

Giving All Our Heart to Christ

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I am humbled to be speaking to you all today, and I pray for the Holy Spirit to imprint on your heart the message that you need to feel.

I have had the honor of being back at BYU this year after ten years at the University of Utah. I frequently get emotional when I come to this building to attend a devotional. I am in awe of all of you,¹ walking from across campus to this building for devotional, without compulsion, with no grade at the end, and in such great numbers. I know the future is bright for the Lord's Church because I see Him reflected in your faces.

You all appear much wiser and more mature than I was at your age. When I was an undergraduate student at BYU, my roommate discovered that late on Saturday nights, Einstein Bagels threw away the bagels that didn't get sold that day; they were in a clear plastic bag that could be easily reached by jumping into the dumpster behind the store. At first my roommates and I would feast on these delicious bagels ourselves. But over time, we felt selfish keeping this bounty all to ourselves

and decided to place these bagels on trays and bring them to Relief Society the next morning for all the sisters in the Provo 197th Ward to enjoy. No one asked where we acquired them, and we thought it better not to offer that information.

While our actions were perhaps misguided, I can safely say that our hearts were in the right place.

Which brings me to my topic today: the heart.

As an Iranian immigrant to the United States and a daughter of a brain surgeon, I was informed at a very young age that I would become a doctor. In Iran, only those who ace the standardized exams have a chance to become a doctor, whereas in the U.S. that opportunity is available to anyone who is willing to work hard enough for it. I remember feeling a bit cheeky claiming I wanted to be a heart surgeon, arguing that the heart was the most important organ in the body. My older sister, who was always my father's favorite, would fervently argue that the most important was the brain. My best argument was that the heart was

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the central distributor of blood throughout the body. Typically, my sister’s trump card was that without the brain, the heart couldn’t function. I figured that with our prophet being a renowned heart surgeon, this might be a good place and time to take this disagreement public.

Many artists have depicted our Savior Jesus Christ holding a human heart—in some cases referred to as “the sacred *heart* of Jesus.”²

Our prophet encouraged us at the April 2024 general conference to study the dedicatory prayer of the Kirtland Temple—the first temple built by the early Saints after great sacrifice.³ This prayer starts, “Thanks be to thy name, O Lord God of Israel, who keepest covenant and showest mercy unto thy servants who walk uprightly before thee, *with all their hearts.*”⁴

There is a connection between loving God with all our hearts and making covenants with Him.

Jesus also instructed at the Sermon on the Mount, “Blessed are the pure in *heart*: for they shall see God.”⁵

The covenants we make with God in the temple prepare us to be reunited with Him,⁶ but what does this have to do with our hearts?

I want to consider each of the five covenants we make with God in His holy house and how they purify our hearts—helping us love Him wholeheartedly and ultimately uniting us eternally with Him.

The Law of Obedience

Consider the heart’s role in our body’s survival. By divine design, our hearts beat around the clock, without volition, even while we sleep. Our hearts pump life-giving blood throughout our bodies.⁷ Likewise, our Savior is constantly there loving us, without a beat skipped.

But how do we love Him back? Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments.”⁸ Our obedience is a manifestation of our love and our desire to be reunited with Him.

It is the simple act of trying to be obedient that God asks of us—to recognize where we lack and show a willingness to keep coming back. Elder Clark G. Gilbert taught, “Regardless of whether we start in abundant or difficult circumstances, we will realize our ultimate potential only when

we make God our partner.”⁹ God rejoices in even microlevel improvements while our hearts are fixed toward a celestial life with Him.

The 1970s band Van Halen had an infamous contract involving brown M&M’s. Van Halen’s contract rider specified in article 126, “There will be no brown M&M’s in the backstage area, upon pain of forfeiture of the show, with full compensation.”¹⁰ If the band arrived to perform for a concert and spotted any brown M&M’s, they would cancel their concert at the expense of the venue. Some promoters thought they were prima donnas, but the lead singer’s explanation for this provision revealed a deeper purpose. Van Halen had a long contract that required very specific safety measures be put in place to ensure the stage diving, pyrotechnics, and occasional parachuting were able to be performed without injury to the band. All these technical points were spelled out in an extensive rider, which also included a request for all brown M&M’s to be removed from the backstage area. When the band would arrive at a venue, they would simply check backstage; if they saw brown M&M’s, they would know that their contract had *not* been strictly observed, creating risks to the safety of the band.¹¹

What are the brown M&M’s we need to remove from our backstage areas? The small asks from our Heavenly Father that we are neglecting and hope He hasn’t noticed?

This story is reminiscent of when Christ said, “Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much.”¹²

For me, any desire to ignore what I might see as a trivial commandment is rooted in pride. When I am critical of others, become defensive after I make a mistake, or interpret prophetic counsel to suit my needs, I know my heart is not adequately directed toward God.¹³ When I justify music that includes language I would scold my kids for repeating or when I watch shows elevating immoral actions or contention, I know I am off track.

When our heart is attuned to God, any major or minor course correction by a loving Church leader is welcomed, any interruption of our time to serve

another is a delight, and secular interests that distract us from the Holy One who has captured our hearts are simply not alluring.¹⁴

These “brown M&M’s” sins may seem petty, but the scriptures are replete with petty disobedience leading to overt acts of defiance. The once-mighty King David might never have committed adultery and spent his life in regret if he hadn’t first decided to ignore the time-honored tradition that a king be in battle during the spring season. Instead, he was home walking on his roof and happened upon Bathsheba.¹⁵

As a criminal law professor, I can attest that a little pride and a minor foray into sin can almost effortlessly end with a major felony. And the account of the Nephites in Helaman provides a great warning: the people let in a little “pride of their hearts,” which sadly ended in “murdering, plundering, lying, stealing, committing adultery, rising up in great contentions”; ultimately, they lost almost all they had.¹⁶

I will never forget the advice my husband and I received before our sealing. What do you think our sealer advised us to do to have a great marriage? He said we should faithfully live the law of tithing. I was so surprised that this was a piece of marriage advice. The sealer explained that paying a full tithe helps us learn exact obedience to God and that honesty helps us remain faithful in marriage.

Law of Sacrifice

In the scriptures, the heart symbolizes the center of our desires, intentions, and loyalty. It represents a guide for our path. The Savior taught, “Where your treasure is, there will your *heart* be also.”¹⁷

The great commandment instructs that above all “thou shalt love the Lord thy God with *all* thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.”¹⁸ It *first* mentions the heart—before our mind—because sometimes our heart must act as our compass when our brain is not courageous enough to choose the right.

I was born during a time of political revolution and war in Iran. During that time my mother was a political activist fighting for freedom in our country. One day military personnel barged into

our home and arrested my mom, and she went to prison for two and a half years for fighting for what she believed in. Not long after she was released, through miracles, my family left Iran and moved to Los Angeles so my father could do a one-year fellowship at UCLA. Additional miracles led my family toward The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

My mom got baptized thinking she might be sentenced to die for her faith. At the time she had no idea if her family would be able to stay in America, but she was willing to sacrifice everything for God. Later, my parents applied for political asylum, and by the grace of God we were allowed to stay in the U.S.

The sacrifice my mother was willing to make for her faith demonstrated that she gave her heart to God. Sister Michelle Craig said: “Arm in arm with you, I want to stand with Him forever. Wholehearted. Knowing that when we love Jesus Christ with all our hearts, He gives us all in return.”¹⁹

Rather than make ten New Year’s resolutions and accomplish three of them, this year I made one impossible one: to have Jesus’s love dwell in my heart always.²⁰ I want to aim to be full of His love. I want to remember to be faithful to Him as my Rock, my Everlasting Deliverer, and my Best Friend.

Elder Patrick Kearon powerfully taught that “God is in relentless pursuit” of every last one of us.²¹ But are we in relentless pursuit of Him? Any of you who has fallen in love can relate to the idea of “relentless” love.²² When you are in the depths of falling in love, there is no breath you take, no morsel you eat, no word you speak without thinking of your newly found love. You might even imagine you hear his or her name or think you see them in places you know they can’t be. Any time you spend with or in serving your new love feels like a gift, not a sacrifice. While our love for God is not romantic, we should aim to create an all-consuming and heart-filling love for our Savior.

Law of the Gospel

In simple terms even a lawyer can understand, our heart pumps blood persistently, causing the dirty blood in our body to enter the heart, where

it is exchanged for the clean blood that our organs need. The heart is the *cleansing* organ for the vital blood that our other organs need to survive.

Because the heart symbolizes how we feel, it is sometimes seen as fickle. We may think of our heart as soft or even weak, requiring oversight from the analytical brain. But the heart—working in tandem with the brain—is a perfectly fine-tuned machine. An intricate balance of electrical, mechanical, and biochemical processes ensures that our heart functions in perfect rhythm to our changing needs. And like a compass, our heart doesn't change its course based on the user—as those who have had a heart transplant can attest. Only in a state of heart failure does our heart allow any dirty blood to cross over into the part of our heart that carries clean blood to our organs.

The heart as an organ that cleanses our blood symbolizes how the Savior is our ultimate source of purification. Our ever-consistent heartbeat reminds us that He is there with us through it all. Our hearts tirelessly clean our blood—despite what we put into our bodies—symbolizing our Savior's Atonement, which offers a cleansing gift to all without regard to whether we accept His miraculous gift. And just as doctors have not been able to reproduce a heart with mortal genius and man-made materials, there is no human replacement for Jesus Christ.²³ He powers a constant filtering of sin after repentance, with immediate cleansing possible through His Atonement. The heart does not clean our blood just once a week, and we needn't cleanse ourselves from sin so infrequently either.

I was asked during a difficult pregnancy if I wanted to mentor a refugee single mother. And even though I am both a refugee and was for a time a single mother, I am embarrassed to admit that I said I couldn't serve as a mentor. But this refusal didn't sit well in my heart. The Spirit told me loud and clear that I had made the wrong decision. It took two months, but I repented, and by divine providence I was still able to be this woman's mentor.

My new friend's name was Speratha. I remember the very first time I met her. I walked into her simple apartment, and it was clean but entirely empty. She had no mattress or table or even a

chair inside. As we sat on the floor to get to know each other, I learned that she had lost almost her entire family in the genocide in Rwanda. I will never forget what happened next. The Spirit brought to my mind my own empty apartment growing up. You see, when my family immigrated from Iran to the U.S., we initially planned to stay for only one year, but our decision to join the Church caused us to decide to remain permanently. Leaving an established life in Iran for the freedoms of America came with challenges, including, for a time, a lack of furniture. So when I saw Speratha's empty apartment, I felt a kinship with her and remembered driving around with my parents looking for mattresses and furniture people had discarded on the side of the road that we could bring home.

At this very moment when my childhood flashed before my eyes, the Spirit whispered to my heart, "She is your sister," and I felt a profound, instant love for her that I know could have only come from God. I remembered in that moment that we had also escaped a fraught political environment and were "brought by the hand of the Lord" to America²⁴ and that once we were here, we were blessed by disciples of Christ who opened their hearts to us. I decided at that moment that Speratha was my sister, and I told her that.²⁵

Speratha felt her Savior's love through people who loved her and helped fill her home with furniture and her kitchen with essentials. Over the years this outpouring of love lifted her spirits and gave her a new family. During the pandemic, I worried she could not feel our love and support, and I was prompted that her heart would need a lasting, more perfect love. So I anonymously signed her up for Mutual, the dating app. Just kidding. I reached out to the missionaries and referred them to teach her about Jesus Christ. After seven months of study and prayer, Speratha decided to get baptized. Her heart was changed as she became a disciple of Christ. This was made possible because I repented and the love of God filled my heart—and then hers.²⁶

Sometimes we put off repentance as if it is something horrid, but it is actually one of the sweetest parts of the gospel. I spoke to a woman

recently about her son who had been engaged in serious criminal activity, bringing her great sorrow. She described praying that God would help her son; *the very next day* he was arrested and subsequently put on trial. The woman and I spoke before her son's sentencing, and I was initially shocked when she asked me not to pray that the judge would give him the lightest sentence possible but rather that she would give him the sentence that would most help him to change. This mother described the way being arrested had opened her son's heart to repentance. He had described the jail where he was first taken as hallowed ground because of the transformation he had experienced there.

Dave Durocher, a former drug addict and felon who helped start The Other Side Academy—an award-winning, faith-based program that helps people stay off drugs—described the gratitude he felt for his arrest and charging, saying that Jesus Christ saved him from self-destruction.²⁷ When we repent and renew our dedication to God, He allows His Atonement to change us.

While these are dramatic examples, we all need the corrective influence of repentance to adjust our trajectory back to God. The Persian poet Rumi said, "Whatever sorrow shakes from your heart, far better things will take their place."²⁸

I think of Christ's ministry and what separated those who were willing to obey His admonition "follow me"²⁹ from the majority who never left home. Are we open to leave our plans and "favorite sins"³⁰ to give Him our whole heart?

Law of Chastity

Have you ever wondered why of the five important things we covenant in the temple, one of them is to be sexually abstinent except with your spouse when married under God's law? I have pondered this often.

Our innate human drive to fill our hearts with love could be why our Master Teacher, who knows us so deeply, used an analogy of a bride and groom preparing for marriage to represent us being true to our Savior.³¹

I had three incredible sons before I had my first daughter, and with all of our excitement to have a girl in the family, we named her Joon, which

translates from Persian as "my heart, being, and soul." Maybe because she knows what her name means, for a time Joon would say things such as "My heart is happy to play tennis." Or when we would ask her to eat her dinner, she would respond, "My heart says it wants ice cream." At other times her heart would make very clear that it did not want to go to school.

Bringing our hearts in line with His heart involves knowing ourselves and Him. Christ said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."³² We know that sometimes our hearts are going to want and feel things that aren't in line with what Jesus wants us to feel or want. That is the nature of being mortal. When I'm feeling impatient or angry, praying to feel God's love or listening to worship music helps me. If I'm comparing myself to others or feeling envy, I know I need to break out my scriptures or pull up a talk from general conference. These simple acts help me develop the humility I need to feel closer to Him.

Does your heart want to be one with Jesus Christ? And only Him?

The intimacy and loyalty we agree to when we get married is similar to the fidelity our Savior wants from us.

In the parable of the ten virgins, Christ is the bridegroom, and half of the virgins are not prepared and can't meet Him. We are all invited to see ourselves as these women. Those of us who aren't committed and don't fill our lamps with oil can't join Him for the marriage feast.³³ I don't imagine it is because Jesus forbids us to join Him, but just like in a marriage, when we lack fidelity to our spouse and put others first, we lack the intimacy to thrive in marriage and be wholly united.

In a marriage, there is *no* room for secrets; there must be transparency. Similarly, in our relationship with Christ, there is nothing to hide. He knows our hearts, our secrets, and all our preferred sins, and He still loves us. He loves us so much that He beckons us to come and be cleansed of our sins so we can feel His love without reservation. The Lord invites us, "Come now, and let us reason *together* . . . : though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow."³⁴

My mom had a dream before I was born of two golden hearts that were linked together. Before the

age of ultrasounds, she knew that her third child would be another girl. And she was right. I think of this beautiful image of two hearts bound together and know that is what I strive for with my Savior. Have I linked my heart with His sacred heart? Or have I allowed someone or something to interfere with my eternal bond with Him?

A heart directed toward eternity will not vary its immovable course based on the lateness of the hour, the seductive charm of the temptation, or the shifting cultural norms of the day. When God is our greatest love, it becomes much easier to be faithful to His laws. And our love for Him motivates us to be chaste before and during marriage as a sign of our obedience and devotion.

Law of Consecration

Jesus said, “Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in *heart*.”³⁵ To give God all our heart, we need to do as He did and not hold back anything God blesses us with.³⁶

When I was a student at BYU, I had the opportunity to complete an internship in South Africa. It was 1999, and Nelson Mandela was president of South Africa. He was a revered international leader for his role in ending apartheid in South Africa after twenty-seven years of imprisonment, and he gained worldwide admiration for appointing to his cabinet members of the former apartheid government who had persecuted him.

It was my dream to one day meet President Mandela. So while I was living there, I casually mentioned this to my South African “mama,” who informed me that that weekend he would be visiting his home that was just a few hours from where we lived. And so my BYU friends and I proceeded to take a minibus to the home of the president of South Africa. As ridiculous as this sounds, it is even more crazy when I tell you that we were dressed in cargo pants and hiking shoes and that I was working very hard to grow dreadlocks at the time; to do this, I had dyed my hair a shade of blonde best described as “lion mane.”

So there we were, dressed in casual clothing and showing up uninvited to the home of Nelson Mandela, a sitting president and one of the greatest statesmen of all time. President Mandela was visiting his ancestral home because he was

reburying one of his sons who had passed away while President Mandela was in prison.

We noticed that a huge tent had been set up to accommodate the many distinguished guests. We told the security guards outside why we had come; we expected to be turned away, but the security guard disappeared. In a few minutes, President Mandela walked out to the driveway wearing a formal black shirt with a red carnation on his lapel and accompanied by his wife.

I will never forget how he treated us. He greeted us with a genuine smile, looked into each of our eager faces, shook our hands, asked us our names and what we were each studying, and made sure we all met his wife. After all of us had the opportunity to meet him—and despite our lack of appropriate dress—he invited us to sit at his table for dinner. Recognizing the importance of the occasion, we didn’t feel comfortable accepting the invitation. But the sacrifice I observed from President Mandela changed my life.

I witnessed a powerful, esteemed president who did not see himself above a group of young interlopers. He didn’t tell us to come back when he was free. He didn’t judge our clothing. Rather, he gave graciously of his time and was willing to dine with us at his table of honor. The act of a president taking time away from his own sorrow and his honored guests to show love to a pack of strangers is an abundant expression of Christian consecration.

C. S. Lewis’s message from *Mere Christianity* challenges my thinking about consecration:

*I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare. In other words, if our expenditure on comforts . . . is up to the standard common among those with the same income as our own, we are probably giving away too little. . . . There ought to be things we should like to do and cannot do because our charitable expenditure excludes them.*³⁷

Our Savior has given His entire heart for every single one of us, and God has blessed us with every comfort we enjoy. When we consecrate our hearts to Him, it becomes a privilege to dedicate our time, talents, and resources to building His kingdom.

At this point, if any of you are like I was as a student, you are waiting with a pen wondering when I'll get to the actionable steps. I did come with two tricks—or dare I say “cheats”—to help you give *all* your heart to Him when you are irritated and cannot muster the love, when you feel less than divine, or when you are stressed and peace seems out of reach.

How Can We Give All Our Heart to Christ?

1. Spend More Time in the House of the Lord

When I married my husband, Ryan, we fought a lot during the first six months of marriage. For reasons I still don't understand, he was unable to recognize the correctness of *all* my opinions. After an intense argument, Ryan had an inspired thought. What if we went to the temple once a week together?

I hesitated. Neither of us had ever attended the temple that often. We had challenging careers and a young family. But I knew in my heart that this would help us, so I agreed.

It is hard to overstate the lasting impact the decision to attend the temple regularly has had on our marriage and our lives.³⁸ During that first year there were many times we entered the temple not speaking. But by the time we left, we were apologizing and holding hands. The temple softened our hearts and blessed our children. The covenants we made in the temple decreased our anxiety. The temple helped us to “think celestial”³⁹ and to realize that our disagreements were insignificant in the eternal scheme.

The Spirit whispered many things to my heart. I felt my Heavenly Father's love. Each time I was washed and anointed in the house of the Lord, I felt that I was a royal daughter of God who was immensely loved and that I was forgiven for my shortcomings. I felt empowered as a woman in God's Church every time I witnessed my sisters performing sacred priesthood ordinances in the Lord's house.⁴⁰ I experienced to my core what the prophet has lovingly taught: that my most important identity is as a child of God, a child of the covenant, and a disciple of Jesus Christ.⁴¹

Elder Dale G. Renlund taught that “every day we should plead with God . . . ‘with all the energy of heart, that [we] may be filled with this love.’”⁴²

Now, eight years since my husband and I started attending the temple weekly, as I think about the dramatic changes in my life, including joining the Wheatley Institute at BYU, getting on social media to talk about Jesus, and even being blessed with a miracle baby in my forties, I know that these changes have come because of my time in His house. Indeed, President Russell M. Nelson has taught that “making a covenant with God changes our relationship with Him forever.”⁴³

God knew that we could not give all our heart to Him in this fallen world without a lot of help, so He gave us temples—places on earth where we can freely access His love. When it has been a whole week since I've been to the temple, I am depleted. I can't wait to fill up on the love of the Lord.⁴⁴ President Emily Belle Freeman testified, “Each time I cross the threshold of His house, I experience deeper covenant relationship with Him.”⁴⁵

Throughout the scriptures, Jesus Christ instructs us not to fear—and often right after that He adds “for I am with you.”⁴⁶ When we embrace the love of God regularly in His house, our hearts are linked with His and we are blessed with His constant peace.

2. Feel the Power of Wearing His Name on Your Heart

And for my second tip, another gift from God: As Americans, to show gratitude and love of country, we put our hand on our heart when we hear our national anthem. To feel that constant heartbeat with your hand is comforting. One way I have found to quickly calm a young child is to put my hand over their heart when they can't be hugged.⁴⁷

God has given us a way to feel a lasting hug from heaven when we leave His house: wearing the garment of the holy priesthood. Our hearts are both physically and metaphorically covered by our Savior, Jesus Christ. So, when we can't be in the temple, wearing the holy garment reminds us of His love for us, His Atonement that covers our sins, and the steadiness of His power that protects us from the adversary.

A friend of mine recently recounted that she was praying to understand her covenants better and was deliberating whether to wear her

garments on a walk with a friend. While she could have justified not wearing garments since she was exercising, she decided to wear them.⁴⁸ During the walk they happened to run into a neighbor who proceeded to treat my friend as unkindly as anyone has ever treated her. She recounted that she was uncharacteristically blessed during this encounter to respond with love rather than defensiveness in a way she knew was a divine gift that stemmed from her decision to wear her garments that day.

Our garments cover our chests—our beating hearts—with the sacred symbols and accompanying hallowed commitments we make when we agree to take on the name of Jesus Christ. As Sister J. Anette Dennis taught, by “wearing the garment of the holy priesthood, my very life can become a personal symbol of my love and deep gratitude for my Savior, Jesus Christ, and my desire to have Him with me always.”⁴⁹

Some of you may be feeling unworthy or too busy to go to the temple. Perhaps you simply haven’t discovered a love for the temple yet. Our prophet wisely instructed, “If you don’t yet love to attend the temple, go more often—not less.”⁵⁰ If you feel you aren’t worthy, just text your bishop right now and get in for a chat.⁵¹ God wants us all in His house.⁵² Elder Neil L. Andersen promises that “as you come before the Savior with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, He will not only cleanse you from sin; He will strengthen your ability to resist sin and to find it totally unappealing.”⁵³

Any guilt you feel for a sin you need to give up is the Spirit, but any shame you feel after having repented, please know that is Satan. *Whatever shame Satan is putting in your heart, remember that Jesus has conquered it.* Satan revels in a troubled heart and will do all he can to deter us from accessing the power of Christ’s Atonement. *So go to the temple—or if you have the gift of the holy garment, put it on—and let Satan know your heart is taken.*

When I think of our Savior’s love for us, I think of a beautiful Persian custom. There is a phrase, *Gabel nadareh*, that translates as “it is not equivalent to you.” And it is used in very unlikely contexts. For instance, your friend gets a new bag, and you tell her you love it. She will respond

“Gabel nadareh” and offer it to you because its value is far less than that of your friendship. Or even when you complete a taxi ride and ask the price of the ride, the taxi driver will say to you, “Gabel nadareh: There is no equivalent to you.” And then you are confused because you need to pay, and he might persist with “There is no equivalent to you.” In the end you might just thank him and pay the approximate value of the ride so you can get out of the car.

This cultural practice is backed by such a beautiful truth. In describing His care for all aspects of our lives, Christ explained that God cares for even a sparrow that falls to the ground and that we are greater in “value than many sparrows.”⁵⁴ There is no equivalent to you. No object on this earth or any human possession comes close to your value. Your Savior adores you. He walks with you and holds your heart when times are hard. He knows your pains, your weaknesses, and even your favorite sins and just pulls you closer, because there is no one or nothing equivalent to you.

You are a unique daughter or son of heavenly parents, with a heart beating in your chest cleansing you sixty to one hundred times per minute of unclean blood to remind you of His purifying power that is available just as often to cleanse you of sin.

May we remember that He has got us covered when we mindfully wear our garment. May we wed our hearts to Him with ardent devotion and with the exactness with which He keeps our hearts faithfully beating. And may we remember to seek His love in His holy house so we can give Him all our heart, I pray in His sacred, constant, everlasting name, Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. I couldn’t agree more with Elder Patrick Kearon’s sentiment earlier this semester that BYU students are “unlike anything I’d seen anywhere before” (“Flecks of Gold,” BYU devotional address, 17 September 2024).

2. One such prominent depiction is by an eighteenth-century Italian artist, Pompeo Batoni (1708–87), who portrayed Jesus wearing a red tunic and holding a human heart with a crown of thorns and a cross at the top. The heart in this

painting is emblematic of Christ's love for us, as evidenced by His suffering and sacrifice (*Sacred Heart of Jesus*, c. 1767, oil on copper, 73.7 x 61 cm, Church of the Gesù, Rome).

3. See Russell M. Nelson, "Rejoice in the Gift of Priesthood Keys," *Liahona*, May 2024.

4. Doctrine and Covenants 109:1; emphasis added; see also Daniel 9:4. The start of this prayer is reminiscent of the heartfelt prayer of King Solomon, who was finally able to accept a temple for the ancient Jews after years of pleading: "There is no God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee *with all their heart*" (1 Kings 8:23; emphasis added).

5. Matthew 5:8; emphasis added.

6. See "Draw Nearer to Christ," Temples, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, churchofjesuschrist.org/temples/nearer-christ-through-temples.

7. President Russell M. Nelson has spoken about the miracle of the human heart, describing it as a "magnificent" organ that pumps life-giving blood throughout our bodies (see Nelson, "The Magnificence of Man," BYU devotional address, 29 March 1987).

8. John 14:15. See Moroni 10:32 for a greater discussion of being perfected in Christ.

9. Clark G. Gilbert, "Becoming More in Christ: The Parable of the Slope," *Liahona*, November 2021.

10. David Lee Roth, *Crazy from the Heat* (New York: Hyperion, 1997), 98; see also page 97; quoted in Kurian Mathew Tharakan, "No Brown M&M's—The Hidden Genius in Van Halen's Contract Clause," *Medium*, 30 May 2023, [kmtharakan.medium.com/no-brown-m-ms-the-hidden-genius-in-van-halens-contract-clause-cbc224e051ec](https://www.medium.com/no-brown-m-ms-the-hidden-genius-in-van-halens-contract-clause-cbc224e051ec).

11. See Steve Jones, "No Brown M&M's: What Van Halen's Insane Contract Clause Teaches Entrepreneurs," *Entrepreneur*, 24 March 2014, entrepreneur.com/growing-a-business/no-brown-mms-what-van-halens-insane-contract-clause/232420. See also Tharakan, "No Brown M&M's"; Jacob Ganz, "The Truth About Van Halen and Those Brown M&M's," *The Record*, NPR, 14 February 2012, npr.org/sections/therecord/2012/02/14/146880432/the-truth-about-van-halen-and-those-brown-m-ms.

12. Luke 16:10, New International Version (NIV). The King James Version translates this text as "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much."

13. See Kim B. Clark, "Are Ye Stripped of Pride?" BYU devotional address, 29 September 2009.

14. Because we love Him, we can try to follow His laws. As the prophet has taught, "God's laws are motivated entirely by His infinite love for us and His desire for us to become all we can become" (Russell M. Nelson, "The Love and Laws of God," BYU devotional address, 17 September 2019; see also Dallin H. Oaks, "Love and Law," *Ensign*, November 2009). Anything we do to direct our actions toward God will buoy our hearts with radiant peace (see Richard G. Scott, "Make the Exercise of Faith Your First Priority," *Ensign*, November 2014).

15. See 2 Samuel 11:1–2. In the Book of Mormon, Korihor initially begins questioning the teachings of the Church. He escalates to serious sin and openly blaspheming against God and deceiving many by lying and making false accusations against others (see Alma 30:12–31).

16. Helaman 4:12; see also verse 13.

17. Matthew 6:21; 3 Nephi 13:21; emphasis added.

18. Mark 12:30; emphasis added; see also Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 22:37; Luke 10:27; Moroni 10:32; Doctrine and Covenants 59:5.

19. Michelle D. Craig, "Wholehearted," *Liahona*, November 2022; see Romans 8:14–18, 28, 38–39.

20. Paul's prayer for the Ephesians was "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith . . . ; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God" (Ephesians 3:17, 19).

21. Patrick Kearon, "God's Intent Is to Bring You Home," *Liahona*, May 2024.

22. See Shima Baradaran Baughman, "A Realization About 'Relentless Pursuit' to Help You Feel Closer to God," *Latter-day Saint Life*, *LDS Living*, 12 June 2024, ldsiving.com/a-realization-about-relentless-pursuit-to-help-you-feel-closer-to-god/s/12280.

23. See Sian E. Harding, "In Search of the Impossible Machine, the Artificial Heart," MIT

Press Reader, 14 February 2023, thereader.mitpress.mit.edu/in-search-of-the-impossible-machine-the-artificial-heart/; excerpted from Harding, *The Exquisite Machine: The New Science of the Heart* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2022); see also Nelson, “The Magnificence of Man.”

24. 2 Nephi 1:6; see Ahmad S. Corbitt, J. Reuben Clark Law Society annual fireside address, 21 January 2022, youtube.com/watch?v=B4ztr1QB4FI.

25. See Ulisses Soares, “Brothers and Sisters in Christ,” *Liahona*, November 2023.

26. Paul instructs us to maintain a “fleshy” heart—a heart that is receptive to the Spirit, humble, and eager to learn and change (2 Corinthians 3:3; see also Ezekiel 36:26–27). Paul also speaks of a spiritual circumcision of the heart (see Romans 2:29).

27. Dave Durocher recounted, “Jesus Christ saved me from myself. I was on a path of self-destruction, but through His grace and mercy, I found the strength to change. He pulled me out of darkness and showed me a better way. I’m not perfect, but because of Him, I have a new chance at life. He gave me hope when I had none and taught me that ‘with [Him] all things are possible’” (BYU Law School address, 9 April 2024; quoting Matthew 19:26; from notes taken by Shima Baughman; used with permission).

28. See *The Mathnawí of Jalálu’d-dín Rúmí: The Translation of the Third and Fourth Books*, trans. Reynold Alleyne Nicholson (London: Messrs. Luzac and Company, 1934), 220, line 3680.

29. Matthew 16:24; Matthew 19:21; Mark 8:34; Mark 10:21; Luke 9:23; Luke 18:22; 2 Nephi 31:12.

30. Russell M. Nelson, “Overcome the World and Find Rest,” *Liahona*, November 2022.

31. See Matthew 25:1–13.

32. John 10:27.

33. As we are all like brides preparing for our marriage, we can choose to experience the joy of being eternally united with Jesus Christ and with our heavenly parents. John wrote about this same marriage feast in the book of Revelation (see Revelation 19:7–9). Paul also uses this metaphor in 2 Corinthians, speaking of the Church as being engaged to Christ with devotion and fidelity (see 2 Corinthians 11:2).

34. Isaiah 1:18; emphasis added.

35. Matthew 11:29; emphasis added; see also 3 Nephi 12:19.

36. See Helaman 3:35. President Gordon B. Hinckley taught that “he who lives only unto himself withers and dies, while he who forgets himself in the service of others grows and blossoms in this life and in eternity” (“Forget Yourself,” BYU fireside address, 6 March 1977; see Luke 17:33).

37. C. S. Lewis, “Social Morality,” in *Mere Christianity* (1952), book 3, chapter 3, paragraph 7.

38. See Shima Baradaran Baughman, “After a Heated Argument, My Husband Suggested We Start This Spiritual Habit—and We Found Peace,” Temple Worship, *LDS Living*, 12 March 2024, ldsiving.com/after-a-heated-argument-my-husband-suggested-we-start-this-spiritual-habit-and-we-found-peace/s/12091.

39. Russell M. Nelson, “Think Celestial!” *Liahona*, November 2023.

40. See Dallin H. Oaks, “The Keys and Authority of the Priesthood,” *Ensign*, May 2014. See also Joseph Fielding Smith, “Relief Society—an Aid to the Priesthood,” *Relief Society Magazine*, January 1959, 4–6.

41. See Russell M. Nelson, “Choices for Eternity,” worldwide devotional for young adults, 15 May 2022.

42. Dale G. Renlund, “Through God’s Eyes,” *Ensign*, November 2015; quoting Moroni 7:48.

43. Russell M. Nelson, “The Everlasting Covenant,” *Liahona*, October 2022.

44. Elder Gary E. Stevenson once shared the results of a study involving rabbits that illustrated the importance of being loved. Researchers examining the effects of diet on heart health were surprised to find that some of the rabbits consuming a high-fat diet were healthier than other rabbits eating the same diet. Eventually the researchers realized the difference: the healthy rabbits were under the care of a researcher who was “unusually kind and caring” and who showed her love for the rabbits by cuddling and petting them. The researcher’s love was found to directly improve the health of the rabbits. (Kelli Harding, *The Rabbit Effect: Live Longer, Happier, and Healthier with the Groundbreaking Science of Kindness* [New York: Atria Books, 2019], xxiv; see also xxiii–xxv; quoted in Stevenson, “Hearts Knit Together,”

Liahona, May 2021. See also Robert M. Nerem, Murina J. Levesque, and J. Fredrick Cornhill, “Social Environment as a Factor in Diet-Induced Atherosclerosis,” *Science* 208, no. 4451 [27 June 1980]: 1475–76.) Like the rabbits, each of us will be spiritually healthier as we feel more and more of God’s love.

45. Emily Belle Freeman, “Walking in Covenant Relationship with Christ,” *Liahona*, November 2023.

46. Jeremiah 42:11; see Isaiah 41:10, 13; Doctrine and Covenants 68:6. See also Genesis 50:21; Deuteronomy 31:6; Psalm 23:4; Moroni 8:16. Also see Tad R. Callister, “Fear Not,” *Ensign*, December 2010; Jean A. Stevens, “Fear Not; I Am with Thee,” *Ensign*, May 2014.

47. Hugging has been found to improve the emotional intelligence of children and to provide comfort to them in times of distress. See Muhammad Ali Adriansyah and Diah Rahayu, “The Influence of Hug Therapy on Children’s Emotional Intelligence Improvement,” Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on Education Innovation (ICEI 2017), *Advances in Social Science, Education, and Humanities Research* 173 (February 2018): 234–37. See also Christine Smith, “Chest Hug Is Best Position to Comfort a Child,” *Kai Tiaki: Nursing New Zealand* 21, no. 2 (1 March 2015): 26–27.

48. This anecdote is not a statement of guidance on when the garment should be worn. President Jeffrey R. Holland recently provided some helpful guidance about the holy garment, explaining that some specific answers about when the garment should be worn that “stem from a personal circumstance related to employment, exercise,

hygiene, climate, modesty, sanitary facilities, or even a medical condition” can be answered by reviewing the material “at temples.churchofjesuschrist.org and in section 38.5 of the *General Handbook*.” He also suggested being attentive to the instructions given during the initiatory ordinance in the temple, speaking to trusted family members and leaders, and turning these questions to the Lord. (Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Garment of the Holy Priesthood,” *Liahona*, September 2024; citing “Temple Clothing and Garments,” *General Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, August 2024 [Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ, 2024], 38.5 [pp. 407–11].)

49. J. Anette Dennis, “Put Ye On the Lord Jesus Christ,” *Liahona*, May 2024.

50. Russell M. Nelson, “The Temple and Your Spiritual Foundation,” *Liahona*, November 2021.

51. I have seen felons whose sins were punished to the fullest extent of the law repent and turn their lives to Jesus Christ and gain access to His house. You too can gain the heart full of joy and the peace that only comes through His mercy (see Mosiah 4:1–3).

52. President Jeffrey R. Holland assures us that “it is not possible for [us] to sink lower than the infinite light of Christ’s Atonement shines” (“The Laborers in the Vineyard,” *Ensign*, May 2012).

53. Neil L. Andersen, “A Broken Heart, Contrite Spirit, and Godly Sorrow,” *The Divine Gift of Forgiveness*, Video Collections, Church of Jesus Christ, September 2020 (transcript also available), churchofjesuschrist.org/media/video/2020-09-0110-a-broken-heart-contrite-spirit-and-godly-sorrow.

54. Matthew 10:31.