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Christ Is the Reason

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Christ Is the Reason

MERRILL J. AND MARILYN S. BATEMAN

Elder Bateman: Brothers and sisters, it is wonderful to be with you at the first devotional of the new year and the new millennium. Sister Bateman and I so much enjoy our association with you. We are pleased that everyone returned safely to campus following the holidays.

This is an especially important time in the history of the earth. The command to take the gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people is moving forward at a rapid pace. The world is being prepared for the return of its Creator. We know not the day nor the hour of His coming. Some signs still are unfulfilled. However, key events associated with the Savior's triumphant return are being recorded on the pages of history. The gospel has been restored, Elijah has returned, missionaries are working in many countries, and temples are beginning to dot the earth. The choir's beautiful rendition of Handel's "Lift Up Your Heads" is a reminder of the day when the gates of the New Jerusalem, the holy city, will be open for the Savior of the world and all of Israel to enter (Psalms 24:7; Revelation 21:21–25).

Today Sister Bateman and I wish to speak about commitment to eternal truths and the principles and values that must motivate our actions if we are to qualify for entry into that

holy place. Our talk will draw on an experience we had in Japan a few years ago.

In the summer of 1993, Sister Bateman and I received an assignment to serve in the Asia North Area, which included Japan, Korea, and far east Russia. The opportunity to live and work in that part of the world was exciting. We had lived in Europe and Africa earlier, but Asia was new to us. As a member of the area presidency, I had responsibility for the stakes, districts, and missions in the three countries. One of the key assignments was to conduct mission tours. Each mission of the Church is visited annually by a General Authority, usually a member of the area presidency. The presidency member and his wife travel with the mission president and his wife throughout the mission, visiting and interviewing missionaries.

Shortly after our arrival in Japan, a mission tour was scheduled for the Fukuoka Mission on the island of Kyushu. Sister Bateman and I were to meet with President and Sister Cyril Figuerres and tour the mission. A few days before the tour began, a tropical storm, one of the worst in the history of Japan, struck Kyushu with typhoon

Merrill J. Bateman was president of Brigham Young University when this devotional address was given on 16 January 2001.

force, wreaking havoc across the island. The city of Kagoshima on the island's southern tip was particularly hard hit as roofs were ripped off buildings, homes were demolished as they slid down mountainsides, trains came to a halt, and cars were swept into the ocean. Initially, there was concern about the safety and welfare of the missionaries and Saints, but reports confirmed that everyone was safe.

A few days later we learned of many acts of service that the missionaries had rendered during the storm. Missionaries had directed traffic at busy intersections where stoplights had failed. Two missionaries had helped a man change a flat tire in the midst of the gale as the owner was unable to secure his car on the jack and remove the good tire from the trunk. Throughout the island missionaries had assisted people in protecting their homes and personal belongings. Over and over the missionaries demonstrated love for the people through acts of kindness and service. In the week immediately following the storm, missionaries spent hours and days cleaning homes of thick layers of mud and helping with repairs.

Approximately one week after the storm, Sister Bateman and I met President and Sister Figuerres in Fukuoka on the north end of the island and then flew to Kagoshima to begin the mission tour. We drove from the airport to the chapel where the missionaries were waiting to begin a zone conference. As we entered the parking lot, we noticed the missionaries standing outside the chapel in a line waiting to greet us. I remember that as we got out of the car and approached the missionaries, the Spirit was so strong that it brought tears to our eyes and we could hardly contain our feelings. Their countenances exuded light. They were clean and well dressed, and their mannerisms reflected an inner peace and humility. A strong impression came that they had had an extraordinary experience—a refining one—as they had become Ammon-like servants to the Japanese people and to the Master. The discussions that ensued in the

zone conference, the lessons taught, and the testimonies borne confirmed our impressions.

After the conference Sister Bateman and I discussed what we had seen and felt. We wondered if the experiences associated with the storm were primarily responsible for the special spirit that prevailed among the Kagoshima missionaries. Obviously they had been impacted by the events. But as we continued the tour and observed missionaries in other parts of the mission, we found a similar pattern of faith, obedience, and motivation to serve. We eventually concluded that there were a number of reasons for the faith and power displayed by the missionaries: the mission president was an effective teacher; the missionaries were obedient and responded to his teachings; and, like Ammon and the sons of Mosiah, they studied the scriptures, they fasted and prayed, they worked hard, and they “taught with power and authority” (Alma 17:2–3).

As we observed, Sister Bateman and I came to understand that the lives of these young men and women reflected a mission motto developed by the president that they had accepted as a guide. Their approach to missionary work and to life was described by this motto that Sister Bateman and I wish to use as our theme today. Our intent is to explain the motto and liken its principles to your lives at Brigham Young University. The principles taught in the motto apply not only to missionary activity but to everyday life. The motto reads:

*Obedience is the price,
Faith is the power,
Love is the motive,
The Spirit is the key,
and
Christ is the reason.*

[Japan Fukuoka Mission Motto, 1991–1994]

Sister Bateman and I will take turns in discussing the elements of the motto. I will begin with “Obedience Is the Price”; Sister Bateman

will follow, discussing the roles of faith and love in our lives; and I will conclude with remarks concerning the Spirit as the key and “Christ Is the Reason.”

Obedience Is the Price

In discussing the motto with the mission president, I learned that his desire was to teach missionaries the importance of obedience to gospel principles; then they would govern themselves. He knew that missionaries would obey missionary rules if they believed in and were committed to a higher set of principles. Thus he spent minimal time teaching from the white handbook but considerable time teaching from the scriptures. The Savior and Ammon were the role models. The mission president infused in the missionaries a desire to be Ammon-like in their service to the Japanese people. The mission president believed if the missionaries would humble themselves; repent; render quiet acts of service; and spend time studying, fasting, praying, finding, and teaching; converts would follow. The mission president’s efforts were rewarded. Missionaries were obedient to the white handbook because they were obedient to a higher set of laws; and they found investigators to teach who then found the gospel because of the way in which these young men and women lived.

I feel the same way about students and the Honor Code at Brigham Young University. For the most part, you live the Honor Code not because you signed your name on a document but because you were taught a higher law in your homes before coming to the university. That is true for members and nonmembers alike. It is faith in a higher order that causes you to act and look the way you do. More than 90 percent of you stated in a recent national survey that you have never seen another student cheat on an exam at this university. The average for other universities is 55 percent (Academic Integrity Study, Center for Academic Integrity, Duke University, fall 1999). In addition, you

strive to live morally clean lives and dress modestly because you understand the sacred nature of the human body and desire to treat it as a temple. In discussing the purposes of mortality, we point to the necessity of obtaining a physical body as a housing for the spirit so that we can become like our Father in Heaven. We don’t often point out, however, that it is the physical body combined with the spirit that contains godlike, creative power. And if we honor that sacred power in mortality, we will have it in eternity. If we abuse that power, we will lose it. Our success as a university stems from your obedience based on faith in the Father and the Son and in the restoration of the gospel.

To illustrate this point, visitors to campus notice almost immediately a difference between this university and others. They remark on the cleanliness, the order that exists, and the light in people’s countenances. Invariably they ask why the students are so happy. Two years ago a high government official from Europe was sitting by me at lunch. We were discussing his visit—including the lecture he had given, the questions asked by the students, and his tour of campus.

During the conversation he said, “Last week I visited another campus in another state. The students were different from yours. If some of those students were brought to this campus, could you make them look like your students?”

I replied, “No! I don’t believe so! We would have to start with their parents!”

Behavior is a function of faith, and faith is determined by one’s willingness to submit, to be obedient to higher laws, to “experiment upon [the] word” (Alma 32:27). The Savior declared that the power to redeem all mankind came from the Father as a result of His willingness to be obedient. He stated:

I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me. [John 5:30]

On another occasion Jesus said:

For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.

. . . Whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak. [John 12:49–50]

Referring to the Savior’s words, a BYU professor wrote the following:

*Without such obedience and unity with the Father, the Lord could not have redeemed us. How else could he have had the power to stay with his mission in the face of the awful suffering it entailed? How else, except by suffering for us, could he have come to love us the way he did? (Alma 7:11–12.) [Allen E. Bergin, “The Way to Christlike Love,” *Ensign*, December 1982, 51]*

Obedience is the price that produces faith, love, access to the Holy Spirit, and, ultimately, access to the celestial kingdom. It is the first law of heaven. Sister Bateman will now discuss the second and third principles of the motto.

Sister Marilyn Bateman: Happy New Year! A warm welcome to all of you. Now is the time for looking forward to the new year and looking backward on the past year, like Janus, the two-faced Roman deity for whom the month of January is named.

As President Bateman has so powerfully illustrated, obedience is the price we pay to come closer to our Heavenly Father. Obedience is a way of demonstrating our faith. Obedience confirms that our belief is more than passive, that it is an active force within us. Elder Bruce R. McConkie observed that there is a vital connection between obedience and faith. He explained:

Faith is a gift of God bestowed as a reward for personal righteousness. It is always given when righteousness is present, and the greater the

measure of obedience to God’s laws the greater will be the endowment of faith. [MD, 264]

There is a kind of feedback loop between obedience and faith. We obey God’s will based on the measure of faith we have in us, but as we obey, the Lord strengthens our faith even more. As we continue to exercise faith through our actions, our faith grows.

Faith Is the Power

This is the next part in the Fukuoka Mission motto. Why was faith included in the mission motto? What is faith? Faith is a confidence and a trust in something. In Hebrews 11:1 we read, “Now faith is the substance [confidence or assurance] of things hoped for, the evidence [or proof] of things not seen.”

Faith is a principle of power. It is active. It causes something to happen. Some equate faith with belief. But faith is more dynamic than belief. Compared with faith, belief is passive. Belief is just an acceptance that something is so. For instance, even the devils believe in Christ, but they don’t trust Him or follow Him (Mark 5:1–18; Mark 1:23–24).

The scriptures state (specifically, Alma 32:21 and Hebrews 11:1) that faith is not a perfect knowledge of something but a hope or even evidence of something not seen that is true. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that faith motivates our day-to-day activities, that faith “is the moving cause of all action” (*Lectures on Faith* 1:10). Because faith dwells within the heart of every person on this earth, we are constantly using this power in sowing seeds of one kind or another with the assurance that sooner or later we will reap a harvest. For instance, the farmer plants seeds in his field with the hope of a harvest. Scholars and students (such as yourselves) exert themselves in pursuit of an education—and eventually graduation—because they believe they can obtain their goal. The same thing is true with missionary efforts. If new missionaries feel they can find a golden contact and

then put forth much effort, they will be successful. No wonder faith was an important principle of the Fukuoka Mission motto. Missionaries must have faith in themselves. They must have faith in the message they are teaching.

Without such faith, the Prophet Joseph said, “both mind and body would be in a state of inactivity, and all their exertions would cease, both physical and mental” (*Lectures on Faith* 1:10). If a missionary sat around and did nothing, President Figuerres, the mission president, knew that this missionary needed an increase of faith. “As faith is the moving cause of all action in temporal concerns,” the Prophet continued, “so it is in spiritual [things]” (*Lectures on Faith* 1:12). All blessings, temporal and spiritual, we receive by faith.

Having faith in ourselves is an important ingredient in accomplishing our goals. We want to graduate from college, so we exert every effort to make it happen. However, some people put all their faith in themselves. Faith in ourselves can be motivating, but it is not saving—and by itself it cannot be sustained. It does not lead to life and salvation. Saving faith centers in the Lord Jesus Christ and through Him in the Father. The Apostle Paul preached that “there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Jacob taught that men must have “perfect faith in the Holy One of Israel [Jesus Christ], or they cannot be saved in the kingdom of God” (2 Nephi 9:23).

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the first principle of the gospel. Faith in Him is more than acknowledgment that He lives. It is more than professing belief. Faith in the Savior consists of sure and complete reliance on Him. As God, He has infinite power, intelligence, and love. There is no human problem beyond His ability to solve. He descended below all things. He knows how to succor His people according to their needs. We must have “unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save” (2 Nephi 31:19). Faith

in Him means that even though we do not understand all things, we know that He does. We must look to Him “in every thought; doubt not, fear not” (D&C 6:36).

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the perfect prescription for all human problems and social ills. But His gospel is effective only as it is applied in our lives. To show our desire to be one with our Savior, to show our gratitude for the great mercy that He has extended to us, to help us gain eternal life, we must be actively engaged in showing forth our faith. We do this by prayer, scripture study, keeping the commandments, attending church, giving service to others, and fulfilling our callings and duties in the Church. We do it by expressing our testimony of Him, the Son of God.

There was a strong faith in Peter’s mind and heart when the Lord asked:

Whom say ye that I am?

And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. [Matthew 16:15–16]

Nor was there any wavering in Peter when Christ taught the multitude at Capernaum, declaring Himself to be the bread of life. Many of those there would not accept His teachings and

went back, and walked no more with him.

Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?

Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.

And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God. [John 6:66–69]

Christ is the Son of the living God, and He does indeed have the words to eternal life.

Love Is the Motive

This is the next part in the Fukuoka Mission motto. As President Figuerres urged the missionaries to be obedient and develop their

faith, he encouraged them to mature to the point where their actions and goals were not motivated by fear or reward or duty but by a love for the Lord and for those they served. The highest motive for keeping the commandments is a love for God and for His children. In fact, Christ has told us that the two great commandments—to love the Lord and to love our neighbors—are the foundation for every other commandment (see Matthew 22:36–40).

Love is itself a gift. It is difficult for us to love others if we are not loved. Sometimes we don't feel loved or at all lovable. At these times it may be difficult for us to feel motivated to exercise faith or to show love. But God loves us. He loves us more than we can comprehend at this time. We need to come to understand how great His love is: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Many converts to the Church report the overwhelming joy they feel in being converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ. They feel God's love for them, and it is this love that entices them to be baptized and follow Him. John reminded us, "We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). I, too, have felt this love, a burning love that encompasses my whole soul. When it is in you, it lights you, *all of you*, and transforms you.

One way we can experience a greater confirmation of God's love is through keeping our hearts and minds pure. Jacob exhorted:

Look unto God with firmness of mind, and pray unto him with exceeding faith, and he will console you in your afflictions, and he will plead your cause. . . .

O all ye that are pure in heart, lift up your heads and receive the pleasing word of God, and feast upon his love; for ye may, if your minds are firm, forever. [Jacob 3:1–2]

Fasting and prayer can bring us closer to the Lord and rekindle in us the fire of love that brought us to commit ourselves to the Savior

in the first place. We have been promised that if we keep the Lord's commandments with a sincere desire to do what is right, He will not withhold His love from us:

As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.

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.

These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. [John 15:9–12]

We need to have faith that the Lord does indeed love us. As we exercise that faith through obedience, we begin to feel the Lord's love more powerfully in our lives. All of these principles are interconnected; they engender and reinforce each other. As we feel the Lord's love take root in our hearts, as we taste of that sweetest of all fruits, then our love is kindled for those around us.

My young brothers and sisters, there are so many of our Father's children in the world today who need our love, who need us to reach out and bring them into our circle. It may be that your expression of love provides the spark that witnesses to them that God loves them. Through your loving actions they may gain an assurance that God is a loving God in whom they can place their faith. I am touched by the chorus of a song by Deanna Edwards entitled "Am I Beautiful to You?"

Am I beautiful to you? Have you eyes to see my soul?

Do you know that I'm a child of God and your love can make me whole?

Am I beautiful to you? Do you see my light within? Please love me from the inside out — not from the outside in.

[In Deanna Edwards, *Share Love's Light* (Provo: Rock Canyon Music Publishers, 1990), 27–29]

Share your own rich stores of love with those around you. You will find that as you do, you will only continue to reap more love and joy.

Our obedience takes on new meaning as we cross over from keeping the letter of the law and begin to keep the spirit of the law. Obedience, faith, and love are not easily separated out from each other. The source of our faith comes from understanding the nature of God—that He is a good and loving God who has the power to save us. The source of our obedience rests in a love for God and in the faith that by keeping the commandments we will partake more fully of God’s love. It is my hope that each of us will exercise the faith necessary to call upon the Lord and receive a witness that He lives and that He loves us. It is my prayer that with this renewed confirmation of God’s love we may open our hearts to others, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Bateman: I appreciate Sister Bateman’s wonderful testimony concerning faith as the power and love as the motive for our behavior. She mentioned a feedback loop that exists between obedience and faith. She stated, “We obey God’s will based on the measure of faith we have in us, but as we obey, the Lord strengthens our faith even more.”

The Spirit Is the Key

What is the connecting link between obedience-producing faith and then greater faith leading to more obedience? As President Figuerres noted, the Spirit is the key. The Holy Ghost is the connecting link, the key to the relationship. The Holy Spirit confirms one’s obedience to gospel principles with an assurance or witness that one is living appropriately. The confirmation or witness adds to one’s knowledge, which increases faith (Alma 32:28–30). Additional faith increases access to the Spirit, which helps us be even more obedient. The spiritual assurances may be in the form of a burning sensation, a peaceful feeling, or

increased joy or love. The Holy Ghost has many fruits with which to bless a person and increase one’s testimony (Galatians 5:22–23).

The spiritual assurance through the Holy Ghost connects with the powers of the Atonement to change one’s nature from that of the natural man or woman to that of a saint or celestial person. Listen to King Benjamin’s words:

For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless 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. [Mosiah 3:19]

The Holy Ghost serves the Father and the Son. He is our connecting link to Them. Christ promised the eleven Apostles after the Last Supper that He would send another Comforter, even the Spirit of Truth (John 14:16–17), who would “teach [them] all things, and bring all things to [their] remembrance” and “guide [them] into all truth . . . and [show them] things to come” (John 14:26, 16:13). The Savior further said that the Holy Ghost would not speak for Himself but would receive from Christ that which He was to tell us and show to us.

The Savior knows us perfectly. Through the Atonement He knows how to succor us (Alma 7:11–12). When one receives a prompting regarding a question asked in prayer or a feeling of love for another person or if one has a confirming feeling during a person’s testimony, where do those come from? One should recognize first of all that the Holy Ghost is at work. In addition, since the Holy Spirit represents the Savior, one should also recognize that the ultimate source of those feelings or those promptings is the Redeemer Himself.

Have you ever thought of the many roles played by the Holy Ghost in our lives? He is

a cleanser, a guide, a teacher, a justifier, a healer, a witness, a comforter, a quickener, a revelator, a sealer, and a sanctifier. He is the key. He knows when we are obedient. He knows how to comfort us when in need. He knows how to assist us without abrogating agency.

Christ Is the Reason

As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we are blessed through modern revelation to know more about Christ and His purposes than any other people on earth. We know him as Jehovah in the Old Testament and as the Son of God in the New Testament (1 Nephi 21:26; Mosiah 3:5–8; D&C 110:3–4). We know His relationship to the Father as the Firstborn spirit in premortality and as the Son of God in the flesh with Mary as His mother (Colossians 1:15; D&C 110:4; 1 Nephi 11:18–21). We understand the Father’s plan presented in the premortal council and the Savior’s willingness to serve as the executor of the covenant—to be the Mediator and Redeemer of all mankind (Abraham 3:22–26). We know our relationship to Him—He is our Eldest Brother in the spirit (Abraham 3:27–28). These truths are not generally understood by the world.

We also have a broad understanding of His earthly mission, including the Atonement (2 Nephi 9; Mosiah 3:5–11; Alma 7:11–12, 34:10, 14; 3 Nephi 11:11; D&C 19:16–19). We certainly know more about the Atonement and the Lord’s power to change us from mortality to immortality and from corruptible to incorruptible beings because of the teachings of the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants (Alma 41; D&C 76). We know about His mission to the Western Hemisphere, which is not understood by others (3 Nephi 11–28). We know more about His work in the spirit world than anyone else. We understand the Resurrection and its meaning for Him and for us (2 Nephi 2:8, 9:12; Alma 11:41, 45, 41:4; 3 Nephi 11; Moroni 10:34; D&C 29:26, 93:33). Finally, we know about His sealing power. We understand

that a key purpose of this earth is to form eternal families and that through the Atonement Christ has the power to bind men and women together for eternity.

Christ is the basis for all that we do. He is the reason we do missionary work. Without the Savior and His Atonement, there would be no good news to spread. Without Him, temple work would be in vain. Our progress would stop. But He did partake of the bitter cup and “finished [His] preparations unto the children of men” (D&C 19:18–19). As we come to know Him and to “learn . . . that there is no other way or means whereby man can be saved, only in and through Christ” (Alma 38:9), we become better students, we have a stronger influence on others, we serve more faithfully as missionaries, we raise better families, and we become worthy to enter the Holy City, following the footsteps of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

I will close with a story that illustrates the influence you have on visitors to this campus as you live gospel principles and abide by the Honor Code. The story also speaks of the power that missionaries have to change peoples’ lives. The moral of the story is the same whether you are a student at BYU, a missionary in Japan, or simply a member somewhere in the world.

Recently, as I discussed the Fukuoka Mission motto and the typhoon experience with President Figuerres, he shared the following story. During the Kyushu storm in 1993,

Brother Mitsunori Sumiya was rushing home from work in the torrential rain. He could barely see through the windshield [of his car]. He tried earnestly to dodge debris blowing across the streets. Traffic was chaotic because traffic lights no longer functioned. He explained that everyone seemed to be looking after their own personal welfare as they hurried home.

Then he experienced a “defining moment” in his life. He saw young missionaries directing traffic at intersections. Further along he saw two missionaries helping a man change a flat tire. As he continued

home he saw other missionaries assisting people in various ways. This good brother said he had a feeling of shame come over him because he realized that his constant prayer and only focus was to protect his car from being damaged. In stark contrast, the young missionaries' only focus seemed to be in serving others.

The member then received an empowering insight: "My core values are not rooted in Christ, but in worldly things like my car. These young missionaries, only half my age, have Christlike values." He realized that it is often in times of emotional stress and anxiety that one's true values are revealed.

Months later the member said to [President Figuerres], "Your missionaries are truly modern-day Ammons who serve the people of Japan spontaneously and without being compelled. They are

constantly serving everyone, all the time, and everywhere because they want to, . . . because love is their driving motive."

During the years that followed, Brother Sumiya deepened his roots in Christ as a result of that experience, and his life began to change. Brother Sumiya became the first president of the newly organized Kumamoto Stake a few years ago. [Cyril Figuerres, letter dated January 12, 2000]

It is my hope, brothers and sisters, that we will not shortchange ourselves in paying the price of obedience, that we will enjoy the power that comes with faith, that we will have love as our motive, that we will live worthy to receive the Holy Spirit in our lives, and that we will know that Christ is the reason. This is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.