

Introduction to June's Devotionals



"If ye love me, keep my commandments."
(John 14:15)

During the years 1979 and 1980, the Women's Department of the Oak Grove congregation used Doctrine and Covenants 10:10a—"Behold, this is your work, to keep my commandments"—as their study guide. The study class was taught by Sister Gwendoline Sorensen. We divided into three groups, each taking one of the three standard books, and searched for commandments. [This was before the days of easy searching for a topic with electronic scripture databases!] Our faith was strengthened when we discovered many commandments in all three books and many times in the same words. God does not change. Only we do.

At the year's end, one or two from each group formed a committee that spent two years compiling the results. The members of the committee were Nelda Brosam, Laurel Gooden, Sheila Lidberg, Sherrie Kline Smith, Gwendoline Sorensen, and Mona Thompson. The result of the committee's work was a booklet listing commandments from the Scriptures. It had four different printings of 2,000 copies each, for a total of 8,000 copies.

In response to recent inquiries about obtaining copies, the booklet has been revised and enlarged and will soon be available once more.

Much of the material for the women's June devotional is based on this booklet. The first week examines why we keep the commandments and looks at some of the scriptures about keeping them. The second week focuses on love, the greatest of all commandments: love God and love others as Christ loved us, which is a sacrificial love. The third explores obedience. Lastly, the fourth week looks at the consequences of not keeping the commandments and the promises and blessings when we do keep them.

I had already completed writing these devotionals when Pat Chadwick emailed me May's devotionals by Jill Gowan. (She did such an excellent job with her topic!) As I read them, I realized that as you go through June's devotionals, you will see many echoes from May as well as from others. One cannot escape the fact that love of God and our neighbor is the fundamental principle of the gospel, the kingdom, and reason for creation.

June Week #1 Devotionals and Consideration



(#291, *The Hymnal*, 1956) "We love to obey Thy commands."

In the introduction to the booklet on the commandments, Gwendoline Sorensen wrote, "Christ said, 'If ye love me, keep my commandments' (John 14:15). We say we love Christ. Do we?"

Love is the foundation of all things. Love is our motivation for keeping the commandments. As our son Aaron preaches and teaches, our relationship with God is the key to keeping the commandments. We must love Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. The April 2015 "flash card," with the excerpt from a talk given by Arthur Oakman about Zion, addresses this commandment.

For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.... 1 John 5:3

If ye love me, keep [ALL] my commandments. John 14:15; D&C 42:8a

He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; 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

Showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. Exodus 20:6; Deuteronomy 5:10; Mosiah 7:114

If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. John 15:10

Surely we all wish to abide in Christ's love. Mormon writes of this so poignantly and urges us to "pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son Jesus Christ, that ye may become the sons [and daughters] of God...." (Moroni 7:53).

One Sunday, some years ago after a worship service in the brick church on Broadway in south Oak Grove, the Lord filled me with this love. Truly I felt a love for everyone that day, and could not explain it. I had not particularly prayed for it or sought it. It was an unexpected gift and a marvelous blessing.

More recently, on one of our tours, the Lord blessed me with what I can only call an endowment. I had fasted for that trip, but it got off to a wrong start and continued to get worse. Several mornings after the beginning of the tour, I stood looking out the window of the hotel. It was morning, and we had been preparing to go down to breakfast. As I gazed out the window unseeingly, I pondered on why things had gone so badly and asked the Lord if my fasting had been in vain.

Suddenly, a bird flew into the yard and caught my attention. When I focused on it, I saw it was a morning dove. It was soon joined by another dove. From that moment on, God endowed me with a love and an insight I've never had before and haven't had again. As the day progressed, everything looked brighter and more beautiful. Relationships with others had an in-depth quality which I can't describe. Everything was enhanced! And, once again, it was very easy to love those around me, and I could have done anything God asked of me.

Without God's help, keeping the commandments are difficult, and dare I say, impossible? But as the Apostle Paul wrote to the Philippians, it is possible to do all things with Christ (4:13). It also might be good to keep in mind God's word to Joseph Smith and six other elders, "For my commandments are spiritual; they are not natural, nor temporal, neither carnal nor sensual" (D&C 28:9c).

More than 100 verses in the Scriptures talk about keeping the commandments. Throughout this month, we will examine only a few of them. Why not take a couple of these scriptures each day and look them up, and if you have time, do an in-depth study using a scripture search database.

Every person who belongeth to this church of Christ shall observe to **keep all the commandments** and covenants of the church. D&C 42:21a

Now as you have asked, behold, I say unto you, **Keep my commandments**, and seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion. D&C 10:3a

Behold, this is your work, to **keep my commandments**. D&C 10:10a

Behold, I have given unto you the commandments; therefore **keep my commandments**. 3 Nephi 7:11, 8:46

Therefore shall ye **keep my commandments**, and do them; I am the Lord. Leviticus 22:31; Numbers 15:40

Turn ye from your evil ways, and **keep my commandments** and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets. 2 Kings 17:13

And now for a man to take up his cross, is to deny himself all ungodliness, and every worldly lust, and **keep my commandments**. Matthew 16:29

June Week #2 Devotionals and Consideration



**Love ye me and love all people—
Love as I have loved you;
This your calling—this my purpose—
Thus be my disciples true.**

**Then in this exalted station,
Your companion I will be;
Every promise of my Scriptures,
Will be verified in thee.**

Joseph Luff (#180, *Hymns of the Restoration*, 1984)

Love God and Others

The celestial law of Zion is the law of love. Jesus said all the law and the prophets hang on two commandments: love God and love our neighbor (Matthew 22:34-39).

This week's devotional material is presented exactly as it appears in the new booklet about the commandments soon to be printed. Spend time each day to read and study the scriptures below.

LOVE GOD

We know that there is a God in heaven . . . and that he created man male and female . . . and gave unto them commandments that they should LOVE and SERVE him the only living and true God, and that he should be the only being whom they should WORSHIP (D&C 17:4a-b).

Hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to LOVE the Lord your God, and to SERVE him with all your heart and with all your soul... (Deuteronomy 11:13-32).

1. Love God with all your heart, might, mind, and strength
Mark 12:33-36; D&C 59:2a; Moroni 10:29
2. Serve the true and living God
Matthew 4:10; Mormon 4:94; D&C 17:4b

3. Worship the only true and living God
Genesis 4:5; Luke 4:8; 2 Nephi 7:32; Alma 16: 237; D&C 108:7c
4. Put your trust in him
Isaiah 26:4; Proverbs 3:5; Mosiah 5:28, 52; D&C 10:6

Further study: John 14; 1 John

LOVE NEIGHBOR

And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also (1 John 4:21).

1. Love one another as Christ loved us
John 15:12-13
2. Love one another; cease to be covetous; cease to find fault
D&C 85:38a, c; 1 Peter 1:22; Ephesians 5:2-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; Mosiah 7:124
3. Love your neighbor as you love yourself
Mark 12:36; James 2:8; Mosiah 11:16; D&C 59:2b
4. Think of your brethren like unto yourselves
Jacob 2:22; Philippians 2:1-3; 1 Corinthians 10:24
5. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you
Matthew 7:21; Luke 6:32; 3 Nephi 6:24
6. Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you
Matthew 5:46; Luke 6:27-38; 3 Nephi 5:90
7. Have faith, hope, and charity, and pray for charity with all the energy of heart
D&C 6:8c; 16:4d; Moroni 10:15-17; 7:48-53; 2 Timothy 2:22

Further study: John 15; Romans 13:9-14; 1 John; 1 Corinthians 13

June Week #3 Devotionals and Consideration



**(#371, *Hymns of the Restoration*, 1984)
"Trust and Obey"**

Obedience

Since the creation of mankind, God has given guidance and commandments. In the Garden of Eden, God commanded Adam:

Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; Nevertheless, thou mayest choose for thyself, for it is given unto thee; but remember that I forbid it; For in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die (Genesis 2:19-22).

We know what happened. Eve was beguiled by Satan and ate that fruit. Then she persuaded Adam to eat also. Because of disobedience, they were expelled from the garden and had to endure sorrow and hard work to make a living. In other words, they suffered for not keeping the commandment.

After being expelled from the garden, God gave Adam and Eve a new commandment "that they should worship the Lord their God; and should offer the firstlings of their flocks for an offering unto the Lord" (Genesis 4:5). This time Adam was obedient (4:6), and when an angel appeared unto Adam and asked him why he was offering these sacrifices unto the Lord, Adam replied, "I know not, save the Lord commanded me." Adam had learned to have trust and to be obedient. Another who learned trust and obedience was Abraham when commanded to make a sacrifice of his only son Isaac (Genesis 22).

Arthur Oakman writes that "the way to knowledge of him [meaning God] is by obedience.... [T]he greatest need of our church today, and the greatest need the world has laid on the church, is that we be obedient to the word of God which we have received through the prophets" (*God's Spiritual Universe*, p. 57). To me this means that by being obedient in keeping the commandments, I will grow in my knowledge of God. Oakman also said that "Men who have found the completest fellowship with [God] are those who have led a life of continued obedience to his law" (Ibid. p. 40). See also 2 Peter 1:5-11 for a formula to acquire this knowledge and charity or love of God.

When we realize God gives commandments *for our good*, we know then that by keeping them we will be blessed. Of greater importance, though, is that *we keep the commandments because we love the Lord*. This was part of our study the first week of June.

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye **be willing and obedient**, ye shall eat the good of the land; But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. Isaiah 1:18-20

Behold, the Lord **requireth the heart** and a **willing mind**; and the **willing and obedient** shall eat the good of the land of Zion in these last days. D&C 64:7a

Wherefore, if ye shall be **obedient** to the commandments, and endure to the end, ye shall be saved at the last day. 1 Nephi 7:69

There is no other name given, whereby salvation cometh, therefore, I would that ye should take upon you the name of Christ, all you that have entered into the covenant with God, that ye should be **obedient** unto the end of your lives. Mosiah 3:11

Who am I that made man, saith the Lord, that will hold him guiltless that **obeys not** my commandments? D&C 58:6g

But, behold, they have not learned to be **obedient** to the things which I require at their hands, but are full of all manner of evil, and do not impart of their substance, as becometh Saints, to the poor and afflicted among them, and are not united according to the union required by the law of the celestial kingdom. D&C 102:2b

June Week #4 Devotionals and Consideration



Thomas O. Chisholm (#19, *The Gift of Song*, 2003)

**Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide.**

**Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!**

Consequences and Blessings

In D&C 81:3b and Alma 17:47-48 the Lord tells us, "I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say, but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise." Today we begin a week to consider the blessings received when keeping the commandments and some consequences when not keeping them. Deuteronomy 11:13-28 provides an example of God's promises of blessings on one hand and the consequences of not keeping the commandments on the other hand.

In The Book of Mormon, over and over again, the people are told that if they keep the commandments they will prosper in the land, but if they do not keep the commandments they will be cut off from his presence. See 1 Nephi 1:54, 116; 2 Nephi 1:34, 3:8-9; Jacob 2:38; Jarom 1:22-23; Omni 1:8; Alma 7:15-16, 17:44, 22:20-21.



Some other consequences of not keeping the commandments are told in the following scriptures.

Oh that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! Then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea. Isaiah 48:18

Keep my commandments continually, and a crown of righteousness thou shalt receive. And except thou do this, where I am thou canst not come. D&C 24:4b

But inasmuch as they keep not my commandments, and hearken not to observe all my words, the kingdoms of the world shall prevail against them.... D&C 100:2c

For verily I say unto you, that except ye shall keep my commandments, which I have commanded you at this time, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. 3 Nephi 5:68; D&C 16:7d, 24:4b, 290:2e; Deuteronomy 5:29, 11:13

This next scripture is kind of scary because I don't want to walk in darkness nor not abide in God's love. "Verily I say unto you . . . if you keep not my commandments the love of the Father shall not continue with you; therefore you shall walk in darkness" (D&C 92:3a).



Young Israeli girl by the Sea of Galilee



Geraniums next to the door of the Garden Tomb in Jerusalem

The blessings are for this life and the next with promises. Look up each of the scriptures below. The first one is familiar because Jill used it in the second week of her devotionals. I, also, love this one as I love everything about King Benjamin's proclamation to his people!

I would desire that ye should 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. O remember, remember that these things are true; for the Lord God hath spoken it. Mosiah 1:88-91

And what I say unto one, I say unto all, Watch ye therefore, and pray always, and keep my commandments, that ye may be counted worthy to escape all these things which shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man when he shall come clothed in the glory of his Father. Luke 21:36

Oh that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children forever! Deuteronomy 5:29

Keep my commandments in all things; and if you keep my commandments and endure to the end, you shall have eternal life; which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God. D&C 6:16c, 12:3b, 24:4b; 29:2e; 1 Nephi 7:69; Revelations 2:26

And if it so be that the children of men keep the commandments of God, he doth nourish them, and strengthen them, and provide means whereby they can accomplish the thing which he has commanded them. 1 Nephi 5:59; D&C 5:6d-e; Deuteronomy 15:4-5

For verily I say unto you, Blessed is he that keepeth my commandments, whether in life or in death; and he that is faithful in tribulation, the reward of the same is greater in the kingdom of heaven. D&C 58:1b

But unto him that keepeth my commandments, I will give the mysteries of my kingdom, and the same shall be in him a well of living water, springing up unto everlasting life. D&C 63:7b

Verily, thus saith the Lord, It shall come to pass that every soul who
forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me,
and calleth on my name,
and obeyeth my voice,
and keepeth my commandments,
shall see my face, and know that I am, and that I am the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. D&C 90:1a

For our day and age, a blessing of keeping the commandments means we can assist in the establishment of Zion.

Now, as you have asked, behold, I say unto you, Keep my commandments, and seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion.... D&C 6:3a, 10:3a, 4c; 11:3b

And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant, which I made unto thy father Enoch; that, when men should keep all my commandments, Zion should again come on the earth, the city of Enoch which I have caught up unto myself. Genesis 9:21

The next is an Arthur Oakman quote taken from our April 2015 flash card.

And if you love him with all your heart, mind, might, and strength then your “self,” which is you, will be cleansed and purified and made white and clean, and with such a self you can be left safely to love your fellow men. This is the essence of the kingdom of God.

What greater blessing can we have than God’s love abiding in us which allows us in turn to love our neighbor as God loves! That is Zion.

This month we’ve considered many scriptures about having the pure love of Christ—which is a sacrificial love—dwelling in us and about our response to his love by keeping his commandments. Everything in life revolves around God’s love for us and ours for him, including keeping the commandments. May we, like Jesus, “do always those things which please him [God]” (John 8:29).