countenance were glorious to behold! There was a peace about him which seemed sublime—it was divine!

“The city, I understood, was his. It was the City Eternal; and the people following him were to abide there in peace and eternal happiness.

“But who were they?

“As if the Savior read my thoughts, he answered by pointing to a semicircle that then appeared above them, and on which were written in gold the words:

“These Are They Who Have Overcome The World—Who Have Truly Been Born Again!”

*Cherished Experiences, p. 102.*

“Being born again, comes by the Spirit of God through ordinances.”

*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, 162*

We are called upon to purify our inner feelings, to change our hearts, to make our outward actions and appearance conform to what we say we believe and feel inside.


The heart is said to be the seat of spiritual light; the source whence springs our love and our devotion, our likes and dislikes, our joys and our sorrows, and our loyalty and fidelity.

George Reynolds and Janna M. Sjodaho, *Commentary of Book of Mormon,* Vol. 3 p. 78

Mend a quarrel.
Seek out a forgotten friend.
Dismiss suspicion and replace it with trust
Write a letter.
Give a soft answer.
Encourage youth.
Manifest your loyalty in word and deed.
Keep a promise
Forgo a grudge.
Forgive an enemy.
Apologize.

Examine your demands on others.
Think first of someone else.
Be kind.
Be Gentle.
Laugh a little more.
Express your gratitude.
Welcome a stranger.
Gladden the heart of a child.
Take pleasure in the beauty and wonder of the earth.
Speak your love and then speak it again.
Try to understand.

President Howard W. Hunter

Though there may be miraculous manifestations attending specific instances spiritual rebirth, such are in addition to the actual fact of being “born of the Spirit.” When the Holy Ghost falls upon a worthy recipient, it has the effect of pouring out pure intelligence upon him; all is calm and serene; the still small voice speaks peace to the spirit within man; and the sanctifying, cleansing power of the Spirit begins to manifest itself.

*Teachings,* pp. 149-150
... Birth ‘into the kingdom of heaven’ takes place when mortal men are born again and become alive to the things of the Spirit and of righteousness.... [This] birth begins when men are baptized in water by a legal administrator; it is completed when they actually receive the companionship of the Holy Ghost, becoming new creatures by the cleansing power of that member of the Godhead.

Mere compliance with the formality of the ordinance of baptism does not mean that a person has been born again. No one can be born again without baptism, but the immersion in water and the laying on of hands to confer the Holy Ghost do not of themselves guarantee that a person has been or will be born again. The new birth takes place only for those who actually enjoy the gift of companionship of the Holy Ghost, only for those who are fully converted, who have given themselves without restraint to the Lord.

McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, p. 101

Alma 5:14

Image of God in our Countenances

An “image” is not just an outward visual impression but also a vivid representation, a graphic display, or total likeness of something. It is a person or thing very much like another, a copy or counterpart. Likewise, countenance does not simply mean a facial expression or visual appearance. The word comes from an old French term originally denoting “behavior,” “demeanor,” or “conduct.” In earlier times the word countenance was used with these meanings in mind.

Therefore, to receive Christ’s image in one’s countenance means to acquire the Savior’s likeness in behavior, to be a copy of reflection of the Master’s life. This is not possible without a mighty change in one’s pattern of living. It requires, too, a change in feelings, attitudes, desires, and spiritual commitment. This involves the heart. Reynolds and Sjodahl have said: “The heart is said to be the seat of spiritual light; the source whence springs our love and our devotion, our likes and dislikes, our joy and our sorrows, and our loyalty and fidelity.”


In the divine development process we do not become saints in a season. We do not usually even fully finish putting off the natural man that quickly, given our weaknesses. The “mighty change” takes patience, but it is a grave error to postpone the putting off.... It is the putting off of the putting off that is our real problem.

Neal A. Maxwell, Notwithstanding My Weakness [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981], 68, 73.

I recently recalled a historic meeting in Jerusalem about 17 years ago. It was regarding the lease for the land on which the Brigham Young University’s Jerusalem Center for Near East Studies was later built. Before this lease could be signed, President Ezra Taft Benson and Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, then president of Brigham Young University, agreed with the Israeli government on behalf of the Church and the university not to proselyte in Israel. You might wonder why we agreed not to proselyte. We were required to do so in order to get the building permit to build that magnificent building which stands in the historic city of Jerusalem. To our knowledge, the Church and BYU have scrupulously and honorably kept that nonproselyting commitment. After the lease had been signed, one of our friends insightfully remarked, “Oh, we know that you are not going to proselyte, but what are you going to do about the light that is in their eyes?” He was referring to our students who were studying in Israel.


While serving my full-time mission to England, I had the privilege of meeting several General Authorities. One who made a lasting impression on me was President Gordon B. Hinckley. Oddly enough, the greatest impact he had on my life came after I returned from the British Isles to my home in Redding California.

About a year after arriving home, I acquired a job as a waiter at a posh restaurant. The waiters were required to dress in suits with white shirts and bow ties. We were also asked to grow our hair long and wear mustaches. It does not take a lot of imagination to realize that I looked very different than I did while serving as a full-time missionary. A
few months after I started the job, my father was called to be a bishop. President Hinckley was sent out from Salt Lake City to set him apart in his new calling.

My wife and I, as well as my extended family, sat in the high council room of the stake center, anxiously awaiting the arrival of Elder Hinckley. As he entered the room, the atmosphere was full of his gentle enthusiasm. Instantly, my mind was brimming with a flood of memories of England, and my heart was full. Seeing him again made me yearn for the time in England that could never be revisited.

Each person in the room felt of his special spirit as he shook their hands one by one. As he came toward me, I reached out and gave him an enthusiastic missionary handshake, which seemed to catch him off guard a little bit. My energetic greeting caused him to step back.

Smiling at me he said, “You’ll have to excuse me; your greeting makes me feel like we’re old friends.” He inquired, “Have we met before?”

“Yes,” I said. “I’m Doug Bassett; I met you in London while serving my mission.”

He hesitated for a moment, perhaps to assess how teachable I was. Placing his hand on my shoulder, he drew me closer to him. Drawing his mouth near my ear, he spoke in a manner that ensured that I would hear his message. His voice came forth in a soft tone of regret: “You’ll have to forgive me for not recognizing you, Elder Bassett; you no longer have the look of a missionary.”

He then stepped back and studied me just long enough to make sure I understood the message he had delivered. Following a gentle squeeze on my shoulder, he moved on.

I was not upset at him; I loved and respected him too much for that. But make no mistake about it, his message had found its mark—like an arrow to my heart. He wanted me to know that while he was not judging me personally, younger men than myself would judge a mission and its ability to change the life of a missionary simply by my appearance. Just because I was not to judge others did not mean these young men would not judge me or the Church by my appearance.


But we should all live so that the Spirit of revelation could dictate and write on the heart and tell us what we should do instead of the traditions of our parents and teachers. But to do this we must become like little children; and Jesus says if we do not we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. How simple it is! Live free from envy, malice, wrath, strife, bitter feelings, and evil speaking in our families and about our neighbors and friends and all the inhabitants of the earth, wherever we meet them. Live so that our consciences are free, clean and clear.

Young, *Discourses of Brigham Young*, p.36

**Alma 5:15**

**Faith**

Powerful faith and spiritual rebirth are twins. The latter cannot exist without the former. There is no rebirth, no mighty change of heart or exalting spiritual activity without faith.


Faith... is the first governing principle which has power, dominion, and authority, over all things; by it they exist, by it they are upheld, by it they are changed, or by it they remain, agreeable to the will of God. Without it there is no power, and without power there could be no creation nor existence.

If men were duly to consider themselves, and turn their thoughts and reflections to the operations of their own minds, they would readily discover that it is faith, and faith only, which is the moving cause of all action in them.

Joseph Smith, *Lectures on Faith* 1 p. 10, 24

The “eye of faith” means the ability and capacity to keep your eyes on the power source (see Matt. 14:23-32).

Ross Cole (address to CES Educators, Ricks College, June 30, 1995)
Alma 5:15
Stand before God

I tell you the Lord in taking account of us. We are individually in His presence…. The Lord… will take note of us, and will record our works and our deeds. Thank God for that… principle of the gospel of Jesus Christ, that every one of us will have to give an account for the deeds we do in the flesh, and that every man will be rewarded according to his works, whether they be good or evil. (In James R. Clark, comp., Messages of the First Presidency, 5:86).

Alma 5:19

If we do righteous acts and refrain from evil acts, we have clean hands. If we act for the right motives and if we refrain from forbidden desires and attitudes, we have pure hearts.

Dallin H. Oaks

Alma 5:21

Garments are various articles of clothing used to dress the body. They may be worn for utilitarian or religious purposes or both. The Lord made “coats of skins” for Adam and Eve to cover their nakedness. (Gen.3:32) Special ceremonial and “holy garments” were worn by Aaron and the priests.

Much that is sacred and symbolical is taught by reference to garments. … Clean garments are a sign of cleanliness, perfection, and salvation. To gain salvation men must wash their garments in the blood of the Lamb.

Bruce R. McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, pp. 303-4

Alma 5:26

Can Ye Feel So Now

I was building a shed next to my home…. I asked my son to go over to the neighbors and borrow a power drill so that “turning the screws in” would not be such a tedious job. He returned with a rechargeable power drill. … I found that as I tried to put in the screws the drill would take them in about half-way and then the power would give out. The battery-powered drill did not have sufficient power for the difficult task. I told my son to take the drill back and ask the neighbor for his other drill because the rechargeable one did not have enough power for the job I was doing. When he returned with the other drill, we plugged it into the outlet in our home. I found that I now had more than enough power to drive the screws all the way into the wood. Both power drills were instruments in my hands; however, only one was able to perform the task that I needed done. As [returned] missionaries and servants of the Lord we might ask ourselves, “Am I like the rechargeable drill trying to get by on spirituality stored up from past experiences, or am I striving to be in tune continually so I am like a power drill that is plugged into the source of all power?”

Clyde J. Williams (Alma—Testimony of the Word, ed. By Nyman and Tate, p. 91)

Come home with your heads up. Keep yourselves clean, from the crowns of your heads to the soles of your feet; be pure in heart,—otherwise you will return bowed down in spirit and with a fallen countenance, and will feel as though you never could rise again.

I wish to make this request; that the Elders who return from missions consider themselves just as much on a mission here as in England or in any other part of the world.
We frequently call the brethren to go on missions to preach the Gospel, and they will go and labor as faithfully as men can do.... In a few years they come home, and throwing off their coats and hats, they will say, “Religion, stand aside, I am going to work now to get something for myself and my family.” This is folly in the extreme.... When he has been at home a week, a month, a year, or ten years, the spirit of preaching and the spirit of the gospel ought to be within him like a river flowing forth.... If this is not the case he does not fill his mission.

*Discourses of Brigham Young*, comp. by John A. Widtsoe [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1954], 328-329

To those of you, who have already served, please remember that you were released from your missions but not from the Church. You spent two years as a representative of the Lord Jesus Christ. We expect you to always look and act like one of His disciples. Look the part. Act the part. Don’t follow worldly trends and fashions. You are better than that. If you have slipped, then do what is necessary to regain your spiritual balance. The rules for happiness and success after your mission are pretty much the same as they were during your mission: pray hard, work hard, and be obedient.


**Alma 5:27**

*Humility*

It’s hard to feel sufficiently humble. If you can, you may not be.

Henry B. Eyring

The Prophet Joseph Smith, in our own dispensation, said this: “When the Twelve or any other witnesses stand, before the congregations of the earth, and they preach in the power and demonstration of the Spirit of God, and the people are astonished and confounded at the doctrine, and say, ‘That man has preached a powerful discourse, a great sermon.’ Then let that man or those men take care that they do not ascribe the glory unto themselves, but be careful that they are humble, and ascribe the praise and glory to God and the Lamb; for it is by the power of the Holy Priesthood and the Holy Ghost that they have power thus to speak. What art thou, O man, but dust? And from whom receivest thou the power and blessings, but from God?”

*Ezra Taft Benson (So Shall Ye Reap, pp.33-34)*

When one becomes conscious of his great humility, he has already lost it. When one begins boasting of his humility, it has already become pride—the antithesis of humility.... Somebody asked me this morning, “How do you keep humble?” Sometimes I am humble and sometimes I am unhumble. I think there is a formula that will never fail. First, you evaluate yourself.... I would be nothing without the Lord. My breath, my brains, my hearing, my sight, my locomotion, my everything depends on the Lord. That is the first step and then we pray, and pray often, and we will not get up from our knees until we have communicated. The line may be down; we may have let it fall to pieces, but I will not get up from my knees until I have established communication—if it is twenty minutes, if it is all night like Enos.... If it takes all day long, you stay on your knees until your unhumbleness has dissipated, until you feel the humble spirit and realize, “I could die this minute if it were not for the Lord’s good grace. I am dependent upon him—totally dependent upon him,” and then you read the scriptures.

*Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, pp. 233-234*

If we were humble, nothing would change us—neither praise nor discouragement. If someone were to criticize us, we would not feel discouraged. If someone were to praise us, we also would not feel proud.

*Jose Luis Gonzalez-Balado, Mother Teresa—In My Own Words, [New York: Gramercy Books, 1996], 53*
It is of interest, however, that during the first 30 years of His life in Nazareth, Jesus apparently drew little attention to Himself even though He was living a sinless life (see Matthew 13:54-56: Mark 6:2-3). That should encourage us to do better in our own quiet and humble way without drawing attention to ourselves.


A story contained in the family lore of Brigham Young's descendants illustrates the submissive nature of humility. It recounts that in a public meeting the Prophet Joseph, possibly as a test, sternly rebuked Brigham Young for something he had done or something he was supposed to have done but hadn't—the detail is unclear. When Joseph finished the rebuke, everyone in the room waited for Brigham Young's response. This powerful man, later known as the Lion of the Lord, in a voice everyone could tell was sincere, said simply and humbly, "Joseph, what do you want me to do?" (See Truman G. Madsen, "Hugh B. Brown—Youthful Veteran," *New Era*, Apr. 1976, 16).

I resonate to the English author John Ruskin's memorable statement that "the first test of a truly great man is his humility." He continued: "I do not mean, by humility, doubt of his own power… [But really] great men… have a curious… feeling that… greatness is no in them, but through them…. And they see something Divine… in every other man…, and are endlessly, foolishly, incredibly merciful."


**Alma 5:28**

Pride is essentially competitive in nature.… In the words of C. S. Lewis: "Pride gets no pleasure out of having something only out of having more of it than the next man…. It is the comparison that makes you proud: the pleasure of being above the rest. Once the element of competition has gone, pride has gone" (*Mere Christianity* [New York: Macmillan, 1852], 109-10)….

Pride is ugly. It says "If you succeed, I am a failure."…

Pride is the great stumbling block to Zion. I repeat: Pride is the great stumbling block to Zion.


**Alma 5:29**

*Envy is Form of Ingratitude*

[God] experiences a deep, divine disappointment in us when we are ungrateful and when we are unwilling to confess God's hand in all things. (D&C 59:21) But it is because of what our sustained ingratitude does to us, not to Him. Failure to see His hand in human affairs in bringing to pass His eternal purposes and plans in the world (at the same time leaving us to exercise our agency) is a fatal misreading of life. It also represents a profound spur to selfishness and self-centeredness. It is these faults which lead to the celebration of the appetites rather than of spiritual things. And God knows perfectly what the end results of such trends are so far as human misery is concerned. It is our true happiness which He desires for us, His children, and "wickedness never was happiness".

Neal A. Maxwell, *Sermons Not Spoken* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1985], 85

**Alma 5:30**

Professor Gary L. Bunker writes, "To mock is to humiliate, ridicule, insult, revile, make fun of, deride, sneer at, scorn, or hold in contempt,… Occasions for mockery usually occur in the context of real or imagined differences. Differences in beliefs, wealth, learning, social position, physical characteristics, group membership, and behavior
may be used as pretexts for the justification of mockery…. Mockery costs our brother or sister severe physical and/or psychological pain. It also jeopardizes our hope of eternal life. Moreover, it is especially debilitating to those who have been called to serve. We cannot serve those for whom we have contempt.”

“Mocking Our Brother”, Ensign, April 1975.

**Alma 5:32**

The mission of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is to call people everywhere to repentance.  

**Alma 5: 37-39, 57, 60**

[Speaking of some members of the Church]  “They have refused to live the gospel, when they knew it to be true; or have been blinded by tradition; or for other cause have not been willing to walk in the light. In this class we could properly place those who refuse to take upon them the name of Christ, even though they belong to the Church; and those who are not willing when called to go forth and preach to a perverse world ‘Jesus Christ, and him crucified.’ They may live clean lives; they may be honest, industrious, good citizens, and all that; but they are not willing to assume any portion of the labor which devolves upon members of the Church, in carrying on the great work of redemption of mankind. We have known members of the Church who have gone out in the world and have mingled with those not of our faith, and these members were ashamed to have it known that they were Latter-day Saints. Such persons certainly are not valiant in the testimony of Jesus.”  

How, in the language of the Scriptures are we to know the voice of the good shepherd from the voice of a stranger?… I say, “Your eye can be deceived. So can mine; your ear can be deceived, so can mine; the touch of your hand can be deceived, so can mine; but the Spirit of God filling the creature with revelation and the light of eternity, cannot be mistaken—the revelation which comes from God is never mistaken…. When an individual, filled with the Spirit of God, declares the truth of heaven, the sheep hear that, the Spirit of the Lord pierces their inmost souls and sinks deep into their hearts; by the testimony of the Holy Ghost light springs up within them, and they see and understand for themselves. This is the way the Gospel should be preached by every Elder in Israel, and by this power every hearer should hear; and if they know the voice of the Good Shepherd, we must live so that the Spirit of the Lord can find its way to our hearts.”  
Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, 16:74-75

**Alma 5:37-40**

“Sin…Is Service to Satan”

Sin… is service to Satan. It is a truism that men are “his whom they list to obey”. Many scriptures affirm this statement. Jesus pointed to this truth when he said to the Jews, “Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.” (John 8:34) Paul, writing to the Romans, said: “Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

For sin shall not have dominion over you….

Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” (Rom. 6:13, 15-16.)

Peter too emphasizes this bondage:

“For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.
While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption; for of whom a man is overcome of the same is he brought in bondage.” (2 Pet. 2:18-19.)

Alma 5:44
Holy Order

In general terms a *priest* is a minister. One so designated (if he is a true priest) must in fact hold the priesthood; yet the designation *priest*, when so used, has no reference to any particular office in the priesthood. Thus among the Nephites it was the practice to consecrate priests and teachers, give them administrative responsibility, and send them out to preach, teach, and baptize (Mosiah 23:17; 25:19; 26:7; Alma 4:7; 15:13; 23:4). These priests and teachers held the Melchizedek Priesthood.

Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966], 598

President Joseph Fielding Smith has written: “The Nephites were descendants of Joseph. Lehi discovered this when reading the brass plates. He was a descendant of Manasseh, and Ishmael, who accompanied him with his family, was of the tribe of Ephraim. (Alma 10:3)

“Therefore there were no Levites who accompanied Lehi to the Western Hemisphere. Under these conditions the Nephites officiated by virtue of the Melchizedek Priesthood from the days of Lehi to the days of the appearance of our Savior among them. It is true that Nephi “consecrated Jacob and Joseph” that they should be priests and teachers over the land of the Nephites, but the fact that plural terms *priests* and *teachers* were used indicates that This was not a reference to the definite office in the priesthood in either case, but it was a general assignment to teach, direct, and admonish the people. Otherwise the terms *priest* and *teacher* would have been given, in the singular….

“From these and numerous other passages we learn that it was by authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood that the Nephites administered from the time they left Jerusalem until the time of the coming of Jesus Christ.”


Alma 5: 45-47
Spirit of Revelation

Alma the Younger had a personal experience with ministering angels….

To be instructed by an angel would be a great blessing. However, as Alma taught us, his final and lasting conversion came only after he had “fasted and prayed many days.” His complete conversion came from the Holy Ghost.


Christ… declared that the manifestations we might have… from a visitation of an angel, a tangible resurrected being, would not leave the impression… which we receive through a manifestation of the Holy Ghost. Personal visitations might become dim as time goes on, but this guidance of the Holy Ghost is renewed and continued, day after day, year after year, if we live to be worthy of it.


A communication to the *heart* is a more general impression. The Lord often begins by giving impressions. Where there is a recognition of their importance and they are obeyed, one gains more capacity to receive more detailed instruction to the *mind*. An impression to the heart, if followed, is fortified by a more specific instruction to the mind.

Richard G. Scott, “Helping Others to Be Spiritually Led” [Church Education System symposium on the Doctrine and Covenants, Aug 11, 1998], 3-4
Alma 5:52

Unquenchable fire

The great misery of departed spirits in the world of spirits, where they go after death, is to know that they come short of the glory that others enjoy and that they might have enjoyed themselves, and they are their own accusers. A man is his own tormenter and his own condemner. The torment of disappointment in the mind of man is as exquisite as a lake burning with fire and brimstone.

Joseph Smith, Teachings, 310, 357.

Alma 5:53-54

Vain things of the World

Vain is defined as "empty; worthless; having no substance, value or importance... Elated with a high opinion of one's own accomplishments"


Jesus taught that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15). Consequently, we should not lay up for ourselves "treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal" (Matthew 6:19). In other words, the treasures of our hearts—our priorities—should not be what the scriptures call "riches [and] the vain things of this world" (Alma 39:14). The "vain things of [the] world" include every combination of that worldly quartet of property, pride, prominence and power. As to all of these, the scriptures remind us that "you cannot carry them with you" Alma 39:14). We should be seeking the kind of treasures the scriptures promise the faithful: "great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures" (D&C 89:19).


In terms of preoccupation with self and a fixation on the physical, this is more than social insanity; it is spiritually destructive and it accounts for much of the unhappiness...in the modern world. And if adults are preoccupied with appearance—tucking and nipping and implanting and remodeling everything that can be remodeled—those pressures and anxieties will certainly seep through to children. At some point the problem becomes what the Book of Mormon called "vain imaginations" [1 Nephi 12:18]. And in secular society both vanity and imagination run wild. One would truly need a great and spacious makeup kit to compete with beauty as portrayed in media all around us.


Alma 5:57

Touch not their unclean Things

Sin is born in the touching stage. Of the tree of life Adam and Eve were commanded, “Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die” (Genesis 3:3). As with our first parents, so with us—we cannot partake of forbidden fruits save we first touch them. To refuse to touch is the fence of safety. Many a bitter tear has been shed by those who thought it cute to flirt with sin or nibble at that which is forbidden.

Millet & McConkie, Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, vol 3, p. 45.

Too many of the people of the world have come to resemble the Babylon of old by walking in their own ways and following a god “whose image is in the likeness of the world” [D&C 1:16].

One of the greatest challenges we will face is to be able to live in that world but somehow not be of that world. We have to create Zion in the midst of Babylon....

My involvement with the building of the Manhattan Temple gave me the opportunity to be in the temple quite often prior to the dedication. It was wonderful to sit in the celestial room and be there in perfect silence, without a single sound to be heard coming from the busy New York streets outside. How was it possible that the temple could be so reverently silent when the hustle and bustle of the metropolis was just a few yards away?
The answer was in the construction of the temple. The temple was built within the walls of an existing building, and the inner walls of the temple were connected to the outer walls at only a very few junction points. That is how the temple (Zion) limited the effects of Babylon, or the world outside.

There may be a lesson here for us. We can create the real Zion among us by limiting the extent to which Babylon will influence our lives....

Wherever we are, whatever city we may live in, we can build our own Zion by the principles of the celestial kingdom and ever seek to become the pure in heart....

We do not need to become as puppets in the hands of the culture of the place and time. We can be courageous and can walk in the Lord’s path and follow His footsteps.


**Alma 5:58**

The book of life is a record kept in heaven which contains the names of those who shall inherit eternal life. They can be blotted out in the event of wickedness.

Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 97

**Conclusion to Alma 5**

To have a change of heart is to have a change of mind, a change of vision, a change of perspective. To have a change of heart is to become aware of things which are ever-present but seldom witnessed. It is to awaken from the slumber of mediocrity, to shake off the effects of the sedative of insensitivity—to become alive to unseen realities. For Nicodemus or for any other person to see the kingdom of God is to begin the process of true conversion. Indeed, “one is converted when he sees with his eyes what he ought to see; when he hears with his ears what he ought to hear; and when he understands with his heart what he ought to understand. And what he ought to see, hear, and understand is truth—eternal truth—and then practice it. That is conversion.”

Harold B. Lee, *Stand Ye in Holy Places*, p. 92

The Lord works from the inside out. The world works from the outside in. The world would take people out of the slums. Christ takes the slums out of people, and then they take themselves out the slums. The world would mold men by changing their environment. Christ changes men, who then change their environment. The world would shape human behavior, but Christ can change human nature....

Yes, Christ changes men, and changed men can change the world.

Men, changed for Christ will be captained by Christ....

Finally, men captained by Christ will be consumed in Christ. To paraphrase President Harold B. Lee, they set fire in others because they are on fire.... May we be convinced that Jesus is the Christ, choose to follow him, be changed for Him, captained by Him, consumed in Him, and born again I pray.

President Ezra Taft Benson, CR, Oct 1985, 4-6

**A Quickening in the Inner Man**

To quicken is to make alive, to animate, to energize. To be born again is to be quickened as pertaining to spiritual things.

To be born again is to gain heightened sensitivity to things that matter.... To be born again is to gain a deeper sensitivity to right and wrong, to enjoy greater manifestations of the gift of discernment, to develop more refined and educated desires... The quickening in the inner man peels away the film and façade of sin, makes unnecessary the rigors and taxing labors of ostentation and superfluity; those who are born again see things clearly and sharply and are able to sift and sort out the sordid or even the tangential or the unimportant. They have less inclination to labor in secondary causes and a consuming but patient passion to occupy themselves in that which brings light and life and love. They come to treasure the simple pleasures in life and rejoice in the goodness of their God. Joseph Smith
taught: “God has created man with a mind capable of instruction, and a faculty which may be enlarged in proportion to the heed and diligence given to the light communicated from heaven to the intellect; and that the nearer man approaches perfection, the clearer are his views, and the greater his enjoyments, till he has overcome the evils of his life and lost every desire for sin; and like the ancients, arrives at that point of faith where he is wrapped in the power and glory of his Maker and is caught up to dwell with Him.”

*The Holy Ghost, by Millet and McConkie p. 95-96*

Can human hearts be changed? Why, of course: it happens every day in the great missionary work of the Church. It is one of the most widespread of Christ’s modern miracles. If it hasn’t happened to you—it should....

In addition to the physical ordinance of baptism and the laying on of hands, one must be spiritually born again to gain exaltation and eternal life....

Would not the progress of the Church increase dramatically today with an increasing number of those who are spiritually reborn? Can you imagine what would happen in our homes? Can you imagine what would happen with an increasing number of copies of the Book of Mormon in the hands of an increasing number of missionaries who know how to use it and who have been born of God? When this happens, we will get the bounteous harvest of souls that the Lord promised. It was the “born of God” Alma who as a missionary was so able to impart the word that many others were also born of God. (See Alma 36:23-26)....

“Human nature can be changed, here and now,” said President McKay, and then he quoted the following: “You can change human nature. No man who has felt in him the Spirit of Christ even for half a minute can deny this truth.... You do change human nature, your own human nature, if you surrender it to Christ. Human nature has been changed in the past. Human nature must be changed on an enormous scale in the future, unless the world is to be drowned in its own blood. And only Christ can change it. Twelve men did quite a lot to change the world [nineteen hundred] years ago. Twelve simple men.” (Quoting Beverly Nichols, in *Stepping Stones to an Abundant Life* 23, 127)

Yes, Christ changes men, and changed men can change the world. Men changed for Christ will be captained by Christ. Like Paul they will be asking, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:6) Peter stated they will “follow his steps.” (1 Peter 2:21) John said they will “walk, even as he walked.” (1 John 2:6)

Finally, men captained by Christ will be consumed in Christ. To paraphrase President Harold B. Lee, they set fire in others because they are on fire. (Stand Ye in Holy Places 192)

Their will is swallowed up in his will. (See John 5:30) They do always those things that please the Lord. (See John 8:29) Not only would they die for the Lord, but more important they want to live for Him....

President McKay tells of a singular event that happened to him. After falling asleep, he “beheld in vision something infinitely sublime.” He saw a beautiful city, a great concourse of people dressed in white, and the Savior.

“The city, I understood, was his. It was the City Eternal; and the people following him were to abide there in peace and eternal happiness.

“But who were they?

“As if the Savior read my thoughts, he answered by pointing to a semicircle that then appeared above them, and on which were written in gold the words:

*These Are They Who Have Overcome the World—Who Have Truly Been Born Again!*

“When I awoke, it was breaking day.” (Cherished experiences from the Writings of President David O. McKay 59-60)

When we awake and are born of God, a new day will break and Zion will be redeemed.

May we be convinced that Jesus is the Christ, choose to follow Him, be changed for Him, captained by Him, consumed in Him, and born again.