

PERSONAL EVALUATION

DOCTRINE: **Mortal Life**

| <i>Question</i> | <i>My Answers</i> |
|---|-------------------|
| 1) What do I know about Mortal Life and it's purpose? | |
| 2) How has this doctrine affected my perspective on life and who I am? | |
| 3) How has this doctrine influenced how I act every day? | |
| 4) What are some specific choices I have made because of this doctrine? | |
| 5) How has this doctrine affected our home and marriage? | |
| 6) When and how have we discussed this topic at home with our family? | |
| 7) What are specific things I consistently do because I of this doctrine? | |
| 8) What are some specific things our family consistently does because of this doctrine? | |
| 9) What are some things I would like to better understand about this doctrine? | |

Child Evaluation

Baby to school age

Child: _____ Age: _____ Doctrine: **Mortal Life**

| <i>Question</i> | <i>My Answers</i> |
|---|-------------------|
| 1) Why is it important to us that they learn about the Mortal Life and its purpose, early in their lives? | |
| 2) How will an understanding and testimony of this doctrine affect their daily choices and how they act at home and with their friends? | |
| 3) What are the 1 st five things we need to teach them about this doctrine? | |
| 4) How can we do this effectively? | |
| 5) What are some skills we may need to work on, as parents, in order to teach them as powerfully as possible? | |
| 6) Who are some other people in their lives that can teach and influence them on this subject? | |
| 7) What growth do I hope to observe in them as they grow in their testimony of this? | |
| 8) How are we going to do this? What is our plan? | |

Child Evaluation

School age and up

Child: _____ Age: _____ Doctrine: **Mortal Life**

| <i>Question</i> | <i>My Answers</i> |
|--|-------------------|
| 1) What truths am I certain they know about Mortal Life and its purpose? | |
| 2) How strongly to they believe those things? | |
| 3) What growth have I observed in them as they have grown in their testimony of this? | |
| 4) How does their testimony of this affect their everyday choices? | |
| 5) How does it affect how they act at home? | |
| 6) How does it affect how they act with their friends and at school and work? | |
| 7) What are we, as parents, doing to be an example of the power of this doctrine? | |
| 8) What specific things do we still need to teach them? | |
| 9) How are we going to do this? What is our plan? | |
| 10) What are some skills that we, as parents, need to work on in order to be more effective? | |

Doctrine: Mortal Life

Individual and Spouse Study

| <i>Source</i> | <i>Truths</i> | <i>My Insights</i> | <i>My Spouse's Insights</i> |
|---------------------|---------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| Ecclesiastes 12:13 | | | |
| 2 Nephi 2:11, 25-27 | | | |
| Alma 34:32-34 | | | |
| D&C 93:41-50 | | | |
| Abraham 3:22-28 | | | |
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Answers To Life's Questions

M. Russell Ballard, *Ensign*, May 1995, 22-24

Life's most challenging questions seem to be those that begin with the word *why*. "Why is life so hard?" "Why is there so much sorrow, hate, and unhappiness in the world?" "Why does death take the young?" And "why must the innocent suffer?" We all have wrestled with such questions from time to time as we struggle with the vicissitudes of mortality. I particularly want to talk to the younger members of God's family about why I believe the only satisfying answers to such questions come from the comforting perspective of faith in our Heavenly Father and his eternal plan for our happiness.

The prophet Alma called the plan "the great plan of happiness" ([Alma 42:8](#)). It is known more commonly as the plan of salvation. It is beautiful in its simplicity to all who seek prayerfully to know and understand the true meaning and purpose of life.

Through prophets past and present, God has revealed the doctrines of his "great plan of happiness." It consists of infinite, eternal, absolute, unchanging principles. From Alma we learn that "God gave unto them commandments, *after* having made known ... the plan of redemption" ([Alma 12:32](#); emphasis added). The plan teaches that all who have or will live on earth are the spirit children of heavenly parents. We lived with them before coming to this earth to receive our bodies of flesh and bone.

"If Adam [and Eve] had not transgressed [they] would not have fallen, but [they] would have remained in the garden of Eden. ...

"And they would have had no children; wherefore they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy. ...

"Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy" ([2 Ne. 2:22–23, 25](#)). After the Fall, God instructed Adam to cleave unto his wife, Eve (see [Moses 3:24](#); [D&C](#)

[42:22](#)). "God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" ([Gen. 1:28](#)), a commandment that has never been rescinded. Our Father's plan provides for redemption from the Fall through the atonement of Jesus Christ. As the Only Begotten Son of God and the only sinless person to live on this earth, he made a perfect atonement for all mankind. It applies to everyone unconditionally as it pertains to the resurrection from temporal, or physical, death, for all shall rise from the dead with immortal bodies as a result of the Atonement. However, the Atonement is conditional as it pertains to each person's individual sins. It touches everyone to the degree that he or she has faith in Jesus Christ, repents, and obeys the gospel. Exaltation and eternal life with God are reserved for those who keep the commandments.

Mortality, then, is the time to test our ability to understand our Heavenly Father's plan and, of course, our willingness to be obedient. Obedience is essential to obtain exaltation and eternal life. King Benjamin explained that "the Lord God hath sent his holy prophets among all the children of men, to declare these things to every kindred, nation, and tongue, that thereby whosoever should believe [in] Christ, ... the same might receive remission of their sins, and rejoice with exceedingly great joy" ([Mosiah 3:13](#)).

He also taught his people: "Consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. For behold, they are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual; and if they hold out faithful to the end they are received into heaven, that thereby they may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness" ([Mosiah 2:41](#)).

What a wonderful, warm, and reassuring thing it is to know that the primary objective of the very God of heaven is "the immortality and eternal life of man" ([Moses 1:39](#)), or, in other

words, our eternal happiness and joy. Sometimes I wonder if we really appreciate what that means and how it should affect our lives. We must give adequate attention to the doctrines of happiness—real happiness, infinite and eternal. They should be the objective of everything we teach in the Church and of everything we do.

The Prophet Joseph Smith said, “We cannot keep all the commandments without first knowing them, and we cannot expect to know all, or more than we now know unless we comply with or keep those we have already received” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 256).

We must understand the basic doctrines and receive the saving ordinances that are essential for our eternal exaltation and happiness. Our present mortal state places a veil of forgetfulness over our minds, allowing us to prove ourselves able to “do all things whatsoever the Lord [our] God shall command” (*Abr. 3:25*). But even though our present long-range view of eternity is limited, the Lord has not left us without direction. He has provided scriptures and Apostles and prophets through whom he has revealed his plan for our exaltation and eternal life. And we have the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, to guide us.

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that “in obedience there is joy and peace unspotted, unalloyed; and as God has designed our happiness ... he never has—He never will institute an ordinance or give a commandment to His people that is not calculated in its nature to promote that happiness which He has designed, and which will not end in the greatest amount of good and glory to those who become the recipients of his law and ordinances” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 256–57).

Critical to our knowledge of the plan of happiness is an understanding of the great governing principle of agency. A person does not have to spend much time in the schoolroom of mortality to realize that Heavenly Father’s plan does not provide for blissful happiness at every step along our

mortal journey. Life is filled with harsh realities that tug at the heart and tear away at the soul.

One cannot look at suffering, regardless of its causes or origins, without feeling pain and compassion. I can understand why someone who lacks an eternal perspective might see the horrifying news footage of starving children and man’s inhumanity to man and shake a fist at the heavens and cry, “If there is a God, how could he allow such things to happen?”

The answer is not easy, but it isn’t that complicated, either. God has put his plan in motion. It proceeds through natural laws that are, in fact, God’s laws. Since they are his, he is bound by them, as are we. I recognize for purposes we mortals may not understand, the Lord can control the elements. For the most part, however, he does not cause but he allows nature to run its course. In this imperfect world, bad things sometimes happen. The earth’s rocky underpinnings occasionally shift and move, resulting in earthquakes. Certain weather patterns cause hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, and drought.

Much adversity is man-made. Men’s hearts turn cold, and the spirit of Satan controls their actions. In foreseeing the day of suffering in our time, the Savior said, “The love of men shall wax cold, and iniquity shall abound” (*D&C 45:27*). Violence, immorality, and other evils run rampant on the earth. Much adversity has its origin in the principle of agency.

We tend to think of agency as a personal matter. If we ask someone to define “moral agency,” the answer will probably be something like this: “Moral agency means I am free to make choices for myself.” Often overlooked is the fact that choices have consequences; we forget also that agency offers the same privilege of choice to others. At times we will be affected adversely by the way other people choose to exercise their agency. Our Heavenly Father feels so strongly about protecting our agency that he allows his children to exercise it, either for good or for evil.

The plan of happiness is available to all of his children. If the world would embrace and live it, peace, joy, and plenty would abound on the earth. Much of the suffering we know today would be eliminated if people throughout the world would understand and live the gospel.

We mortals have a limited view of life from the eternal perspective. But if we know and understand Heavenly Father's plan, we realize that dealing with adversity is one of the chief ways we are tested. Our faith in our Heavenly Father and his beloved Son, Jesus Christ, is the source of inner strength. Through faith we can find peace, comfort, and the courage to endure. As we trust in God and his plan for our happiness with all our hearts and lean not unto our own understanding (see [Prov. 3:5](#)), hope is born. Hope grows out of faith and gives meaning and purpose to all we do. It can give us comfort in the face of adversity, strength in times of trial, and peace when we have reason for doubt or anguish.

By focusing on and living the principles of Heavenly Father's plan for our eternal happiness, we can separate ourselves from the wickedness of the world. If we are anchored to the correct understanding of who we are, why we are here on this earth, and where we can go after this mortal life, Satan cannot threaten our happiness through any form of temptation. If we are determined to live by Heavenly Father's plan, we will use our God-given moral agency to make decisions based on revealed truth, not on the opinions of others or on the current thinking of the world.

For example, we are moving into an era when the Information Superhighway will have the capacity to cut a wide path right into our homes. With fiber-optic computer technology, it can link homes to an incredible assortment of messages and influences. This highway will be the conduit of information that will have the power to change our culture and, thus, our very lives. As we consider the importance of nourishing our intellects with the promising potential of Superhighway resources, we must be ever cautious about the choices of programs and the impact of media in our lives.

Those who understand our Heavenly Father's eternal plan for the joy and happiness of his children will be better prepared to make good choices as the Information Superhighway rolls across the world. The computer, television, satellite, microchip, and even the telephone, all can bless and enhance our lives—or can make them miserable.

This is why making life's decisions based on our Heavenly Father's plan is so important. If we truly believe that we are his children and are here on earth to learn to live, by faith, the teachings and the commandments of God and his Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, we will make the choices that will qualify us to one day return to live in their presence.

Understanding the gospel of Jesus Christ and following him as our Savior and our Redeemer will influence every aspect of our lives, including all of our individual choices. Those who live according to Heavenly Father's eternal plan will not want to absorb any information that is illicit or untoward, nor will they destroy their spiritual sensitivity through immoral acts or the consumption of any harmful substances. Neither will they search for doctrinal loopholes to find reasons to challenge the ordained leadership of the Church nor tamper with the simple truths of the gospel. They will not attempt to justify any lifestyle that is contrary to the plan of happiness. If they do any of these things, they will never find the inner peace and joy that living the gospel brings. All of our Father's children can seek prayerfully to know who they are and can find real happiness if they obey God's commandments and endure to the end. President Howard W. Hunter said:

“There is nothing sad or gloomy about a person who accepts the truths of the gospel and incorporates these principles in his daily living. God wants all of his children to be joyous and glad, and we can have this blessing if we are willing to keep his commandments and live by his word in all that we do” (in Conference Report, Sept./Oct. 1961, p. 108).

When the plan of our Heavenly Father is understood, the answers to life's questions are found in the gospel of Christ. May we learn to accept with faith the doctrines and teachings of the gospel and accept the plan of salvation with believing hearts and minds. Always know, brothers and sisters, that the leaders of the Church understand and accept the gospel plan and will defend it at all times and in all places.

My testimony coincides with the testimony of the beloved Apostle John: "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" ([John 13:17](#)). May we search for the doctrines and commandments of the great plan of happiness; and when we learn them, may we embrace them willingly. By doing so we will find lasting joy, happiness, and peace. Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" ([John 14:27](#)).

I leave you my testimony that the Lord's promise of peace comes from knowing and living the principles of our Heavenly Father's plan of happiness. May his peace and joy be with all of us I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Now is the Time to Prepare

Elder Russell M. Nelson, Ensign, May 2005, 16-18

My dear brethren and sisters, since our last general conference, my sweetheart—my beloved wife for 59 years—passed away. While I was at home on a rare Saturday with no assignment, we had worked together. She had washed our clothing. I had helped to carry it, fold it, and put it in place. Then while we were sitting on the sofa, holding hands, enjoying a program on television, my precious Dantzel slipped peacefully into eternity. Her passing came suddenly and unexpectedly. Just four days earlier, our doctor's report at a routine checkup indicated that her laboratory tests were good. After my efforts to revive her proved fruitless, feelings of shock and sorrow overwhelmed me. My closest friend, angel mother of our 10 children, grandmother of our 56 grandchildren, had been taken from us.

Dantzel was not only a loved and loving companion. She was a teacher: by her noble example, she taught faith, virtue, obedience, and mercy. She taught me how to listen and to love. Because of her, I know all the blessings that can come to a husband, father, and grandfather.

With deep gratitude, I acknowledge the tremendous outpouring of love from dear friends across the world. Countless letters, calls, cards, and other messages have been sent. All tributes expressed loving admiration for her and sympathy for us whom she left behind. Those messages came in such large numbers that we, regretfully, were unable to respond to all of them individually. May I thank each and all for your great kindness toward us. Thank you so very, very much. Your expressions have brought much comfort through this time of heartache for our family. We really love dear Dantzel! We miss her!

From her sudden departure we can learn a very important lesson: now is the time to prepare to meet God. Tomorrow may be too

late. Prophets through the ages have so declared: "This life is the time for men to prepare to meet God. ... Do not procrastinate the day of your repentance."¹

A. The Need to Prepare Now

Yet many do procrastinate.² A prophet warns us: "Ye cannot say ... that I *will* repent, that I *will* return to my God. Nay, ye cannot say this; for that same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will ... possess your body in that eternal world."³ Another prophet adds, "He that is filthy shall be filthy still; and he that is righteous shall be righteous still."⁴

Great is the knowledge that "whatever principle of intelligence we attain ... in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection."⁵ From the Prophet Joseph Smith we also learn that "God has ... a time ... appointed ... when He will bring all His subjects, who have obeyed His voice and kept His commandments, into His celestial rest.

This rest⁶ is of such perfection and glory, that man has need of a preparation before he can, according to the laws of that kingdom, enter it and enjoy its blessings. ... God has given certain laws to the human family, which, if observed, are sufficient to prepare them to inherit this rest."⁷ Sister Nelson was so prepared!

That glorious goal seems mighty distant if one is discouraged by worldly trouble and gloom. I remember when a friend having a difficult day exclaimed, "Oh, why was I ever born?" God's plan answers his question. We came into this life to acquire a physical body. We may fall in love and be married. We may have children and experience the trials of mortal life. (Please forgive me for mentioning children and the trials of life in the same breath. I sense that they are both part of our growing process.) The Church was restored—the earth was created—so that those families could be sealed in holy

temples. Otherwise, the whole earth would be “utterly wasted.”_8

We came to be tried, to be tested, and to choose._9 Our decisions determine our destiny.

We are “free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator ... , or to choose captivity and death.”_10 Those who choose the Lord’s way will likely endure

persecution._11 But their reward is certain.

Those who prove faithful “shall inherit the kingdom of God, ... and their joy shall be full forever.”_12

Sister Nelson has earned that reward. What comfort that brings to me and our family!

Trials and tests apply to rich and poor alike.

Years ago, I was asked to perform an operation upon a very wealthy man. A surgical biopsy confirmed that he had an advanced cancer that had spread throughout his body.

As I reported this news, his immediate response was to rely upon his wealth. He would go anywhere or do anything to treat his condition. He thought he could buy his way back to health. But he soon passed away. Someone asked, “How much wealth did he leave?” The answer, of course, was, “All of it!”

His priorities were set upon things of the world. His ladder of success had been leaning against the wrong wall. I think of him when I read this scripture: “Behold, your days of probation are past; ye have procrastinated the day of your salvation until it is ... too late.”_13

In radiant contrast, Sister Nelson prepared throughout her life for the time when she would return to God. She lived each day as though it were her last. She cherished every hour, knowing that time on earth is precious.

Some people live as if there were no day of reckoning. Others waste today’s time with a disabling fear of tomorrow or a paralyzing preoccupation over mistakes of yesterday. Each of us might well heed the words of a poet, as posted on a sundial:

*The shadow by my finger cast
Divides the future from the past:
Before it, sleeps the unborn hour,
In darkness, and beyond thy power:*

*Behind its unreturning line,
The vanished hour, no longer thine:
One hour alone is in thy hands,—
The NOW on which the shadow stands._14*

B. How Do We Prepare?

Now is the time. But *how* do we prepare? Begin with repentance! Scripture declares, “If ye have sought to do wickedly in the days of your probation, then ye are found unclean before the judgment-seat of God; ... no unclean thing can dwell with God.”_15 He gave this simple rule: “Except ye abide my law ye cannot attain to this glory.”_16

Now is the time to show reverent respect for one’s physical body. It serves as the tabernacle for one’s spirit throughout all eternity. Physical appetites are to be controlled by the will of one’s spirit. We are to “deny [our]selves of all ungodliness.”_17 We are to “forsake all evil and cleave unto all good, [and] live by every word which proceedeth forth out of the mouth of God.”_18

Because of frequent and frightening calamities in the world, some people doubt the existence of God. But, in fact, He is trying to help us. He revealed these words: “How oft have I called upon you by the mouth of my servants, and by the ministering of angels, and by mine own voice, and by the voice of thunderings, and ... tempests, ... earthquakes, ... great hailstorms, ... famines and pestilences of every kind, ... and would have saved you with an everlasting salvation, but ye would not!”_19

His hope for us is eternal life. We qualify for it by obedience to covenants and ordinances of the temple—for ourselves, our families, and our ancestors. We cannot be made perfect without them._20 We cannot *wish* our way into the presence of God. We are to obey the laws upon which those blessings are predicated._21 God’s plan is fair. Even those “who have died without a knowledge of this gospel, who would have received it if they had been permitted to tarry, shall be heirs of the celestial kingdom of God.”_22 His plan is also merciful. He “will judge all men according to their works, according to the desire of their hearts.”_23

Now is the time to enroll our names among the people of God. This we do by paying tithing. He tithes His people to bless them. [_24](#) Sister Nelson taught that lesson to our family, over and over again. [_25](#)

Now is the time to align our goals with God's goals. His work and His glory—"to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" [_26](#)—can become ours. Of temple marriage the Savior declared, "If a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, ... [they] shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, ... exaltation and glory in all things." [_27](#) We are to emulate the example of the Lord, to love as He did, to pray as He did, and to endure to the end as He did. [_28](#)

C. Importance of Death in God's Eternal Plan

Death is a necessary component of our eternal existence. No one knows when it will come, but it is essential to God's great plan of happiness. [_29](#) Thanks to the Atonement of the Lord, eventual resurrection is a reality and eternal life is a possibility for all humankind. [_30](#) That possibility becomes a reality as we obey God's law. He said, "Except ye shall keep my commandments, ... ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." [_31](#) One day we will be judged by the Lord [_32](#) and go to our own mansion prepared in our Father's heavenly house. [_33](#) Celestial glory awaits those who have been faithful to God's gentle commands. [_34](#)

Brothers and sisters, we live to die and we die to live—in another realm. If we are well prepared, death brings no terror. From an eternal perspective, death is premature only for those who are not prepared to meet God.

Now is the time to prepare. Then, when death comes, we can move toward the celestial glory that Heavenly Father has prepared for His faithful children. Meanwhile, for sorrowing loved ones left behind—such as our family and me—the sting of death is soothed by a steadfast faith in Christ, a perfect brightness of hope, a love of God and of all men, and a deep

desire to serve them. [_35](#) That faith, that hope, that love will qualify us to come into God's holy presence and, with our eternal companions and families, dwell with Him forever. Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. Notes

1. [Alma 34:32–33](#); see also [Alma 13:27](#).
2. Scripture admonishes each of us to "harden not your hearts any longer; for behold, now is the time and the day of your salvation; ... therefore, if ye will repent ... , immediately shall the great plan of redemption be brought about unto you" ([Alma 34:31](#)).
3. [Alma 34:34](#); emphasis added.
4. [Morm. 9:14](#); see also [2 Ne. 9:15–16](#); [D&C 88:27–32, 34–35](#); [D&C 130:2](#).
5. [D&C 130:18](#).
6. In the New Testament, the term *rest* has been translated from the Greek feminine noun *katapausis*, which means "the heavenly blessedness in which God dwells." Thus, *rest* connotes an element of glory.
7. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 54.
8. See [D&C 2:1–3](#); [D&C 138:48](#); [JS—H 1:39](#).
9. See [2 Ne. 9:27](#); [D&C 98:12](#); [Abr. 3:24–26](#).
10. [2 Ne. 2:27](#).
11. See [2 Tim. 3:12](#).
12. [2 Ne. 9:18](#).
13. [Hel. 13:38](#).
14. Henry Van Dyke, "The Sun-Dial at Wells College," in *The Poems of Henry Van Dyke* (1911), 345. Sundial and poem displayed at Wells College, Aurora, New York.
15. [1 Ne. 10:21](#).
16. [D&C 132:21](#); see also [D&C 88:36–39](#).
17. [Moro. 10:32](#); see also [2 Ne. 2:21](#); [Morm. 9:28](#).
18. [D&C 98:11](#).
19. [D&C 43:25](#).
20. See [D&C 128:15, 18](#).
21. See [D&C 130:20–21](#).
22. [D&C 137:7](#).
23. [D&C 137:9](#).
24. See [Mal. 3:10](#); [3 Ne. 24:10](#). Tithing also prepares people against a future day of vengeance and burning (see [D&C 85:3](#)).

25. See Spencer J. Condie, *Russell M. Nelson: Father, Surgeon, Apostle* (2003), 104.
26. [Moses 1:39](#); see also [Moses 6:59](#); Joseph Smith Translation, Gen. 6:62.
27. [D&C 132:19](#); see also [D&C 75:5](#); [D&C 101:65](#).
28. See [2 Ne. 33:4](#); [3 Ne. 15:9](#); [3 Ne. 27:21–22](#); [D&C 14:7](#).
29. See [Alma 42:8–9](#).
30. See [1 Cor. 15:50–54](#); [1 Jn. 5:11, 20](#); [Alma 12:25](#); [Morm. 9:13](#); [D&C 46:14](#); [D&C 76:40–42, 50–59](#); [D&C 133:62](#).
31. [3 Ne. 12:20](#).
32. See [1 Ne. 10:20](#); [2 Ne. 9:41–46](#); [Alma 12:27](#).
33. See [John 14:2](#); [D&C 98:18](#).
34. See [D&C 78:7](#); [D&C 131:1–3](#).
35. See [2 Ne. 31:20](#); [Mosiah 16:7–8](#); [Moro. 7:38–48](#)