

How We Can Show Our Heavenly Father that We Love and Respect Him

June 18, 2017

Introduction

In 1966, the President of the United States issued a proclamation designating the third Sunday in June as Father's Day, a day to honor fatherhood in general and our own fathers in particular.

It is with profound humility that I respond to the invitation of the Bishopric to take a few minutes of your time on this the third Sunday of June 2017 and speak in an attempt to honor Him who is the Father of each person in this room -- to honor God, our Heavenly Father.

We are the children of God

Brothers and sisters, you and I are not simply physical beings. The Book of Abraham teaches us that after the physical body of Adam was created, God put into Adam's body, Adam's spirit, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and thus Adam became of living soul (Abraham 5:7). The same is true of you and I. At some point in the development of our physical body while in our mother's womb, prior to that point where our mother could feel us move inside her, our spirit was put into our body. And having a body and a spirit, we too became a soul (D&C 88:15).

The spirit that was placed in our body is the literal offspring of the most holy, exalted, and supreme being in all the universe, our Heavenly Father. Prior to being placed into our bodies, our spirits dwelt with Him. Our spirits know our Heavenly Father very well (footnote 1). Our spirits love Him and long to be with Him again. But to accomplish the purposes of this our second estate, our spirit is precluded from communicating to our physical mind its memory of our premortal existence and our knowledge of and experiences with our Heavenly Father.

And so one of the challenges of this life is to come to know Him and to love Him again -- this time not in the context of sight but in the context of faith.

We come to know and love our Heavenly Father again in this life through 3 means -- first, through the record of the ministry of His Only Begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ; second, through revelations by Him to His servants the prophets (Amos 3:7); and, third, through individual personal revelation and sacred personal experience.

The Earthly Ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ

We learn so much about our Heavenly Father when we study the life, the ministry, the teachings, and the attributes of Jesus Christ, our Savior.

The Apostle Paul declared that Jesus was "the express image of [the Father's] person" (Hebrews 1:3) The Savior testified that His life and His words were a reflection of His Father saying "The

Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do" (John 5:19), "... I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things." (John 8:28)
He so fully emulated His Father that Jesus told His disciples, "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9).

While the Lord Jesus Christ is a separate and distinct being from His Father, He is a member of the Godhead, the first born spirit of the Father, and the only begotten of Him in the flesh. As to their character, attributes and perfections, the Father and the Son are equal. What is true of the Son is true of the Father.

When we read of the compassion of the Jesus to Jairus and his daughter, we see the compassion of the Father. When we see His tenderness to Mary and Martha, we see the tenderness of the Father. When we read of His command of the wind and the waves, we learn of the power of His Father. When we see how He "laid down His life for His friends" (John 15:13), we see the Father's love for all of mankind. When we read of His ministry to each individual gathered at the Nephite temple in the land Bountiful, we see the Father's love for each of us His children.

General Revelation

As we study the words of the Prophets, we learn many truths that God has revealed about Himself. Let's review together a few of these truths.

Our Heavenly Father is the most intelligent being in all the universe. He revealed to Abraham the following: "... the Lord said unto me: These two facts do exist, that there are two spirits, one being more intelligent than the other; there shall be another more intelligent than they; I am the Lord thy God, I am more intelligent than they all." (Abraham 3:19)

Our Heavenly Father is a God of Truth. The Brother of Jared bore this witness saying, "Lord, I know that thou speakest the truth, for thou art a God of truth, and canst not lie." (Ether 3:12)

Our Heavenly Father always follows through. To Abraham, He said, "there is nothing that the Lord thy God shall take in his heart to do but what he will do it." (Abraham 3:17)

Our Heavenly Father is merciful. "I, the Lord, forgive sins, and am merciful unto those who confess their sins with humble hearts;" (D&C 61:2)

Our Heavenly Father is long-suffering. Ammon declared, "Behold, who can glory too much in the Lord? Yea, who can say too much of his great power, and of his mercy, and of his long-suffering towards the children of men?" (Alma 26:16)

Heavenly Father is kind. To Isaiah He revealed, "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." (Isaiah 54:10)

In fine, our Heavenly Father is, as Jesus testified in the Sermon on the Mount, perfect, complete, in every way. (Matthew 5:48)

Personal Revelation, Relationship, Experience

I submit that the most impactful knowledge about our Heavenly Father is obtained through our personal experience of Him, on those occasions when our spirit communes with His Spirit and the testimony of the scriptures concerning Him become something we experience personally.

When we commune with God in prayer or study or meditation, He through His Spirit communicates to our spirit and our spirit communicates to our mind and our heart a portion of that which it receives from our Heavenly Father. As Paul taught the members of the primitive church in Rome, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Romans 8:16).

And when we commune with Him, we, like King Benjamin's people, can "... come to a knowledge of the goodness of God, and his matchless power, and his wisdom, and his patience, and his long-suffering towards the children of men" (Mosiah 4:6) And, when we feel these things, we like King Benjamin's people feel the desire "to be obedient to all things that he shall command us" (Mosiah 5:5) This desire springs out of our love for Him. But "We love him, because he first loved us." (1 John 4: 19)

I testify that each of can experience Him personally. And when we experience Him, we will experience His love.

He loves us because we are His children. And He loves us because He can see in us things we cannot yet see in ourselves. There is something of His DNA in us. He sees a diamond where we see just coal. He sees in us a beautiful sculpture where we see but a block of stone. I submit that the truest reflection of who we are is not seen in the mirror but in the eyes of our Heavenly Father as He looks lovingly upon us. His love is the greatest influence for good in all the universe and it provides us a power to help us become what He has designed us to become.

As we come to know God and to experience His love for us, our response will be to love Him in return, to give Him due reverence and respect, and to try to do His will.

Respecting the Supreme Being

Surely the baseline behavior of those who love God is to respect His name. From Sinai, came the third commandment. "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." (Exodus 20:7) To each of us, I say, let us not allow the vocabulary of classmates or coworkers to leach into our own. Let us never be found guilty of profaning His holy name or title.

Reverence the Supreme Being

Loving God includes having reverence for Him, for His House, and for those meetings dedicated to His name.

When Joseph and Sydney were given a view of the celestial kingdom, they said "... we saw the glory of the celestial, which excels in all things—where God, even the Father, reigns upon his throne forever and ever; Before whose throne all things bow in humble reverence, and give him glory forever and ever." (D&C 76:92-93)

We do not need to wait for a future day to humbly reverence Him. The Lord has said "Verily, verily, I say unto you, as I said unto my disciples, where two or three are gathered together in my name, ..., behold, there will I be in the midst of them—even so am I in the midst of you." (D&C 6:32)

Behind me are three panels. When I come here to worship with you, I imagine in my mind's eye seated in the air in front of these three panels the three members of the First Presidency of the Universe, Our Heavenly Father in the center, the Lord Jesus Christ on his right hand and the Holy Ghost to his left. And while I know that to God distance is nothing, thinking of them as near helps me in my attempt to commune with them in our Sacrament meetings.

We when assemble to worship God, let us observe a reverence consistent with that idea He is near, He is aware, and wants us to enjoy the edifying influence of His Spirit and His love as we are here.

Communion with the Infinite

When we love God, we seek to have a personal relationship with Him. We call upon His name in prayer. We do not let a morning or evening go by without checking in with our Father.

When "we enter into our closet" (Matthew 6:6) or other private room and "shut [our] door" and "pray to our Father" in secret, let us have a mindset that He is near, that He is listening, that He cares about us and wants us to succeed in this our second estate. Let us speak with Him as if He were standing above us just as He stood above the prophet Joseph Smith. Using the language of respect, let us express to Him the desires of our hearts, pouring out our whole souls unto Him.

It is my testimony that when do this, we, like Oliver Cowdery, will hear Him "speak peace to [our] mind" (D&C 6:23) and "in [our] heart" (D&C 8:2) reveal to us His love and His desires for us.

Keep My Commandments

Christ taught us how we can love Him and His Father saying, “If ye love me, keep my commandments”. (John 14:15) “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me” (John 14:21). And “... If a man love me, he will keep my words” (John 14:23)

Notice that the Lord uses the word “keep” which suggests holding on to, storing, saving, and treasuring, as well as to observing His commandments. It is my opinion that He uses this word to encourage us to keep on keeping on – to get up after we stumble, to repent as necessary and try again.

And when we love God both in word and deed, he offers us this marvelous promise “... and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. (John 14:21) ... and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. (John 14:23)

These are not idle words but the solemn promise of a God who canst not lie. If we are true and faithful to our covenants with Him, we will keep this our second estate and abide on this planet which will become a celestial kingdom where Our Heavenly Father will come and abide with us.

Feed My Lambs

For those who are called to serve Him, our Heavenly Father asks us to love Him by being “in the service of [our] fellow beings” (Mosiah 2:17).

You will recall the word of Jesus to Peter, “..., Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.” (John 21:15)

As we strive to serve God in our callings, may our prayer to Him be the words of hymn number 221, “Make us Thy true under-shepherds” (Hymns 221)

Conclusion

Our Heavenly Father is the most Supreme, Holy, and Exalted Being in all the universe. He loves us beyond our capacity to comprehend.

In His house are many mansions.

And He wants each of us to live in one of them. (John 14:2; D&C 98:18)

He has prepared for us things that exceed our wildest imaginations. (1 Corinthians 2:9)

And all He asks is that we love Him in return.

By respecting His name.

By reverencing Him.

By keeping His commandments.

By blessing the lives of our fellow man.

Tonight, before we close this Third Sunday in June, may we each take time to humbly bow and honor Him who is the Father of our Spirits. May we express to Him our love, our appreciation for all that He is and all that He has done. May we communicate to Him our desire to live with Him again and our determination to keep His commandments until the end of our mortal life.

In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Footnotes

1. "Nothing is going to startle us more when we pass through the veil to the other side than to realize how well we know our Father [in Heaven] and how familiar his face is to us." Ezra Taft Benson, "Jesus Christ—Gifts and Expectations," in *Speeches of the Year, 1974 (1975)*, 313; see also "Jesus Christ—Gifts and Expectations," *Ensign*, Dec. 1988, 6; *Tambuli*, May 1977, 24.