

February Week #1 Devotionals & Consideration



Hymn: “Give Me Thy Heart”

Give Me thy heart says the Father above, no gift so precious to Him as our love...

“Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life...” I Timothy 6:12

The root word “heart” means “the center of anything.” This month as we continue our preparation for establishing the cause of Zion, let us consider the great battle we are engaged in: The Battle for our Hearts.

At the time of creation we were given a precious gift, agency. This is the ability to choose between good and evil, light and dark. On the very first day of creation God set in motion the very tools we would need to engage in this battle with His creation of light.

Genesis 1:6-8 And I, God, said, Let there be light, and there was light. And I, God, saw the light, and that light was good. And I, God, divided the light from the darkness. And I, God, called the light day, and the darkness I called night. And this I did by the word of My power; and it was done as I

spake. And the evening and the morning were the first day.

Apostle Arthur Oakman was shown the creation. He heard the words, “Let there be light.” What he saw as he heard those words was described as a spirit being born into the darkness—a spirit of light, wisdom, and intelligence. There are many scriptures that list the attributes of this “light” and how, if embraced, enlightens the souls of men.

D&C 85:3a-b And the light which now shineth, which giveth you light, is through Him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings; which light proceedeth forth from the

presence of God, to fill the immensity of space.

The light which is in all things; which giveth life to all things; which is the law by which all things are governed; even the power of God who sitteth upon His throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things.

Doctrine & Covenants, Section 85:10 a-c, goes on to list even more attributes of “light”: intelligence, wisdom, truth, virtue, mercy, justice and judgment. **This is the “light of Christ” and it can transform our lives.** Think of examples from the scriptures that describe and tell of the transformation that people experienced when filled with this light. One example would be King Lamoni from the Book of Mormon:

Alma 12:132-135 Now this was what Ammon desired, for he knew that King Lamoni was under the power of God; He knew that the dark veil of unbelief being cast away from his mind, and the light which did light up his mind, which was the light of the glory of God, which was a marvelous light of his goodness.

Yea, this light had infused such joy into his soul, the cloud of darkness having been dispelled, and that the light of everlasting light was lit up in his soul; Yea, he knew that this had overcome his natural frame, and he was carried away in God.

We see also on the first day of creation that God separated the light from the dark, thus creating the foundation or atmosphere for the spirit of opposition to exist that we might be given the gift of agency.

2 Nephi 1: 81-83 For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things. If not so, my first born in the wilderness, righteousness could not be brought to pass; neither wickedness; neither holiness nor misery; neither good nor bad. Wherefore, all things must needs be a compound in one.

2 Nephi 1:94-100 And now, my son, I speak unto you these things, for your profit and learning: For there is a God, and He hath created all things, both the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them is; Both things to act, and things to be acted upon; And to bring about His eternal purposes in the end of man, after He had created our first parents, and the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and in fine, all things which are created, it must needs be that there was an opposition; Even the forbidden fruit in opposition to the tree of life; the one being sweet and the other bitter; Wherefore, the Lord God gave unto man, that he should act for himself. Wherefore, man could not act for himself, save it should be that he was enticed by the one or the other.

Man is in a fallen state. We battle with the natural man (carnal, sensual and devilish) and the spiritual enticings of God. Ladies, we are in a daily battle for our hearts, our minds and our will. Let us bow down before our Creator, in submission and commit our life daily, into the Father’s hands. It seems like it would be an easy choice but darkness pleases our carnal nature and the power and pull of the flesh has the ability to rage within us or

blind us into complacency. This month let us put on the full armor of God and battle those areas of darkness that linger in our lives.

Ephesians 6:10-18 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. **Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day.**

What have you given your heart to? Elder Howard Parker said in a sermon, "**All unused time will flow to your weakness**

and our actions follow our heart."
It's an issue of the heart.

We have been placed here, in this time, to help establish the cause of Zion. Do you hear the trumpet sounding? We must move out of the valley of decision and commit our lives with meaning and purpose to this great calling. Lift up a standard of "light," even the light of Christ, in your life, in your home, and wherever you may be. Cleave unto that which is good. Give the Lord your heart!

"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life," 1 Tim. 6:12.

Also See: 2 Nephi 12:61-128, Alma 19:84-116, John 1:1-12, Ephesians 6:11-18, Alma 9:41, Alma 16:228, 1 Peter 1:19, 2 Nephi 11:23, Moroni 7:13, D&C 50:6b, 1 Kings 18:21, 37, James 1:12-15, James 4:8, Exodus 35:5, Matthew 5:8, Psalms 66:18, Psalms 96:13; Proverbs 23:7; D&C 38:9c; Hebrews 12:11

February Week #2 Devotionals & Consideration



Psalm 115:9-11

**O Israel, trust thou in the Lord; He is thy help and thy shield.
O house of Aaron, trust in the Lord; He is thy help and thy shield.
Ye that fear the Lord, trust in the Lord; He is your help and your shield.**

This week we are going to study and consider about submission and trusting in the Lord in the face of LIFE. Life happens: Cars need fixed, babies cry, grown children need help or stray from the Lord, jobs are hard to find and often don't pay enough, loved ones get sick, loved ones pass away, we had goals in our lives that didn't come to fruition, divorce, broken promises...the list goes on. Sometimes it's hard to concentrate on "establishing the cause of Zion" when our life is going 100mph or feels like it's out of our control. Have you ever caught yourself saying, "Why does it have to be so hard Lord?" Can it really be God's will to afflict us and make us suffer or to have sorrow?

Genesis 3:22-23 Unto the woman, I, the Lord God, said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow, and thy conception; in sorrow thou

shalt bring forth children, and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam, I, the Lord God, said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the fruit of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it, cursed shall be the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.

Sorrow was part of the curse that God gave to Adam and Eve as a result of their sin, which curse is still in effect today. We find ourselves having to yield to the will of God. Alma wrote about submitting our life to the will of God even as a little child submits to a parent:

Mosiah 1:119-120 For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been, from the fall of Adam, and will be, for ever and ever; But if he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man, and

becometh a saint, through the atonement of Christ, the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father.

It's hard to imagine that it would be the Lord's "will" to inflict us. If you continue to read the story about Alma, Sr. in the Book of Mosiah, you read about his conversion to the true gospel even though he was already a priest. You'll also read about the rise of the Church of God and of the people of Alma fleeing into the wilderness to escape death. But affliction followed them and they were eventually discovered by their enemies, having grievous afflictions placed upon them. (Mosiah 11)

They were physically beaten, made to carry heavy burdens that were tied to their backs and persecuted mercilessly by their captors. They were not even allowed to pray out loud. To be caught doing this was a death sentence. They were already a humble people. But now they were a broken people; broken and heavy-hearted.

They lifted silent prayers and poured out their hearts continually to God. How long Alma's people lived under these conditions we don't know, but their response to adversity is well documented. They submitted themselves and trusted in God to deliver them. God had made them a promise and they believed it:

Mosiah 11:60-62 And it came to pass that the voice of the Lord came to them in their afflictions, saying, Lift up your heads and be of good comfort, for I know of the covenant which ye have made unto Me; and I will

covenant with this My people, and deliver them out of bondage.

And I will also ease the burdens which are put upon your shoulders, that even you can not feel them upon your backs, even while you are in bondage; And this will I do, that ye may stand as witnesses for Me hereafter, and that ye may know of a surety that I, the Lord God, do visit My people in their afflictions.

God was their refuge in a time of trouble. He did not forsake them. He will not forsake us! Their response is a great example to us and an encouragement.

Mosiah 11:63-64 And now it came to pass that the burdens which were laid upon Alma and his brethren, were made light; Yea, the Lord did strengthen them that they could bear up their burdens with ease, and they did submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord.

They saw their afflictions (trials) as the "will of the Lord." For whatever reason God would allow this to come upon them, they would trust Him. What faith, what submission! We see that submission to God's will in affliction builds our faith and trust in Him. These are vital ingredients in establishing the cause of Zion.

1 Peter 4:19 Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

No trial is in vain. It truly is part of our preparation for Zion. All of these fruits: patience, endurance, and long-suffering—these are the fruits that allow the other fruits to bloom and grow to fruition in our lives. Things like Joy in All circumstances, Love beyond our capacity, being able to Love your

Enemy, Great Faith, the kind of Mercy that allows God to Forgive us and us to Forgive Others.

Let our prayer be: *Into Thy hands I commit my spirit, to go where You Call Me to Go, to Suffer when You Call Me to Suffer, to walk through the Valley of Sorrow, for the sake of my eternal welfare and the cause of Your Kingdom. Let my life be one of willful and even joyful submission in the face of adversity. In Christ's name, Amen.*

I'd like to share a brief testimony of a friend of mine: My friend and her family gathered here from Oregon 20+ years ago. Her family moved here in obedience to God's will for them as they were called to gather to the center place. After they had been here for some time, my friend began to have breathing problems...severe breathing problems. She found out she had acute asthma. This affliction has caused multiple hospital stays, medications that have damaged her internal organs and systems and physically changed her appearance to the tune of adding over 130 pounds of weight. She has even faced death in many circumstances.

One time as she lay in the hospital literally struggling for every single breath, the Lord made known to her that **"every breath is a gift from Him."** Her response was one of praise and gratitude for every breath she was able to breathe. Her life has been

completely changed because of her affliction, which she still suffers with. She has put her trust in God to see her through every valley and every trial. She has not been forsaken and has received many testimonies. Again we say, "What faith, what submission!"

Consider the following: "Praise God today for all your trials. You can't become like Christ by learning it in a book. It is through trial, testing, and emptying out yourself to God that every new revelation of Christ is given or born inside of you. Every new ground for Christ you surrender comes at a cost. If you remove yourself from that trial you are taking yourself out of the hands of God. Empty yourself and submit to His will." (Suzanne Smith)

Ladies, we are in a battle for our heart. This month, this year, let us acknowledge the sovereignty of God and submit our will to His. Every day is a gift to us. Rise up and thank the Lord **for this day**. Your life matters and has meaning and purpose, whether you are 10, 50, or 100 years old. Be faithful!

[Psalms 9:9-11](#) The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. [And they that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee; for Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek Thee.](#)

[Sing praises to the Lord, which dwelleth in Zion; declare among the people His doings.](#)

Also See: [Mosiah 11\(all\)](#), [Romans 10:3-4](#), [Proverbs 3:5-6](#), [Psalms 116:12-19](#), [D&C 95:3a](#), [Alma 9:4-50](#), [2 Nephi 1:108](#), [Alma 16:228-232](#), [Alma 19:84](#), [Alma 17:75-82](#), [2 Timothy 3:11-12](#), [James 1:2-4](#), [Psalms 34:17-19](#), [Mosiah 1:119-120](#), [1 Peter 4:19](#), [Psalms 9:9-11](#), [Psalms 46:1, 57:1](#), [2 Samuel 22:3](#), [2 Nephi 3:37-47](#)

February Week #3 Devotionals & Consideration



Hymn: “Give Me Thy Heart”

**Give Me thy heart, says the Savior of men, Calling in Mercy again and again.
Turn now from sin, and from evil depart. Have I not died for thee? Give Me thy heart.**

D&C 24:1b A revelation I give unto thee concerning My will, and if thou art faithful and walk in the paths of virtue before Me, I will preserve thy life, and thou shalt receive an inheritance in Zion.

D&C 81:4c For Zion must increase in beauty, and in holiness; her borders must be enlarged; her stakes must be strengthened; yea, verily I say unto you, Zion must arise and put on her beautiful garments.

All of our monthly devotionals have been a call to make ourselves ready for the bridegroom, personally and collectively. This is a call to prepare every needful thing and become transformed into the image of Christ. We recognize that we are in a great battle between our carnal nature and the Holy Spirit...the battle for our hearts.

In a Sunday school class taught by Elder Tom Mitchell, he said, “God is calling us back to the spiritual disciplines of prayer, fasting and feasting upon the word of God.”

Alma 12:1-5 And now it came to pass that as Alma was journeying ... he met the sons of Mosiah...Alma did rejoice exceedingly, to see his brethren; And what added more to his joy, they were still his brethren in the Lord; yea, and they had waxed strong in the knowledge of the truth; For they were men of a sound understanding, and they had searched the scriptures diligently, that they might know the word of God.

But this is not all: they had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting, therefore they had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and when they taught, they taught with power and authority, even as with the power and authority of God.

As a guideline Elder Tom Mitchell said we should incorporate the following four things into our daily life:

(1) Purposeful Prayer & Fasting: (some ideas from the book “Exercises in Growing Spiritually”)

1. Adoration: Praising God.
2. Thanksgiving: Giving thanks in all things, be specific.
3. Dedication: Daily dedicate your time and talents to God’s cause.
4. Guidance: Pray for guidance, listen for His voice or inspiration, make a list.
5. Intercession: Pray for others, make a list and date when prayers are answered.
6. Petition: Pray over all parts of your life.
7. Confession: Confess your sins and ask for forgiveness, be specific.
8. Meditation: Be still, listen, let your mind be open to and receptive to God’s Spirit. Ponder.

(2) Feast upon the Word of God: We should read in the scriptures daily! It renews our minds and hearts. It gives us wisdom and counsel. It convicts us. It fills us with the spirit of prophecy and revelation.

2 Nephi 6:102 And feast upon that which perisheth not, neither can be corrupted, and let your soul delight in fatness.

(3) Humility: “Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less,” quote from Elder Aaron Smith. It is the opposite of pride. Take your focus off of yourself. When our hearts are meek and lowly, we are in a condition where God’s Spirit can fill us, use us, mold us.

(4) Service: The gospel moves us to serve one another in love. The scriptures admonish us to be “doers of the word and not hearers only.” King Benjamin and Matthew both record that when we serve others we are serving the Lord!

We have so many “tools” available to us to be strong in the Lord and to fight the good fight in preparing for Zion. God IS CALLING us in mercy, again and again! Put on the beautiful garments of forgiveness, humility, feasting-upon-the-word, prayer, fasting, and praise. “Give me thy heart,” says the Savior of men.

God is preparing for us, let us be prepared for Him!

Enos 1:46 And I rejoice in the day when my mortal shall put on immortality, and shall stand before Him: then shall I see His face with pleasure, and He will say unto me, **Come unto Me ye blessed, there is a place prepared for you in the mansions of My Father. Amen.**

Also See: [1 Chronicles 16:29](#), [Genesis 7:23-25, 59](#), [Genesis 9:21-22](#), [Psalms 9:14, 50:2](#), [Isaiah 4:1-5, 52:1-3, 7](#), [Joel 2:1](#), [3 Nephi 12:14](#), [D&C 85:21a, 36b](#), [Alma 4:6; 12:5](#), [4 Nephi 1:13](#), [D&C 59:3a-b](#), [James 1:22](#), [1 Samuel 12:24](#), [Luke 22:26-27](#), [Mosiah 1:42-51; 2:21, 27](#), [Matthew 25:33-41](#), [2 Nephi 14:4](#), [1 Peter 5:5](#), [Hebrews 2:31](#)

February Week #4 Devotionals & Consideration



Hymn: “Give Me Thy Heart”

**Give Me thy heart, says the Spirit divine, All that thou hast to My keeping resign;
Grace more abounding is Mine to impart, Make full surrender, and give Me thy Heart.**

In this battle for our hearts we realize two things: (1) The more you surrender your will and put your trust in God, the more you become filled with strength, faith and light. (2) The more you try to surrender your heart, the more you become aware of your own weaknesses and the need for that abounding grace to be imparted to you.

Grace becomes a transforming force in our lives. The Apostle Paul of the New Testament was raised in the Jewish religion of his day. It was a time where men relied on their heritage from Abraham and on their knowledge of the “law.” His relationship with God was based on rituals and obedience to the letter of the law. But when he was converted to Christ, he had to re-evaluate his beliefs and personal

relationship with God. He became transformed!

Paul urged the believers of his day to believe that only through the atoning sacrifice of Christ could they receive forgiveness of their sins.

Ephesians 2:1-10 And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.

Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, Even when we were dead in sins,

hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness toward us, through Christ Jesus.

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; but it is the gift of God; Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

This atonement creates in us a new life and we become a new creature. Grace is extended toward us because of the mercy of God. Grace also embodies the power of God to forgive our sin as we seek Him through repentance.

In a recent sermon, Elder Howard Parker talked about four steps of repentance:

1. Godly sorrow: It calls us to understand there is a separation between us and God that requires repentance.

2 Corinthians 7:9-10 Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance; for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing; For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of; but the sorrow of the world worketh death.

2. Admission of your sin and guilt: Stand up and say, "Here I am." Admit your guilt.

Psalms 5:1-4 Give ear to my words, O Lord; consider my meditation. Harken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God; for unto thee will I pray. My voice shalt Thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look up. For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness; neither shall evil dwell with Thee.

3. Cease to do evil: True repentance means to turn around and walk in a new direction that is opposite to our sin; to forsake.

Isaiah 1:16 Wash ye, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;

4. Learn to do well: It's not enough to remove something from your life, you have to fill your life with something else to replace it. All unused time will flow to your weakness.

Isaiah 1:17 Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

As we meditate on God's forgiveness and realize how much we've been forgiven, a love for the Lord is nurtured in our hearts. What a beautiful result of trusting God. But He doesn't stop there, our transformation is still a work in progress.

Consider a coin. It has two sides. Forgiveness is like a coin. We "accept" forgiveness and then we are called to "extend" it. Hopefully we can see others as creatures who are like us and flawed with weakness. Instead of responding in anger and pride toward others, we can respond with loving concern and forgiveness. Elder Lyle Smith once said, "The abundant life is the ability to

forgive.” Out of compassion, we can offer to others the forgiveness that is so essential in our own lives and so near to the heart of God.

Make no mistake, this is a huge battle in our lives. It’s about changing our hearts and the hearts of God’s people. Even the apostles of Christ struggled with this.

D&C 64:2b-e There are those who have sought occasion against him without cause; nevertheless he has sinned, but verily I say unto you, I, the Lord, forgiveth sins unto those who confess their sins before me, and ask forgiveness, who have not sinned unto death.

My disciples, in days of old, sought occasion against one another, and forgave not one another in their hearts, and for this evil they were afflicted, and sorely chastened; wherefore I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one another, for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses, standeth condemned before the Lord, for there remaineth in him the greater sin.

I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men; and ye ought to say in your hearts, Let God judge between me and thee, and reward thee according to thy deeds.

Matthew 18:21-22 Then came Peter to Him and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?

Jesus said unto him, I say not unto thee, until seven times; but, until seventy times seven.

Also See: Proverbs 15:1-4, 18, 17:9; 18:19-21, Leviticus 10:17, Isaiah 53:4; 55:6-7, Psalms 32:1-5, 1 Kings 8:30-50, 2 Corinthians 2:7-10; 12:13, Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 2:13; 3:13, Luke 7:42-43, Romans 4:7, Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:14, Matthew 18, Ephesians 4:32, D&C 98:11a-12c, Revelation 19:7-9, 1 Nephi 7:37-39, Romans 8:(all)

Brother Parker said, “It’s not about cancelling a debt or overlooking a sin. It’s about restoration of relationships. Forgiveness is not complete until we rebuild the relationship and restore it.”

This takes TIME. To extend forgiveness to others is to extend mercy and grace. Mercy purges iniquity.

Proverbs 16:6-7 By mercy and truth iniquity is purged; and by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil. When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.

Forgiveness causes scales of blindness to fall from our eyes and releases the other person from their iniquity.

1 John 2:9-11 He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.

He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.

Fight the good fight of abounding grace, repentance and forgiveness. We are more than conquerors through Christ Jesus.