

# “Consider the Wondrous Works of God” (Job 37:14)

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**D**ear brothers and sisters, I love you. I love Brigham Young University, and I am greatly honored to be here today to worship with you in this devotional.

In my personal gospel study, I have noted the recurring use of the word *work* in many well-known and often-quoted passages of scripture.

For example, Isaiah described the latter-day Restoration of the Savior’s gospel and of His true and living Church as “a marvellous *work* . . . , even a marvellous *work* and a wonder.”<sup>1</sup>

The Lord declared to Nephi, “I will show unto the children of men that I am able to do mine own *work*.”<sup>2</sup>

In September 1823, Moroni instructed the young boy Joseph Smith “that God had a *work* for [him] to do.”<sup>3</sup>

And following the loss of the 116 pages of manuscript translated from the first part of the Book of Mormon, the Lord revealed:

*The works, and the designs, and the purposes of God cannot be frustrated, neither can they come to naught. . . .*

*Remember, remember that it is not the **work** of God that is frustrated, but the **work** of men.*<sup>4</sup>

I now earnestly pray for the companionship and edifying power of the Holy Ghost for all of us as we consider together the eternal importance of God’s “wondrous *works*.”<sup>5</sup>

## **The Word *Work* in the Scriptures**

The word *work* and its derivatives are used in the scriptural text of the standard works in English more than 1,100 times and in many different ways.

Sometimes the word *work* is used to describe the specific actions and activities that are necessary to do or to make something. For example, as God concluded the Creation of the earth, He said:

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*I rested on the seventh day from all my work, and all things which I had made were finished, and I, God, saw that they were good;*

*And I, God, blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it I had rested from all my work which I, God, had created and made.*<sup>6</sup>

Likewise, Nephi received heavenly instruction about how he “should work the timbers of the ship”<sup>7</sup> to construct the vessel that would carry Lehi’s family and his fellow travelers across the ocean to the promised land.

Other times, the word *work* refers to God’s overarching purpose or to a result or goal to be accomplished. For example, missionaries “are called to the work”<sup>8</sup> according to their desires and qualifications.<sup>9</sup> And the Lord instructed Hyrum Smith to “keep my commandments, and assist to bring forth my work, according to my commandments, and you shall be blessed.”<sup>10</sup>

### God’s Work and Our Work

Perhaps the most familiar scripture that focuses upon the importance of work in God’s plan for His children is Moses 1:39. This verse clearly and concisely describes the overarching purpose of the Eternal Father: “For behold, this is *my work* and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”<sup>11</sup>

A companion scripture found in the Doctrine and Covenants describes with equal clarity and conciseness our primary work as the sons and daughters of the Father: “Behold, this is *your work*, to keep my commandments, yea, with all your might, mind and strength.”<sup>12</sup>

Thus, God’s work is focused upon the progression and exaltation of His children. Our work as God’s sons and daughters is to love Him and keep His commandments.

We initially may think of God’s work and works as “the wonders of eternity”<sup>13</sup> and the “worlds without number” that He has created.<sup>14</sup> Yet every facet of God’s work is designed to develop and bless His sons and daughters. Truly, “the worth of souls is great in the sight of God.”<sup>15</sup>

Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf explained:

*And while we may look at the vast expanse of the universe and say, “What is man in comparison to the glory of creation?” God Himself said we are the reason He created the universe! . . . In other words, the vast expanse of eternity, the glories and mysteries of infinite space and time are all built for the benefit of ordinary mortals like you and me. Our Heavenly Father created the universe that we might reach our potential as His sons and daughters.*

*This is a paradox of man: compared to God, man is nothing; yet we are everything to God. . . . We have the incomprehensible promise of exaltation—worlds without end—within our grasp. And it is God’s great desire to help us reach it.*<sup>16</sup>

### The Works of His Work

Importantly, as we learn about and become anxiously engaged in God’s holy work, then you and I ultimately become *the works of His work*. We become the results of God’s work as we strive with His help to fulfill our eternal destiny.

Let me explain what I mean by the phrase “we become the works of His work.”

As disciples and members of the Lord’s restored Church, you and I “are called to the *work*,”<sup>17</sup> and, in different seasons of our lives, we fulfill various purposes and responsibilities. Through the power of God’s grace and mercy, every act of selfless service that we render helps us become more acquainted with the Master whom we represent and every act draws us closer to Him.<sup>18</sup>

President Ezra Taft Benson taught:

*Ours is a gospel of work—purposeful, unselfish and rendered in the spirit of the true love of Christ. Only thus may we grow in godly attributes. Only thus may we become worthy instruments in the hands of the Lord.*<sup>19</sup>

Work is love made manifest.<sup>20</sup> Doing God’s holy work by the power of His Spirit changes our hearts and minds in remarkable ways. We acknowledge Jesus Christ as our Savior and Redeemer and become “converted unto [Him],”<sup>21</sup> and then “we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually.”<sup>22</sup> Our devotion to the Lord and to His eternal purposes deepens. We

are transformed—“born again . . . [and] changed from [our] carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God.”<sup>23</sup> Our spiritual rebirth and progress along the covenant path enable us to become sanctified as “new creatures” in Christ.<sup>24</sup> Ultimately, then, we become the works, or the results, of God’s work. “Our progress is His work!”<sup>25</sup>

As we each labor in mortality to accomplish God’s purposes, we are proved, polished, and prepared for eternal blessings. We literally are the wondrous works of God’s work—the very reasons for His eternal plan and for the infinite and eternal atoning sacrifice of His Only Begotten Son.

### Work Is Essential for Our Spiritual Progress

The use of the word *work* to denote action to do or to make something does not enjoy a universally positive reputation. Adam, as he was driven out of the Garden of Eden, was introduced to and instructed about aspects of the work he would perform throughout his life:

*In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground. . . .*

*Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.*<sup>26</sup>

Because of the stark contrast between the beautiful and lush Garden of Eden and the lone and dreary world into which Adam and Eve were driven, we may tend to perceive work as unpleasant or compulsory drudgery, toil, and labor. However, our understanding of the Father’s plan of happiness helps us to recognize that work is a necessity for spiritual progress.

As sons and daughters of God, “each [of us] has a divine nature and destiny”<sup>27</sup> and has inherited spiritual capacities from Him. Our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son are creators, and They have entrusted to us in mortality portions of Their creative powers. Our particular ability to work and create is significant spiritually precisely because it is central to the Father’s plan and constitutes one of the ultimate expressions of our divine potential.

President Thomas S. Monson explained:

*God left the world unfinished for [men and women] to work [their] skill upon. He left the electricity in the cloud, the oil in the earth. He left the rivers unbridged and the forests unfelled and the cities unbuilt. God gives to [us] the challenge of raw materials, not the ease of finished things. He leaves the pictures unpainted and the music unsung and the problems unsolved, that [we] might know the joys and glories of creation.*<sup>28</sup>

But why is work vital to our individual spiritual progress?

The overarching purpose of Heavenly Father’s plan is to provide His spirit children with opportunities to learn. The moral agency afforded to all of the Father’s children through His plan and through the Atonement of Jesus Christ is divinely designed to facilitate our learning. Endowed with agency, the capability and power of independent action, we are “agents unto [our]selves.”<sup>29</sup> Agency thus enables us to become agents “to act for [our]selves” instead of objects “to be acted upon.”<sup>30</sup>

Moral agency, becoming an agent, and righteous action are interrelated and bound together in truly powerful ways. Consider, for example, the definition of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as set forth in the *Lectures on Faith*: “Faith [in Christ is] the first principle in revealed religion, . . . the foundation of all righteousness, . . . and the principle of action in all intelligent beings.”<sup>31</sup>

I underscore that very significant statement: “the principle of action in all intelligent beings.”

The spiritual gift of faith in Christ entails the exercise of our agency to act and follow Him, live His teachings, keep His commandments, bind ourselves to Him through covenants,<sup>32</sup> trust in His promises, and meekly accept His will and timing in our lives. Acting in accordance with the doctrine and correct principles the Redeemer proclaimed is essential because “faith without works is dead.”<sup>33</sup> We are to be “doers of the word, and not hearers only,”<sup>34</sup> “that every man may act in doctrine and principle pertaining to futurity, according to the moral agency which [God has] given unto him.”<sup>35</sup>

We also learn in the *Lectures on Faith* that “faith is not only the principle of action, but of power also . . . , whether in heaven or on earth.”<sup>36</sup> Faith

in Christ always leads to righteous action,<sup>37</sup> which increases our spiritual capacity and power.

Therefore, faithful disciples of Christ are workers

*anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do[ing] many things of their own free will, and bring[ing] to pass much righteousness;*

*For the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves.*<sup>38</sup>

Brothers and sisters, we become the works of God by faithfully doing God’s work. Devoted disciples consistently and conscientiously—according to their individual abilities and circumstances—act as agents to do or to make something in both the temporal and spiritual aspects of their lives and in their service to others.

Understanding that faith in the Savior is a principle of action and of power suggests an ongoing pattern of spiritual work that is a fundamental expression of reliance upon and trust in Him and a source of learning and growth. For these important reasons, work is essential for our spiritual progression.

Inaction negates the gift and blessing of moral agency; it is the antithesis of faith. Idleness, laziness, slothfulness, fear, apathy, and procrastination are the opposites of true faith in the Savior.

In the scriptures we are admonished repeatedly to “cease to be idle,”<sup>39</sup> to “not idle away [our] time,”<sup>40</sup> and to not waste “the days of [our] probation.”<sup>41</sup> If we are to learn what we need to learn and become what God intends for us to become, then we need to “press forward”<sup>42</sup> rather than just sit and wait for something to happen.

Work both develops and reveals the firmness of our spiritual purpose. Mormon admonished:

*Let us labor diligently . . . ; for we have a labor to perform whilst in this tabernacle of clay, that we may conquer the enemy of all righteousness, and rest our souls in the kingdom of God.*<sup>43</sup>

### **Work Helps Us Acknowledge and Appreciate Our Dependence upon God**

Becoming God’s works by being anxiously engaged in His work helps us to acknowledge

and appreciate our dependence upon Him in and for all things. Our limited mortal capacity is completely insufficient to ever realize our eternal possibilities; we need and depend upon the grace, strength, inspiration, and means that only the Lord can provide. This is another reason work is essential to our spiritual growth and development.

President Lorenzo Snow explained:

*In and of ourselves we cannot possibly comply with all the commandments that God has given unto us. Jesus himself could not without divine aid from His Father accomplish His work. . . . And we, if it was necessary for Him, our Lord, to have divine assistance, will find it all the more important to receive His assistance. And in every circumstance and condition surrounding the Latter-day Saints, while in the performance of their duties, they are entitled to supernatural aid from the Holy Spirit, to help in the various conditions surrounding them, and in the duties that they are required to perform.*<sup>44</sup>

For example, a farmer may recognize God’s gracious gifts in the light, water, air, and soil as seeds are planted and crops are cultivated and harvested. He becomes a witness with Alma that

*all things denote there is a God; yea, even the earth, and all things that are upon the face of it, yea, and its motion, yea, and also all the planets which move in their regular form do witness that there is a Supreme Creator.*<sup>45</sup>

A laborer may be grateful for the blessings of ongoing health and strength that make it possible to provide food and shelter for a beloved family.

A highly skilled and experienced medical doctor may give thanks for heavenly inspiration even while performing a new surgical procedure to repair faulty heart valves and save a patient’s life.<sup>46</sup>

And faithful parents striving to create a Christ-centered home may receive capacity and “strength beyond [their] own”<sup>47</sup> that enables them to “be not weary in well-doing, for [they] are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great.”<sup>48</sup>

Please recall the questions posed by King Benjamin to his people:

*Are we not all beggars? Do we not all depend upon the same Being, even God, for all the substance which we have, for both food and raiment, and for gold, and for silver, and for all the riches which we have of every kind?*<sup>49</sup>

Thus, work helps us to “confess . . . his hand in all things”<sup>50</sup> and “live in thanksgiving daily, for the many mercies and blessings which [God] doth bestow upon [us].”<sup>51</sup>

### Therefore What?

As president of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, President Boyd K. Packer often asked the following question during our deliberations and discussions: “Therefore what?”

I understood his question to mean, “So what spiritually significant difference will this idea, proposal, or course of action make in the lives of Church members?” He was inviting us to consider the value and long-term implications of the matter about which we were counseling.

So, you may be asking, “Brother Bednar, what is the ‘Therefore what?’ of your message to us today?” I believe four key summary points from my message can answer this important question.

1. God’s work is focused upon the progression and exaltation of His children.<sup>52</sup> Our work as sons and daughters of God is to love Him and keep His commandments.<sup>53</sup>

2. As we each labor in mortality to accomplish God’s purposes, we are prepared for eternal blessings. We literally are the wondrous works of God’s marvelous work—the very reasons for His eternal plan and for the infinite and eternal atoning sacrifice of His Only Begotten Son.

3. Understanding that faith in the Savior is a principle of action and of power suggests an ongoing pattern of spiritual work that is a fundamental expression of reliance upon and trust in Him and a source of learning and growth. For these reasons, work is essential for our spiritual progression.

4. Becoming God’s works by being anxiously engaged in His work helps us to acknowledge and appreciate our dependence upon Him in and for all things. Our limited mortal capacity is completely insufficient to ever realize our eternal possibilities; we need and depend upon the grace, strength, inspiration, and means that only the Lord can provide. This is another reason work is essential to our spiritual growth and development.

As the Lord declared, “Keep my commandments, and assist to bring forth my work, according to my commandments, and you shall be blessed.”

### Promise and Testimony

As I began my message today, I referenced Isaiah’s prophecy that the Lord would do a marvelous work and a wonder among the children of men in the latter days. I believe this great prophet’s promise operates at both a dispensational and an individual level.

Truly, the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ; the reestablishment of the Savior’s Church with His doctrine, priesthood authority, and sacred covenants and ordinances; and the ushering in of the dispensation of the fullness of times is the latter-day marvelous work and wonder foretold by Isaiah. And you and I are blessed to live in such a special season of this distinctive dispensation.

This marvelous work and wonder of the latter days is spreading across the earth and enables you and me individually to become the works of God’s work—even the results of His loving labor and divine direction. The holy work in which we are engaged stretches, strengthens, enlightens, transforms, and purifies us. Behold,

*now are we the sons [and daughters] of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*<sup>54</sup>

All of us have a work to do, “for of him [and her] unto whom much is given much is

required.”<sup>55</sup> As you strive to learn the gospel of Jesus Christ and perform the work you have to do, I specifically exhort you to be wise<sup>56</sup> in your use of contemporary technological tools. Innovations such as artificial intelligence have the potential to both (1) assist you in receiving magnificent blessings and (2) diminish and suffocate your moral agency.<sup>57</sup> Please do not allow the supposed accuracy, speed, and ease of modern technologies to entice you to avoid or circumvent the righteous work that invites into your life the blessings you will need. My beloved brothers and sisters, there are no spiritual shortcuts or quick fixes.

Always remember that ongoing conversion unto the Lord requires focused and sustained work. We must strive to become agents who exercise faith in the Savior and act and shun becoming objects that merely are acted upon.<sup>58</sup>

Becoming a devoted disciple requires focused and sustained work. We must strive to become agents who exercise faith in the Savior and act and shun becoming objects that merely are acted upon.<sup>59</sup>

Personal revelation requires focused and sustained work. We must strive to become agents who exercise faith in the Savior and act and shun becoming objects that merely are acted upon.<sup>60</sup>

Seeking appropriately for the gifts of the Spirit requires focused and sustained work. We must strive to become agents who exercise faith in the Savior and act and shun becoming objects that merely are acted upon.<sup>61</sup>

To be clear, we do not earn or qualify for God’s blessings solely by or through our individual works. God’s will and timing determine how and when we receive His tender mercies. But we have the obligation to work as we become the works of God.

Please prayerfully “consider the wondrous works of God.”<sup>62</sup> I invite you to study, ponder, and apply in your life the magnificent exhortation by the Prophet Joseph Smith:

*Shall we not go on in so great a cause? Go forward and not backward. Courage . . . ; and on . . . to the victory! Let your hearts rejoice, and be exceedingly glad.*<sup>63</sup>

As you respond in faith to this invitation, I promise that by the power of the Holy Ghost you will be blessed with eyes to see, ears to hear, and a heart to understand<sup>64</sup> your place in and your roles as “the wondrous works of God” in this latter-day marvelous work and wonder.

I joyfully witness that God the Eternal Father is our Father. He is the author of the plan of happiness, and I witness that He lives. I also witness that Jesus Christ is the Only Begotten and Beloved Son of the Eternal Father. He is our Savior and Redeemer, and I witness that He lives. I testify that He is risen. And I witness that the Father and the Son appeared to and instructed Joseph Smith—thus initiating the marvelous work and wonder of the Restoration of the Savior’s gospel. I bear my sure witness of the truthfulness of these things and express my abiding love for all of you in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

#### Notes

1. Isaiah 29:14; emphasis added.
2. 2 Nephi 27:21; emphasis added.
3. Joseph Smith—History 1:33; emphasis added.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 3:1, 3; emphasis added.
5. Job 37:14; emphasis added.
6. Moses 3:2–3; emphasis added.
7. 1 Nephi 18:1; emphasis added.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 4:3; emphasis added.
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 4:3, 5–6.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 11:9; emphasis added.
11. Moses 1:39; emphasis added.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 11:20; emphasis added.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 76:8.
14. Moses 1:33.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 18:10.
16. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “You Matter to Him,” *Ensign*, November 2011.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 4:3; emphasis added.
18. See Mosiah 5:13.
19. Ezra Taft Benson, “Power Through Service,” *Millennial Star* 118, no. 10 (October 1956): 299;

quoted in *TETB*, 484; also quoted in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2014), 266–67.

20. See Neal A. Maxwell, “Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel,” *Ensign*, May 1998.

21. Alma 23:8.

22. Mosiah 5:2.

23. Mosiah 27:25.

24. Mosiah 27:26; see also Jacob 4:5; Moroni 10:33; Hebrews 10:10–39; Moses 6:59–60.

25. Henry B. Eyring, “Walk with Me,” *Ensign*, May 2017; emphasis in original.

26. Genesis 3:19, 23.

27. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” (23 September 1995).

28. Thomas S. Monson, “First Presidency Message: In Quest of the Abundant Life,” *Ensign*, March 1988.

29. Doctrine and Covenants 58:28; 104:17.

30. 2 Nephi 2:26.

31. *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 1 (1:1, 9).

32. See David A. Bednar, “Abide in Me, and I in You; Therefore Walk with Me,” *Liahona*, May 2023.

33. James 2:20.

34. James 1:22.

35. Doctrine and Covenants 101:78.

36. *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 3 (1:13).

37. See James 2:14–26; Ether 12:4; Alma 7:24; Alma 26:22.

38. Doctrine and Covenants 58:27–28.

39. Doctrine and Covenants 88:124.

40. Doctrine and Covenants 60:13.

41. 2 Nephi 9:27.

42. 2 Nephi 31:20.

43. Moroni 9:6.

44. Lorenzo Snow, *CR*, April 1898, 12; quoted in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Lorenzo Snow* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ, 2012), 178.

45. Alma 30:44.

46. See Russell M. Nelson, “Sweet Power of Prayer,” *Ensign*, May 2003.

47. “Lord, I Would Follow Thee,” *Hymns*, 2002, no. 220.

48. Doctrine and Covenants 64:33.

49. Mosiah 4:19.

50. Doctrine and Covenants 59:21.

51. Alma 34:38.

52. See Moses 1:39.

53. See Doctrine and Covenants 11:20.

54. 1 John 3:2.

55. Doctrine and Covenants 82:3.

56. See Jacob 6:12.

57. See Doctrine and Covenants 101:78.

58. See 2 Nephi 2:13–14.

59. See 2 Nephi 2:13–14.

60. See 2 Nephi 2:13–14.

61. See 2 Nephi 2:13–14.

62. Job 37:14.

63. Doctrine and Covenants 128:22.

64. See Matthew 13:13–16; Doctrine and Covenants 136:32; see also Jeremiah 5:21.